

UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER

Department of Dance

***Bruk Out* Feminism in the Intercultural Dancehall Queen
Scene**

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

DEPARTMENT OF DANCE

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The focus of this thesis is the intercultural Dancehall Queen (DHQ) scene, as manifested between Jamaica and Europe, within the broader culture of dancehall. Dancehall is a performance culture that first developed as a resistant expression toward a postcolonial Jamaican climate in the late 1970s (Cooper, 2004). According to several dancehall scholars including Carolyn Cooper, dancehall articulates the condition of a working-class black Jamaican population. As such, much of the academic research on dancehall to date has focused on its relationship to its Jamaican socioeconomic and cultural context. Dancehall has also been found to be relevant to women outside Jamaica (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006b), but very little of the literature looks specifically at this dimension. This thesis sets out to examine the practices of Jamaican and European women in dancehall from an intercultural perspective, looking at the connectivities and tensions within this diversely positioned collective.

The research, which used a reflexive physical/digital multi-sited ethnographic methodology, offers a model for conducting research into intercultural black feminist phenomena that span transnational sites and virtual/physical embodiment and connectivity. The methodology recognises the ethnographic encounter as a performative space between researcher and participant, and develops accountable strategies for reading silence and embodied expressivity, in dialogue with verbal, textual and visual research materials in intercultural research settings. It reveals that in this study juxtapositions between hypervisibility and silence by certain black Jamaican and black European dancers amount to a decolonial articulation of the right to opacity (Glissant, 1990).

The study finds that the women in the Jamaican/European DHQ scene engage in various forms of creative, embodied and digital labour practices in the construction of their dancehall identities. It argues that this labour is underscored by a black epistemology centred on the vernacular Jamaican notion of *bruk out*, which put simply means to *break out*. The research argues that *bruk out* is performatively enacted within DHQ performances that engage black feminist Caribbean aesthetics that centre on the pleasure taken in performative dares that break social respectability rules. The study subsequently introduces the concept of '*bruk out feminism*', which it argues is a performative world view that focuses on the expressivity of pleasure and pain through the construction of digital visual cultures, forms of materialist self-determination and decolonial self-preservation.

The research studies how these cultural specificities are negotiated in the intercultural exchanges between white and black, Jamaican and European, dancers. It argues that *reflexive interculturalism*, which centralises and empowers the practices of black women in dancehall and uses exchange, friction and dialogue to de-centre a privileged position of whiteness, enables forms of coalitional solidarity to take shape. It concludes that the scene reflects an agonistic (Mouffé, 2012) status quo, where exploitative and socially progressive predilections co-exist.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Celena Luz Monteiro, declare that the thesis entitled '*Bruk Out* Feminism in the Intercultural Dancehall Queen Scene' and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission, or [delete as appropriate] parts of this work have been published as: [please list references]



Signed:

Date:.....06/01/2020

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Introduction

The focus of this thesis is Jamaican and European women in dancehall – a popular style of dance and music and a cultural phenomenon that first developed as a resistant expression toward a Jamaican postcolonial sociopolitical climate in the late 1970s (Cooper, 2004). Caribbean Studies scholar Carolyn Cooper proposes that dancehall articulates the condition of a black working-class, Jamaican population and is defined by the unapologetically vulgar attitude embodied and articulated by its participants. Much of the academic research on dancehall to date has focused on its relationship to its sociocultural Jamaican context. Very little of the research concerns the style's intercultural dimensions. I use the term *intercultural* here in reference to performance theorist Royona Mitra's (2015) view of 'New Interculturalism', as "a conceptual, processual, embodied lived condition driven by one's own multiple affiliations to cultures, nations and faiths" (2015: 15). In Chapter One I explain this usage in more depth in relation to the canon of intercultural theatre.

This research aims to contribute a new perspective on dancehall by studying the inter-connections and impact of the style's trans-Atlantic dimensions, in particular its participation by women in Jamaica and Europe and the impact this has on their lived experience as racialised, gendered and classed subjects. It analyses participants' geographic movements in the form of tourism and migration patterns, and it also accounts for the role of virtual connectivity online and across globalised audiovisual media. It focuses on dancehall's female participants, many of whom identify as Dancehall Queens (DHQs); a title that was first awarded to a Jamaican performer named Carlene in 1992 (Niaah 2010). Carlene became famous for performing a movement style that centred on a vocabulary of precise, often slow, hip rotations and polyrhythmic articulations of the torso and buttocks. As the first dancer to be given the title of DHQ her movement style became the foundation upon which the DHQ style has come to be known and marked the DHQ icon through a distinctly erotic aesthetic. To date there has been no dedicated research study of length focused on DHQ culture. Although feminine identities and gender more broadly has been discussed by dancehall scholars including C. Cooper (2004) and Sonjah Stanley Niaah (2010), these have included brief discussions of DHQs only in relation to their broader focuses on dancehall culture at large. This thesis, by focusing on women in dancehall, and DHQs specifically, offers a pointed study into this feminine and exclusively female performance space, which is dedicated to women's expressivity. In particular, the thesis studies the negotiation of feminine identities at performance events named DHQ Competitions, which are staged performance events at which female dancers vie for the title of first prize DHQ by performing in front of an audience and set of judges.

As this thesis is driven primarily by the discipline of dance studies, the investigation looks at the dancing body, as a key investigative site. Studying dancers' physical and virtual movements has led the research toward an inquiry into the codified symbolism and kinaesthetic expressivity of embodied action within female dancehall performance. This analysis, along with testimony from dancers and other dancehall participants, has enabled a theory to develop regarding the significance of the term 'bruk out', which originates in Jamaican patois and colloquially means to act in an unruly manner, but which I theorise as a complex epistemology, rooted in black Jamaican cultural life, that is key to understanding dancehall as a black performance culture. In a documentary dedicated to the concept, titled *Bruk Out!* (2017) dancehall musical patron, Elephant Man explains: 'When you hear "bruk out" that mean... "Get mad", that mean "No holding back". Dancer Mad Michelle who won the International DHQ Competition in 2003 highlights the experiential side of the idea, saying "Bruk out is vibes, enjoyment... realness" (*Bruk Out!*, 2017). Additionally, dancehall singer Beenie Man highlights the sociocultural connotation, stating "You break free from your life [that] you used to have, now you're out there, you're out inna di street" (*Bruk Out!*, 2017). Together these statements draw a combined picture of *bruk out* as relating to embodied, sociological and phenomenological experience. In the case of DHQ performance manifesting the *bruk out* epistemology refers to the abandoning of stylistic and moral restrictions by which the dancer may feel socioculturally conditioned. This is expressed in dancehall artist 'Alkaline's' lyrics "do something [that] you wouldn't normally do" within the song titled "Gyal Bruk Out" (2014).

In this study I introduce a theorisation of *bruk out* as a decolonial black feminist epistemology that is performed through DHQ performance. On decolonialism, history theorist Emma Pérez asserts that

If we are dividing history into these categories – colonial relations, postcolonial relations, and so on – then I would like to propose a decolonial imaginary as a rupturing space, the alternative to that which is written in history. I think that the decolonial imaginary is that time lag between the colonial and postcolonial, that interstitial space where differential politics and social dilemmas are negotiated.

(1999: 6)

I employ the notion of the decolonial in this thesis to articulate the politics of the black women in dancehall whose performative participation in the scene I analyse as being resistant to their own classification as overdetermined colonial objects. I detail in the thesis how they perform themselves into a paradoxical position of hypervisibility and opacity, which enables them to refuse definition by asserting a form of incomprehensibility that American studies scholar Nicole Fleetwood (2011) identifies as a black feminist tactic, and which, I argue, is akin to Pérez's (1999) argument regarding the intangibility of the decolonial imaginary. The theorisation of the decolonial politics of black

Jamaican dancehall artists which I introduce in this study is constructed in relationship to Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant's concept of the *right to opacity* (1990). Glissant explains:

If we examine the process of "understanding" people and ideas from the perspective of Western thought, we discover that its basis is this requirement for transparency. In order to understand and thus accept you, I have to measure your solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons and, perhaps, judgments. I have to reduce.

(Translation by Wing, [1997]: 190)

The opaque, he argues, "is not the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence" (Translation by Wing, [1997]: 191). In this thesis I identify Glissant's concept that the right to opacity, which I interpret as the right to not be wholly understood by keeping parts of one's self opaque, as being enacted by some of the black dancehall dancers involved in the project. I analyse how certain acts of with-holding by black Jamaican women, and European women of colour, in interviews and via online participation, use the right to opacity as a source of power.

Complicating the analysis of these decolonial politics is the question of how this sits in conjunction with the growing intercultural dancehall scene. The research focus on dancehall's presence across a trans-Atlantic space dictates that this study does not provide a pointed analysis into the Jamaican site, or any other specific dancehall site, but focuses on the significance of the connective network between the European and Jamaican sites.¹ The focus on intercultural relationships between Jamaican and European dancehall sites and people, rather than on a particular site, allows the thesis to interrogate the connections and tensions *between* places and people and what happens to the decoloniality of dancehall in its interculturalism.

The concentration on the relationship between the Jamaican scene and the emergence of DHQs in Europe allows for a detailed discussion about the connectivities that female *bruk out* dancehall culture forges across this Black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1994) space, as it is traversed by twenty-first century agents in physically and virtually embodied form. In studies on dancehall to date there has been some discussion of dancehall's global reach through the lens of diaspora. Noble (2008) studies the impact of dancehall culture on Caribbean diaspora communities in Britain, and Niaah (2010) looks at dancehall's relationship to other African diasporic popular music and dance cultures such as Kwaito in South Africa and Latin America's Reggaeton. C. Cooper (2004) and Bakare-Yusuf (2006) also broadly

¹ The distinctiveness of the Jamaican dimension has been analysed by scholars including C. Cooper (2004), Niaah (2010) and Hope (2006), as has the Japanese scene by Sterling (2006).

consider dancehall's international dimensions and the role it has in the meaning and wider circulation of the popular culture. This study therefore adds to the existing literature on dancehall a close examination of the connectivities and power relations involved in the white and black European participation in DHQ culture, and the relationship this dimension has to the Jamaican scene – an area of study that has been largely absent from the literature on dancehall to date

One of this study's research questions is: what connections are formed in the intercultural DHQ network and what impact is this having on the construction of femininities and black feminist activity in Jamaica and in Europe? To answer this question the research investigates the circulation of feminine dancehall culture at DHQ competitions in Jamaica and Europe as sites of intercultural feminine identity production and the relationships between Jamaican and European dancers. The focus on the spaces and networks that bind these dancers, raises debate about how this dance culture circulates as a form of black cultural traffic (Elam and Jackson, 2005), with and without black bodies present. Black performance scholars Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez state:

black sensibilities emerge whether there are black bodies present or not; and that while black performance may certainly become manifest without black people, we might best recognise it as a circumstance enabled by black sensibilities, black expressive practices and black people.

(2014:1)

This research studies how the blackness of dancehall is being navigated as it is being taken up by white bodies. It studies how certain black Jamaican and black European figures in the scene have developed strategies to control the circulation of power in resistance to the potential of whiteness to enact its privilege unto the form. It also studies white European dancers' relationships to these politics and their efforts, in some cases, to develop reflexive coalitional positionalities, despite the pervasive impetus to commodify dancehall through forms of cultural appropriation. The research identifies online visual culture, dance tourism and the embodied contact this enables, and globalised commercial trade markets, as the specific sites for the negotiation of interculturalism in the scene to take place. This area of study responds to an overarching research question which asks in what ways do racialised and nationalised power and influence circulate in the intercultural dancehall scene? The study's analysis of this topic highlights the way in which dancehall as a black performance practice circulate across systems of desire in the neoliberal global marketplace. It theorises the relationships and expressivities in this female dancehall scene as existing in tandem with globalised capitalist principles of individualism, wealth accumulation and commercial consumerism (Lippit, 2005). It considers how the scene is influenced by the neoliberal intensification of this economic climate through technology circuits and globalised free-market trade environments (Bockman, 2013: 14) that

often commodify the black female body. At the same time, it acknowledges dancers' reflexive awareness of these processes and the existence of various efforts to shift dynamics away from exploitative models of exchange.

The theorisation of intercultural connectivity in this scene includes a consideration of geographic connective forces, propelled by the residual relationships of colonialism, for example Jamaica's relationship to Britain as an ex-colony and a member of the Commonwealth.² Anibal Quijano (2000) identifies how capitalism and colonialism emerged in coalescence with one another and this dictated that labour practices were structured around race (as an invention of colonialism). Considering this concept, this study looks at the connectivity between people and place through a lens of transnational exchange networks, that are forged through formal and informal trade routes and media circuits. In particular, the research considers the immense impact of virtual connectivity and digital culture online in shaping one's racial, sexual and classed positionalities. It theorises connectivity in this culture as depending upon a fluctuating relationship between online and offline network activities. Indeed, it acknowledges Jose van Dijck's (2013: 4) proposition that "...the worlds of online and offline are increasingly interpenetrating." Dijck points out that platforms such as Facebook and YouTube "enable people... to make connections by sharing expressive and communicative content..." (p4). The investigation in this thesis evidences this phenomenon and, drawing from media studies scholar Lisa Nakamura (2008), provides insights into the role of the racialised body in these sharing process. Dijck further asserts that "recent changes in our global media landscape have profoundly affected – if not driven – our experience of sociality" (p5). The examination of the relationships forged in the trans-Atlantic Jamaican/European DHQ scene in this study highlights the creative possibilities and frictions (Elswit, 2018) surrounding this particular culture's relationship with a globalised media landscape.

My reasoning for focusing on the complexities of these connective relationships also stems from my subjective positionality as researcher with experiential embodied knowledge of the connections and tensions raised by dancehall in Europe, and the cultural relationship between Jamaica and Europe. The research is therefore partly based on my subjective awareness of some of the issues at stake in my personal life and previous academic projects. As a white British-Portuguese woman I encountered dancehall culture both in London and the Caribbean. My experience of dancehall as a form of trans-Atlantic black cultural traffic (Elam and Jackson, 2005) adds context to the case studies of European women engaging with black Jamaican women in dancehall, which is the main subject of the thesis. My

² The Commonwealth is an international association made up of fifty-three countries, the large majority of which, are connected by their shared history of being a part of the British empire.

partial 'insider' experience of these cultural flows has supported my ability to undertake this ethnographic project.

I considered not engaging with my subjectivity during the research, so as to avoid making the thesis 'about myself', and therefore celebrating the very privileges that I seek to problematise. However, I decided to share the following personal narrative because my story is both a case in point and the subjective reality that underscores this research. To not highlight my personal positionality would disingenuously infer that my role as researcher does not matter to this project. It matters because every time I built a relationship with a participant, interviewed her and she shared with me personal details of her engagement with dancehall for the purposes of supporting my research project, I brought my story with me. It was the baggage that hung in the silent glances, knowing chuckles and gestures of exchange between us. My white skin was ever-present and this, of course, contributed to shaping the discourses that took place between us. This is part of the reality of ethnographic research, and when used reflexively is a strength to the research design (Soyini Madison, 2012). What helps to make this research credible is my commitment to dealing with the nuances and the complexities of the positionalities and discourses in a systematic manner, while adding a strong dose of reflexive analysis to my intuitions, helping to reveal the multiple perspectives and layers of meaning that exist within the scope of this research project.

I reveal the personal history detailed below as an exercise in vulnerability. If this thesis is permitted to deal with the sensitive subject areas of how the women discussed in these pages experience femininity, sexuality and race, then I believe I should be as scrupulous about my own positionality as I am about theirs. In this way, I aim to decrease the elevation of status caused by the role of researcher and to create a degree of experiential parity between myself and the participants. Of course, I remain aware that my role as researcher dictates that my experience is substantially different to the research participants and the power dynamics prescribed by our distinct roles remain largely intact.

Researcher Positionality

In the summer of 2006, at the age of nineteen, I went to live with my best friend – Josie, who was from Camden Town, North London. The plan was to get a bar job and save up enough cash to go travelling around the Caribbean for six months, before beginning a degree in BA Dance and Culture at the University of Surrey the following year. We shared a small flat in Kentish Town for four months. Josie had lived in this part of London all her life. She, and her close friends from the area represented London's diverse racial and ethnic make-up. Her two closest friends – Clarissa and Jordan were of respective British-Guyanese and British-Jamaican descent. Josie was of British-Jewish descent. Unlike

these three women who I spent this summer with, I had not grown up in London. I, a British-Portuguese woman, had been raised in the rural area of Somerset, South West England, and had grown up spending many summers with my trans-European family in Portugal and France.

During the four months that I lived with Josie, I encountered dancehall culture for the first time. One evening Jordan and Clarissa, as well as two male friends, had come to hang out at our place and during the evening someone put on a Passa Passa DVD. At the time, I did not know what this was, but because it seemed like a cultural insiderism, I went along with the excitement of watching the film. When it began to play, I saw a vernacular outdoor party scene with people holding drinks and dressed in brightly coloured provocative finery. I had never been to the Caribbean myself, although I had experienced some commercial Caribbean music from the likes of Sean Paul at nightclubs in Bristol in my teens. I was therefore not familiar with the setting portrayed on the Passa Passa film, which I would later find out was a dancehall party in downtown Kingston, Jamaica. I remember that the women in the film stood out to me, as they appeared nonchalant in their comportment, and wore bold and revealing clothing. Some of the people on the film were dancing in small groups or as solos and the cameraman moved through the space as an active spectator, focusing on specific subjects along the way, who would react to the camera's presence by intensifying their gestures and dynamics. An exaggerated knee bend, a more pronounced hip rotation, or an assertive hand gesture signalled that they wanted to be seen by the camera's lens and they laboured to retain its attention.

This first encounter with dancehall through a mediating screen was implicated in an intercultural, diasporic and neocolonial, system of consuming Caribbean bodies. My positionality was distinct from Josie's, Jordan's, Clarissa's and the two men who were both black-British Londoners. Our various spectator positions both conflicted and converged as our shared position as British youth created a jovial atmosphere in which we all seemed intent on securing a 'cool' status and were each using the Passa Passa film as an object upon which to pin our desires for this status. As I sat watching and discussing the film with the group, I was conscious that the others spoke with a sense of knowing that I did not share. They exchanged comments in London's finest appropriation of Jamaican patois, which as Logaldo (2010) identifies to this day holds heavy influence over urban slang in the UK and constitutes what Sebba (2014) identifies as *London Jamaican*. I lacked the insider knowledge that the others seemed to share about this black performance culture, but I was deeply curious about this new cultural landscape and was excited to learn more.

During the four months that I lived in London with Josie, we also went to several dancehall parties known as 'Bashment raves', which were frequented by a largely British-Caribbean clientele. Getting ready to go to these late-night parties with Josie and her friends, I was told to dress in a certain way –

Josie lent me a pair of tight shorts, which I was advised to wear with stiletto heels, a fitted top, big hoop earrings and a cropped puffer jacket. They taught me several dancehall moves such as Log On, Butterfly and Dutty Wine. Having a repertoire of moves under my belt seemed essential to my acceptance into the scene, although my friends told me that I was not to perform the Dutty Wine at any stage of the party, as this would draw too much attention and was sure to expose me as a dancehall novice, something we all agreed was to be avoided.

Following this time in London, Josie, Clarissa and I spent six months travelling across the Caribbean; we went to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Antigua, Dominica, Trinidad, Tobago and Guyana. By the time I returned and began my Bachelor's degree I had engaged corporeally and developed a keen interest in several Caribbean social dances including dancehall, reggae, salsa, bachata, merengue, soca and chutney. During these early years of adulthood as I embarked on a career in Dance Studies, these black and Hispanic dance forms and their contextual cultures became a key feature of the social 'world' that I identified with.

The analysis in this research project develops a reading of how the black performance practice of dancehall is trafficked by black Jamaican, black European and white European dancers (such as myself) in their articulation of intercultural black or black-affiliated identities. It studies how various forms of embodied and creative labour (Srinivasan, 2012) are invested in processes of making and maintaining this intercultural black DHQ scene. This theorisation of the link between labour and black cultural traffic (Elam and Jackson, 2005) in the DHQ scene is a significant aspect of this thesis' contribution to knowledge, in particular in regard to intercultural exchanges involving black popular culture and the racialisation of digital labour.

When I began my studies at the University of Surrey on my return from my travels, with my newly acquired embodied knowledge of Caribbean popular dance cultures, I enjoyed performing my knowledge of references to songs and dance moves that created a rapport between myself and some of the black-British students at the university. I enjoyed the experience of cultural exceptionalism as my movement style enabled me to express a cultural awareness that was often unexpected of me due to my whiteness and my rural-British upbringing.

During my Bachelor's degree I trained in diverse African diasporic dance forms, and was given theoretical tools to contextualise the circulation of dance practices from the Global South by Dance and Cultural Studies. I was not explicitly aware at the time of how my travels coincided with my planned studies. What was clear to me was that from my first encounter with dancehall via the *Passa Passa* film in London to my experiences in the Caribbean itself, the culture I was learning about was

centred in the geographic space of the Caribbean, but its reach was far wider. It was a highly integral part of the identity production that my friends in London were engaged in, and its movement between people and across the Atlantic was deeply significant to how I, and many others, experienced the culture.

I was not aware of the immense privileges that resourced my ability to even consider these experiences. I worked long hours in several minimum wage jobs to save the cash to make my travels possible, so I was aware of the labour required. But it was not until I encountered dancers in the Caribbean, who worked harder jobs, for much less pay and had long abandoned dreams of travelling or seeking a formal dance education, that I recognised the privileges afforded by my Great British burgundy passport with the gold shiny emblem on it, as well as my access to education and a living wage. For me, living in London, and then travelling across the Caribbean was a gap year adventure, one that I could cut short at any moment, and one that many of my British peers were also undertaking. It was the precursory interlude to an academic future in a powerful Global North university. For the people I encountered along the way, my fleeting dip into their realities only further entrenched the differentials in our ability to seek out and exploit opportunity.

Theoretical Focus and Thesis Structure

Using ethnographic methods, this thesis traces individual dancers' stories of encountering and becoming DHQs. One of the research's aims is to identify how becoming a DHQ is meaningful in the lives of the variously positioned dancers. Studying the significance that the culture holds for the dancers helps to shed light on what this scene reveals about broader sociopolitical questions concerning global flows of cultural influence and the way in which identities are formed in intercultural contexts. This analytical perspective connects the integral relationship that both Europe and Jamaica have to postcolonial legacies, and the neoliberal contemporary cultural traffic in black performance cultures.

The thesis aims to contribute to several of the disciplines that it draws upon. It intends to add to dance studies a concentrated analysis of dancehall from a dance studies perspective, as all the major research projects on dancehall to date have come from outside dance, in either cultural studies (C. Cooper, 2004), Caribbean studies (Niaah, 2010; Hope, 2006, 2010) or anthropology (Sterling, 2006). The thesis also supports a burgeoning development of studies on popular dance; which works toward countering the hegemony of 'high art' dance in dance studies (Dodds, 2011). To digital studies the thesis offers a concrete case-study perspective on virtual embodiment and digital connectivity and their increasingly integral role in globalised black popular cultures. To cultural and postcolonial studies

it offers a perspective on how contemporary intercultural connective cultures negotiate colonial connections, agencies and tensions in the age of social media and commercial globalisation. Finally, the case study focused approach enables the project to identify how the black Jamaican dancers at the centre of the intercultural DHQ scene produce a form of black feminism that centres on the *bruk out* epistemology.

Discussions surrounding how DHQs use creative and embodied labour and expressions of pleasure and pain to extend and exhibit their own sense of agency, by resisting the notion that female sexuality in performance exists essentially and primarily for male scopophilic satisfaction, challenge contemporary Global North readings of sexuality in popular performance. Interventions, such as this one are vital to the analysis of trends involving the increasing popularity of black expressive cultures across intercultural and digital domains. By situating the intercultural DHQ scene in relation to theory from black feminists this thesis makes a vital connection between dancehall literature, black feminist literature and dance studies. The black feminist literature that is referenced is from African-American scholars (Brown, 2013; B. Cooper, 2015; Hartman, 2018) in dialogue with scholars local to the Caribbean (C. Cooper, 2004; Hope, 2006; Niaah, 2010). Drawing these together, and using the primary research from the ethnographic research carried out, enables this study to develop a unique contribution to knowledge surrounding the presence of a decolonial black feminist politics within intercultural DHQ culture.

The project is structured into five chapters. Chapter One reviews the existing literature on dancehall, and its theorisation through a postcolonial lens (C. Cooper, 2004; Wright, 2004; Hope, 2006; Niaah, 2010). I situate postcolonialism as a temporal, socioeconomic, political and cultural environment that exists after and as a direct consequence of colonialism. Crucially, I conceptualise postcolonialism as impacting not only on the post-colonised states, but the post-*colonising* states also – a fact that is often neglected, I argue, due to a purposeful ambivalence toward the role of colonialism in constructing whiteness. However, rather than positioning dancehall through a postcolonial lens, as I explain in Chapter One, the theorisation in this study is more closely aligned to decolonial black feminist literature. In particular, it draws from theory on black female pleasure in performance (Fleetwood, 2011, 2012), as well as work on hip hop feminism and the politics of excess, hypervisibility and gratification in a capitalist marketplace (Brown, 2013).

Chapter One also looks at literature on virtual connectivity and the digitisation of race (Nakamura, 2008) as a precursor to the investigation into the relevance of this in the intercultural DHQ scene. Chapter Two presents the study's methodology, discussing the key ethnographic principles that guided the research process. It outlines the methods and ethics that guided participant observation,

interviews and online data collection. It explains that a key contribution to knowledge is situated within the theorisation of silence and with-holding on the part of the research participants.

Chapter Three is dedicated to theorising the nature of the female dancehall network that expands across digital and physical space. It develops an analysis of the systems that support the circulation of dancehall across the network of participants who engage online and travel between Jamaica in Europe. Using a case study approach, it examines how the network is built on relationships between specific cultural gatekeepers and a currency of immediacy which prizes proximity to the black Jamaican dancer's body as its goal. The investigation identifies the role of network capital (Prell, 2006) and how participants invest various forms of labour (Srinivasan, 2012) to negotiate individual positions of power within the network. The chapter argues that despite the expansive potentials and threats of appropriation created by mediation, virtual environments are being policed, by variously positioned women in the scene, so that blackness remains at the centre of these exchanges.

The possibility of engaging in dancehall via a screen and interacting with other dancers at home, is analysed through a consideration of public/private space and virtual agency (Doorn, 2011). Virtual agency is defined as the agency afforded by virtual space, for example the way that it enables sociocultural choice-making and potentially emboldens individuals to seek out alternative life strategies in spaces suited to their own individual patterns of life. I argue, based on the ethnographic research carried out and the textual research surrounding digital inequality (Hargittai and Hinnant, 2008), that virtual agency is a privilege afforded to only certain dancers in the scene and therefore must be theorised through ideas of power and labour. I do this in the chapter by looking at case study examples of the impact that the development of online visual identities has on dancers' lives across the different strands of the network and the subsequent ways in which this shapes dancehall in the global marketplace.

In Chapter Four the focus is on the DHQ icon and her participation in DHQ activities, in particular DHQ competitions. Drawing together black feminist Hartman's theorisation of "living otherwise" (2018b) and dance scholar Priya Srinivasan's notion of dance as labour (2012), the chapter studies DHQ performance as involving black feminist labour practices that makes visible the *bruk out* epistemology. It charts the physically and creatively laborious processes of preparation and performing at events and creating online identities. The chapter argues that the work that goes into the preparation and performance practices, online and in physical form, produces a particular DHQ world that celebrates black female embodied labour and creates a space in the public domain for the expression of complex relationships to pleasure and pain. It considers the black female dancehall dancers' use of the

expressive tools of improvisation and what I term the *will to dare* to delineate subjectivities and resistance to the controlling forces of colonialism and white supremacy.

Chapter Five further develops the analysis of *bruk out* by developing the investigation into the unique form of feminism that it articulates in an intercultural context. It does this by looking at how its relationship to black Jamaican culture is in frictional dialogue with a growing number of white European dancers who take on central positions in, and profit from, DHQ culture. Here I develop a theorisation of intercultural feminine dancehall as creating a form of agonism (Mouffé, 2012) that is based on positional difference, but enables productive spaces for coalition building.

Chapter Five goes on to look at how the sexual content of the dance style, centred in the codified movement of specific body parts, such as hip jerks and vagina-patting gestures, is present in the intercultural DHQ scene. It studies the intercultural embodied politics surrounding race and sexuality when white and black European women engage with this erotic dance style. The guiding questions in this area are: Is there space for white women's exploration of sexuality in this scene? Does the white woman's desire to embody this form of sexual performance intensify the fraught negotiation of resources between black and white positionalities? How do black European and black Jamaican women, and the dancehall scene at large, exercise forms of control in these exchanges? How do white European women relate to the black epistemology of *bruk out* – what happens to dancehall's decolonial black politics? This thesis seeks to respond to these questions, which until now have been left unexplored, through its ethnographic study into the sociocultural and economic impact of DHQ dance and adornment practices, the dancers' online activities, and the coalitional relationships formed in the intercultural DHQ scene.

Chapters Three to Five contend in various ways with the question of how the blackness inherent to *bruk out* dancehall (Niaah, 2010) circulates as a desired commodity in the intercultural dancehall network. The analysis across these chapters relates its findings to the structural dimensions of transnational neoliberal consumer capitalism. Chapter Five argues that the celebration of materialism within dancehall culture is experienced as a source of pleasure (Brown, 2013) through the processes of aesthetic play and cultural identity negotiation within the dancehall community. I argue that in addition to economic wealth, what is valued in this celebration of material excess is an investment in creative ingenuity and resourcefulness. These forms of creativity are part of the black performance culture of *bruk out* that infuses across its physical and virtual expressions. I argue that the pleasure and labour that is related to these capitalist aesthetics is recognised and valued interculturally, albeit with differing emphases, by dancers across the various areas of the network.

The thesis as a whole examines *bruk out* feminism and the intercultural DHQ scene as a particular type of feminist community, that is being carefully organised by several central black Jamaican dancers whose activities make visible the differentials in power between dancers from Europe and Jamaica, and between black and white dancers in the scene as a whole. It highlights how the exchanges and dialogues in the scene create a 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffé, 2012) which, rather than brushing over uncomfortable areas, encourages their exploration.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Dancehall a mi everything
Dancehall a mi everything
Dancehall a mi everything

Vybz Kartel (2015)

These repetitive lyrics from the track titled “*Dancehall*” (2015), by Vybz Kartel, one of the most prominent dancehall artist of the 2000s, speak to the central and vital role that dancehall occupies in the lives of its practitioners. On the subject of dancehall’s sociocultural positionality, cultural geographer Sonjah Stanley Niaah states, as the opening line of her book: “Dancehall is synonymous with Jamaica” (Niaah, 2010: 1). Together, Kartel’s lyrics and Niaah’s statement demonstrate two key points about dancehall; firstly the symbolic weight it holds in the lived experience of its participants and secondly its intrinsic relationship to Jamaica.

This chapter maps and interprets the existing literature on dancehall, in particular that which concerns female dancehall practices. Through this mapping exercise it identifies the body of thought that connects dancehall culture firmly to its black Jamaican roots. It presents an overview of the current scholarship that identifies strong and unwavering bonds between Jamaican postcolonial sociocultural and political contexts (both historic and contemporary) and dancehall culture.

In regards to the performance practices of dancehall, the chapter includes a focused review of the discourse surrounding female dancehall performance, in particular the role of the black female body in relation to the interwoven themes of sexuality, pleasure and pain. This literature review then extends to scholarship that looks at black female sexuality in performance across other Caribbean popular dance contexts. This inclusion of theory beyond dancehall scholarship, allows the review to develop a cross-disciplinary perspective. Locating scholarship on the hip choreographies of the Cuban mulatta (Blanco Borelli, 2015) and the *wukking up* style from Barbados (Thorington Springer, 2007), provides the chapter with two closely-related popular Caribbean female performance practices to compare with dancehall in decolonial feminist terms. The aim of these comparisons is to identify the ways in which coloniality plays a role in other Caribbean popular dance contexts, in order to situate female dancehall performance within a wider discourse concerning the constituent features and issues at stake within feminine popular performance in the Caribbean. This literature on women’s popular performance relates to discourse concerned with decolonising feminism and the circulation of black performance, which frames this thesis’ study into the constructions of racialised femininity and sexuality in the European and Jamaican DHQ scenes.

Following the discussion of the discourses surrounding dancehall in Jamaica and femininities in dancehall in relation to black feminism, the chapter then turns its attention to the existing literature on dancehall's international dimensions. This includes a brief discussion of the literature that places dancehall in relation to the African diaspora (Niaah, 2010; Hope, 2006; C. Cooper, 2004) and other 'foreign'³ lands. It discusses the tropes surrounding dancehall in non-Jamaican contexts; in particular, issues surrounding the white European involvement in the DHQ scene. In connection to dance theorist Halifu Osumare's (2002) theory of the 'intercultural body' and DeFrantz's (2014, 2018) work on the circulations of hip hop in neoliberal contexts, the chapter analyses existing perspectives on globalised black popular dance forms. The chapter then looks at other literature from dance studies (Shea Murphy, 2007; Kraut, 2011; DeFrantz, 2014; Elswit, 2018) and intercultural theatre and performance (Knowles, 2010; Mclvor, 2015; Mitra, 2015), that sets the theoretical stage for the analysis of intercultural performance in a trans-Atlantic black performance context within this thesis.

In view of dancehall's international developments, and this chapter's focus on the emergent dancehall wellspring in Europe, the chapter then turns its attention to literature that supports this study's theoretical investigation into digital embodiment (Shields, 1996; Nakamura, 2008; Castells, 2009; Ellison et. al 2010; Fleetwood, 2012; Shah, 2017). This section provides a foundational overview of the specific areas of digital and virtual studies literature that inform this thesis' investigation into the role of online networks in the intercultural DHQ scene. Research from Nishant Shah (2017), Nicole Fleetwood (2012) and Lisa Nakamura (2008) on the relationship between race and digital visual cultures is discussed here, as this is a key theme within this study. Altogether, this chapter's discussions of online intercultural connectivities present a system of flows (Appadurai, 1996) wherein culture, taste and identity are interculturally dependent and transnationally productive.

The intercultural theory that I draw from in my usage of the term 'intercultural' is influenced by performance theorist Royona Mitra's 'New Interculturalism' (2015) due to its focus on the creative output of non-white people who present themselves through decolonial, self-determining methodologies, rather than featuring as fetishised (post)colonial objects of a colonising imaginary. I align this aspect of New Interculturalism to the activities of many of the black DHQs in this study. However, the interculturalism of the DHQ scene is not precisely the same as the form that Mitra (2015) describes, because it also involves white European dancers taking up space as central dancing figures, writing the cultural script and sometimes engaging in (or being complicit with) the fetishisation of

³ The term 'foreign' is used here to signify the use of this Othering term in Jamaican vernacular language to describe people from outside of Jamaica, as in Demarco's lyrics "Girls from foreign" in the song "Puppy Tail" (2010).

marginalised black women's bodies. These features signal that the DHQ scene is also reminiscent of a form of intercultural theatre that was popularised by largely white, Western, male theatre makers in the 1980s, and has been critiqued for its treatment of 'Other' theatre genres for the viewing pleasure of Western audiences (Bharucha, 2004; Knowles, 2010). This form of theatre has a problematic history of appropriation processes, for example diluting and re-forming sacred works to be re-staged in a Western framework and context. Knowles argues that such intercultural theatre:

unwittingly participate[s] in the commodification of the 'other' and thereby the perpetuation of the colonial project, in which the raw materials of the world (including its cultures and peoples)... are grist for the colonial mill of western industry and capitalist production.

(2010: 22)

Knowles' argument is pertinent to this study, in regard to some of the more exploitative cultural and economic exchanges that take place between dancers from Jamaica and Europe. The type of intercultural theatre that Knowles (2010) describes is therefore also part of the historical context of the DHQ scene that I theorise in this thesis.

In sum, the form of interculturalism that I argue is present in the DHQ scene, is driven by a decolonial incentive (similar to that described by Mitra, 2015), on the part of black Jamaican dancers, and some black European and white European practitioners, who perform coalitional solidarity (Elswit, 2018) through reflexive positionings in the discourse and in dance spaces. Yet, I argue that this form of interculturalism is underwritten by a chaotic mix of desires and incentives, that are both colonial and decolonising in nature, that altogether make the scene indeterminable. Glissant (1990, translated by Wing 1997: 193) argues: "Chaos is order and disorder, excessiveness with no absolute, fate and evolution." This thesis contributes key understanding of how the complex form of interculturalism in the DHQ scene moves constantly in-between the antagonistic forces of appropriation and decolonialism. I argue that this manifests exchanges that are instructive of the types of opposition in the scene, that encourage social progress through 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffé, 2012).

There are a multitude of other substantial areas of investigation surrounding dancehall performance and culture, which are not explored in this chapter or thesis. The discourse surrounding masculinities in dancehall and homophobia is a notable area that is not examined here, despite the rich discussions currently developing in this area, in particular by cultural theorist Donna Hope (2006; 2010; 2015), which explore the subject area in relationship to the social order of contemporary postcolonial Jamaica. Although this is an area of study related to this research due to the focus on gender and sexuality, my aim is to present a focused review of literature relating to femininity in relationship to dancehall. This is because this thesis' central concern is analysing the feminine spaces created within

the DHQ scene, in order to identify the significance of the intercultural DHQ scene, and its use of virtual connectivity, as a popular black feminist movement.

An additional area that is debated heavily in the dancehall literature is violence; be it real or symbolic. This is because lyrics often refer to killings and some of the dance movement, in particular moves created by male dancers, contain gestures that reference the use of firearms. In addition, a particular dance act known as 'dagging', is widely condemned for its troubling combination of sexuality and dynamic aggressiveness. This move involves a man and a woman dancing together, with the man behind the woman so that their hips are joined, whilst both parties move in a particularly vigorous fashion, with jabs and gyrations of the hips. There is an ongoing debate as to whether the violent theme should be read as inciting violence or as a pressure valve of sorts, which allows participants to express their violent experiences in a safe form, rather than through actual violence (Hope, 2006; C. Cooper, 2004). Although I will not be undertaking a comprehensive review or analysis of the literature on the theme of violence as this tends to fall more into conversations about masculinity and gender relations within dancehall, I will be looking at the role of pain in DHQ solo performance and its relationship to pleasure and sexuality in dancehall as a black female performance practice, drawing on Fleetwood's (2012) work on this topic.

This study is primarily concerned with dancehall as a cultural dance phenomenon and will focus less on the musical aspect of the culture. There are several texts on dancehall as a musical practice; theorists such as Norman Stolzoff (2000), Cheryl Ryman (2004) and C. Cooper (1995, 2004) have prioritised the musical aspect, using ethnomusicology and textual analysis methodologies. In more recent work, Niaah (2010) has worked to integrate the body alongside the music in her analyses, acknowledging that the two are inextricably connected, practically and theoretically. However, there is still (as is often the case with the study of vernacular music/dance cultures) a tendency to focus studies on what is perceived as the more tangible elements of lyrical content and musical form, rather than the elusive dance component. Perspectives that privilege embodiment and adornment are lacking in the dancehall literature, despite from a few notable pioneers, such as gender theorist Bibi Bakare-Yusuf (2006, 2006b). This chapter will analyse Bakare-Yusuf's work as an exiguous area of scholarship, as her investigation correlates directly with this project's embodied approach. This focus on literature that privileges the body, as well as this thesis' own embodied methodological focus, works to re-centre scholarly attention on the dancehall body as a working site of sociopolitical action.

My use of the term 'embodiment' stems from an ethnographic method and theorisation of the dancing body as "part of a kinaesthetic and symbolic process" (Singer, 2014: 136). In alignment with dance theorist Warburton, I argue "that bodily movement is essential to an understanding of all

aspects of life” (Warburton, 2011: 66), and that studying the patterns, systems and qualities of bodily action “emphasizes the emotional and relational nature of thought in action” (Warburton, 2011: 67). Sally Ann Ness discusses the “...essential role for embodied practice in achieving a self-consciously hermeneutic understanding of culture” (Ness, 2004: 124). This study’s analyses of embodiment, in various physical and virtual form, draw from this cultural studies perspective of understanding the body, its mediation, and its usage in dance and in everyday life, as being loaded with cultural meaning.

1.2 Black Feminism

Black feminism is concerned with ideas, practices, pedagogies and epistemologies that exist and have developed from black cultural life. Black feminist literature recognises the specificity of the lived experiences of black women in shaping certain epistemologies and practices, which do not always live only in black bodies (DeFrantz, 2014), but that are influenced by the historical and contemporary realities of blackness. Because the intercultural transnational DHQ scene is a cultural form that is shaped by blackness and the experiences of black women seeking routes to empowerment (C. Cooper, 2004), it is essential that it be viewed in relation to black feminism in this thesis. In the following section I look at the key ideas of several prominent black feminists whose work speaks with particular gravitas in relation to this project.

In 2015 Brittney Cooper wrote an article dedicated to recognising the role of black feminism within the broader field of feminist studies. In this text she explains that black feminism needs to have its own space in the academy because “theoretical frameworks have often worked against Black women in both feminist and black literature” (2015: 9-10). She laments her own observation that black feminism has been led by the authority of Western Philosophy. In a call to shift the status quo and to develop black feminism in its own right she asserts that “we should not accept Theory as the only acceptable currency by which to do Black feminist work” (p10).⁴ Quoting black feminist Barbara Christian she explains that “dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking.” (Christian in B. Cooper, 2015: 10). This assertion gestures toward the idea that black feminism is grounded in an alternate epistemology to the white text-based feminist canon – a point that is key to the theorisation of *bruk out* feminism that I introduce later in this thesis. Her call to action highlights the urgent need to address the normalisation of a certain type of feminism in the academy, which is actually specific

⁴ As I discuss the body of black feminist research that guides this study, I am critically aware that my position as a white scholar in relation to this work must be contextualised and addressed. In developing a reflexive perspective on my role in this study I have drawn from other white dance studies scholars dealing with critical race theory, including Jacqueline Shea Murphy (2007) and Anthea Kraut (2011). In Chapter Two I discuss my positionality in greater depth, identifying the theoretical influences that helped to shape my relationship to the field of study as a white scholar.

to a group of largely white middle-class Euro-American educated intellectuals.⁵ It also means calling into question restrictions surrounding what is perceived as feminist work and “...what is right or wrong and who or what gets to be called feminist” (Durham, B. Cooper & Morris, 2013: 723). This changing of focus means acknowledging forms of feminism that are not based on middle-class Euro-American freedoms, and do not work through the traditional prisms of academic philosophy or activism, such as *bruk out* feminism, which this study introduces. Recognising how black feminism manifests requires one to un-know the ‘truths’ of white Western feminism. It requires the humility to recognise the limits of one’s own positionality and a receptivity to epistemologies grounded in black cultural practices, such as storytelling, performances of masking/unmasking and wit (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006).

Black feminist Saidiya Hartman, theorises black women’s lives in relation to themes of anarchy, waywardness and what she terms “fugitive feminism” (2018). In discussion of the concept of fugitive feminism in relation to her research into black political activist Esther Brown she says:

To want better than what she had and to be propelled by her whims and desires was to be ungovernable. Her way of living was nothing short of anarchy.

(Hartman, 2018: 466)

Hartman describes anarchy in the context of black feminism as relating to: “A long history against the enclosure... the enclosure of the plantation, the enclosure of the ghetto” (2018b). She explains that in studying the anarchic acts of fugitive black feminists, one needs to look to embodied knowledge, because the declarations and reflections of black women are rarely found in official texts, and because the body – through collective, sometimes mundane acts, is most often the site and the vehicle for living differently in the world. In Chapter Two I consider how the performative expressions of women in dancehall can be considered in relation to such ideas, in particular considering how dancers intersect these embodied forms of reflection with performative with-holding and silence.

Through this theorisation Hartman (2018, 2018b) highlights that, when researching the practices of black women, it is important to recognise the ways in which seemingly small, wayward or micro-resistant acts play a role in confronting enclosing systems, such as the violence of white supremacy and misogyny. Her research also highlights the need to look beyond ideas of black ‘resistance’, as this suggests that black feminist practices are always relational to a centralised white space and

⁵ Ann Cvetkovich asks whether race needs to also be factored into studies of depression, pointing out that medical studies into depression assume a middle-class white subject as a neutral positionality. She writes: “... the privileges of class, race, or other categories complicate personalist stories of oppression or require that they be carefully situated.” (p133). Thus, there is a need to situate feminist work in relation to critical race theory in multiple areas of research.

experience. This move beyond notions of resistance is key to decolonising feminism and black expressive practice. Hartman (2018b) poignantly argues that a key aspect of black feminism is to ‘exist otherwise’, and in doing so not be answerable to the ‘supremacy’ of whiteness. She explains how black feminist practices draw from specific black cultural legacies of embodying one’s politics in ways that do not invest in simply deflecting and diminishing the enclosing grasp of white supremacy and misogyny, but instead focus on a completely alternative way of knowing and being in the world. In investing in these black epistemologies, the black feminists that she describes reject the hegemony of a white, masculine world view and reveal and develop the power of epistemologies that derive from black culture. The concept of *existing otherwise*, as well as Hartman’s (2018, 2018b) reflections on black feminist anarchy, form a key component in the theorisation of the will to dare and *bruk out* feminism within DHQ culture and performance in Chapters Three to Five.

Black feminist Nicole Fleetwood investigates the relationship between “...sexual pleasure and pain, erotic desire and violence...” (2012: 419), using the case of Rihanna – a popular singer and performer and a woman of colour from Barbados. Her underlying argument is that positioning black women as helpless victims in discussions of erotic desire and violence can work as a disservice to them. This, she argues, is because black women who face violence in quotidian life, often express the way that their bodies know violence alongside erotic pleasure, due to forms of sexual violence that are aligned to a racialised, classed and gendered experience⁶. To position them as purely victims ignores the “...erotic figuration of black female sexuality through a coalescence of sex and violence in intimate relations” (Fleetwood, 2012: 421). She adds that there is a critical need to

examin[e] black women’s sexuality, ... in ways that do not repeat a history of pathologizing discourse or narratives of exploitation that have long shaped the subject.

(Fleetwood, 2012: 422)

Fleetwood’s investigation into Rihanna is of interest to this study because DHQ performance also expresses a relationship between black female sexuality and pain/violence. The various tricks and stunts that the dancers perform, which are described in Chapter Four, and the dancers’ own descriptions of the bruises and injuries incurred, demonstrate the centrality of physical pain in DHQ performance. Further, Fleetwood’s examination of “black female sexualities... that do not conform to dominant frameworks of exploitation, of racial uplift and respectability” (p421), is useful for

⁶ See Fleetwood (2012) for a discussion of the intricacies of domestic violence in the lives of black women and the sensitivities surrounding ‘victim’ and ‘abuser’ labels. See also Wright (2004) for references to the relationships between black Jamaican women in dancehall and sexual labour.

considering how DHQ performance disassembles the social value associated with 'respectable' black culture, through a performance of 'waywardness' (Hartman, 2018). She explains:

Rihanna's... exploring [of] the boundaries of sexual ecstasy and pain can be seen as reactive against... the conservative sexual protocols and self-presentation associated with black female middle-class respectability.

(Fleetwood, 2012: 421)

This offers a theoretical grounding for dealing with Caribbean performance, which joins the accosting aesthetics of sexuality and violence in the same breath, or the same cataclysmic fall into the splits or daggering performance, in the case of DHQ performance. In studying black DHQs' performances and the painful manipulations of their bodies in conjunction with an aesthetic of sexualised auto-veneration, I too am interested in moving the discussion of black women's sexuality in public performance beyond a trope of victimisation and exploitation. Looking at the way in which these embodied discourses are complicated further by white European women taking an interest in the form, both highlights the particularity of DHQ performance by black Jamaican women and helps to reveal what is at stake when white European women take up space in the dance culture.

The notion of respectability is particularly key to the link between Fleetwood's (2012) investigation and this one, because DHQs, both in Jamaica and in Europe, navigate frameworks of respectability as a crucial factor in their resistive or 'wayward' (Hartman, 2018) identity productions. Black DHQs, both Jamaican and European, deal with the integral relationship between blackness and respectability that infuses black cultural life. White DHQs, sometimes assumed automatically respectable by black audiences in Jamaica, by virtue of their whiteness, also dislodge such associations. However, the ramifications of the white dancer's toying with the boundaries of respectability speak more heavily of a desire to commodify an exotic and 'risqué' black body than the socio-economic deprivation that many black Jamaican Queens are at constant risk of.

In her analysis of Rihanna's erotic performativity Fleetwood (2012) references Audre Lorde's (1978) essay *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, which she describes as celebrating the erotic "as a mode of self-determination for marginalized subjects" (Fleetwood, 2012: 426). She argues however that "Recent work ... moves us away from an understanding of the erotic as wholly celebratory and positive" (Fleetwood, 2012: 426). In another text Fleetwood (2011) situates black female cultural producers, who use nudity and 'excess flesh' in their work in relation to critiques of white feminist performance artists who explicitly present their own naked bodies as a way to "wrestl[e] with the ghosts of that explication" (Schneider 1997 in Fleetwood, 2011: 110). By pointing out how, unlike black performers, white performance artists who use nudity as an artistic device have been critiqued by art

critics as working through the problems of their representation productively, she exposes a contradiction. This double standard ignores or relegates black women's active engagements with their own representations as cultural fodder for the amusement of a colonial masculine gaze, whilst uplifting white women's work as culturally rich and meaningful. This study responds to this double standard by drawing attention to the strategies of black women in the DHQ scene to use their cultural production as devices in their own decolonial manoeuvrings.

Fleetwood also asserts that in considering black women's engagement with performance it is firstly important to recognise that black women "Are produced through visual signs as in excess of idealized white femininity" (2011: 110-111). She identifies that certain "black female cultural producers... construct an identification that acknowledges but does not adhere to racialized and sexualized aberrance" (2011: 111). Fleetwood's argument highlights how these black women produce discursive positions in relation to their representation as a way to take control of said discourse. This is a strategy that I recognise in the work of certain black women in dancehall in their production of imagery online and through various relational strategies with white women in the scene, as I will detail in discussion of the case study participants.

In her choosing and framing of research material in both texts mentioned here, Fleetwood (2011, 2012) makes some important rhetorical interjections about erotic performance and respectability. Her framing of her subjects as 'black female cultural producers' positions them as active and respectable in the sense that they are engaged in cultural work. She explains that "...the black female body has been overdetermined and these cultural practitioners have worked to differing impacts to destabilize this overly familiar figuration." (p144). Fleetwood's work presents a shift from a colonial or white feminist perspective which habitually renders black women as passively subservient to the scopic gaze and overdetermining tropes of white visual culture (McRobbie, 2008). She does however, remark on the "...differences between excess flesh enactments in various arenas of cultural production..." (p132) and notes that in mass culture "visual spectacle is manufactured and widely distributed [in ways which] mudd[y] the issues of intentionality." (p126). In this study I extend this theorisation of 'muddied intentionalities' to the intercultural exchanges between Jamaican and European women in the DHQ scene. Through analysis of the quality of the reflexive engagements and the actions taken to empower those who are systematically disenfranchised, (whether that be Jamaican women empowering themselves, or white and black European women performing acts of solidarity with disenfranchised women), it becomes possible to recognise the nature of the various intentionalities.

An additional lesson from Fleetwood (2011) in consideration of black female visibility is that it is important to "challenge debates among black activists and critics about what constitutes positive or

productive representation of blackness, by refusing the binary of negative and positive” (p112). This is a point I keep in mind in discussions of DHQs in this thesis – it has become common in feminist literature and particularly that which critiques black female sexualities to argue for a ‘correct’ way to conduct one’s self, be that in adherence or refusal of politics of respectability. In this study I consider not whether the performances discussed are positive portrayals of femininity or race, but what the performance does for the performer. I look at how performative modes such as excess flesh, and the experience of pain in coalition with pleasure in rehearsal and performance, create an experiential terrain that is useful for actively working through the complexities of their identity production.

Another pertinent area of black feminist research, also dealing with themes of pleasure and material commodification is hip hop feminism. This research area is particularly relevant to this project because it also relates to a contemporary manifestation of black popular performance. Because this research project develops a theorisation of the feminist principles within DHQ performance, I look to hip hop feminism as an adjacent area of research that deals with similar topics and is thus instructive in guiding the intellectual framing of this study. In their discussion of hip hop feminism Durham, B. Cooper and Morris argue that

rather than treating feminism as though it lends a certain intellectual gravity to hip-hop, we consider how the creative, intellectual work of hip-hop feminism invites new questions about representation, provides additional insights about embodied experience, and offers alternative models for critical engagement.

(2013: 722)

In this thesis, I introduce the idea that *bruk out* feminism does similar work to hip hop feminism, but with a specifically Caribbean decolonial emphasis.

Durham, B. Cooper and Morris (2013: 722) further assert:

We see hip-hop feminism as a generationally specific articulation of feminist consciousness, epistemology, and politics rooted in the pioneering work of multiple generations of black feminists based in the United States and elsewhere in the diaspora but focused on questions and issues that grow out of the aesthetic and political prerogatives of hip-hop culture.

It is with a similar emphasis on a certain generationally specific political prerogative and epistemology that I develop the theorisation of the *bruk out* feminist politics pertaining to the DHQ movement.

This thesis draws from hip hop feminism and black feminism, because they rebuke an elitism that often insists on defining feminism through a limited intellectualised form that is driven by a white,

middle-class experience and epistemology. Hip hop feminism does not accept a “facile identification with the third wave” (Durham, B. Cooper and Morris, 2013: 731), and thus is not a bracketed part of a broader ‘post’ politics. *Bruk out* feminism, in connection to these other areas of feminist thought, is about uncovering the empowering politics already operating amongst marginalised women of colour. In this way, this thesis develops an analysis of the feminism at play in a specific Caribbean context and to establishing how the intercultural dynamics contributes to its identity today.

1.3 Overview of Dancehall Literature

There is a general consensus amongst dancehall researchers that to understand dancehall as a style of music and dance, one needs to understand its relationship to the sociocultural and political contexts of Jamaica. As such, the literature on dancehall to date has situated the dance and music culture in relation to the historical and contemporary context of Jamaican postcolonialism, wherein the political institutions “mirror old colonial structures and are manifested as ‘regimes of violence’” (Niaah, 2010: 10-11). The legacy of colonial paradigms is seen to be integral to dancehall practices and their negotiations of meaning, power and identity. Niaah, alongside Hope (2006) and C. Cooper (2004) position dancehall as being engaged in various resistive battles (symbolic and real), that are symptomatic of these remnants of colonial rule. “There are... unreconciled issues of law and governance, and battles for space, power and personhood in the postcolonial context” (Niaah, 2010: 10). Hope explains that the economic conditions that gave rise to dancehall productivity in the 1980s include the

fall-out of Jamaica’s experiment with structural adjustment; the rise of free market capitalism; increasing urbanization; rising political violence; a growing ideological convergence between the... [People’s National Party]... and the... [Jamaica Labour Party], the explosion of Jamaica’s informal economy and ongoing transformations in the class/status hierarchy...

(2006: 1)

As a result of Jamaica’s precarious geopolitical status as a postcolonial state with little international influence, declining commercial revenue, and high public debt (World Bank, 2015), the country has struggled with wide-scale poverty since its independence from the British in 1962. C. Cooper, Niaah, and Hope all position the art form as representing a marginalised lower-class black Jamaican positionality in this sociocultural context. This is highlighted by Niaah (2010: 14), who states: “Jamaica’s popular cultural space is a cutting-edge site of autonomous creation and negotiation of identity for mostly disenfranchised... inner-city youth.” In this study, I draw from these theorisations of dancehall through a postcolonial paradigm, but align my own analyses to the concept of the decolonial. This shift from ‘post’ to ‘de’ is a significant one, because it makes two distinct points.

Firstly, unlike 'post', the prefix 'de'colonial removes emphasis on a temporal concept of colonialism. The term 'postcolonialism' in its indexation of being after-the-fact, places a referential bias on the dominance of colonialism as an organising system. In making the theoretical shift to the 'de'colonial I therefore gesture my recognition of colonialism's meta-presence in contemporary cultural life. Secondly, the word 'decolonial' signifies an active process of working against the colonial. In consideration of the different emphases – between colonial and decolonial – Pérez (1999: 110) asserts:

The difference between the colonial and decolonial imaginaries is that the colonial remains the inhibiting trace, accepting power relations as they are, perhaps confronting them, but not reconfiguring them. To remain within the colonial imaginary is to remain the colonial object who cannot be subject until decolonized. The decolonial imaginary challenges power relations to decolonize notions of otherness to move into a liberatory terrain.

It is this notion of being active in the process of undoing that I argue is present within Jamaican DHQ culture. Further, as I discuss later in this thesis, this undoing of colonialism is enacted through an active, embodied and performative relationship to the black epistemology of *bruk out*, through strategies of disregarding (Radley, 1995), with-holding and risk-taking.

Perhaps in response to these decolonial politics, dancehall culture is systematically rejected by dominant European-facing culture in Jamaica. As identified by Hope, "The discourses of the dancehall operate in tension with and against the conventional, hegemonic framework of 'decent traditional Jamaica'" (2006: xviii). Acts of public disassociation with and denigration of dancehall are a way for 'uptown'⁷ individuals to assert their allegiance to the moral and aesthetic values held by the nation's upper classes and to confirm their aspirational social positionality. This rejection of dancehall is largely based on its widespread perception as over-sexualised and violent. Dancehall represents a vulgarity associated with the lower classes which produces a moral panic amongst uptown folk, whose taste values continue to be allied closely to colonially-retained Europeanist ideals (C. Cooper, 2004; Hope, 2006; Niaah, 2010) and politics of respectability (Fleetwood, 2011; Durham, B. Cooper and Morris, 2013). These theorisations highlight that in order to understand dancehall's position in Jamaica it is important to register its continued role in class and race tensions. In addition, Niaah (2010) adds that dancehall is the site of a struggle between secularisation and religious authoritarianism. She explains:

Incidents such as... shootings draw attention to... the supposed oversecularization of society, and signs of the decline of moral values and respect in Jamaica, with dancehall

⁷ This term is used in Jamaica to describe individuals who are seen to be of higher class status, and reside in the uptown, rather than the 'downtown ghetto', areas of Kingston and other cities.

culture as an embodiment of such signs.

(2010: 10)

This view of dancehall as a sign of the oversecularisation of Jamaican society, is very much linked to its lower-class status. The perceived abandonment of Christian values is associated with the economic deprivation of the ghetto youth, and thus dancehall becomes, to the upper classes, a sign of the failing Jamaican state.

Dancehall's blackness is also a weighty negative symbol in the Jamaican context; as Hope (2006) identifies, in Jamaican society 'high' culture is polarised against 'low' culture through a light/dark racially marked system.

[T]here is a constant struggle between the 'superior' European culture and the African culture in the negotiation of Jamaican identity. European cultural values continue to be elevated while African cultural values are denigrated.

(Hope, 2006: 9)

In relation to this understanding of dancehall, much of the literature (C. Cooper, 2004; Hope, 2006; Niaah, 2010) draws connections and identifies meaning in the dancers' relationship to the African diaspora and blackness. Niaah (2010: 119) frames the bodily movement of dancehall using a postcolonial analysis, wherein she sees dancers as being "slaves to the rhythm", and draws connections between the use of space and the historical dances of colonial slave ships. Her analysis pays necessary attention to the retention of psychosocial states created through the Atlantic slave trade experience. On discussing dancehall movement vocabularies and style she states that it "tell[s] stories of... contemporary and historical Jamaican and African traditional forms" (2010: 145). Niaah also analyses the Dancehall Queen from a pan-African standpoint; observing that "The pervasive elevation of a central female persona is consistent with African popular and sacred traditions" (2010: 138). This firmly positions dancehall in relation to African diaspora performance, her argument resting on the principle of African genealogy amongst the Jamaican dancers. This perspective offers valuable insight and vitally illuminates the black performance aesthetics (), culture and spiritualities within Jamaican dancehall. It also helps to understand how through its focus on a black-Atlantic epistemology, dancehall is also decolonial in its impetus. This theoretical trajectory, however, sheds little light on the significance of dancehall's persistent relevance to communities in Europe, black and white, who are situated differently in relation to coloniality and the Black Atlantic space. This is a key area that this thesis contributes to, as it investigates the relationships that individuals in Europe have developed with dancehall through their connections to Jamaica and black Jamaican bodies as the site of 'authentic' black performance.

An additional feature of dancehall that many theorists deem crucial to its identity, and is relevant to this study, is its relationship to commercial capitalism. Prior to dancehall's prominence, reggae was arguably the most influential musical style in Jamaica, which is decisively anti-capitalist in its rejection of Babylon and Western power regimes (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006). Hope (2006: 13) establishes that dancehall is different to reggae in this way because it grew out of the 1980s sociopolitical era which involved, both internally in Jamaica and on a global scale, the expansion and consolidation of late-capitalist systems and commodity cultures. She states that "dancehall... operates as an (informal) economic space in a capitalist, free-market environment" (p16-17). Hope asserts that due to its relationship to this economic environment, dancehall celebrates material culture in a way that is not seen elsewhere in contemporary Jamaican popular culture (p23). Niaah (2010) further argues that through its relationship to the capitalist framework, dancehall enables the creative production of identity. She states that dancehall is a space to "become somebody... [through] the creative process of making and remaking self and identity" (p49). This, she argues, is a central theme in Jamaican society, due to the effacement of identity brought about by colonisation (Fanon, 1967). As such, dancehall is positioned as a postcolonial practice deeply connected to blackness in Jamaica. These analyses, which form the grounding theory for the investigation into contemporary DHQ persona constructions in this thesis, highlight the ties between popular black performance and consumer capitalism as is evidenced in dancehall.

1.4 Decolonising Black Caribbean Women's Performance

As indicated earlier in this chapter, various scholars, including C. Cooper (2004), Wright (2004) and Hope (2006) contextualise their analyses of dancehall through gender theories. Hope argues that there is a "heavily policed and tightly gendered order... in Jamaica" (p47), which, driven by a strong commitment to Christian moral values and 'respectability', is deeply invested in heteronormativity. These scholars place gender identities as a central concern in their studies. This is because they see gender as a key theme within dancehall culture itself, which they frame as further evidence of dancehall being a manifestation of Jamaican social politics. This is exemplified in the assertion from Hope that the gender discourse in dancehall "is really part of a cultural dialogue of gendered identities that draw on the historical and cultural legacies of Jamaica" (p36). These legacies include racism, respectability politics and Christianity.

Several scholars have written extensively on the role of femininity and sexuality in dancehall. C. Cooper (2004) studies the concept of vulgarity, which she identifies as a particularly loaded term within Jamaican culture, with associations to blackness, poverty and 'slackness'. The latter, she suggests "can be ... theorized as a radical, underground confrontation with the patriarchal gender

ideology and the duplicitous morality of fundamentalist Jamaican society” (p3). C. Cooper posits that the highly sexual female performance style that she identifies in the dancehall scene, is a celebration of black Jamaican femininity; a performance of embodied ownership and a celebration of female fertility. C. Cooper thus reads dancehall as a space that offers liberating possibilities for women to play out erotically stylised identities that are usually restricted by respectability politics. This perspective is supported by cultural geographer Tracey Skelton who sees the female performance style as a strategy employed by women to “mak[e] space for themselves” (1998: 149). She describes this as a resistive space and asserts that through their physical and vocal expressions these aggressive stylisations resist patriarchal definition (p153). Together, these theorists demonstrate the interwoven nature of gender and class politics in female Caribbean performance.

Bakare-Yusuf (2006) also identifies the rejection of patriarchy and space-making as key themes in feminine dancehall performance. She argues that vital symbolic space is created for counter-narratives and distinctive taste values, which are produced largely by lower-class black female Jamaicans in dancehall.

[M]odes of adornment are employed to contest society’s representation of and expectation about lower-class leisure activity, morality and sexual expression. Fashion allows dancehall women to challenge the patriarchal, class-based and... puritanical logic operating in Jamaica.

(2006: 462)

This is a consistent standpoint across the literature on black femininities in dancehall, which largely positions the cultural practices of dancehall women, whether in the form of lyrics, fashion or dance moves, as being in stark opposition to upper-class social values in Jamaica. The social values that the female dancehall style supposedly rejects include sexual discretion and an aesthetic preference for lighter skin and slighter bodies. This mirrors many of the characteristics identified by Durham, B. Cooper and Morris (2013) in their introduction to hip hop feminism. Another feature, that is also prevalent in both hip hop and female dancehall styling is that ‘success’, defined here through a late-capitalist model of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), can be attained through the informal economy of the dancehall in the form of desirable material excess (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006; Hope, 2006; Brown, 2013). In the logic of this late-capitalist model, ‘success’ is measured through the celebration of material commodities such as designer clothes, ‘bling’ jewellery and flashy vehicles. Bakare-Yusuf argues that the commodification of these ‘success’ symbols by dancehall patrons, acts as a rebuttal of the conventional supposition that the accumulation of social and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) requires formal education. This argument highlights the centrality of capitalist economic values within dancehall and correlates with a subcultural theoretical perspective of capital acquisition through

means that reach beyond those prescribed by upper-class power regimes (Hebdige, 1979). Furthermore, Bakare-Yusuf asserts that the possibility of perceived 'success' on these terms, by women in the dancehall who achieve a degree of economic agency, works to resist the bound system of capital acquisition in Jamaica, which is typically reserved only for middle – and upper-class individuals who have access to formal education and institutional support.

Another key argument expressed by C. Cooper (2004) regarding the sexualised female dance movement is that the demonising trope from the social elites, who criticise the dance for its complicity with the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975), ignores the pleasure experienced by the performers, and the power-inducing potentiality of this pleasure. C. Cooper posits that critics "fail to acknowledge the pleasure that women themselves consciously take in the salacious lyrics... [which] affirm the sexual power of women" (p103). According to this line of argument the pleasure experienced by the performers can be read as an empowering factor, as the intention and ability to experience pleasure demonstrates personal will and the self-fulfilment of desire, and thus a subject position.

Hope (2006) presents a far less celebratory view on this topic, arguing instead that the performer's pleasure is based on the desire to be seen by the male scopic gaze. She argues:

these displays cannot be classified as... female self-idolation in isolation. ... they are primarily direct female-male engagement and these women broker some level of advancement in their own self-empowerment as a kind of residual benefit...

(2006: 75)

Hope therefore argues that women who achieve a prominent position in dancehall culture do attain a sense of power, but asserts that this is depleted by the male's position as gazer and resource giver. Bakare-Yusuf's (2006) line of argument follows a similar logic to Hope's, however she identifies more symbolic forms of empowerment and resistance in the multi-layered gazing paradigm.

Through sartorial eloquence, dancehall women invite the male gaze only to fend off scopic capture. This is due to the extravagant, risqué style of their adornment, their dancing skills and the unsmiling, distant look, which can only be responded to with awed silence by the appreciative audience—both male and female. Therefore, what appears initially as sexual vulnerability or availability becomes a form of defensive armory in which the women assert... an unwillingness to be intimidated by the normative pressures of a passive femininity.

(Bakare-Yusuf, 2006: 473)

Yet, despite this analysis into how the dancers perform themselves into positions of power, Bakare-Yusuf maintains that these performative achievements still sit within a patriarchal context. In analysis

of this duality she argues that dancehall “should... be understood as both an expression of female agency *and* the opportunity for male scopophilic mastery” (2006: 472) [italics added].

Wright (2004) positions this debate regarding the sexualised female dancehall dancing body, power and patriarchy within a black decolonial feminist discourse.

I want to rethink and complicate the often-conflated notion of hypersexuality and blackness, which has often accompanied the trajectory of the black female body throughout history, and to explore how the experience of this highly sexualised dance performance has real potential for spiritual healing.

(Wright, 2004: 79)

Wright’s contribution is a reminder of the interwoven relationship between race, nation and sexuality and how this is relevant in the Jamaican context. Her theoretical positioning demonstrates that the issues at stake for Jamaican women who participate in dancehall, are not only about sexuality and gender, but also race.

To summarise, Wright (2004), Skelton (1998) and C. Cooper (2004) identify various embodied, linguistic and creative forms of female empowerment and resistance to external definitions, through the deployment of unapologetic affronts on ‘superior’ aesthetic values through female dancehall performance. The less celebratory critiques from Hope (2006) and Bakare-Yusuf (2006) insist that whilst female dancehall performance is involved in these resistive self-affirming practices, it sits within a field of limitations, due to the robust natures of the colonial and patriarchal structures that they contend with. Altogether this body of literature situates feminine dancehall performance as a site of intense interrogation and debate around the black female body in performance and a hotbed for negotiations of interpersonal and subjective identities through character explorations, performances of sexuality, desire, pleasure, pain and violence. Hope’s and Bakare-Yusuf’s perspectives suggest that dancehall may not be the emancipating vehicle that C. Cooper, Skelton and Wright have argued, but is a necessary expressive medium to act out certain power plays. Hope’s and Bakare Yusuf’s arguments suggest that dancehall enables female performers to achieve prominence and express their experiences and creative desires, but that this often takes place within a patriarchal system that also appeases a masculine scopophilic gaze. All things considered, Hope argues that “Dancehall’s gendered and sexual discourses play with, against and into the patriarchal structures” (p123). This is perhaps a reasonably balanced view, which rather than being driven by excessive celebratory arguments acknowledges that dancehall is in the thick of negotiating gender and race politics. This thesis examines the complexities and juxtapositions playing out in these negotiations. In particular, it studies the ways in which global flows of audiovisual information, network connectivities and neoliberal

marketplace forces impact the potentialities. This research demonstrates that the emergence of new networked spaces of DHQ identity production across the globe effects the tone and content of the embodied discourses taking place.

In addition to the body of literature that looks at female dancehall performance, there is also a body of relevant research that looks at feminine performance within other popular Caribbean dance styles (Pinto, 2009; Blanco Borelli, 2015; Thorington Springer, 2007; Jones 2016). Much of this literature has identified links between the sociopolitical systems that were put in place in the Caribbean during colonialism and present-day oppressive systems. In analysing the colonial system in relationship to femininity, gender studies theorist M. Jacqui Alexander (1991: 133) identifies that “the very identity and authority of the colonial project rested upon the racialization and sexualisation of morality.” In the case of the Caribbean, historian Hilary McDonald Beckles asserts that “‘woman’, both black and white, had to be socially constructed, engineered and re-engineered to facilitate the agro-commercial enterprise [of colonialism] ... and its supportive social environments” (1999: xviii). During the colonial period depictions of women were produced that “reinforced the racialized construction of white ‘ladies’ and the hypersexualization of African women” (Thorington Springer, 2007: 102). This, Ulysse writes, worked to “reinforc[e]... the racially coded white Madonna/black whore polarity” (Ulysse, 1999: 148), which was a founding principle of colonialism.

It is commonly understood by black feminist theorists and critical race theorists that the construction of black female sexuality as excessively sexual was achieved, to a large extent, through the portrayal of the black female body as ‘over-sized’ and grotesque (Gilman, 1985; hooks, 1997). As cultural historian Sander Gilman also points out: “the female genitalia came to define the female” (1985: 235). Studies on this subject have shown that propaganda surrounding the buttocks and genitalia of black women deemed these body parts to be out of proportion with the rest of their bodies, and their supposed inflated size was read as physical evidence of a salacious sexual essence (hooks, 1997:115). Pinto (2009) claims that the system of constructing racialised female identities through the portrayal of their physicality persists until today. She explains that “Black women’s visible sexuality... becomes the sign under which the Caribbean nation is frequently read” (p143). This argument is supported by dance theorist Melissa Blanco Borelli’s analysis of the central role of the Cuban mulatta in the exoticised construction of the Cuban nation-state (2015). Together, these assertions highlight that the sexualised and racialised representations of Caribbean women continue to be used in propaganda that supports nationalistic tropes surrounding Caribbean identities.

Within the scholarship on Caribbean female popular performance the argument is made that the meanings associated with female hips, buttocks and genitalia can be debated and re-imagined through

their movement (Pinto, 2009; Blanco Borelli, 2015; Thorington Springer, 2007). By carefully choreographing these body parts women can signal awareness of the potency of their own corporeality, and through their movement they can disrupt the imposed meanings ascribed to them. Blanco Borelli identifies a strategy used by the dancing Cuban mulatta to wield power and agency through the articulation of her hips wherein she “stak[es] out space, territory, and meaning with the same body as has been used against her” (p31). Blanco Borelli’s study highlights how certain female Caribbean dancers have found crafty ways to assert agency through the very same politically-loaded body parts, that are so heavily policed and burdened with fetishising symbology by (post)colonial powers.

English and Africana studies scholar Jennifer Thorington Springer notably points to a related message within the popular performances of Barbadian calypso artist Alison Hinds. The dance style performed by Hinds, called *wukking up*, involves accentuated rotations and polyrhythmic articulations of the hips. According to Thorington Springer, Hinds “validates the ‘wuk up’ as an art form intrinsic to Caribbean culture...” (p93) and in so doing “... assists women in discovering their erotic/ sexual selves, and allows room for dance as aesthetic pleasure” (p106). These examples of scholarship wherein the hips and buttocks have been identified to play a crucial role in re-negotiating Caribbean feminine identities, is testimony to the dynamic use of these body parts across Caribbean dance contexts at large. Within these examples the theorists argue that there is a demonstrated awareness of the hyper-sexualisation of the black female body and the role of the hips and buttocks as the material evidence of this image, and in both cases the dancer’s claim to self-assertion is driven by these very same body parts. In sum, this body of thought suggests that by making the fetishised parts of their bodies the central focus of their choreographies, these dancers reclaim ownership over them. This theory crucially suggests the presence of an embodied awareness amongst the respective performers as women of colour of the potency of their hips and buttocks within the colonial fantasy. This is key to the debate because by looking/dancing back at the colonial gaze with this sense of awareness, they work to reduce its power over them (Bhabha, 1994).

Complicating this vision in a dancehall context, is Bakare-Yusuf’s (2006: 462) assertion that “dancehall women most often do not consciously adhere to this critical position in their speech, nor readily perceive their action as jamming the hegemonic syntax”. Yet, she argues, this does not infer the lack of a critical positionality. She explains:

Phenomenology teaches us that there is often a gap between intentional action and explicit, self-aware interpretation (Tseelon 1997). Far from imputing a kind of rational, contestive voluntarism to dancehall women, I suggest that the significance and meaning

of their action as a form of contestation is not always available for self-articulation. As such, my... interpretation of the meaning... in the culture is not wholly circumscribed by empirical enquiry into conscious explanation, speech acts, or verbalized discourse. Rather, my analysis is based on both empirical engagement and my own analysis of the expressive body in the culture.

(2006: 462)

Bakare-Yusuf's position on this subject creates space for inquiries into symbolic embodied action and adornment. Her argument for the validity of such a methodological positioning gives primacy to the un-spoken, but highly expressive, information of the body. This is a methodology that has gained traction through the impetus of performance studies (some key texts include Turner, 1987; Schechner, 2002; and Soyini Madison and Hamera, 2006), which is interested in what could be simply termed: interpreting the performative un-spoken texts of the body. This theoretical stance on the possibility for the body to say what words cannot, underpins the methods of dance movement analysis and ethnographic participant observation employed in this study. However, in this thesis, I take a critical stance toward talking 'for' the participants in the study. This is particularly problematic in this study because of my white positionality and the blackness of the practice being studied. In my research about the participants I analyse our embodied discourse in interviews as a form of performance that happens between two co-performing (Conquergood, 2002), racialised subjects. The nuance of this methodology is articulated in Chapter Two and through exemplar descriptions in the subsequent chapters. This concept and the methods employed for gathering un-spoken embodied texts needs particular attention in this study for two specific reasons. Firstly, as Fleetwood (2012) observes, black women are in a particularly complex situation because of the systematic scrutiny of their bodies by colonial and patriarchal gazes, and these women's embodied tactics for subverting the power of said gazes. Secondly, in writing about these women's embodied expressions as a sort of 'text' that I am reading, I can easily fall into a paradigm of speaking for black women, which as a white woman is particularly problematic – this is an issue I cover in Chapter Two in discussion of my methodology.

1.5 Readings of Female Dancehall Movement Aesthetics

In studying female dancehall performance, Niaah (2010: 145) observes a concentrated use of the hips and buttocks and, similarly to other theorists of black Caribbean women's performance – Thorington Springer (2007) and Adanna Jones (2016) – identifies *wining* as a central movement feature. On discussing the level of control and ingenuity involved in these movements, Niaah explains that "In various body positions the dancer's buttocks can shimmy, thrust, rotate, release and contract, push, press and pump, in a light, heavy, frantic, sharp, fluid or jerky manner" (p145). Drawing from these observations Niaah develops a theory that positions the female body in dancehall culture as being a

signifier of fertility (p121). This relationship between female dancehall performance and fertility symbolism is also explored by C. Cooper (2004) when she suggests that the DHQ embodies the Yoruba God Oshun, who she describes as the “spirit of female fertility” (p103).

Both C. Cooper (2004) and Niaah (2010) identify the fertility theme to also be present in the symbology of the vagina; for example, in lyrics such as “Yuh pum pum bring life” by dancehall artist Kalado (2013). Niaah aligns the veneration of the vagina to what she identifies as the valuation of physical health, which is made explicit in the celebration of the “visibly plump pudenda” (p136). Further, she argues that the vagina and female body as a whole are appreciated for their role in child birth, which is evident in the valuing of stretch marks. According to Hope (2006) the system of appreciating the “healthy, strong vagina” is by extension, an adoration of “a healthy, strong, aggressive woman” (p49). Hope posits that this strength is venerated as an “admirable power of women in the guise of the punaany” (p50), but that the image of the strong durable vagina also conjures a fear amongst the male sex. For example, she identifies popular artist Shabba’s “repeated warning to men against the punaany and its durability” (p49). According to C. Cooper (p106) this theme within the lyrics of male dancehall artists, demonstrates that the female sex organs signify both pleasure and terror in this context. This speaks further of the pleasure/pain synergy that Fleetwood (2012) points to within black feminine performance.

Hope (2006) argues that the co-existing tropes of fear towards, and veneration of, the vagina are in existence because the female sex organs are mythically understood to have a corrupting potential. This, she argues, problematically plays into a system wherein femininity becomes the site for masculine identity production through the conquering mission. A substantially different perspective comes from Wright (2004) who sees the prominence of the vagina in relation to her theory that female dancehall performance is a decolonial feminist practice of healing. Describing the common act of touching and gesturing toward the vagina, she asserts that

caressing the vagina in dance and in masturbatory bliss, exposing the figurative vagina in this public space allows the public eye to view these women’s bodies, nakedness and sexuality under the women’s own terms.

(2004: 80)

These conflicting viewpoints highlight that the interpretation of the vagina symbol varies according to the perspective that is foregrounded. Hope’s view places emphasis on the rhetoric amongst male vocal performers, whereas in Wright’s (2004) view the ‘blissful’ experience of the female dancers themselves is given prominence. Both viewpoints can be seen to add value to the field of study, but it is important to note that the orientation of each perspective impacts its findings. Further, when the

discourse centres on the words spoken by male dancehall vocalists about the female body, it is possible to marginalise the voices and expressions of the female dancers of whom we speak, and this is certainly not the objective in this study.

C. Cooper (2004), Hope (2006) and Bakare-Yusuf (2006) assert that the female body is the site of both sexual and maternal discourse in dancehall culture. C. Cooper identifies in the common use of the term 'mumi', which is used by men to refer to women in Jamaica: "evidence of the valorization of the female as nurturer- both maternal and erotic" (p106). According to Bakare-Yusuf this signifies the way in which sexual and maternal feminine identities become a part of the same discourse in dancehall and indicates a value system that is out of sorts with the moral codes of the Madonna/whore duality, which is held by upper-class Jamaicans. Altogether, this body of research demonstrates the ways in which dancehall plays an instrumental role in dancers' assertions of self, and explorations of sexuality and race. This is pertinent given their location within a sociocultural climate that often limits the space available for feminine pleasure and visibly nuanced identities, in favour of overdetermined sexualised and racialised imagery which serves a white patriarchal social order. As such, this body of research highlights the decolonial potential of DHQ performance albeit within a limiting framework of contradictions and unclear intentionalities.

1.6 Dancehall in the World: Dance Studies, Race and Intercultural Performance

An additional relevant body of literature to this thesis, is that which looks at dancehall's international and intercultural dimensions. The existing literature in this area largely focuses on relationships between dancehall and other black performance styles. Niaah's research into what she terms "A Common Transnational Space" (2010: 177) identifies a genealogy of connectivity between dancehall and kwaito from South Africa and the pan-Latino style named reggaeton. In studying dancehall's transnational reach Niaah draws on the Caribbean's intercultural history and the on-going theme of displacement. "The Caribbean historical space is inscribed with... a[n] openness to, and developed relations with, metropolitan centres; and high levels of international and internal migration" (Niaah, 2010: 49). This statement highlights that colonial Caribbean history has always had an on-going relationship with Europe through various migratory flows of people, commodities and cultures. This theme of transnational connectivity is explored by both Niaah and Hope (2006) respectively, when they each highlight the significance of the first non-Jamaican winner of the International DHQ Competition: Japanese dancer Junko Kudo in 2002. "Junko's crowning signalled dancehall's ability to cross racial, ethnic and geographical barriers and to incorporate diverse elements into its informal space" (Hope, 2006: 70). However, in both Niaah's and Hope's research the impact of Kudo's participation, and the growing involvement of women traveling from a plethora of countries,

representing many different nations and cultures in the International DHQ competition in Jamaica, as well as the growing number of DHQ competitions happening outside Jamaica, is not comprehensively considered.

Niaah's (2010) analysis focuses on the role of space and place in dancehall culture as she develops a theory of 'performance geography', which she locates within the field of diaspora and cultural geography studies. She argues that diasporic links are maintained through dancehall as a popular art form, insisting that the "relationship between place, performance and identity extends beyond national contexts... to a wider Diasporic space" (p25). Looking at a particular transnational dimension she describes the prevalence and success of high-profile British Link-Up events, which are dancehall events held in Jamaica that mark diasporic connectivity between Jamaica and the UK. These events, she explains, are heavily populated by British people of Jamaican descent who travel to Jamaica to attend and are often followed-up with adjoining events held in the UK. Niaah's description of these events helps to map the on-going diasporic relationships between Jamaica and other black diasporic spaces. However, despite dedicating complete chapters to the transnational reach and significance of dancehall, Niaah does not meaningfully extend her analysis beyond the scope of the diaspora to fully consider dancehall's interculturalism.

The intercultural dimensions of dancehall have been studied by Sterling (2006), in his pioneering study of Japanese dancehall. In this study he stresses that "The internationalization of dancehall to include new localities beyond those of Jamaica complicate th[e] representation of... [this] subculture as a tension of social inside and social outside" (p3). Thus, he argues, dancehall cannot be understood purely in reference to Jamaican society. Instead, he posits that to theorise dancehall's international developments "It is necessary to begin to articulate the systemic terms under which the... global dancehall cultural sites, including Jamaica, are interlinked" (p4). This assertion points to a theoretical perspective held by dance theorist Halifu Osumare (2002) who identifies a process wherein local stylisations of hip hop in Hawai'i reference the West Coast USA style, whilst simultaneously "keep[ing] it real" (p39) in relation to its Hawai'ian cultural framework. The expression that is 'real' to Hawai'i necessarily accommodates the dancers' relationships to the USA, and the hip hop scene as they know it, as well as the sociocultural specificities of the Hawai'ian site. This perspective suggests that analysing the make-up of dancehall in any 'new' context such as Japan or Europe, requires a sensitivity to the workings of globalisation and interculturalism in that specific site. In particular, it necessitates an appreciation of the relationships between the sites and the ways in which these relationships are embroiled in the dancer's bodily experience. This view of the dancer's body as not exclusively representing a singular culture or nation is what Osumare terms the 'intercultural body'.

A complexity regarding the issue of appropriation in dancehall, that is problematised by Bakare-Yusuf (2006, 2006b), is its positioning as an inward-facing cultural form by scholars such as C. Cooper (2004). Bakare-Yusuf argues that dancehall must be considered through its relationship to spaces outside of the nation-state of Jamaica as this is crucial to its make-up. She states:

Dancehall is grounded not only in the “politics of place” but in an avaricious interplay between alterity and difference. Dancehall absorbs external influences as much as it is absorbed by them.

(2006b: 167)

Thus, she adds:

Those who participate in dancehall (at home or abroad) are never involved in pure translation or mere interpretation; rather they are transductive engineers, forever converting one form of energy into another as different layers of materiality come into excessive play.

(2006b: 167)

Bakare-Yusuf’s theoretical standpoint puts into question the view held by some dancehall theorists that dancehall exists as a culturally insular form in Jamaica. She points out that as a style defined largely by its embracing of consumer capitalism in the age of free-market globalisation, this inward-looking view does not account for the complexities of space and place connectivity in the late-capitalist era. This is an important point that undergirds my theorisation throughout this study as I contend with the multiple flows (Appadurai, 1996, 2013) crossing this cultural landscape. Although this thesis acknowledges dancehall’s intrinsic relationship to Jamaica, its central focus is the complexities derived from the relationships between Jamaican dancers and European women taking up space in the culture. This involves looking at how black Jamaican women operate in relation to this intercultural manifestation of DHQ performance and how white and black European women engage with the style’s inherent blackness.

Theatre and performance studies scholar Kate Elswit (2018) and political theorist Chantal Mouffé (2012) offer analyses of dialogical performance and political exchange that consider the productivity of friction and conflict in European contexts, relating to nationalism. Elswit (2018) in analysis of *Europa Europa*, a Swedish cabaret, argues that: “The cabaret aims to build a temporary coalition between different but like-minded audiences as an aim distinct from changing minds” (p25). Mouffé (2012) offers the concept of agonism and a conflictual consensus in European politics. She asserts that:

In an agonistic relation the adversaries share a common symbolic space and they recognize, at least to some degree, the legitimacy of the claims of their opponents. A sort

of “conflictual consensus” exists between the various groups.

(Mouffé, 2012: 632-3)

These texts are relevant to this study because of how they frame differences in perspectives and positionality through lenses that are neither utopian nor derisive, but recognise the productive possibilities of friction and conflict. I employ the ideas of conflictual consensus and friction in the thesis to develop an understanding of the impact of visible whiteness in the black performance practice of dancehall. The thesis questions how the intercultural exchanges taking place between European and Jamaican dancers relate to the decolonial politics that I argue are present within black Jamaican DHQ performance. This aspect of the investigation looks at how black Jamaican dancers exploit the white presence for their own gain and to maintain dancehall’s celebrations of blackness. It also considers how difference can be engaged with by white European dancers and producers, who work as allies with the black Jamaican dancers, to support decolonial politics.

Charlotte McIver’s essay (2012) on social change in intercultural Dublin post-Celtic Tiger boom explains that the successful economic development of Ireland from an inward-facing to outward-facing economy and the subsequent major increase in immigration of people from various parts of the world has transformed what it means to be Irish. She states: “Irishness no longer immediately translates into white and Catholic, or at least Christian, but has become a far more complex identity” (p184). She goes on to assert that this more complex identity is formed through the performance activities of City Fusion, an intercultural performance group who parade through the streets of Dublin as a part of St. Patrick’s Day celebrations. Her argument brings to the fore themes that apply to this project, in particular the need to reconsider notions of ‘Europeanness’ to take into account the diverse histories, ethnicities and races this category represents. Her study also presents the view that popular performance is at the heart of this reformulation of Irishness, which is a notion that I will explore in this study in relation to other European identities and in particular how the DHQ scene in Europe offers a place to explore Europe’s complex and tangled relationship with coloniality.

1.7 Digital and Virtual Dimensions

One of the areas this study looks at is how DHQs engage with social network sites (SNSs) as a part of their practice. It considers how this engagement promotes network connectivity and virtual embodiment and thus how SNSs act as mediums through which DHQ culture emerges. A measured review of literature concerned with these topics is therefore required in this chapter. The review presented in this section on this subject is not exhaustive, but driven by the specifics of this study and the key themes of virtual embodiment, and the relationship between race and the digital in intercultural network formations.

British artist Roy Ascott outlined the implications of the digital turn in 1990, when he stated that computing and telecommunications

seem increasingly to be calling into question what it means to be human, to be creative, to think and perceive, and indeed our relationship to each other and to the planet as a whole.

(1990: 76)

Ascott's observations highlight a shift that took place within cultural theory in the late twentieth century, toward examining the changes in behaviours and life experiences emerging as a consequence of the digital turn and the so-called 'information age' (Castells, 1996). However, Ascott's assertion assumes a universality of the privileged subject, with access to digital networks. The work of Nakamura (2008) is particularly informative in regards to deconstructing such assumptions. In particular, she makes a case for the vital need to factor race into discussion of the Internet. She explains:

The mode and type of iteration, the order and positioning of symbols, and the codes by which it is read determine the way that a new media object interacts with its user. When we look at any example of the Internet's popular culture, we must weigh power differentials in terms of both its overt 'content', as well as its user's access to forms of revision, modification, distribution, and interaction to parse the movement of power across the multiple positions available to users of color and women on the Internet.

(Nakamura, 2008: 35)

Here she asserts that it is vital to consider identity not just in regard to digital inequality (and she critiques the overly simplified notion of the 'haves' and 'have nots' of the Internet), but in regard to how the Internet is organised around a white male order of things.

Information Professor Nicole Ellison et al (2010) study the ways in which computer-mediated communication is used to connect people "who did not otherwise share time and space" (p125) and also "to articulate previously established relationships [rather] than to meet strangers" (Ellison et al, 2010: 126). Ellison et al posit that "more work is needed to develop instruments that capture nuances of hybrid (online/offline) interaction patterns and their impact on relationship development and maintenance" (p126). These findings and assertions are important to this study's research because of its investigatory focus on the connectivity between DHQs who are physically dispersed across the trans-Atlantic space between Jamaica and Europe. This study's research supports the idea that the relationship between online and offline connectivity is complex and DHQs invest heavily in both offline and Internet-driven network connectivity.

Sociologist Manuel Castells contends that at “the end of the second millennium of the common era a number of major social, technological, economic and cultural transformations came together to give rise to a new form of society, the network society” (2012: xvii). This he explains, has involved a “shift from traditional mass media to a system of horizontal communication networks organized around the Internet and wireless communication... as virtuality becomes an essential dimension of our reality.” (2012: xviii). One of the subject areas that is being investigated in digital studies in relation to the ‘network society’ is the role of SNSs in peoples’ lives. There is a substantial body of literature on the various roles and uses of SNSs such as Facebook and MySpace, for example Parks’ (2010) theorisation of virtual communities on these sites, and Mendelson and Papacharissi’s (2010) research into narcissism within Facebook activities. Studies looking at the use of Instagram, a newer and more visually focused SNS, are also beginning to emerge (Moon et al, 2016; Sheldon and Bryant, 2016; Hendrickse et al., 2017). Discussions are beginning to turn toward analyses of this visual culture surrounding online content, in particular the way in which the Internet shapes constructions of race and gender. Nakamura (2008: 6) states: “It is crucial to examine users in their embodied subject positions.” This is a shift, Nakamura explains, from “Studies from a communications perspective [which] have discussed the dynamics of online interaction quite exhaustively but fail to integrate their findings into readings of what the sites do visually” (p10). So, whereas earlier literature was focused largely on the connectivity between users, more recent work from theorists such as Nakamura (2008) and Fleetwood (2011, 2012) study the visual culture of the Internet, and the implications of aesthetic representation in relation to questions of identity (in particular race and femininity) more closely.

This study looks at the culture of posting images and videos on both Facebook and Instagram, by DHQs whose identity constructions and social network capital (Ellison et al, 2010) are dependent on these SNSs. It recognises that DHQs work hard to build a digital aesthetic for their online DHQ personas, through a deep investment in the visual culture of digitally-constructed representations of themselves in film, image and personalised emojis on social media. It also investigates the phenomena of viewing dance (in this case dancehall) videos via social media platforms and studies the nature of the so-called “new possibilities for the kinaesthetics of performance and spectatorship” (Landay, 2012: 133), that such experiences offer. This aspect of the study is invested in the enquiry laid out by Landay (p134) when he asks: “what new relationships between performance and spectatorship, between the visible and invisible, arise from bodies that are not actually there?” These questions have begun to be probed within popular dance literature (Blanco Borelli and Burrill, 2014; Bench, 2014, 2015; Benthaus, 2015). Dance theorist Elena Benthaus (2015) discusses the possibility of affective viewing experiences for audiences viewing the televised dance competition *So You Think You Can Dance*. She explains that “The skin of the spectator-at-home works in relation to the interface-skin of the screen and the

dancing bodies on the screen as a means of affective intensification” (p16). Benthaus’ study is instructive in its theorisation, but it does not (nor does it try to) comprehensively analyse, the multiple forms of virtually-mediated communication taking place between dancers and the way in which skin *colour* matters here. This study’s investigation into the role of circulating dancehall videos in the experiences of networked DHQs works to further develop this pioneering area of contemporary dance research concerning virtual dance communities paying particular attention to the way in which identity politics ‘overflow’ (Shah, 2017) into digital enactments.

A pertinent question that arises out of the investigation into the digitisation of DHQ culture concerns the role of embodiment in digital contexts. Political scientist Niels van Doorn explains that

‘virtual life’ on the internet is neither disembodied nor decontextualized... the idea of the digitally virtual as somehow separate from the material conditions of everyday reality has nevertheless persisted in much of the literature.

(2011: 532)

Around the time of the new millennium, the potentialities of virtuality presented an exciting future, that could do away with the restrictions of the body. Virtual environments were positioned as a perfect substitute landscape to experience new forms of immersive virtual embodiment (Doorn, 2011). More recent literature has taken a more nuanced and critical view on the subject of virtual embodiment. For example, gaming theorists Robert Farrow and Ioanna Iacovides argue that “digital embodiment differs so significantly from primordial embodiment that any idea of total immersion is simply fantasy” (2014: 221). Other research looks less at the question of whether virtual embodiment can simulate ‘real-life’, but rather at the relationship between materiality and digital experience. This is particularly interesting in relation to this study when looking at how DHQs choose to present themselves digitally. In this thesis I investigate how DHQs create digital personas that exceed the boundaries of the corporeal in ways that highlight and exaggerate their own racialisation and sexualisation. Castells asserts:

on-line communities are fast developing not as a virtual world, but as a real virtuality integrated with other forms of interaction in an increasingly hybridized everyday life.

(2012: xxix)

In theorising the relationship between subjectivity and technology, digital culture theorist Nishant Shah (2017) presents the concept of the overflow, which he explains has historically only been used for understanding “...logistics, regulation and infrastructure” (p190), but can also be used to emphasise the way in which the digital and the physical impress upon one another so that they are

not mutually containable, but spill out into one another. Using the concept of overflow Shah studies what he calls a “techno-affective subjective” (p190). He asserts that this concept helps to move away from the idea of transferring between online/offline environments as distinct entities.

Digital theorist Rob Shields (1996) argues that there exists a widespread social anxiety surrounding the ontological slippages and transformations between physical and virtual categories. Ascott (1990: 76) argues that this anxiety is based in the fundamental question: “Is there love in the telematic embrace?” He posits that a societal fear exists of “technological formalism erasing human content and values” (p76). This text is arguably somewhat outdated as much has changed in attitudes towards virtuality and the competency of online interfacing and communication between 1990 and the period of this study’s research (2014-2019). Still, the question of whether, or how, ‘love’ and other affective emotions exist in virtual networks remains relevant in contemporary contexts, as the forms of slippage and the intensity of virtual immersion continuously transform and develop.

In his study of behaviours on SNSs, Doorn pertinently identifies that participants

articulated their digitally material connections through various forms of affective exchange... [and that]... [t]hese exchanges, which were overflowing with gendered and sexualized affection, were crucial to the delineation of the network structure... By virtue of being included in these ‘flows of affection’, the individual friends perform[ed] their membership of the group and wr[o]te each other’s ‘digital body’ (i.e. their user profiles) into being.

(2011: 535)

In view of this body of literature, this study looks at how virtuality and embodiment work in tandem to create a DHQ visual culture. In addition to gender and sexuality it also looks at how users create racialised and classed bodies. It explores the ways in which technology, such as filters placed on photographs posted to SNSs, and the aesthetic of Instagram, and other social media profiles, support DHQs’ articulations of racial, gender and class identities that are based in the material world, but ‘overflow’ (Shah, 2017) into the digital. The thesis explores how this activity shapes the intercultural dynamics of the DHQ scene.

This study argues that the virtual is a space of possibility. As Nakamura (2008: 13) asserts: “the Internet [is] a privileged and extremely rich site for the creation and distribution of hegemonic and counter hegemonic visual images of racialized bodies.” I recognise that the digital is a racialised environment with limitations and possibilities, that correspond, overlap and sometimes alter intersubjective power dynamics. In this study I consider whether virtual connectivities provide a form of interpersonal

immediacy that is otherwise hard to come by in the geographically dispersed space of the DHQ network, due to geographic immobilities that are reinforced by national border-lines (Elswit, 2018).

With its focus on DHQ networks between Jamaica and Europe this study is primed for an exploration into the particularities of feminine interactivity that deal with the racial politics that are ever-present in the postcolonial “telematic embrace” (Ascott, 1990). Music scholar Marion Leonard identifies that Internet driven networks open up possibilities for women to engage in networks from the domestic spaces of the home, and more specifically the bedroom; spaces that are often coded and experienced as feminine (2005: 107). She explains that participation in such networks can become a “tool for empowerment allowing geographically isolated people to correspond with each other and share a sense of identity” (2005: 109). This study, however, argues that whilst online spaces enable access to, and visibility within, intercultural online spaces, the nature of digital interactivity adds further dimensions to established racialised and geopolitical experiences of difference. Rather than seeing this as systematically negative, these manifestations of difference in some cases help to raise visibility and nurture deeper understandings of black women’s experiences of precarity and marginalisation. In this study I explore female participation in the DHQ network and the power differentials that operate in relation to issues of access and digital inequality (Nakamura, 2008; Hargittai and Hsieh 2010), including the relationship between network connectivity, social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and the legacies of colonialism that impact geographic mobility.

1.8 Conclusion

The theoretical domain of black feminism provides a critical entry point for this study’s examination of the intercultural DHQ scene as a feminine black performance practice. It illuminates the need to attend to the racial dynamics of feminism and performance. In particular, the notions of waywardness (Hartman, 2018), as well as pleasure and its coalescence with pain (Fleetwood, 2012) are particularly pertinent to this study. Altogether the black feminist literature studied, as well as the emerging area of hip hop feminism (Brown, 2013; Durham, Cooper and Morris (2013), reveal the complexities of how race and (de)coloniality intersect with feminism in women’s performance.

The literature on feminine dancehall performance, as well as the studies on dancehall’s transnational and diasporic dimensions, provide a culturally-specific theoretical foundation to the exploration in this research project. The insights into the postcolonial significance of dancehall in contemporary Jamaica within the existing literature are crucial to understanding the dance’s sociocultural and geopolitical positionality and to developing new insights into dancehall’s intercultural and virtual dimensions in this thesis.

The body of literature that looks at works on decolonising popular female Caribbean performance, is key to the theorisation of DHQ culture in this thesis. The various arguments surrounding the black female Caribbean dancer and the discourses surrounding fertility and sexuality in dancehall culture, highlight both the burden on, and the valorisation of, black women's bodies in popular culture. The examples discussed in this chapter identify some of the ways in which popular performance navigates these impositions. Whether the focus on the vagina in dancehall is empowering or seen as a form of exploitation is an on-going debate amongst the various theoretical camps, amongst whom there are a range of perspectives and conclusions. Theorists such as Hope (2006) see it as further entrenching the heteronormative ideal under-written by patriarchy. Others position it as a decolonial healing mechanism (Wright, 2004) or a re-writing of femininity (C. Cooper, 2004), which serves to satirically make visible the very performative nature of gender (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006). In summary, this literature identifies the visible role of women in expanding the discourse on femininity in this context; be it through language or more often through movement and adornment. This presence of women in the rhetorical and physical battlefield of interpretation is a form of 'claiming space' (Skelton, 1998), that is vital for these women in this patriarchal and postcolonial context.

Until now, there has not been a focused investigation into the relationship between European and Jamaican women in dancehall, which includes, Afro-Caribbean diasporic subjectivities and black and white dancers. Sterling's (2006) study into dancehall in Japan presents the only major study that looks at dancehall from a cultural perspective, without focusing primarily on the diasporic lens as its main foundation. This demonstrates that there is a substantial lack of research looking at dancehall from intercultural and transnational perspectives. The literature on intercultural performance (Osumare, 2002; Mitra, 2015; Knowles, 2010; McIvor, 2015), as well as the work on radical European politics and difference (Elswit, 2018; Mouffé, 2012) signals the potential for further research into dancehall's intercultural significance. In particular, the ideas pertaining to the potential for agonistic acts (Mouffé, 2012) and friction in performance (Elswit, 2018) in the reconfiguration of European identities and politics, suggests that the intercultural DHQ scene is a rich topic of study. This project's study into the nature of the intercultural exchanges between Jamaica and Europe, involving virtual, geographic and embodied mobilisations, therefore has the potential to contribute critical understanding of how difference operates in contemporary European social politics.

Notably, this study draws into the conversation about intercultural dancehall the element of virtuality, which has been largely missing until now. The discussion of literature concerned with visual cultures of the Internet (Fleetwood, 2012) and the digitalisation of race (Nakamura, 2008) in this chapter demonstrates the potential for theoretical engagement in this area in relation to popular dance and

black performance, and provides a foundation upon which this aspect of the study develops. One of the key topics discussed in this area is the relationship between online network activity and embodied experience. Collectively, the literature from theorists such as Shah (2017), Shields (2003), Castells (2012) and Doorn (2011) convincingly makes the case that the digital is woven into the fabric of everyday life and should be analysed accordingly, rather than as a separate and independent realm. As such, the Internet is theorised in this thesis as a further space for exploring and resisting subjugating processes of racialisation and sexualisation, through virtual representation, aesthetic play and network connectivity.

This investigation's focus on the relationships between European and Jamaican DHQs situates the relationship between these dancers in an inter-connected web of cultural trajectories across physical and virtual spaces. This web is historically determined largely by the Black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993) colonial space, and is contemporaneously developing in the age of intercultural connectivity, racialised cyber-cultures and globalised commercial trade routes. This focus broadens the analytical spotlight within studies of dancehall, and offers to feminist and performance studies a detailed analysis of a contemporary intercultural dance culture that speaks to the politics of whiteness in black performance cultures.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the methodological design that this study has followed from its initial preparation to the complexities of navigating researcher positionalities in a multi-sited ethnography. It aims to examine the conceptual frames that have shaped the methodology, as well as the specific skills and methods used in the field to fulfil the study's practical requirements and its emphasis on reflexive embodiment and accountability.

As the starting point for this study was my embodied experiential knowledge of the dancehall scene, I chose to develop a methodology that was grounded in self-reflexivity and the subjective accounts and embodied expressions of case study participants. The project does not aim for a quantitative view of dancehall practices, but a qualitative and nuanced perspective on the experiences of women in the trans-Atlantic Jamaican/European scene. Due to the way in which the methodology is grounded in personal experience on the part of the researcher, this chapter uses a first-person writing style. For the purposes of documenting the self-reflexive, ethnographic process this was deemed the most fitting mode of presentation.

I come to this research project with a theoretical and methodological background in dance anthropology and dance movement analysis from feminist, postcolonial and decolonial perspectives. This chapter examines how the theory and methods from these disciplines have been employed in my research process. I turned for guidance to the writing of researchers in ethnographic methods: Kamala Visweswaran (1994), Robert Emerson (1995) and D. Soyini Madison (2012); and for examples I turned to dance and performance ethnographers dealing with intercultural performance and who draw from critical race theory: Marta Savigliano (2003), Francesca Castaldi (2006), Cindy Garcia (2013), Charlotte McIvor (2015), Jacqueline Shea Murphy (2007) and Melissa Blanco Borelli (2015).

Soyini Madison explains the way in which theory and methods are interlinked and mutually dependant in the research process:

Although theory may fund the guiding principles of our doing, there is a necessary and distinct attention that must be given to the... processes of that doing itself – our method. Methods... are contingent on our... fundamental questions,... and the scene itself... [T]heory may guide..., but it is a methodological process that directs and completes the task.

(2012: 15-17)

The following sections of this chapter identify the specific needs of this study and the methodological design constructed to support these needs.

I brought to the investigation an awareness of the possible theories related to the subject area – for example, cultural appropriation theory (Robinson, 2006) and issues surrounding white bodies in black spaces (Monroe, 2014). The methodology is also deeply informed by black feminist performance research from Fleetwood (2011, 2012), Brown (2013) and B. Cooper (2015), as discussed in Chapter One. The methodology draws from elements of these theories, which are particularly informative in relation to the doing of critical intercultural ethnographic research. It enabled the development of an original contribution to knowledge, pertaining to the (to-date under researched) particularities of the research area.

In the field research and in the act of writing I employed performance ethnographer Dwight Conquergood's (2002) 'dialogical performance' methodology. This aims "to bring self and others together so they may debate, and challenge one another" (Soyini Madison, 2012: 10), to create dialogue between theoretical positionalities, in this case particularly around race and femininity. I drew from the knowledge I gained in reading black feminist literature about the need to develop an understanding of the black epistemologies that ground a practice such as dancehall. I also looked to contemporary intercultural research (McIvor, 2015; Mitra, 2015) and digital race theory (Nakamura, 2008; Shah, 2017), to consider how to locate racial and cultural implications in the multi-sited virtual/physical sites. During the process of this research I studied how the primary data collected during the ethnographic research, including embodied observations and interview data, sat in relation to established views on black feminism, popular performance, digital race theory and intercultural performance (Knowles, 2010; Mitra, 2015; McIvor, 2015) and European politics of the nation (Mouffé, 2012; Elswit, 2018) to ascertain how this particular field of activity contributes to, and navigates trajectories across these discussions.

2.2 Self-Reflexive Ethnography

To introduce the subject of self-reflexive ethnography I include here an excerpt of reflexive notes that raise valuable questions about the process of developing an approach to navigating and sharing self-reflection.

Who am I to give voice to these DHQs? What traits or authority do I possess that qualify me for this responsibility? Why give voice to an expression that has chosen the corporeal form? In my plight for the creation of textuality is my own endeavour furthering the primacy of language over body? What of the power of with-holding – am I committing an

epistemic violence in this 'translational'⁸ act? How does this do justice to the corporeal knowledge of black bodies – how can my text honour the primacy of the body and recognise the partiality of my own embodied positionality? I must consider the politics of my practice – my weaving of space, lives and ways of knowing into a single text.

Writing on the subject of the self within an ethnographic study is a much-debated method of enquiry. Performance theorist Soyini Madison recommends investigating

how you, me, the self, or, more precisely, 'the self-reference' can actually be employed, can actually labor, even be productively exploited, for the benefit of larger numbers than just ourselves.

(2012: 129)

Historically, the self was rejected from ethnographic endeavours within the discipline of anthropology as the common ideology presupposed that one's study should be about 'Others'. It is often advised that researchers develop an awareness and control over their subjective experience as it is devalued and seen as a 'contaminant' to objective data (Emerson, 1995). However, when undertaken with appropriate care, recording one's emotions offers valuable insight into significant processes.

[I]f substance ('data', 'findings', 'facts') are products of the methods used, substance cannot be considered independently of method; what the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected with how she finds it out... From this point of view, the very distinction between fieldnote 'data' and personal reactions', ... is deeply misleading.

(Emerson, 1995:6)

It is in fact impossible to divorce one's findings from the self that conducted the research and thus writing about subjectivity not only opens up insight, but critically also adds ethical transparency to the ethnographic act. Having said this, a common issue within anthropology is the researcher's over-dependence on their subjective interpretation of the field. On the subject of one such type of writing, called *confessional ethnography*, performance theorist David Terry states that it

might easily, through its very catharsis, give the illusion of addressing broader social/political ills while in fact leaving them fundamentally unchallenged and unchanged... sometimes confession... is a shrinking rather than an acceptance of responsibility.

(Terry, 2006: 219)

⁸ Translation is always incomplete, can never sum up the affective nuances of the primary script and it assigns power to the latter- the transcribed translation, as if the original is illegible, incomprehensible.

In dance research this is paramount, because the act being documented is physical and this arguably leaves it wide open to interpretation. Dance ethnographers often come to the field with pre-existing embodied knowledge of the dance form, as in my case, and this can aid in interpreting the field. However, it is crucial to decipher when this embodied knowledge adds value to the research and to be conscious that it can also overshadow it. Soyini Madison contends that autoethnography, unlike confessional ethnography, might involve the “cultural context being illuminated *through* personal confession” (2012: 198). The task in using such self-reflexive methods is to acknowledge the nuances within the sensations and thoughts that make up one’s own experience and to maintain critical reflexivity in order to determine when these are valuable to the research. This project implemented such a critically reflexive approach to its focus on experiential knowledge, by observing my positionality in the field. This involved acknowledging when my pre-existing knowledge of the dancehall scene led me toward ‘insider’ experiences, and also how at other times my lack of experience of interacting within a particular area of the scene, as well as my researcher status, positioned me as an outsider. I reflected on this moveable status; deciphering how it added layers of understanding and fed into the research findings. I positioned these observations in dialogue with observations of other people’s activities, as well as data from interviews. I focused on embodied writing, dialogical performance, accountable positioning and subjectivity as process.

In the passage below, I present a section of reflexive fieldnotes, which discuss my own embodied relationship to dancehall movement. I include this account because it assists in the interrogation of how identity plays a role in the politics of participation and it also helps to situate my white British-Portuguese body in this research. This is important because of the role my body has taken in shaping the research process and findings. As feminist Adrienne Rich asserts:

To locate myself in my body means more than understanding what it has meant to me to have a vulva and clitoris and uterus and breasts. It means recognizing this white skin, the places it has taken me, the places it has not let me go.

(2003: 32)

It’s a Thursday evening in late November 2015. I’m listening to a U.S radio station called Dancehall Link FM, via a mobile phone app, whilst cooking in the small kitchen of my South London flat. One of my favourite old school dancehall songs called “Driver” (2006) by Buju Banton comes on and I immediately turn up the volume. The base vibrates through the kitchen work surface, into the floor boards where it reaches my feet. The sensation of the vibration in my body evokes a memory of moving to this rhythm many times before. I instinctively bend my knees, lowering my centre of gravity, the weight of the rhythm now engaging my hips, I feel enlivened with energy. The music’s creative impulse drives me to

perform a heavy, dynamic rocking movement centred in my hips. "That's right", I think, as the familiarity of the sensation encourages an inner sense of connection to the dancehall movement style as I know it. As I become increasingly engrossed in the corporeal pleasure of the experience I begin to embellish my movement: circling my legs on the off-beat and adding a rotation in my torso. Then the song switches to "Body Brukka" (2015) by Aidonia, and I, gleaming with delight, react by creating a bouncing flick motion between my hips and buttocks, which playfully mirrors the rise and fall of the song's beat.

(Fieldnotes, April 2015)

The style that I was performing was familiar to me – my muscles remembered the language and it felt local to my body. But this has not always been the case; this movement vocabulary and style was once unknown to this body. Like all dancers, I have developed a familiarity with my chosen dance style through practice and training. I learnt at dancehall parties in the UK and in the Caribbean, how to engage in corporeal rhythmic pleasure in relation to popular Caribbean dance. During both formal and informal Caribbean dance training my body has experienced great pleasure through the exploration of polyrhythmic articulation and the sensations of moving in relation to the music's dynamics. Through my dance practice I have developed an embodied appreciation for the black epistemology that underpins dancehall. This appreciation is meaningful to me and comprises a significant part of how I position myself in the world, but as my relationship to the DHQ world is shaped by my experience as a white European woman, I do not know and experience dancehall in the same way as a black Jamaican dancer from Kingston, or a black European dancer. Rich points out that "the specific subjection of women, through our location in a female body... has to be addressed" (2003: 31). My own subjection to sociopolitical forces as a woman, as well as my experience of privilege and power, are specific to the particularities of my racial, class and cultural background. I use my positionality as a case in point here – the broader point is that the forces of oppression and resistance must be contextualised by geopolitical and sociocultural frames. In order to account for the complex ways in which identity politics produce layers of embodied knowledge, it is imperative that the condition of *woman* is not universalised, but that race, class and nationality are also acknowledged as fundamental determining factors in one's relationship to cultural practice.

2.3 Dialogical Embodied Methods

I include personal experiential knowledge as research material, because during the process of the research my body has absorbed knowledge of the various sites. Blanco Borelli contends that

To corpo-realize means to make the body a real, living, meaning making entity; a focus on the material body in the social sphere enables an understanding of how subjects find and assert their agency.

(2015: 30)

My theoretical relationship to the project is situated within my corporeal body; I know through my muscles, ligaments and joints. Thus, my knowledge is always embodied, especially when it comes to knowledge of the moving body. My body responds to kinaesthetic signs and symbols based on my experience of moving between dancehall spaces as a raced subject in my personal social dance life. This cultural knowledge factored as a foundation, which helped the embodied data collected to assemble and become meaningful, in relation to this project's focus on embodied dialogical experience between dancers and between variously cultured, embodied and intellectual ways of knowing.

My experience of the symbols within the practice of dancehall during the research sits within a field of experience and a personal taste for dancehall music and style. As I conducted the research, attending dancehall classes and events in the various research sites and following the activities online, I felt involved in the scene. I engaged with events through my living, breathing, moving body. This type of engagement is what Conquergood (2002) calls 'coperformance' or 'doing with', which he describes as dialogical performance. He argues that

Particularly at the PhD level, original scholarship in culture and the arts is enhanced, complemented, and complicated in deeply meaningful ways by the participatory understanding and community involvement of the researcher. This experiential and engaged model of inquiry is coextensive with the participant-observation methods of ethnographic research.

(2002: 153)

On this topic Visweswaran (1994) suggests that such ethnography involves "a politics of identification [and] the dynamics of autobiography and community rather than authority and disaffection" (32). This positionality moves away from historical notions of the ethnographer as estranged onlooker in favour of one that is engaged in the very fabric of the community. I experienced such a positionality in this project's fieldwork in the form of active participation in dance classes, as an emotionally engaged audience member at DHQ competitions, and through my interactive experience with the online dancehall community on Facebook and Instagram, as the discussion later in this chapter will demonstrate. This positionality values engaged participation for its potential to enhance embodied learning on the part of the ethnographer and thus enable her to write from said embodied situational experience.

I am aware that ethnographic research asks individuals to open up chapters of their lives for the researcher to listen to and read; to describe moments and share experience for the researcher to imagine, provide objects for the researcher to examine, and ultimately allow their identities to be analysed for the purpose of the researcher's output. I realise that as researcher "you have the power to tell their story and to have the last word on how they will be represented" (Soyini Madison, 2012: 40). I enter with awareness of the fact that although the outputs can benefit those involved, the participants often provide their time and energy to the project and ask for very little in return. In commitment to the participants I enter with the intention to 'turn up'; to be present in mind and body as entirely as possible and with virtue, in honour of the ethics of the ethnographic relationship.

My commitment to engaging in the field through dialogical performance does not dissolve the need for my status and the power differentials between myself and the research participants to be attended to.

A commitment to dialogue insists on keeping alive the inter-animating tension between self and Other. It resists closure and totalizing domination of a single viewpoint, unitary system of thought.

(Conquergood 1982: 11)

I acknowledge that a commitment to dialogue involves identifying how status manifests and the implications it has on relationships. As Soyini Madison (2012: 40) asserts: "if you cannot... see the rewards of your status, you will also be blind to the complex inequalities and veiled injustices of those whose status is unjustly subordinated." A dialogical performative methodology therefore involves scrutinising one's own positionality in relationship to others.⁹

In commitment to embodied knowledge and in honour of subaltern feminine experience this study gives prominence to participant testimonies because, as Blanco Borelli (2015: 52) asserts, "women become repertoires and repositories of national history." The study makes space for the movements, words and silences of practitioners as it interweaves bodily expression, virtual activity, and verbal and written expression from interviews and statements. This placing of the various research data in relation to one another has allowed for a detailed analysis of how these forms of data speak to the research questions as a whole and the unique contribution of each. For example, certain themes are expressed in performance that are largely absent from interview transcripts and vice versa. In

⁹ Performance ethnographer Joni L. Jones (2002) sets out six principles to consider when producing a performance ethnography. Although this project was not focused on a performance outcome her emphasis on working closely with the themes of contextualisation, accountability, subjectivity, multivocality, participation and ethics are also applicable to this study, due to its performative context, and the various performance activities involved in the research.

identifying these disjunctures, I have been able to study the relationship between literary, verbal and embodied communication in the scene and construct a methodological design that allows space and time for each.

I was steered in my approach to these research materials by Fleetwood's (2012) method of studying Rihanna. Fleetwood's essay offers in its methodology a way of sensitively engaging with silence and the embodied articulations of black women. She achieves this by integrating interview quotes with image analysis, while also paying attention to what is not said, and how black women's voices and desires are muted by dominant cultural perspectives in the media. Evelyn Hammonds writes: "Historically, black women have reacted to... the hegemonic discourses on race and sex with silence, secrecy, and a partially self-chosen invisibility" (cited in Fleetwood, 2012: 121). However, Fleetwood also asserts a scepticism around the possibilities of visibility (2012: 122). She argues that "The question becomes how do the terms of engagement change in performative practices that are rooted in the trouble of visibility? (Fleetwood, 2012: 122) In this study, my reading of embodied discourses vis-à-vis verbal silence needed to recognise the presence of these histories and theorisations and how research interviews were scenarios wherein dancers could perform their own relationship to these histories.

I also acknowledged my role in the performative setting of the interviews and the possible reasons why subjects chose to hold back certain elements of themselves. Soyini Madison urges consideration that "what you think you are hearing as true to experience may actually be based upon how your gender or race is perceived in that culture or situation" (2012: 43). It is likely that participants in this study shaped their responses somewhat according to their perception of me as a white European woman. Moments of disclosure spoke volumes. For example, DHQ Jonesy took time and appeared to make an effort to respond to questions in a cordial manner, but later changed her demeanour and tone, exclaiming "Can I get something off my chest?! The whole world [is] not gunna like me for saying this..." (DHQ Jonesy, 2014). She then went on to describe the inequities between Jamaican and non-Jamaican DHQs. In this instant and in the side-eye glances from other dancers in the room, I gained an idea of some of the discourse that was boiling under the surface for some of the dancers. When analysing such data, I needed to consider how my analysis could reify a problematic system of the white researcher 'translating' the ethnographic Other (Shea Murphy, 2007). In order to write reflexively about black bodies dancing, I needed to be sensitive to the boundaries of my writing practice. Looking at the writing of Shea Murphy and dance scholar Anthea Kraut (2011) I learnt about the need to refrain from 'speaking for' black subjects and instead to develop balanced points about the politics of their expression in relation to other forces and factors.

Visweswaran posits that "the process of knowing is itself determined by the relationship of knower to known" (1994: 48). Her statement highlights that any theoretical output is a product of the methodological particularities of the project undertaken. The way in which the researcher relates to the research participants and sites lays the ground for the ideas that develop out of the research. Not only does 'the relational' hold influence over the researcher's interpretation of events, but also the ideas produced amongst participants about the research and researcher. This affects how the participants interact with the researcher, what information they choose to disclose and how they disclose it, as well as how the experience is remembered.

2.4 Accountable Positionality

If we have learnt anything about anthropology's encounter with colonialism, the question is not really whether anthropologists can represent people better, but whether we can be accountable to people's own struggles for self representation and self determination.

(Visweswaran, 1994: 32)

As has been detailed, a researcher's positionality fundamentally impacts on how their research is carried out, thus an awareness of researcher subjectivity needs to be developed through a process of "accountable positioning" (Haraway, 1988). This involves confronting and developing an awareness of one's positionality and as Soyini Madison highlights, requires the researcher to "attend to how [their]... subjectivity in relation to others informs and is informed by... [their]... engagement and representation of others" (2012: 10). She further identifies that "positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects" (Soyini Madison, 2012: 8).

Although no one has written an extensive academic text about the politics of white women taking up space in dancehall, the discussion of white cultural appropriation looms large in dance studies (Shea Murphy, 2007; Kraut, 2011; DeFrantz, 2014; Monroe, 2014; Shay and Sellers Young, 2016). In order to develop a methodology for examining my researcher positionality I looked at examples within the dance ethnography literature. I focused specifically on texts wherein the researcher contends with the complexities of insider/outsider positionality, as I anticipated that this would be key to my methodology. This is because I am an insider to the extent that I have previous experience of the dancehall scene, however, I am also an outsider in several ways, due to my race, nation and profession – I am white, non-Caribbean and not a DHQ.

At the same time that I wanted to recognise my whiteness and acknowledge the limitations of my relationship to the field, I also recognised the way in which my work sits troublingly on the border of

white exceptionalism, as in my 'exceptional' position in writing about a black performance style as a white theorist. I needed to find a way to recognise the partiality of my perspective on black cultural practice and black feminism, but to also not focus so heavily on critiquing white participation in dancehall that I centralised whiteness in this study. I was inspired by the work of Shea Murphy (2007) on Native American Dance, as well as Kraut's (2011) work on the intersections between copyright, dance and race, and their respective focuses on paying necessary attention to either the role of their own racial identity or that of their white research subjects, without creating a discourse of victimisation or white exceptionalism.

In Shea Murphy's seminal introduction to her book "The People Have Never Stopped Dancing" (2007: 3) she discusses her own trepidation as a white researcher of Native American Dance, and the ethical:

limits of another book (only) about white choreographers' self-stagings as Indians, focused primarily, again, on white performers and foregrounding the problems of white cultural production, and leaving out the very voices and perspectives these performers themselves ignore.

Informed by Shea Murphy's position, I realise that it is imperative not to produce a project about a black performance practice that centralises whiteness, thus inadvertently perpetuating, rather than exposing, white privilege and detracting from the politics of a decolonial black cultural expression. I therefore concentrated on honing an approach that was focused on the movement and space of the in-between (Bhabha, 1994); between the black Jamaican, black European and white European dancers. In this way the project was not claiming to be another expert opinion on dancehall in Jamaica and neither was it shifting the focus to white cultural production. It was focused on the oceans that envelope and currents that connect these people and places. For this reason I focused on the case studies of Flava, Talent, DHQ Katie and DHQ Fraise and their trans-Atlantic connectivities and movements, through which I was able to study their impact in Europe and their perspectives as black Jamaican, white European and black European women. The thesis studied the different ways in which white bodies occupied black spaces in Jamaica and what they were able to do with that experience, in relation to the black Jamaican women who come to teach in Europe. The study was therefore not about one group of people but about the relationships between people in this intercultural system.

Other illuminating texts that helped shape my approach were Francesca Castaldi's book chapter (2006) titled, "*Choreographies of African Identities: Négritude, Dance and the National Ballet of Senegal*", in which I noted the transparency with which she exposes her researcher positionality. She clearly allows her own bias to be exposed by demonstrating how her subjectivity influences the reading of events. This text guided my own emphasis on transparency in the crafting of my

methodology and writing style. Also, Cindy Garcia's work (2008, 2013) aided in theorising the nuances and complexities of the insider/outsider positionality. As a self-identified red-head Latina, Garcia is both *inside* the salsa field she studies (as she identifies as Latin American), but appears to others as an *outsider* due to her white Caucasian features. Both of these authors deal with whiteness, relationships to processes of Othering and methods for theorising these complexities. These texts helped me to envision how to construct a methodology that, rather than ignoring race illuminates its complexities. In consideration of my positionality I focused on developing a research design that engaged reflexively with whiteness and centred dialogue. By doing this I was able to study the fieldwork engagements as sites of identity and power negotiation, even in moments of silence between myself and the dancers. Recognising the ways in which my whiteness and the participants' various racial identities played a role in the fieldwork enabled me to hone the method outlined above of speaking *with* and *about* the dancers without speaking *for* them. This reflexivity came into play, for example, during the research process when I watched dance performances online and registered various tensions between myself and the dancers due, in part, to the sociopolitical weight of our mediated kinaesthetic relationship as white and black spectators and performers. I critiqued this experience by noting both the availability of the dancer's commodified dancing body as visual objects of the Internet (Nakamura, 2008), but also recognising the black women's roles in curating their online self-image. I took heed of the fact that:

There is much at stake...in observing the ways that... women of color, members of linguistic and ethnic minority cultures, the global underclass- negotiate their identities as digital objects and in incremental ways move them toward digital subjecthood.

(Nakamura, 2008: 20)

Looking at the dynamics beyond an *active viewer/passive visual object* (Mulvey, 1975) paradigm involved acknowledging the dancers' manifestation of decolonial aesthetics and politics in their social media presence.

I also retained an open dialogue with the project participants about the racial and power politics involved in the study and took on board advice from dancers, teachers and theorists with experience of dealing with these dynamics, such as recognising the contributions and generosity of others to the research process. I also identified with Shea Murphy's rationale: "At the core of it all, I believed that what I was doing was more important than my own uncertainties." (p7). But in my case I was aware this could only be the case if my methodology was ethically sound and the research output, rather than producing further epistemic violence, was generative of a positive outcome. It was therefore crucial to keep in my mind's eye how the research contributes to dancehall culture itself and to harness opportunities to empower and support others in the scene. This can be in the form of offering

opportunities to dancehall practitioners to share their experiences with new audiences and offering access to the research outputs. Developing a writing style that does justice to the participants through a deep consideration of their actions in relation to their individual life circumstances, was also key to developing a sound methodology. This involves recognising that the dancers are not necessarily a united group –they have diverging aims and concerns – sometimes expressed agonistically, as explored in Chapter Five. As discussed, it also means acknowledging that identity politics produce difference.

2.5 Language

Considering the role of language in regard to one's methodology it is important to recognise the symbolic weight of the terminology used. The acronym 'DHQ', which I use in this thesis, is a commonplace shorthand used in the scene in marketing materials and on personal social media profiles. It bears a history dating back to the *original* DHQ Carlene, who was given the title before the DHQ competition came into existence. The use of the term *Queen* in DHQ culture can be perceived as a provocative title that connects the dancers to a notion of imperial feminine prowess and in so doing positions them within a socially hierarchical schema as the *haves* rather than the *have nots*. All the while this same title queers the empirical history, which entwines Jamaica and the United Kingdom.

The DHQ title is assigned to a female dancehall dancer who engages in the DHQ aesthetic, lifestyle and artistry. One's DHQ title is often self-ascribed; dancers create stage names with DHQ as the prefix, for example DHQ Fire and DHQ Flex. These names work to define their DHQ identity, which is often distinct from their 'ordinary' name and persona. As the DHQ title is usually self-assigned and does not require the dancer to have been crowned queen at a DHQ competition, I accordingly use the term to refer not only to competition winners (those officially *crowned* DHQ), but for all dancers who self-identify as a DHQ.

2.6 Multi-Sited Ethnography

Multi-sited ethnography is increasingly a suitable methodology for research into contemporary cultural phenomena, because it allows researchers to investigate the transnational flows of people and cultures. I chose to conduct a multi-sited ethnography as this serves the research's focus on the transnational and intercultural dynamics of contemporary DHQ culture. When undertaking a multi-sited ethnography, the concept of "participat[ing] in the daily routines of [the] setting" (Emerson, 1995: 1) takes on a new form. As the research participants are not located in a bounded location it is impossible to live alongside them all simultaneously for a substantial amount of time. Rather than being a problem, this is a symptom of contemporary cultural dynamics and evidences the need for a

robust multi-sited methodological approach. In designing such an approach for this study, I used the transnationality of the DHQ scene to drive the methods. With the identified focus on the connections between spaces, and the DHQs who move physically and virtually between them, the research needed to be placed between the various sites and to mirror the dancers' movements.

The digital terrain brings new forms of participation in the DHQ scene. This project looks at the role of virtual embodiment and the processes through which identities are developed in physical and virtual environments. To fulfil this intention the methodology involved researching dance activities online, and documenting specific forms of participation, for example the posting and circulation of videos and the visual culture surrounding such materials. It also involved asking dancers questions about the role of online networks in their DHQ lives. I was then able to study the relationship between these activities and physical dance practices in the analysis of how intercultural DHQ identities are forming in the scene.

2.7 Choosing Field Sites

The field sites chosen were Jamaica (specifically Montego Bay and Kingston), London and Vienna and SNSs as non-fixed virtual sites that can be theorised as being the connective tissue in-between the other sites. I chose these sites because I was aware of the body of literature surrounding the Black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993), as well as the historical relationship between Europe and the Caribbean, and dancehall as a postcolonial cultural manifestation (C. Cooper, 2004). Considering the lack of research on the more recent manifestations of DHQ culture in Europe and the pertinent questions this raised, I decided to focus the project on the relationship between women in dancehall in Europe and Jamaica. As outlined in the Introduction, this was also a connective space of which I had experiential knowledge, which was deemed useful for the research process.

Having identified the geographic focus, I was then required to consider more specifically where and how the investigation would take place. In the following sections I will discuss how the field sites were chosen in accordance with the theoretical and methodological concerns discussed above and give details of the methodological particularities of each site. Then I will discuss the specific methods used for conducting participant observations and interviews, and writing fieldnotes.

2.7.1 Vienna

In September of 2013 I began researching the European DHQ competition scene online and in conversation with European and Jamaican dancehall participants. I knew from recently published YouTube videos that DHQ competitions were taking place in Germany, Austria, the UK, France and

Russia. I researched details of upcoming events online and found that the next annual European DHQ Competition was to take place in November 2013 in Vienna, Austria. As I was at a very early stage in designing the project I decided to attend the event as a preliminary fieldwork trip. This was an opportunity to learn about the scene and make contact with DHQs from across Europe and witness them dancing.

I participated in the event as a 'coperforming' (Conquergood, 2002) spectator, investing in the emotional rollercoaster of the competition and allowing my pre-existing knowledge to guide my intuition toward particular instances and interactions. This led me to further develop the research questions as my observations raised my awareness to particular points of interest. For example, topics that came out of discussions with dancers, such as their experiences of embodied pleasure in the dance scene, and in Jamaica in particular, drove the investigation toward the theme of pleasure and dance tourism. Further, observations about how dancers described their online DHQ activities as vital to their DHQ journeys, yet crucially in dialogue with physically-embodied engagement, helped to shape the investigation into the relationship between physical and virtual embodiment in the scene. During the trip, I conducted four formal interviews with DHQs and fans and developed key relationships within the network. This experience drew the investigation toward an analysis of the relationship between interview data and observational data, as it was during this trip that distinctions and linkages between the sentiments of the dancers' verbal and embodied expressions began to emerge. This preliminary research experience led to the focus on embodiment. The diverse content of the observations and interviews conducted was also key to developing the case study approach, which is described later in this chapter.

2.7.2 Online

Crucially, I would not have known about the European DHQ Competition without social media. It was therefore important that I observed the online space to identify how it operates alongside and within the geographically fixed sites. This was key to investigating *how* DHQ culture is becoming transnational as I hypothesised that online visual cultures were crucial to the development of DHQ aesthetics and the development of network connections. This inclusion of the online as site indicated a theoretical concern for globally connective cultural flows (Appadurai, 1996) and in particular a form of connectivity that "Builds global affinities and solidarities through an irregular assortment of near and distant experiences" (Appadurai, 2013). These affinities are manifested through the work of a global urban poor population who, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai states, practice "the[ir] capacity to aspire" (2013). My research into the online black cultural traffic (Elam and Jackson, 2005) surrounding

dancehall that centres around black Jamaican women's dancing bodies, signals the capacity and the desire of these women to aspire.

The identification of the online as an integral 'field site' required specific methodological considerations. Whereas I was trained in popular dance and anthropological research methods, I was not experienced in the treatment of the digital. Through an investigation into topical digital studies literature, in particular Prell's (2006) notion of network capital and Doorn's (2011) analysis of virtuality, I found theories relating to virtual experience, but a lack of methodologies for investigating the role of embodiment in this realm. However, recent literature within the popular screen dance sector from Harmony Bench (2012, 2014, 2015), Melissa Blanco Borelli (2014), Elena Benthaus (2015) and Juliet McMains (2015) presented some methodological examples grounded more integrally in embodiment and dance studies. Bench's work, in particular has made a strong case for the need to seriously consider the potential for knowledge development in studies of dancing bodies on screen, in various of her contributions to the *International Journal of Screendance* (2012, 2015) and her book chapter analysing Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (2014).

Looking at my own research data, I identified the sharing of audiovisual materials via SNSs to be a key factor in processes of embodied connectivity across the virtual and physical sites of the DHQ scene. Drawing from Nakamura (2008) and Shah (2017), I considered which bodies were being presented audiovisually and the racialised visual culture surrounding them.

This project's investigation involved documenting who was involved in the scene, both offline and online, the visual culture of the material they produced online, and how this intersected with their offline DHQ personas. Studying this involved reading how race, class and sexuality were addressed in their virtual self-representations. Considering all of this I then looked at how the online work that the DHQs undertook to maintain aesthetic appeal and currency impacted on their network capital (Prell, 2006). In particular, I studied several Jamaican case studies looking at how they produced a black Jamaican visual culture and worked to centralise black embodied labour in the visual culture of intercultural dancehall.

I focused the virtual investigation on researching activities on Facebook and Instagram as these platforms are widely used by dancehall participants. Facebook provides dancers with a platform for sharing various media including text, images and videos, and Instagram is widely used for sharing pictures, videos and live video stories. I was already using Facebook and had pre-existing knowledge and connections with dancers via the website. I began using Instagram in 2015 and developed a network with dancers who I was already connected to via Facebook using the "recommended people

to follow” option. I conducted this research through active participation in activities such as watching, sharing, liking and commenting on circulating media. On Facebook I participated in private dancehall groups, pages and conversations where media and ideas also circulated, and this also led to my joining several WhatsApp groups dedicated to DHQs and dancehall classes in London. These activities allowed me to fulfil my aim of integrating into the virtual DHQ community. For ethical reasons, I declared my position to any of my Facebook 'friends' whose media I wished to use in the research.

I critically reflected on the power dynamics of the dialogical relationship between myself and my new DHQ Facebook 'friends'. Through the click of a button they had allowed me access to an abundant constant source of personal information. As 'friends' this information was technically in the private realm, yet often their activity on the site signalled that it was being used as a public space for professional marketing activity. This was particularly the case with individuals who had numerous Facebook accounts and where I was accepted as a friend to the professional 'public' profile, but not the 'private' supposedly more personal profile. On Instagram, however, many DHQs set up their profiles so that anyone can “follow” them without their authorisation. Although this provides a very low level of privacy, it means they often have thousands of followers, which translates to a quantitative form of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). These interpersonal dynamics highlighted the participants' innovative use of Facebook and Instagram as network platforms with creative and professional benefits. For example, the work of dancehall entrepreneur *Talent* works to situate her as a central gatekeeper between Jamaican dancehall and intercultural participants by posting videos of herself dancing dancehall in iconic world cities.

Choosing who to follow and which data to record for this study was based on several principles. I invested "in creat[ing] symmetry between [my]... use of resources and means of communication and the subject's" (Hine, 2000: 48). As I followed DHQs' online profiles and their activities on Instagram and Facebook, they appeared on my digital newsfeeds, which were organised by algorithms that were out of my control, but which enabled my access to mirror that of other participants who would also receive digital information in these ways. I paid particular attention to DHQs who I had contact with in other contexts, such as at competitions, events and classes. I also focused particularly on dancers from Europe and Jamaica rather than other nations and continents. I followed the activities of these dancers more closely by visiting their Facebook and Instagram profiles. I noted observable trends such as the heightened use of Facebook by European DHQs in the scene in comparison to Jamaican DHQs. Recognising who engages online, and how they engage, requires a sensitivity to the fact that

Rather than a 'digital divide' that definitively separates information haves from have-nots, the Internet has occasioned a wide range of access to digital visual capital,

conditioned by factors such as skill and experience in using basic Internet functions such as 'search' in addition to less-nuanced questions such as whether or not one possesses access at all.

(Nakamura, 2008: 18)

It was imperative that all of the activity online was considered in relation to this point. Recognition of how Jamaican dancers used the Internet to serve a decolonial political incentive, through the production of a visual culture that plays on the right to opacity (Glissant, 1990) vis-à-vis (hyper)visibility (Fleetwood, 2011), often in contention with issues in digital access, needed to be factored into conversations about privilege and cultural production in the scene. Jamaican women in dancehall, can be understood as negotiating a form of cosmopolitanism 'from below' (Appadurai, 2013), that is fuelled by an:

urge to expand one's horizons, of self and cultural identity and a wish to connect with a wider world... but... [it] does this without an abstract valuation of humanity or the world as a generally known or knowable place.

(Appadurai, 2013)

Collecting data in the form of online discussions, movement dynamics in the dancing, the processes through which the videos circulated, and the location and filming style, helped me to situate the online materials of Jamaican dancers alongside the dancers in Europe. Studying the interactions between the materials enabled me to draw a picture of the flows of information and power between the intercultural network participants.

In choosing which data to select and save for analysis I followed the principle: "what is it that I need to know about it to answer the questions or address the problem?" (Soyini Madison, 2012: 33). I looked at how individuals interacted with virtual space and with one another by observing details such as which videos, images and textual comments dancers chose to share, and via which platforms. I gathered information on how networks of relationships were established between dancers and which profiles were gaining visibility, via shares, followers and likes. I noted how the online dancing related to the dancing I was witnessing in classrooms and at dancehall events in the various physical sites. I tracked transformations in the style and narrative surrounding movements as they moved between contexts. I also documented affective viewing experiences, which involved reflecting on my experience of viewing dancehall online in relationship to my experiences at physical sites. Also, during interviews with dancers I questioned their experience of using SNSs. I later studied their responses in relationship to the question of the role of virtually-embodied connectivity in the scene, and what this reveals about DHQ culture in relation to questions surrounding cultural appropriation and the intercultural appreciation of dancehall as a black performance practice.

Although my participation was active, in the sense that I sought out these networks and positioned myself within them, the extent to which I overtly participated was minimal as I largely participated as a silent observer. Although my presence was not covert, it is notable that "Ethnographers in cyberspace can... lurk in a way that face-to-face ethnographers cannot readily achieve..." (Hine, 2000: 48), due to the structure of SNSs allowing individuals to view pages without sending any signal to others as to their presence. I chose not to share many of my ideas via comments as a way of minimising the impact that my presence had on the field. Similarly to when conducting interviews, I was more interested in gaining insights into the indigenous meanings, than asserting my own theories at this stage. Simultaneously, I critically reflected on this positionality that offered the comfort of being less visible and at the same time the ability to be inside the live action as it took place on my newsfeed. I was aware that this positionality gave me a voyeuristic power, which as a researcher I found disconcerting and drove me to further scrutinise these dynamics in order to strengthen my strategies for ethical participation. I developed the strategy of selecting materials that read as distinctly 'public' and critically reflecting on the implications of me using them on a case by case basis. All the while I was aware that my experience of access in this virtual terrain mirrored the experiences of many other participants in the scene.

2.7.3 Jamaica

As the project's focus is on DHQs, visiting the site of the largest most influential DHQ competition was an obvious choice; I therefore went to Montego Bay, Jamaica, for the International DHQ Competition in August 2014. In preparation for this research trip I paid attention to the pre-existing narratives about the island that I had access to, and reflected on my positionality in relationship to these narratives. For example, I noted that I had heard 'stories' about Jamaica as a place associated with an Anglophone Caribbean culture, understood colloquially in the Global North as 'ghetto', 'dangerous' and 'cool', which situated the country within a discourse of Otherness (Bhabha, 1994) and overdetermined blackness. Considering my awareness of these tropes raised questions about how national narratives operate in the scene; how they are presented in Europe, and how they influence the dancers who make up the focus of this study. It also raised questions about my pre-conceptions of the scene and how this might shape the research process. I critically reflected on this in order to counter my bias and used this information, in conjunction with the textual sources covering this (Kraut, 2011; Shea Murphy, 2007, Castaldi, 2006) to theorise the ethnographic encounter.

My focus in Montego Bay was the International DHQ Competition, and the relationships between the European and Jamaican dancers who were also involved. I studied how the European dancers were received by Jamaican dancers, how the European dancers related to the Jamaican dancers and the

impact and implications of these interactions. I also, later, looked at how the European and Jamaican dancers' participation in the physical scene in Jamaica impacted their presence and activities in Europe and online.

I was invited to observe the DHQs during rehearsals at the event organiser's mansion. I noted my reaction as I entered this grand home and came upon a scene of DHQs in a domestic space helping one another prepare their costumes for the event, which was to take place three days later. Later that day, and the next, I observed the dancers rehearsing in groups and noted the ways in which they were divided by nationality. I followed the activities as they took place, taking breaks to compose jottings and record observations. I also conducted several interviews during this period, which I describe in more detail below.

At the International DHQ Competition I was given backstage access. I chose to move between the various areas of the space available to me; taking time to observe and interact with the DHQs as they prepared their costumes, warmed-up and psychologically prepared for the event. I also took time to observe and interact with the crowd, the organisers and the judges. I recorded the performances via a digital camera and wrote observational jottings about the performances, including the relationships created between performer and audience during the event. I also noted sounds, music, scenery, and snippets of conversation around me, as well as the dancers' dynamics, focus, styling, movement vocabulary, costumes and use of space.

In addition to Montego Bay, I also conducted fieldwork in Jamaica's capital city of Kingston as this is dancehall's place of origin and is the geographic and cultural crux of dancehall production. I initially entered the Kingston scene by attending dance classes at the Jamaican Dancehall School (JDS). Here I met European dancers –white and black – who had travelled to Jamaica to experience and learn about dancehall. Attending classes alongside other visitors and under the tuition of Jamaican teachers enabled me to engage corporeally with the dance and the other dancers. I was then invited to attend dancehall parties in Kingston with groups made up of dancehall teachers, international students and their transnational entourages. Attending the parties alongside these individuals gave me the opportunity to observe the dancehall scene in Kingston and to physically engage with other dancers as we moved in the space together.

2.7.4 London

London was chosen as a field site because of its pivotal role in the postcolonial connection between Europe and the Caribbean, and also as it hosts a popular and highly active dancehall scene. The fieldwork in this location involved conducting participant observations at dancehall classes and

performance events and studying how media from these events circulated online. I also interviewed several dancehall practitioners – teachers and students – who live in the city, to investigate its role in their lives from personalised case study perspectives.

2.8 Observations and Fieldnotes

When doing participant observations my focus was on locating and interpreting indigenous meanings. As Emerson argues the "object of participation is ultimately to get close to those studied as a way of understanding what their experiences and activities *mean to them*" (1995:6). I documented my experiences in the field by writing extensive fieldnotes. Writing fieldnotes, during and after fieldwork, is essential to the ethnographic process because it allows memories and ideas to flow and develop and instigates the forming of analyses. However, as Emerson (1995: 10) notes, "Nearly all ethnographers feel torn... between their research commitments and their desire to engage authentically." Writing fieldnotes at the wrong time can have a detrimental impact on the fieldwork; taking a notepad out at an inappropriate moment can "plant seeds of distrust" (Emerson, 1995: 10) among the participants. This highlights the need for thorough consideration of how to engage dialogically in the field. One needs to account for environmental factors and to be adaptable to different ways of working. Sometimes writing notes is inappropriate because the researcher is expected to participate fully in the event and at other times it creates barriers, because the participants see the act of note-taking as alien, or as an authoritative threat. Indeed, within the dancehall scene, which is underpinned by a rejection of upper-class regimes of power, the overt act of taking notes during social dance activities is both alien and threatening, as it symbolises a formality aligned to upper-class Jamaican sociality. Even when participants have been informed about the purpose of the research and the researcher's role has been outlined, some members may remain unclear about the researcher's position due to cultural or language barriers (Emerson, 1995: 11). This was sometimes the case in this study. Thus, whilst observing and participating in events I used interactional skills to judge the appropriateness of taking notes in the moment.

When I did choose to write in the field I wrote 'jottings' – descriptive accounts and evocations designed to jog the memory at a later stage. Writing jottings involves attending to sensory information, for example, hearing music, looking at the scenery or feeling the sweaty wetness of a labouring dancer's body as she moves past you. The focus of my jottings was driven by my intuition regarding what I believed would be helpful to recall. I evoked this intuition by asking myself what is striking; what am I sensing, what catches other people's attention, what do they talk about and focus their energy on, and what produces a strong emotional response (Emerson, 1995). Not all of the jottings went on to be integral to the research analysis, rather the act of jotting was treated as a part

of the research process that enabled reflection and information filtering to take place, in preparation for analysis.

I chose to engage in the field with a deliberate concern for participating as fully as others (Conquergood, 2002), in order to not visibly detach myself from activities and minimise the intimidating impact of my presence. As Emerson writes: "in valuing more natural, open experience of others' worlds and activities, field researchers seek to keep writing from intruding into and affecting these relationships" (1995: 9). Active participation enables the researcher to experience events through the kinaesthetic sense, which was key to this study's research design.

I brought embodied knowledge to the fore of the investigation by observing both my own embodied state and observing the embodied enunciations of others. During classes I observed the teaching styles and relationships between dancers and students, noting details such as the style of movement chosen, the focus on improvisation or choreography, and the sharing of details about the moves and cultural context. I observed individual dancers' movements and considered what these suggested about the dancers' emotional or physical experiences of intensities such as anguish or pleasure. I interrogated relationships between dancers by analysing their body language and facial expressions when they interacted with one another and with me.

I looked at how my movement, experiences and observations in each context related to that which took place in other sites. For example, when I was taught a dance move in a classroom in London that I had previously seen at a party in Jamaica I examined how the experience felt in my body. Was I stirred to move with the same sense of investment and dynamics, or was it different? I observed how the movement was received by the other students in the class. As mentioned earlier, during the DHQ competitions I looked at individual and interpersonal negotiations of identity – primarily through observing the performance styles used and the relationships between participants. I paid attention to whether performances appeared choreographed or improvised, and the movement vocabulary and qualities employed.

During the viewing of online videos, I observed the *mise-en-scene* of the production, the role of the camera and the dancers' relationship to the lens. I observed which dance movements were popular, how they were circulating to become so, the visual culture they produced and how this created a specific aesthetic of race, class and sexuality, in particular visible black female pleasure. In aim of documenting affective details, I also noted my experience in watching – how did it feel to watch the dancers via a screen? Did I find it more or less accessible than in other contexts? What sense of connectivity did I feel to the dance and the wider dancehall community in this context? By looking at

the quality of participants' movements, as well as that of my own movement and viewing experience, I was later able to use this information to construct and articulate concepts regarding the way in which the white European, black European and black Jamaican dancers each use the online space, and how this related to their broader constructions of DHQ identities.

2.9 Case Studies

As this project is concerned with developing an understanding of the significance of DHQ experiences between Jamaica and Europe I used case study methods for the engagement with participants, which enabled me to develop in-depth knowledge of several dancers' individual embodied, virtual and sociocultural experiences. In her study of the salsa scene McMains (2015) uses an approach, whereby she looks at key individuals who have a strong presence online, and how this impacts on their realities offline. She states that "the physical travel of salsa teachers was to a large extent enabled by their virtual travel over the Internet" (p268). A similar approach was taken within this study, wherein the decision was made to focus on case studies whose experience was inextricably related to the research focus on the connectivity between field sites. The dancers who make up the case study participants are a small segment of the DHQ community; although they range in positionalities, they are not representative of the full range of DHQ positionalities. As discussed in the subsequent chapters, there is a vast range in DHQs' access to geographic mobility and digital engagement.

All of the interview participants were offered anonymity in the study, which was implemented through the use of pseudonyms for people's names and the names of companies and dance moves that have been accredited to a specific individual in the dancehall community. Some of the participants requested for their right to anonymity to be waived and these requests were considered on ethical grounds on a case by case basis. If it was deemed that revealing the individual's true identity posed no clear risk to themselves or others, it was deemed an acceptable request and was therefore accepted.

An additional ethical consideration concerned using quotes that were taken from the online ethnographic research. It was deemed ethical to request permission from individuals who had, for example, posted a comment of a personal nature on a SNS that I wanted to use as data in the study. This was because, although the data had been disseminated into the public domain, I had an ethical responsibility to consult them on its use in an academic context.

2.10 Conducting Interviews: Techniques and Attributes

During interviews a key aim was to create opportunities for participants to be verbally expressive, as this provided a platform for them to communicate in words that which they commonly express kinaesthetically. This offered them a chance to be heard within the essentially patriarchal arena of linguistics (Hellinger, 1989; Lorde, 1978). Conquergood explains:

most academic disciplines... have constructed a Mind/Body hierarchy of knowledge corresponding to the Spirit/Flesh opposition so that mental abstractions and rational thought are taken as both epistemologically and morally superior to sensual experience, bodily sensations, and the passions.

(1991: 180)

The participants' verbal expressions reference their embodied knowledge, and gathering this information enhanced the project's ability to document and analyse the physical dancing act. Soyini Madison explains "The interview is a window to individual subjectivity and collective belonging" (2012: 28). By listening to what the dancers say about their own dancing experience, I was able to discuss the dance in view of their subjective viewpoints. I designed interview questions which referenced the study's core research questions, as well as additional sub-topical areas that transpired during observations or previous interviews. Most of the interviews were semi-structured with pre-prepared questions used to guide the conversation, but with unanticipated topics brought up by the interviewee also encouraged. At other times interviews took the form of informal conversations, which would often take place during events. Rather than including the interview questions as appendices, I describe their structure in this chapter and their content in the subsequent chapters. I chose this method of presentation due to the variations in interview formats and in how they were recorded, from being filmed to being recounted from memory. This presentation method allows me to contextualise each interview. This, I decided, was preferable to presenting complete transcripts of some interviews and only partial transcripts of others.

An aim of the interview is to gather qualitative information from the perspective of the participants' unique standpoint. Soyini Madison (2012: 28) identifies three forms of ethnographic interviews – oral history, personal narrative and topical. The interviews conducted for this study involved a combination of these forms, but concentrated mostly on personal narratives and topical conversations. Due to the research focus on dancers' experience, the questions focused mainly on their memories and feelings. Soyini Madison posits that in such instances "The interviewer is concerned not with the truth or validity of a phenomenon, but with how a person feels about it or is emotionally affected by it" (2012: 30). I found it helpful to ask additional questions about the embodied sensations involved in their experience, inciting them to describe, from memory, their visceral and corporeal experiences, with emphasis on a "felt, sensing account of history" (Soyini Madison, 2012: 34). These could then be

placed in dialogue with my participant observations to identify how my observations related to the participants' accounts. Oftentimes I felt that responses to these kinds of sensory questions were vague or lacking in detail. This may have been partly due to a lack of experience of being asked to describe their sensory experience of dancing, but it may, as I will discuss later in relation to the notion of silence, also have been due to a desire to with-hold information from me. In considering how to attend to this I was informed by Fleetwood's (2011) analysis of how silence can be understood to be in dialogue with a black woman's experience of hypervisibility. In her analysis of performances involving excess flesh by black women, she argues it is imperative to recognise how these often function to "explicitly display and yet reveal very little" (Fleetwood, 2012: 429). She explains that, when such performances involving excess flesh are analysed within their performative visual contexts, they reveal acts of with-holding. For example, she notes how Rihanna uses closed eyes to combat the gaze of an over-zealous aggressive media presence. In relation to this idea, I argue that many black women in dancehall use performative tactics, such as producing explicitly eroticised visuality that is so aggressive that it boycotts their own vulnerability in performance. The DHQ persona is so lavish and exudes such an abrupt display of physical capital in a kind of transactional form, that she refuses the power of the viewers' critique over her.

My approach to negotiating the interpersonal dynamics between myself and the participants was informed by Shea Murphy's (2007) positioning of herself as a privileged white researcher among non-white participants who treat her with trepidation. She explains that she gave "special weight to the stated intentions..." of the participants, but "At the same time [her] goal was not to present a neutral view" (p7-8). Also important is her point that the Native American dances she was researching "really aren't about the pre-dominantly non-Native viewers watching" (p8), which I relate to the decolonial politics of black Jamaican women's dancehall performance. Yet, in the case of this project, I acknowledge that intercultural DHQ performance by Jamaican and European dancers is produced through cultural dialogue.

The way in which I centred the participants' own voices and intentions involved having an openness to the various ways in which the research could develop and/or how it can take a different course – be derailed – by the research participants. It was important that I allowed this to take place and that I made intellectual space for these interjections as this, I read, was a way for the dancers to challenge me to work harder and to contend with my own privilege in writing this thesis. If I was to represent them I needed to figure out what was going on between silence and hypervisibility and the contradictions of pleasure and pain. Only then could I be considered to be in a qualified position to speak about (and never for) these women.

Questions regarding subject knowledge, opinions and values were also asked. I often used what anthropologist James Spradley (1979) refers to as '*native language questions*', which are based on the interviewer's subject knowledge, for example I asked dancers what the term 'Dancehall Queen' means to them and used vocabulary such as 'vibes'; both of which are native to dancehall culture. I also asked '*quotation questions*' wherein I quoted individuals or common hearsay within the scene and asked participants how they would respond to these points. Blanco Borelli contends:

Some stories are told over and over so many times that they become a type of truth which has real material affects in people's lives, in their embodied memories.

(2015: 60)

The use of native language and 'stories' during interviews is an example of my focus on participating in the scene as a copperforming (Conquergood, 2002) researcher, by following its etiquette practices and addressing the current circulation of ideas. Formulating such questions involved the employment of pre-existing knowledge regarding the language and social themes present in the scene.

Essential to interview technique is the ability to build rapport with the interviewee. Soyini Madison uses the phrase "mindful rapport" to describe a researcher's awareness of the importance of "feeling[s] of comfort, accord, and trust..." (2012: 39), between interviewer and interviewee. Mindful rapport requires the researcher to be patient and understanding, to express empathy and avoid judgment. When I needed to gain more understanding of a statement I would gently ask follow-on questions, explaining the reason for asking, but only if it felt safe. I took embodied and verbal cues from the interviewees as to whether they felt comfortable to delve further into a topic. I was mindful of being sensitive to their behaviour and to look for signs. For example, if they were silent, or particularly rigid, or if they changed the subject from that which I opened, I was mindful that this could be because they were uncomfortable or did not want to share certain information, so I allowed them to change the focus. If the interviewee chose to speak about difficult emotions still, I followed Soyini Madison's advice to be caring and "listen... with sympathy, [and] follow... the narrators pace" (p42). This helped to create a safe space for the participants to share their thoughts and feelings. I also pre-empted areas that were more likely to cause discomfort and took steps to reduce this. For example, I came to interviews with both a dictaphone and video camera and, although I preferred to have a video recording, I gave interviewees a choice between being videoed or, if they preferred, being voice recorded only. I also explained in advance that they did not have to answer a question if they did not want to and had no obligation to participate.

Soyini Madison (2012) draws attention to the fact that many ethnographers will be faced with their own naivety of the field when conducting interviews and observations. She highlights the usefulness

of naivety, which is that one "must rely with humility on others and trust upon the knowledge of knowers" (39). She also identifies that the positive acknowledgement of such naivety involves a "grasping [of]... what we do not know with integrity, intelligence, and conviction" (2012: 39). Della Pollock writes of her experience as ethnographic researcher:

In the course of talking with and writing about the many people who contributed... I more often than not felt unnerved and overwhelmed, 'othered', interrogated, propelled into landscapes of knowing and not knowing I would not otherwise have dared enter.

(1999: 23)

In my experience in the field I learnt that positive naivety required me to make myself vulnerable to being moved (Pollock, 1999: 23), and engage closely with the unnerving areas, particularly in order to unlock newly valuable experiences, which in turn informed the investigation. Identifying and analysing what one does not know can help raise the researcher's awareness of their positionality within the field, which contributes to the process of interpreting data with integrity. For example, it is important to acknowledge that one cannot assume a participant's internal state, but rather can document what the participants themselves say about it and place this alongside the researcher's observations to create meaning. In other words the researcher speaks *about* the subject, not *for* the subject.

2.11 Writing-up: Listening to Data and Interpreting Silence

[F]ieldnotes are written accounts that filter members' experiences and concerns through the person and perspectives of the ethnographer.

(Emerson, 1995: 6)

It was often directly after research events that I would write extensive descriptive observations. These were then placed alongside other materials, such as recordings and interview transcripts to create a dialogical relationship between the data. The descriptions were developed from memory of events using video recordings and jottings as reminders. I wrote thick description (Geertz, 1973) of all that I sensed; what I saw, heard, smelt, felt and tasted. I paid attention to the participants' body postures and quality of speech during our interactions as embodiments of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). I described gestural action and the organisation and movement of bodies in space. I documented the roles people played, for example as dancers, singers, cameramen, DJs or audience members. I noted data such as the number of people in each role and their observable age, ethnicity and gender. In this way, the methodological and theoretical processes were grounded in the descriptive writing and the interpretative process was given transparency.

Once I had compiled extensive fieldnotes I began a deep analysis of the research materials. This requires, as Emerson writes, a "shift [in] gears" (1995: 19) and the main effort of the investigation moves to analysing in a more comprehensive way than before. Emerson explains that "putting an idea or intuition into a concrete, relatively concise word or phrase helps stimulate, shape and constrain the fieldworker's thinking and reflection" (p20). Analysing data fluidly helps to develop links between events, interviews and ideas. Soyini Madison (2012) advocates the method of developing cluster categories (codes) according to places, people and key issues and comparing topics within a cluster. The notion of comparing and contrasting was useful for the analysis within this research project. Clusters identifying collective rhetorical standpoints and embodied values amongst participants were developed, as well as clusters based on demographics, in particular national identity and race. OneNote and Mind Map technologies, as well as hand-written notes and diagrams were used in the clustering process to help develop clarity and display relational connections between data. Using the terminology from within the words and phrases that I, or participants, had adopted as code names was a helpful way to keep the analysis grounded in the materiality of the data. The clustering method helped develop clear and distinct themes and linkages between data, which went on to underpin and inform the investigation's analysis. This, in conjunction with the textual research, allowed the development of the key themes within the study, in particular *bruk out* feminism, and the decolonial aesthetics of with-holding and opacity (Glissant, 1990).

The clustering method points toward coding primarily through the information drawn from interviews. However, in accordance with the move toward embodiment I chose to draw the interview data into dialogue with observations of dance data. As highlighted in the section above on embodied writing, honouring the primacy of the dancing body as knowledge source in dialogue with spoken discourse, allows for a methodology that is concerned with how the body expresses meaning in tandem, but also autonomously, from language. There is within this methodology a politics of preserving the silent subject. Ethnographic ideals have recently moved away from the silent subject, due to the issue of participants being too often 'spoken for' by researchers. This is a positive ethical move within ethnographic research and one that this research supports, as it recognises that giving volume to participant experience is key. However, I would like to also open up the nuance of silence as resistive performance, rather than assuming it is the consistent sign of oppression. Visweswaran asks: "does not my puncturing of a carefully maintained silence replicate the same moves of a colonial anthropology?" (1994: 60). She positions silence as a social act to be studied alongside verbal expression and suggests

investigat[ing] when and why women do talk, to assess the strictures placed on their speech; the avenues of creativity they have appropriated, the degrees of freedom they

possess. Perhaps then a feminist ethnography can take the silences among women as the central site for the analysis of power between them. We can begin to shape a notion of agency that, while it privileges speaking, is not reducible to it.

(p51)

DHQs commonly favour embodied forms of expression and communication. The rigorous pronunciation of themes that the dancers articulate corporeally is sometimes contrasted with linguistic vagueness. During interviews, some dancers, in particular black European dancer Katie appeared unsure of how to express herself verbally, and others were compliant but appeared to avoid depth and sincerity. Many of the dancers, Jamaican and European, engaged in the activity with a newness that suggested a lack of experience, as if oral expression was marginal to their identity production. Even those who embraced the opportunity to be aurally heard often expressed discomfort in articulating that which they knew corporeally. As suggested above, racial dynamics need to be taken into account here in relation to my whiteness and many of the participants' blackness. My outsider status was also highlighted due to my etiquette – use of language and comportment – which influenced how relatable I was to the participants. These identity politics particularly came to the fore when interviewing black Jamaican dancers, because as I mentioned above, the dancehall scene in Jamaica largely rejects 'uptown' sensibilities, which I, a white European, educated woman, in many ways represent. Also, English literacy and fluency on the part of the participants sometimes also had an impact, as some participants did not speak much English. My expectation to do the interviews in English, on reflection, was itself a colonising act, which I could have worked to counter by providing translators.

Due to the contradictions between some of the interviews and performance observations, I deemed it valuable to situate them alongside one another in analysis. Without the involvement of embodied utterances, the participants' silences and stutters cannot be fully apprehended. As Visweswaran identifies: "if we do not know how to 'hear' silence, we cannot apprehend what is being spoken" (1994: 51). In this study, it was by identifying how spoken word, or carefully crafted silence, interacted with embodied expression and online visual production, that the interview data became meaningful. For example, it was important to identify that interviewees' minimal responses to my questions were often juxtaposed with a sense of hypervisibility elsewhere; as Fleetwood (2011) argues, this suggests that silence is being used as a tool here – through the power of with-holding – as a way to retain ambiguity and assert control over her own narrative. The thesis analyses the racialised performative nature of the exchanges in relation to the idea that with-holding can be a decolonial method of exercising the right to opacity (Glissant, 1990). Considering how the data spoke to one another in these ways enabled the project to move beyond researcher/participant communication and expand

to also include conversations between orality and corporeality. A method of analysis that attends to the nuances of the embodied interview, is to present the content of the interview with a description of the interviewee's own words. Soyini Madison urges critical ethnographers to "highlight... [and] redescr[e]b[e]... the remembered textures, smells, sounds, tastes, and sights rendered through story and performance" (2012: 36). An example of this methodology can be seen in Blanco Borelli's (2015) text. As she describes meeting an interviewee she writes:

When she opened the door she apologized for her appearance. She wore a white nightgown and said she had spent too much of the morning attending to her elderly mother so she was unable to get ready for my visit.

(Blanco Borelli, 2015: 56)

This descriptive form was equally fitting and complimentary for the discussion of interviews and participant interaction within *this* project. It enabled the text to attend to the coperformative quality of the interactions between myself and the participants – the words said, the words *not* said, and the bodies in motion that punctuated, situated, and gave life to the oral dialogue.

In interpreting the research data it became clear that each participant had a unique story and a different version of history to share. I treated the variations in the histories between participants as evidence of Soyini Madison's assertion that "Memory is a site of struggle for competing meanings" (2012: 38). I attended to the sociality of memory in order to interpret how and why things were assigned meaning. What was of value for documentation and analysis was both that which was remembered and *how* it was remembered. I allowed accounts that differed from one another to stand alone as informative material in regard to their unique standpoint. Emerson explains that

finding only one example would be a problem if the... researcher's purpose were to make claims about frequency or representativeness. But frequency is only one dimension for analysis... The ethnographer seeks to identify patterns and variations in relationships and in the ways that members understand and respond to conditions and contingencies.

(1995: 28)

When dealing with diverging accounts of events I was not particularly interested in verifying the validity of individual claims, but in discovering the reasons why dancers remembered events and narrated their experiences in certain ways. This was because the latter was useful in helping to unpick how the scene is symbolically constituted and layered with meanings by the participants themselves.

At the analysis stage there were choices to be made about which information was to be left out. This sorting process was driven by asking which materials were informative to the investigation's core

questions and which were tangential. Sometimes a whole cluster of data was not included in the final analysis, not because it was not rich, but because it spoke to different research questions, outside the parameters of the study. In addition, as Soyini Madison states; "Every researcher is unique, so it is expected that you will pick and choose, select and sort, and blend and combine what is useful for you" (2012: 43). This does not mean the process was done at random, or with an over-emphasised bias, but simply through a sorting method that involved decision making on the part of the researcher. At this stage, some of the initially anticipated themes became largely unrelated and new unpredicted themes began to emerge such as the digitizing of race. Some of the themes that became present in the research, such as issues surrounding appropriation and divisions between dancehall activities in Europe and Jamaica I had anticipated, due to my knowledge of pre-existing disciplinary concepts in the field. However, I found that these themes did not always 'fit' within the research as I had previously expected and required either a completely new perspective based on the particularities of the data. Inspired by the various themes, I began to entertain broader concepts and analyses relating to the research questions about feminism in the DHQ community, documenting them as they developed.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the question of how this research project was undertaken, looking at the specific methods used and their conceptual underpinnings. It highlights the interpersonal foundation that the ethnographic research rests upon, because the notion of subjective experience is a core theme across the project. It provides a detailed account of the broad theoretical considerations of *self-reflexivity, dialogical embodied writing, and accountable positioning* that inform this study's methodology. The chapter highlights the relationship between the theory and methods involved, so as to illustrate how the various considerations and practices that make up the methodology act as a part of a symbiotically constituted whole.

The chapter's reflection on how my positionality as researcher, and as a white European woman, was taken into consideration in designing the research focus and methods, helps to clarify the exact way in which awareness of difference was recognised in the research design. Through a discussion of the impact of researcher positionalities and in outlining the concept of immersive copformance (Conquergood, 2002), the chapter posits that my role as insider/outsider to the chosen field enabled me to conduct the research through an embodied approach, focusing on dialogical relationships, tension, rapport and vulnerability.

A key theme that the chapter identifies, is how the research brought together embodied methodologies with virtuality. It highlights that the choice to draw on embodied expressions as a data

source was driven by the prominence of embodied knowledge in the scene itself. The chapter begins to explain that the embodied approach was crucial not just to examining the offline activities, but in understanding the currency of embodiment in virtual environments also – a theme that is explored in more depth in the following chapters.

In considering the relationships between interview and performance data the chapter highlights the role of feminine silence in the DHQ scene. I address the need to consider these 'silences' through a reading of the body, in order to fulfil the methodological aim of being accountable to the participants' own representations of themselves. This chapter thus offers virtual ethnography, and ethnographic methodologies in general, a reflective account of the specific methods and processes involved in developing an embodied methodology, using dance studies research skills in analysis of contemporary intercultural feminine cultures.

Accumulatively, through its discussion of broad theoretical concerns, in conjunction with details regarding fieldwork, writing techniques, conducting interviews, and reviewing data, the chapter outlines how the research design has accounted for the variety of data. It demonstrates how research ethics, valuing participants' intuitions, and dialogue between myself and the participants were at the core of the project design and how the data was theoretically analysed through a critical process of organising and analysing materials.

Chapter 3: The Dancehall Network

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces case studies from the ethnographic fieldwork to examine the intercultural dancehall network. It analyses how several Jamaican dancers use the systems of racialisation and the overdetermination of gender as tools in their methods of subverting cultural powers and flows of influence. In this analytical frame I am guided by Fleetwood's drive to

...move away from an analysis of how dominant visual culture represents black women to a focus on black female cultural producers' engagement with the image of black female excessiveness and their critique of the racializing and gender apparatuses of the visual field.

(2011: 109)

This chapter focuses on the digital labour of black Jamaican and black European DHQs in the visual cultures they create, and how white European women position themselves in relation to these aesthetics and politics.

Since the rise of the DHQ icon in the late 1980s, through to the years when this study was carried out (2014-2019), the dancehall scene has gone through some tremendous transformations. The rise of screen technology and social media have caused this once niche subcultural (Hebdige, 1979) manifestation to extend its roots outside of Jamaican national spaces and this growing international popularity reverberates within the Jamaican context as well. Niaah (2010: 99-101) notes that in 2002 seventy percent of contestants at the International DHQ competition in Jamaica claimed to represent Kingston or St. Catherine (both provinces in Jamaica). However, in 2014 this figure was much lower with approximately twenty-five percent identifying as Jamaican. Despite these developments dancehall and DHQ culture remain synonymous with Jamaica. This chapter investigates these contiguous elements of dancehall and DHQ culture, asking how and why it remains unquestionably aligned with a Jamaican national identity, whilst simultaneously developing new cultural nexi across the globe.

The chapter analyses the international DHQ scene as a millennial cultural movement that has emerged in tandem with the information age and network societies (Castells, 1996). The question of how virtual and physically co-present DHQ practices are experienced corporeally by participating dancers is key to the investigation. To explore this question, the chapter studies the structure of the DHQ scene and the role of bodies in its internal workings, looking particularly at how black bodies continue to be central to the scene's cultural production and further how white bodies engage with the hypervisible

black body in the scene. It does this by charting the key areas of embodied activity that make-up the network strands linking Jamaica and Europe, including social interactions, performances, lessons, and sharing of televisual and online dance media. It examines how the Internet and televisual media are woven into the DHQ network of activity and support intercultural connectivities, which in turn help to shape a nationalised aesthetic of 'Jamaicanness'. As well as charting the mobility of the dancers as they navigate between virtual and physical experiences, the chapter also looks at how differentials in the degrees of access that participants have to these experiences, create disjunctures between the various strands of the network.

This chapter's overarching theme is the relationship between dancehall's introspective Jamaicanness and its interculturalism – both within the indigenous dance culture in Jamaica and its global interpretations. At its heart this theme is centred on a discourse of black performance and its engagement by black and white intercultural subjects. It examines how these strands of the network are connected through complex ties, geopolitical and sociocultural flows (Appadurai, 1996, 2013), and desires (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977). The theorisation of desire traces the legacy of colonialist pleasure inclinations, as they are corporeally (re)imagined by white DHQs. The concept of the 'desiring machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977), is used to theorise the macro dimensions of the social, cultural and political influences that shape the multi-directional desiring processes involved in intercultural dancehall culture. The chapter examines the power dynamics that shape the dancehall desiring machine, by looking at existing inequities in experiencing the virtually-embodied, and globally-mobile, dancehall body. It identifies various responses to these power relations. Firstly, a response from black Jamaican women to curate hypervisible black visual culture that enables them to act as gatekeepers and control inclusion and exclusion of white practitioners. Secondly, it identifies that many white practitioners perpetuate a blind privilege, benefiting from black performance in ways that are damaging to black women's lives. Finally, I recognise a networked response to these power relations between black and white, Jamaican and European women, in the shape of *reflexive interculturalism*, which is theorised as a dancer-motivated drive to decolonise intercultural exchange.

The chapter studies the sociocultural connectivities operating in the millennial manifestations of dancehall culture, using the concept of network capital, which is "a specific type of social capital... [that typically relates to] ... collaborative practices emerging from e-enabled human networks" (Acevedo, 2007: no page). The concept of social capital derives from philosopher Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) theorisation of 'The Forms of Capital', which include economic, cultural and social/symbolic capital. Put simply, social capital is understood here as a measure of a person's influence and 'knownness' within a specific society. This study investigates how network capital is developed by key

individuals in the dancehall network, who cultivate connectivity with other individuals through cosmopolitan poor (Appadurai, 2013) forms of enterprise.

There are several key terms¹⁰ used in this chapter which each require a definition, in order to maintain clarity and precision in their application. The first term is *immersion*. According to Mitra (2016) immersion is an “embodied, psycho-physical state that transpires interstitially between any audience, any artist and any art that is primarily premised on gestural dimensions of communication” (p89). In gaming research the theory of 'sensorial immersion' is often used to signify the possibility of feeling enveloped by something, (in relation to a 'surrounded in liquid' sense), without physically being so (Farrow and Iacovides, 2014). Farrow and Iacovides (2014) assert that immersion in digital contexts can be understood through philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception (1962) theory, which argues that one's relationship to the world is perceptual and results from one's individualised and embodied form of "being in the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 148). I use the term immersion in relation to the dancehall network to signify the perception of being enveloped within a dance community or scene, as a result of virtual or physically co-present dialogical embodied engagements. I use the term 'immediacy' to signify the embodied closeness, accessibility and visceral connectivity felt by dancers as a result of these immersive experiences. Hansen's (2006) concept of 'being with' is used to ground the notion of immersion in both physical and virtual contexts. It is applied to experiences of togetherness, that are invoked by seeing, hearing and feeling others, and reciprocally being seen, heard and felt by others. In analysis of these experiences I focus on dancers' feelings of being significant in the experiences of others and how this impacts their experiences of interculturalism.

In analysis of the various forms of intersubjective connectivity in the network I draw from Ellison et al.'s (2010) theory of 'ties', which is useful because it helps to visualise the network of connections

¹⁰ Another set of terms used in this chapter that require some attention are those that describe the relationship between bodies and the various realities that they engage with. In this thesis I have opted to use 'physical', 'online/offline' and 'virtual', because these are the least open to misinterpretation and extrapolation out of the available terms (which also include 'in-person' and 'concrete'). 'Physical' is relatively unambivalent in its reference to objective matter, and 'virtual' helpfully invokes the in-betweenness of digital culture, which I will detail later in the chapter. 'Online/offline' is used because it is widely understood to denote Internet presence/absence, which is a common theme in this thesis. There are various issues with the other terminology that I have identified in this area. 'Concrete' reduces the physical world to a harsh, hard, human manifested surface, which is unhelpful for this study's analysis of the soft corporeal surfaces of skin and the involvement of soundscapes and visceral materiality in one's perception and experience of the physical world. 'In-person' problematically implies that one's personhood is limited to physical embodied experience, when in fact in-virtual presence is increasingly involved in shaping individual personhoods. Additionally, I do not use the term 'co-presence' in the commonly prescribed way to describe 'face-to-face' interaction, so as to avoid the inference of an absence of 'presence' in online interaction. I instead use the more accurate terminology of 'physical co-presence' to describe instances when dancers physically dance together.

between participants and the varying strengths and structures making up the bonds between them. I theorise connective ties to be on a spectrum of varying intensities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977), underpinned by racialised and classed experiences of the world and of one another.

In analysis of the value systems undergirding the structure of the network, the chapter explores how key individuals, spaces and relationships in the network are imbued with racialised 'authenticity' (Shay and Sellers Young, 2016) and how this circulates as a currency upon which dancers achieve social and network capital (Prell, 2006). This advances Noble's (2008) call to analyse "dancehall's migratory circulation through a series of entangled networks of cultural movement, intercultural address, appropriation and translation" (p112). The distinctive feature of this research, is that it traces how this circulation involves intersecting strands of both virtual and physical spaces; a theoretical perspective that until now has been lacking in the literature on intercultural dancehall. In addition, this research uses a focused case study approach to ground its analyses in the human experience of European and Jamaican dancers operating within the multi-modal, intercultural network under investigation.

3.2 Space, Flows of Influence, and Desire

The dancehall network is fuelled by a web of desires. These include a neocolonialist desire for a black dancehall body by white viewers and practitioners, and the converging desire for commodified 'authentic' Jamaican dancehall. The concept of the 'authentic' dancehall space and body is psychosocially connected to the concept of the African diaspora being eternally historical – that is, stuck in a historical moment in time (Pieterse, 1992; Dyer, 1997). The desire for an 'authentic' Jamaican dancehall that is richer in cultural worth than its transnational editions, is thus built on the racist premise of black performance being less developed than its white appropriations. Thus, even when 'authentic' Jamaican dancehall is glorified as 'greater' than its white appropriations, it continues to be positioned as an exoticised Other (Bhabha, 1994), that is highly desirable, yet irreconcilable with Global North values and morals. Black Jamaican dancehall is indeed rich in cultural value and should be recognised as such. My point here is that there is a nuanced distinction between white people recognising this richness for all its complexity and relevance in the world, and the alternate system where 'richness' is shorthand for virtuosic, energetic and aesthetically pleasing. In the latter the appreciation remains superficial, overdetermined and feeds a white desire to fix and commodify blackness.

Some of my initial fieldnotes made in 2014 from observations in Kingston, demonstrate my own nationalist preconceptions about dancehall in an 'authentic' Jamaican context, and the questions this raised.

I was surprised when some U.S hip hop music was played – in fact I was displeased with the lack of concentration on Jamaican dancehall. Was I judging the authenticity of the event by its commitment to Jamaican music – its nationalist drive? Why did the other patrons (who were mostly Jamaican) seem to welcome the hip hop more than me? What pre-existing image of dancehall in Kingston was I working from and why did this inclusion of U.S hip hop challenge it?

(Fieldnotes, August 2014)

These fieldnotes highlight how my first experience in Kingston's dancehall scene was shaped by how I had previously imagined the space's artistic and cultural dimensions. I had ideas about how it would look, what music would be playing, and an overarching sense of dancehall's role in Jamaican society. The playing of North American hip hop music complicated my view of Jamaican dancehall and highlighted Jamaica's relationship to the Black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993) diaspora. My desire for the Jamaican party to fulfil my preconception of 'authentic' Jamaican dancehall was jarring against the Jamaican party-goers' expressions of desire for North American black music and culture. The multi-directional flows of desire and imagined authenticities travelled between myself, the other party goers and the imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) involved in this racialised desiring machine (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977).

The reality that is revealed on closer inspection, as Bakare-Yusuf points out, is that

Dancehall culture... represents the desires, aspirations, and anxieties of a local [Jamaican] expressive culture that cannot be contained within the terms of the local—whether in terms of interpretive community or flights of influence.

(2006b: 173)

Dancehall's cultural landscape cannot be fragmented and compartmentalised into clear-cut local and global sections with a unidirectional trajectory of influence. As C. Cooper asserts, in dancehall culture "the transnational flow of media images is not one way, from imagined 'core' to disempowered 'periphery' as conventionally conceived" (2004: 256). In light of this, Bakare-Yusuf suggests that "we look at dancehall as a plural desiring machine that appropriates global cultural flows just as much as it is appropriated by them" (2006b: 172). Recognising the ways in which dancehall is involved in this web of information flows, from and to Jamaica, helps to reveal its dynamics as a form of cosmopolitanism from below (Appadurai, 2013), wherein black cultural products and symbols are mobilised across global urban contexts. This activity is driven by the entrepreneurial work of the people on the ground, for example the DJ who plays the music at the dancehall party, and other party

goers who engage in creative play with the symbols, by inventing dance moves and designing garments that add nuance to the citation (DeFrantz, 2016) and trafficking of cultural references.

Niaah argues that "Engagement with space in cultural studies of the Caribbean is critical" (2010: 30). This is because the Caribbean's history and present, is heavily shaped by its relationship with geographic spaces outside the region, in particular Europe, due to its role in the colonisation of the region, and North America in the region's economic and cultural identity¹¹. Niaah points out that "The Caribbean historical space is inscribed with... a[n] openness to, and developed relations with, metropolitan centres" (2010: 49). As a Jamaican popular culture, dancehall is inscribed with the openness that Niaah highlights and thrives as a cosmopolitan poor (Appadurai, 2013) network that interconnects these spaces.

Whilst being inscribed with this openness, dancehall is simultaneously a black performance practice expressive of Kingston's ghetto street life, as it resonates with the people, histories and contemporary realities etched into this urban landscape (Niaah, 2010: 70-1). Niaah (p37) explains that dancehall's "central nervous system [is] within... Kingston." As the capital city of Jamaica, Kingston is a thriving dancehall space and the primary site for the creation of most dancehall movement. She explains that

the wellspring of venues [in Kingston] never dries out, for these life-giving spaces are constantly created and refashioned.... they are central to the articulations of a sense of community and cultural identity among the lower class and those abroad...

(Niaah, 2010: 62)

The embodied experiences of the black Jamaican dancers who live in Kingston are crucial to shaping the value systems that circulate in the intercultural network. Dancehall would therefore not exist in its current form, without the labour of the black bodies and the conditions of the city of Kingston. Due to this, as well as dancehall's historic relationship with Kingston, which was explored in Chapter One, the city is understood as a creative and cultural dancehall hub. Yet, as this chapter details, the complexity of dancehall's national and urban expressivity in Jamaica lies in the fact that its localised aesthetic, political and sociocultural notes as a black performance practice are themselves already attached to the country's intercultural and transnational geopolitical history and present. Dancehall, as a contemporary popular Caribbean black performance style, expresses conditions of colonialism, racialised and sexualised difference. As Jamaican history is underwritten by the forceful trans-Atlantic flows of people and cultures between Africa, Europe and the Americas, its expressivity is intercultural

¹¹ In 2016 46.11% of exports from Latin America and Caribbean went to the United States (WITS World Bank, 2018). There is also a consistently strong migratory flow from the Caribbean region to North America (Thomas-Hope, 2002).

at its core. This interculturalism is not based on equal power distribution, on the contrary it is based on stark inequities in power. Knowles (2010) explains that, contrary to the common assumption that intercultural theatre is a western invention, there are plenty of examples of intercultural performance in 'indigenous' theatre. I argue that dancehall is an example of this, and further that the form of interculturalism that it produces is decolonial due to its politics of shifting emphasis toward a black Caribbean epistemology and visual culture.

3.3 Case Studies: Flava, Talent, Dancehall Queen Fraise and Dancehall Queen Katie

There are two main organisational case studies explored in this chapter; the Jamaican Dancehall School (JDS) and the Dancehall Jamaica Culture Holiday (DJCH), both of which are particularly active hubs in the network connectivity between Jamaica and Europe. The JDS is one of only a few dance schools in Jamaica dedicated to offering dancehall dance classes, and the DJCH is a yearly trip organised for European dancers to experience dancehall in Jamaica. The investigation into these organisations focuses on the activities of key individuals involved in managing and supporting them. Specifically, the investigation draws from ethnographic research carried out into the networked dancing activities of Flava, Talent, DHQ Katie and DHQ Fraise. Flava and Talent, who are black Jamaican, are involved in running JDS and DHQ Fraise, a white Italian DHQ who first studied dancehall with Flava, manages the DJCH. DHQ Katie, who is a German-Jamaican mixed-race performer, is discussed in Chapter Four.

Flava, Founder and CEO of JDS, first became a highly visible member of the all-female Top Rated dance crew in Kingston. She is known for developing a unique feminine dancehall style that is bold, sensual and technically demanding. For example, she developed the 'Over It' move, which accentuates the hips (and is understood as a 'female move'¹²), but unlike the majority of dancehall's 'female moves' requires an intricate coordination of the limbs, as well as the typical hip isolations and rotations common to the gendered style. She now teaches her unique movement style at regular classes at JDS. Alongside Flava, Talent is also a central figure within the network; she teaches at JDS and has an extensive résumé of features in music videos, films and in a commercial with athlete Usain Bolt for Virgin Media.

¹² The division and classification of dancehall dance movement vocabulary into 'male' and 'female' moves acts as a way of defining performances of both male and female bodies. Songs aligned to female moves often promote hip articulations through lyrics encouraging dancers to 'wine', 'bounce' and 'jiggle' their 'bumpers'. Alternatively, male moves focus on the feet, legs, shoulders, arms and head, and create sharp, angular shapes, which are commonly performed in quick succession (Monteiro, 2018). Songs that are written for 'male moves' often carry a heavier lyrical tone, reflecting a weighty and aggressive heteronormative masculine performative style.

As a publicly operating dance school, JDS acts as a hub of dancehall activity in Jamaica, beyond its nocturnal street existence. It also has a strong online presence, via SNSs and its website, which is packed with content that formalises dancehall trends. One of the resources on the website is a catalogue of information about selected dancehall dancers. Flava has chosen to include both Jamaican and non-Jamaican dancers on this page and a variety of men and women. Placing the dancers' images alongside one another in this way is a democratising act, that works to diminish the power dynamics of 'insiders/outside' and 'Jamaican/non-Jamaican' dancers in the scene. Nonetheless, although the list is extensive and is regularly updated, it inevitably also excludes some dancers. The catalogue thus acts as both a legitimising space for dancers who, once listed, are accredited with visibility and recognition, and also an exclusory space that marginalises non-listed dancers. As CEO of JDS Flava thus has a great amount of control over the visibility and network capital that other dancers are able to develop.

It is significant to note that neither Flava nor Talent self-identify as DHQs – instead they identify simply as dancers and teachers. The DHQ identity, due to its associations with a sexually expressive dance style, that continues to be regarded as 'vulgar' in Jamaica (C. Cooper, 2004), would potentially jeopardise their positions in the network. This is because their current roles are underpinned by an ability to act as the connective nodes between upper and lower classes in Jamaica, and the local and global strands of the network. Female Jamaican dancehall dancers who *do* self-identify as DHQs face a level of demonisation by Jamaica's social elites, that Talent and Flava manage to elude. Notably, there are few Jamaican DHQs who experience the same level of influence and mobility as Talent and Flava. I argue that this is because of a stigma that is attached to the DHQ persona in Jamaica due to it being a lower-class black performance practice. By being in the dancehall scene but not identifying as DHQs, Talent and Flava position themselves as socially mobile, or at least as having the potential to mobilise. Flava explained this to me, stating that she is comfortable socialising with Jamaica's social elite as much as she is ready to be a part of the underground dancehall scene. She appeared to take pride in this, and I came to understand it to be a key component of her personal and professional sense of self. I argue that her ability to performatively move between Jamaica's social classes, and her role in running the JDS make her an exceptional individual in the scene. Flava draws on her blackness, her knowledge of dancehall in Kingston as a black performance practice and her understanding of white Western culture (she spent parts of her childhood in the U.S), to position herself at dancehall's intercultural crossroads. In this role she has a relatively strong degree of control over the cultural traffic of black Jamaican dancehall in white spaces, as well as foreign white and black bodies in black Jamaican spaces.

Prior to the opening of JDS, in Jamaica dancehall was taught almost entirely at informal street events. The opening of JDS changed this as Flava consistently invites local Jamaican dancers from Kingston's street dancehall scene to teach at the school. For many of these dancers, the experience of leading a class in a formal dance studio setting is often their first (Flava, 2014). By enabling local dancers, who typically dance in the streets, to be paid as teachers in a studio setting, Flava enables a form of cultural and social legitimisation to take place. This legitimisation is based on the change of location to a more formal transmission setting and the codification of the improvised movement structures into choreography and validated 'technique'. This confronts the upper-class Jamaican refusal to acknowledge dancehall as an art form, on the grounds of it being a negative manifestation of a ghetto street lifestyle, and pushes the social elite to re-assess their dismissal of the style. The school therefore offers its teachers a step towards validation and recognition in the broader Jamaican cultural climate.

Since the establishment of JDS, flocks of international dancers have visited Jamaica in search of developing their dancehall technique and style. Many of these dancers rely on Flava and Talent to welcome them into the Jamaican dancehall scene. The school has become an ideal place to host these international dancers and ease them into creating connections with the 'authentic' local dancers who teach at the school. The teachers' Jamaican national identities and blackness are selling points – as dancehall is understood (and desired) in the network as a symbol of black Jamaicanness. Due to the popularity of spaces such as JDS, and the opportunities for capital acquisition that it offers local teachers, it is increasingly difficult for the social elites of Jamaica to ignore the role that dancehall culture plays as a transnationally consumed symbol of Jamaica. The visibility and economic resources that JDS offers Jamaican teachers emboldens them to capitalise upon their Jamaicanness and claim a valued position in the socioeconomic landscape of Jamaica. This is a political move given that in Jamaica black, lower-class dancehall bodies are typically marginalised from the image of the nation (C. Cooper, 2004).

Some European dancehall teachers have begun organising group trips for their students to visit and take classes in Jamaica at schools such as JDS. These trips include the DJCH, which was established by DHQ Fraise in 2014. The programme of activities includes daily classes at JDS, attending lectures led by local dancehall teachers, and frequenting the popular dancehall street parties in downtown Kingston. They also engage in wider cultural activities such as going shopping for DHQ outfits and visiting iconic landmarks related to dancehall culture, for example the Bob Marley Museum. The trips are designed to offer a window into 'authentic' Jamaican dancehall, by learning about the dance and music via practical dance workshops, contextualising their training with sociocultural and historical knowledge and subsequently applying the knowledge gained at dancehall parties. This is a form of

training in black culture and performance. The investment in contextual knowledge and the engagement in 'real-life' dance practices means that the programme encourages dancers to develop embodied and situated relationships to dancehall culture as a black performance practice in vernacular Jamaican settings.

The DJCH is heavily reliant on Flava welcoming and hosting the European participants at JDS. She is involved in programming their daily schedule, and liaising with the wider Kingston network to enable the European dancers access to events and activities. The collaboration between DHQ Fraise and Flava was founded upon a shared history and friendship between them. Fraise recalls her first time in Jamaica in 2007: "I met [Flava] she was my teacher... she is still my teacher, and thanks for her, because I start to understand the culture and I love, so I start to respect [it]" (DHQ Fraise, August 2014). In essence, the DJCH is underwritten by the promise of a cultural and artistic experience, with a great level of proximity to black Jamaican dancehall. Its unique selling point is the fact that it was created through DHQ Fraise's connection to Flava, who due to her hard work, negotiations and entrepreneurial skills is able to offer a wide range of experiences within the Jamaican scene. Further, the activities are documented via SNSs where images, videos and statements are published. This means that the recordings of their presence in Jamaica are visible online, which significantly impacts the European dancers' network capital and cultural legitimacy.

3.4 Mediated Consumption of the Jamaican Dancehall Body

One's ability to accumulate cultural capital in the dancehall network, is tied very closely to one's ability to perform Jamaican 'authenticity' (Shay and Sellers Young, 2016). The production of an 'authentic' Jamaican dancehall image is codified as a black aesthetic that is differentiated from other black cultural traffic (Elam and Jackson, 2005), as signifying an island-cool aesthetic. DeFrantz identifies that

Black social dances offer pleasure to those who engage them because they encourage cool aesthetic approaches; they confirm careful organization of the body in relation to discourses of physical ability and ingenuity.

(2014: 229)

The island-cool that is associated with a Jamaican dancehall performativity is stereotypically laid back, and more excessively colourful and brazen than other contemporary black performance culture manifestations such as U.S hip hop or UK grime. This dancehall aesthetic has been built up over several decades via commercial media and consumed in specific ways in Europe, which I will now detail.

In the late 1990 and early 2000s dancehall became internationally visible via docu-films, which were filmed in Jamaica and distributed worldwide via VHS and DVD recordings. These docu-films, often

known as Passa Passa films,¹³ as described in the Introduction to this thesis, grippingly portray an insider's view of the dancing at regular dancehall parties in Jamaica, mainly in downtown Kingston. Following in the stead of Reggae, which secured Jamaica's place on the global arts and culture map (C. Cooper, 2004), these dancehall docu-films were key to the proliferation of a newly popular unapologetic representation of Jamaican national identity on the global stage. They capitalised upon the interests of late twentieth-century second generation¹⁴ black Caribbean diaspora communities across Europe and North America in developing their connectivity to Caribbean culture. The distinction that dancehall music was making between itself and Reggae, with the culture of MCing and toasting¹⁵ over electronic beats, was compelling to Caribbean youth in the diaspora as well as in the Caribbean itself (C. Cooper, 2004). The docu-films offered an audiovisual manifestation of this culture, enabling interested parties to encounter and enjoy the sounds and visuals of vernacular dancehall in Jamaica, via a mediating screen. The docu-films offered a way into dancehall, in a way that was sensually rich, with close-ups of sweating, gyrating dancers a common occurrence. Such media played a significant role in shaping urban black British culture in the 1990s and 2000s, and the symbols embedded in these cultural products continue to influence the value systems in contemporary assertions of diasporic Caribbean identity today (Noble, 2008), as well as the construction of an often overdetermined black aesthetic within commercial images of Jamaican dancehall.¹⁶

In 2002 Jamaican singer Sean Paul released the album *"Dutty Rock"* and with it came several accompanying music videos, which presented a commercialised version of the type of imagery that was already being consumed via Passa Passa docu-films. However, whereas the distribution of the docu-films happened largely via informal circuits, including word-of-mouth marketing and underground trade channels, Paul's music videos were played on relatively formal and mainstream circuits, via television channels such as MTV Base. This created a shift in the way that dancehall media was consumed in the international circuit. The viewing of the docu-films necessitated the circulation of the VHS tape or DVD and acquiring these items required a physical purchase. In the UK, the videos were typically only sold at independent shops located in Caribbean diaspora hubs such as Brixton in London, or via unofficial bootleg suppliers. Most often, once the physical copy had been acquired it would be passed between friends and family, and viewing would happen as a shared social experience

¹³ These films are often referred to as Passa Passa films because many of the first videos were filmed at a popular Kingston street party known as Passa Passa.

¹⁴ The term 'second generation' is in reference to the children of Caribbean migrants, in particular those who migrated during the post-World War Two Windrush era.

¹⁵ Toasting is a form of lyrical chanting wherein the MC talks swiftly and melodically over a dancehall rhythm.

¹⁶ In Western media we see reductive, mimickry of this aesthetic in cultural manifestations such as much of the white adoption of twerk culture, which fetishises and decontextualises black expressive cultures and histories (Monroe, 2014).

on a television set. The ability to consume the videos was thus dependent on social (Bourdieu, 1986) and subcultural capital (Thornton, 1996) – knowing the ‘right’ people who were willing to share the valuable commodity and experience. However, when music videos such as Paul’s emerged on satellite television channels the imagery became available to anyone with the economic capital and resources to pay for these channels. This made this strand of dancehall media ‘too available’ to maintain its subcultural status. Viewing in this period became a relatively, although not exclusively, private experience, as middle-class households in the Global North increasingly had several television sets, meaning people could view television programmes independently. This brought about the rise in the white middle class consumption of commercialised black popular performance (DeFrantz, 2014; Monroe, 2014).

The video for Paul's *Like Glue* (2003) is set at a dancehall street party and is loaded with 'Jamaican-cool' black aesthetics in the form of Rastafari colours, graffiti, excessive Caribbean fashion (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006) and dancehall choreography. The video focuses on the reproducible and commodified elements of dancehall imagery, in order to create an accessible ‘authentic’ Jamaican aesthetic. Music videos such as this presented a slick and sanitised image of Jamaican dancehall culture to viewers across the globe, and capitalised on the commercial power of the expressively ‘cool’ black Jamaican body. This form of ‘coolness’ is expressed through the embodiment of versatility and rhythmic musicality, created through relaxed joints and the technical proficiency to move fluidly between sharp and soft dynamics.

The imagery in *Passa Passa* docu-films and music videos such as Paul’s, which link dancehall to a standardised 'Jamaican-cool' aesthetic, has played a fundamental role in how dancehall is pictured outside Jamaica, and what is perceived as 'authentic' dancehall culture. This media offers viewers around the world an easy and private way to consume the dancehall body. For many dancers outside Jamaica, viewing these videos was their first contact with dancehall, and despite the mediating screen, the virtual bodies they engaged with were animated with rich visual details. When such viewers watched the videos, and danced alongside them to learn the choreography, or in improvisational pleasure they developed corporeal relationships to the virtual bodies represented on the screen (Blanco Borelli, 2012).

3.5 Racialised Dancehall Queen Interactivity and Online Visual Cultures

The process wherein physical dancing bodies feed off the rich signifiers emitted by virtual bodies in the dancehall scene has continued throughout the early twenty-first century. However, soon after the early 2000s, the primacy of tele-visual media platforms as enablers for these embodied interactions,

was superseded by online virtual media platforms, such as the video sharing website *YouTube*, which offers more diverse and reciprocal forms of virtually-embodied communication. Such platforms have become highly saturated with streams of videos, comments and likes, which evidence the large numbers of people able to access the materials.

The participatory nature of the digital age has transformed how capital is negotiated in the scene. With the wealth of videos available it is no longer enough to just have access to materials; one now needs to develop the cultural knowledge of which individuals, channels, and trends are rich in cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). At this point, social capital comes back into play and network capital (Prell, 2006) becomes paramount, because selecting which videos to watch now requires knowledge of which moves and videos are deemed 'cool' by other dancehall figures at a particular moment in time. One needs to be attuned to the specificity of online dancehall visual culture and this requires a certain type of digital labour. Trends can change very rapidly, with new moves sometimes emerging on a daily basis. Acquiring this information requires one to be connected to people who generate and circulate videos popularly regarded as 'cool'. For example, by following individuals on Instagram who are central to the Jamaican dancehall hub, such as Talent or Flava, their posts will automatically feature in one's newsfeed, which assists in developing one's cultural knowledge and proficiency in the internal taste values that deem materials 'cool'/'uncool' and 'authentic'/'inauthentic'.

Nakamura (2008) observes that the Internet often organises identities around a capitalist social order. She explains that

The interface serves to organize raced and gendered bodies in categories, boxes, and links that mimic both the mental structure of a normative consciousness and set of associations (often white, often male) and the logic of digital capitalism: to click on a box or link is to acquire it, to choose it, to replace one set of images with another in a friction-free transaction that seems to cost nothing yet generates capital in the form of digitally racialized images and performances.

(Nakamura, 2008: 17)

This description of online activity highlights the way in which choosing to click and like images is a form of commodification, and due to the racialisation and gendering of this space that Nakamura (2008) also points to, this lends itself to fetishising gazes. Evidence of these gazes come in the form of digitally edited images that fragment and decontextualise black dancehall performers' use of excess flesh, for the benefit of party organisers and DJs, who market their events and music compilations using the sexualised and racialised visual appeal of the images. Racialisation is also involved more intimately in the viewing practices of dancehall dancers in the intercultural scene. One element of the desiring machine (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977) that keeps the intercultural dancehall network active

is a desire to commodify an image of a strong and highly sexualised black dancehall dancer by non-black participants. Evidence of this can be seen in the documentary film: *Bruk Out! (2017)*, in which a Japanese dancer explains “Jamaican women are so strong – I want to get that strong.” The emphasis on somehow acquiring the strength of the iconic Jamaican woman situates her as almost mythical or unworldly – a form of fetishisation that admires, but dehumanises.

Yet, as Fleetwood (2011) and Daphne Brooks highlight, racialising iconography can also be re-configured to serve a black feminist agenda.

Systematically overdetermined and mythically configured, the iconography of the black female body remains the central ur-text of alienation in transatlantic culture... Yet there are ways to read for the viability of black women making use of their own materiality within narratives in which they are the subjects.

(Daphne Brooks in Fleetwood 2011: 105)

Fleetwood (2011) highlights how the production of online visual cultures by women of colour functions, for some, as a space for such subjective renderings.

Black Jamaican dancers Talent and Flava and white European DHQ Fraise all play central roles in designing the online visual culture surrounding female dancehall. They each centre black Jamaican female bodies and embodied knowledges in their online profiles. I argue that Talent and Flava carve out narratives in which they are the protagonists of dancehall culture by positioning themselves and their black female allies at the centre of their media. As an ally DHQ Fraise supports this narrative by sharing videos of herself in tutorial with black Jamaican teachers, such as Flava, who she claims as her teacher/mentor (although these videos do also benefit her self-image and network capital as a white European DHQ).

Looking at the geographical settings of the media these women post, highlights some significant aspects of how they frame blackness as intercultural. Flava has made several dancehall tutorial videos, which are set in locations as far-reaching as Sydney, Tokyo and Berlin. In each of the videos she emits a ‘Jamaican cool’ style – wearing tight, colourful sportswear, or mesh tights with black boots, with an iconic hair style featuring Rastafari colours – and performs a series of dancehall steps. Talent shares many collaboration videos of herself performing alongside dancers from South America, Europe and Russia. In these videos Talent and Flava present an image of intercultural dancehall with their labouring dancing bodies at the centre. Furthermore, their facial expressions often suggest they are enjoying the performance, thus centring black female pleasure in the visual culture of the scene. DHQ Fraise’s videos are distinct from Flava’s and Talent’s in that they focus more heavily on her training in

Jamaica with Jamaican teachers, videos of the women she takes to Jamaica, or of herself in other teaching/judging roles in Europe. Her media thus works to centre an image of her as a white European dancer gaining legitimacy in black spaces.

In addition to the visual cultures that surround central dancers such as Flava, Talent and DHQ Fraise, another significant topic is how videos are engaged with by viewers. The following section looks at how physically co-present and virtual dance events are experienced on an embodied level, through the body's surfaces (Benthaus, 2015) as a viscerally affective physical response to stimuli, such as music and the presence of other dancers. The focus here is specifically on the intersubjectivity of the dancers across the strands of the network. There is also an examination of the inequities in access to virtually-embodied experiences and the impact this has on the kinaesthetic experiences of the dancers and the aesthetic, socioeconomic and cultural identity of the DHQ scene.

Doorn (2011: 533) explains that "The term 'virtuality' has often been used to signify either the opposite or a lack of 'reality': a state of unreality or absence". When a dancer is viewed on a screen, the body being looked at is not that of an alive human being, but a representation of one. Doorn posits that

the virtual can be understood as an imminent and immaterial form of agency or potential: effectively but not formally or materially existing within the interstices of everyday life.

(2011: 533)

According to Hansen (2006: 14) this causes us to experience virtual bodies differently to physical bodies, but, he argues, digital technologies have the potential to "expand the scope of bodily (motor) activity and... create a 'medium' for our enactive co-belonging or 'being-with' one another" (2006: 20). Research carried out as a part of this investigation into DHQs' virtual activities suggests that engagement in virtually-embodied communication plays a crucial and meaningful role in the dancehall experience of some dancers. This is demonstrated in the following passage from Italian DHQ Suzie. When asked how she first heard about the international DHQ competition, she stated:

My sister showed me a video of the DHQ competition and there was a DHQ called Junko from Japan and she was so crazy and I love that, she was... so unique, she... came all the way from Japan, [and] she took a big chance by coming out like that... I saw a tough girl doing her thing, representing herself, not just by talking, [but through] body language.

(DHQ Suzie, July 2014)

Suzie's emphasis on the impact that viewing Junko's body language had on her, which she later explained prompted her own desire to become involved in dancehall, suggests that her engagement

with Junko's virtual body was a particularly significant component in her own DHQ journey and experience. Further evidence of the significance of virtually-embodied experience in the network comes from a statement made by Italian DHQ Gabriella, who, when describing how she initially started out in the scene, stated:

in... Italy I saw some girl go pon da table doing this (turns head around in a circle to demonstrate the 'duttu wine' dance move). Mi say... 'mi wan fi¹⁷ learn', so as I reach back home I start to search on [the] Internet.

(DHQ Gabriella, October 2013)

Explaining that when she searched on the Internet she found videos of other dancers performing the move, she added, "...then I start to train myself in my room for some months." The fact that this informal training period, when she learnt by engaging with virtual DHQ bodies via the Internet, took place for 'some months', implies that it was an important step in her journey to becoming a DHQ. Both in Suzie's and Gabriella's cases viewing virtually-mediated dancehall bodies marked a transformative moment in their cultural lives.

DHQ Gabriella is not alone in identifying the virtually-connected home as a primary DHQ training space – many of the dancers interviewed, when asked about other DHQs, frequently referred to watching online videos of their favourite dancers whilst at home. Watching videos of other dancers in the network via a digital platform in a domestic space allows the dancer-viewer to have a heightened level of control over their viewing experience. The availability of the footage online means that she can watch the material when she feels ready to do so. She can choose how and where she watches and thus is able to manage her own safety and comfort when engaging with the dance. This has the potential to be particularly empowering in situations where dancers feel inhibited in physically co-present dancehall spaces. Discussing her experience of dancehall in Italy, Gabriella (2013) explains: "I don't have so many people around me [who] love dancehall... my friends... don't love so much dancehall. So, I love [to] meet somebody [who has] my same feeling." On the subject of performing in Italy she added, "It's very hard... for girl[s] ... As I started... I [felt] like everyone pree¹⁸ me in a bad way." In comparison to this experience of cultural isolation, Gabriella reported that virtual dancehall environments were relatively welcoming. Virtual connectivity enabled her to nurture her interests and 'be with' (Hansen, 2006) others in a safe way and engage relatively freely in dancehall activities, despite the negativity toward the dance in her immediate physical surroundings. This highlights that for dancers facing sociocultural constraints, online engagements are often far more accessible than

¹⁷ The 'fi' here means 'to' in English.

¹⁸ The term 'pree' in Jamaican patois (a language that influenced Gabriella's spoken English), generally refers to the verb 'watch' or 'look'.

physically co-present events, as virtual participation can be a relatively private, or even secret, act. Shah contends:

the computer actually is able to give voice to, recognise and augment all the different possibilities – things which have not happened, things which cannot happen, things that would never happen – and give them all an in-potentia existence.

(2017: 193)

Thus, in contexts where a dancer feels unable to freely share her interest with the people physically surrounding her in the home or community, connecting and identifying with the DHQ community online is a form of active resistance, that draws from and realises the potential for virtual agency in everyday life (Doorn, 2011).

As well as being the space where videos are frequently viewed, domestic spaces are also increasingly the set of many informal dancehall videos. The domestic context invites the viewer to experience the dancer in an intimate, familial setting, that would typically be reserved for close friends and family. These domestic spaces are typically also loaded with cultural artefacts, furniture, art, technology, and other cultural motifs, which place the dancer within a certain cultural context and create the visual culture surrounding her online profile. Thus, the online viewer gains a sense of immediate contact with the dancers' dancehall life in a highly personalised context. By exchanging such images and videos, dancers create familiarity with the participating dancers/viewers and thus strengthen interpersonal ties.

The cultural references in different videos can also highlight difference – in particular, different socioeconomic and cultural positionalities. For example, videos posted by white Swedish dancer Alexia are often set in a living space that includes a minimalist IKEA-esque grey L-shaped sofa, double French windows leading onto outdoor wooden decking. The minimalist Scandinavian architecture and furniture reads as a contemporary European middle-class aesthetic. Other similarly classed sets can be seen in videos posted by black European and African American DHQs. For example, mixed-race DHQ Katie posts videos in her walk-in wardrobe, which features a plush carpet, soft sliding draws and closets full of clothes – signalling a middle-class domestic space and consumer capital. Videos from Jamaican dancers by contrast are rarely set inside domestic spaces, and instead are usually outdoors in someone's yard or in the streets. Thus, Jamaican dancers tend to maintain a separation between their domestic spaces and their online visibility, resulting in a heightened sense of privacy in comparison to the dancers filmed in their homes. This boundary could well be maintained due to cultural difference – the camera may be unwelcome in the Jamaican women's homes due to cultural boundaries and respectability politics (Fleetwood, 2012; Brown 2013). Any differences or similarities

in how Jamaican and European dancers live, signalled by the style and maintenance of their homes, thus remains largely unknown in the virtual space. The lack of black Jamaican women filming themselves at home and their choice of public locations instead, highlights a cultural difference in their relationship to virtual sharing practices. That black Jamaican dancers' homes are not made visible references a boundary that is, in my experience, rarely vocalised but firmly upheld; it is a way to maintain a degree of control amidst a culture of excess and hypervisibility that they are simultaneously part of. This, I argue, is a practice in the right to opacity (Glissant, 1990). On the politics and poetics of opacity from a decolonial perspective Glissant reflects:

I...am able to conceive of the opacity of the other for me, without reproach for my opacity for him. To feel in solidarity with him or to build with him or to like what he does, it is not necessary for me to grasp him. It is not necessary to try to become the other (to become other) nor to "make" him in my image.

(Glissant translated by Wing, 1997: 193)

I argue that this notion of with-holding parts of one's self from being 'grasped' is a decolonial project, because it involves self-preservation and control over what is revealed. It is in this way that the black Jamaican dancers' practices of with-holding enable them to operate a decolonial politics, that uses (in)visibility as a tool for self-preservation and self-determination.

Discussing the online sharing of dance footage between fans of the television show *So You Think You Can Dance*, Benthous (2015: 20) makes the claim that "These practices are processual... they involve a constant re-reading and re-engagement with the text, texts related to the text, and other fans." In concordance with Benthous' analysis I posit that the dance material circulating virtually in the DHQ scene is not static, and that each viewing experience is different. Even when a dancer watches a video that they have viewed previously, the video may have new comments attached, a new filter applied or a different person may have shared it, which will impact on the media's cultural worth and significance. According to Benthous, community and attachment are created through "... an active state of participation and engagement" (p21) in these virtual scenarios. I argue that these active and processual practices of virtual community-building, as well as the practical ease of rewinding the video to study minute details, means that the relationship between the dancer-viewer and the virtual dancer is rich with affective and interactive potential.

The interpersonal ties that are made possible by virtual sharing practices vary in intensity. This is because there are a range of different experiences of 'being with' (Hansen, 2006) in virtual environments. For example, there is a range of intensity and interactivity between participating in WhatsApp groups, which are managed by 'admins', require an invitation, and focus on audiovisual

information sharing, commentary and dialogue,¹⁹ in comparison to 'following' individuals on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. 'Following' often becomes a form of lurking (Argyle, 1996) wherein individuals are able to view media shared by people/pages, but their role as viewer can be relatively passive. The level of participation depends on how they are able to, or choose, to engage. They can either view media with no trace, or they can add 'likes' and other reactions. There is also the possibility of writing comments on the media, in which case the dancer's role becomes increasingly active. The network ties developed by an individual often depend on the myriad of engagements that they invest in, the level of active participation, and the personality exhibited across the various platforms. More passive forms of engagement such as following and viewing posts with little or no reciprocity have a different effect, because these forms of engagement enable awareness building, in terms of cultural, social and aesthetic/movement tastes and trends, but do little in the way of enabling interpersonal bonds to form, often because the individual posting the material is unaware of who is viewing their posts. Passive participation happens for various reasons. It can be because it is the only form of participation that is possible for that individual, because of technological access or virtual literacy – for example viewing on a family members' device or lacking experience with certain media functionality. It can also be a way to protect one's self from vilification as in some cases participation can have a negative societal response (Shah, 2017).

Strong levels of active engagement in the dancehall network's virtual social environments often come in the form of video-sharing competitions. This trend involves a dancer or crew instigating a dance competition focused on a specific dance move. For example, in 2016 Talent choreographed a 'female' dance move called 'Look Pon It' and launched a competition for the best video of a dancer performing the move. The move involves the dancer tapping her pelvis, then shaking a pointed index finger in a gesture that signifies 'telling someone off'.²⁰ Talent opened the competition by posting videos of herself performing the move at various studio and Jamaican street party locations and then invited others to share reciprocating videos. This prompted dancers around the world to create and share footage of themselves performing the move. For several weeks, Talent regularly shared these videos on Facebook and Instagram. In her video captions she typically highlighted the name of the dancer and made supportive comments about the performance, its inventiveness, and the accuracy of the style. For example, she wrote the following comment in response to a video posted by white Austrian DHQ Cher: "BIG UPPP to ma girl @ [DHQ Cher] representing for [lookponit] ... this was really creative

¹⁹ Ethnographic research for this study involved participating in several WhatsApp groups, including one set up for people interested in the international DHQ competition, and also a group for attendees of a 'female steps' class in London.

²⁰ The move speaks to the feminist politics of embodied ownership and the centrality of the vagina in Jamaican female dancehall style- a subject that is discussed at length in Chapter Five.

mami, in the streets, in the pool ... thanks for this lovely video mami. Appreciate the support” (Talent Instagram, 2016). Talent also posed questions for her viewership to respond to regarding the quality of the performance. As embodied knowledge of the technical, stylistic and cultural components of dancehall is valued in this dance culture, receiving positive comments, especially from 'authentic' patrons such as Talent, helps to build one's network capital through one's proximity to symbols of 'authentic' dancehall. The dialogue surrounding the videos presents and affirms kinaesthetic taste values, which can subsequently be supported by other viewers through the continual process of posting reactions and reciprocal videos. The celebratory, yet competitive, culture surrounding the videos encourages individuals, who are actively involved in this strand of the network, to develop strong ties across nations, cultures and time-zones, and to overcome material immobility and financial constraints. The competitions tend to attract a diverse mix of races and nationalities including black Jamaican dancers who typically post their videos in outdoor spaces. The visual affirmation of multi-layered relationships involving both cultural difference and shared values creates a vision of the contemporary dancehall scene as intercultural, whilst at the same time the focus on an 'authentic' Jamaican style reinforces the centrality of Jamaica in the network. These video sharing competitions create a dialogical inter-play between differently placed dancers, which acts as a form of agonism (Mouffé, 2012).

As Talent's video sharing competition demonstrates, virtually-embodied media is created in dialogue with other media and experiences produced and shared between participants in the network. The repertoire of visual knowledge one accumulates from viewing other peoples' videos influences the content of one's own video production. Dancers often explicitly mention other videos in the descriptions accompanying their videos to demonstrate such links. These connections are sometimes supportive of community-building, as they celebrate and support the work of other dancers. Other times dancers engage in a type of one-up-manship, wherein they attempt to perform similar dance moves or tricks with a greater level of skill, risk or boundary-defiance than the dancers they engage with. The dialogue then escalates into a playfully combative 'who can shout the loudest' clash, which speaks to the naturalisation of inter-personal interaction and competition within this virtually-embodied agonistic scenario.

The instances of exchange and dialogue between dancers highlight the processual nature of the virtual dancing practices (Benthaus, 2015). Each of the videos has a relationship to the other videos and embodied knowledge of these inter-connections signifies cultural legitimacy. Similarly to Benthaus (p22), I argue that as dancers "share their cultural knowledge with an increasingly globalised dance community on the Internet, they set images, affects, bodies, opinions, and comments in constant

virtual flow." By participating in the virtually-embodied activity dancers leave a trace – their input becomes a part of the continuous process of (trans)forming the intercultural dancehall network. This active participation in the flow of information ultimately impacts on the identity of the dancehall network itself.

The embodied nature of the imagery being circulated, and the possibility to engage in spirited dialogue, presents viewers with the opportunity to 'be with' (Hansen, 2006) the dancer on the screen; to read and react to her dancing expression and, as a result of such experiences, develop their own sense of immersion within the dancehall network. Physical distance between the networked dancer-viewers is not removed, but can be re-conceptualised through virtually-embodied communication. Castells explains that

New territorial configurations emerge from simultaneous processes of spatial concentration, decentralization, and connection, relentlessly labored by the variable geometry of global information flows.

(2001: 207)

In the dancehall network, dancers who engage online draw new territorial configurations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977) through their dancing activities and network connectivities. Effectively, these women are involved in re-configuring the positions of bodies in the network. Given that only a select group of privileged dancers have continued and secure access to all of these forms of engagement, I argue that this re-territorialisation works to enable privileged dancers in the global North to claim a sense of ownership over dancehall. This is because experiences enabled by the conjunction of an online and geographically mobile physical presence in the network are disproportionately available to dancers situated outside of Jamaica. Contrastingly, many Jamaican dancers are frequently unable to travel internationally and are faced with unstable connections to virtual space due to technological, infrastructural and financial issues. This works to loosen dancehall's fixity to black Jamaica and also enables white and black non-Jamaican dancers to claim a position in relation to the Jamaicanness of dancehall. Nakamura argues that "When users create or choose avatars on the Internet, they are choosing to visually signify online in ways that must result in a new organization and distribution of visual cultural capital" (2008: 17). Such re-organisations of visual cultural capital are enacted in videos where European dancers perform routines with black Jamaican dancers in iconic Jamaican spaces, such as the streets that black Jamaican females typically perform in. In this scenario the privileged European women occupy a space that black Jamaican women have worked hard to claim as a space dedicated to their own expressivity. In the European women's claim to visibility in the black Jamaican space, she benefits from her alignment to its legitimacy as an authentic dancehall space, precisely because of the role it plays in the lives of black Jamaican people. This becomes problematic when the

European woman's occupation of space side lines the Jamaican women's visibility in the same space, and especially when the race politics of the dancers works to reconfigure dancehall as another black performance practice that involves a decreasing number of black bodies (Monroe, 2014).

Doorn makes the argument that because of the increasing fluidity between virtual and physical space, "it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate bodies... from the technological networks that give them form and meaning" (2011: 536). The evidence from the dancehall network supports this statement, as the physical body and the virtual body are inter-dependent in their identity constructions. Individuals move between physical and virtual space and time with a level of ease that suggests that they are understood as parts of the same experiential landscape. This straddling of virtual and physical space and the grey areas in-between, is a key component in contemporary dancehall identities; this is to say that dancehall culture is an expression of virtually-embodied fluency. However, in analysing the role that virtually-embodied activity plays in shaping the dancehall network, it is important to identify the diverging levels of networked connectivity available to the various groups of people involved. In the case of the influx of Japanese dancers developing roles in the network, Sterling identifies that

Japanese [people] are able to travel to Jamaica, learn about Jamaican culture, travel back to Japan and consume the Jamaican in a way that Jamaicans, citizens of a poor country, are generally unable to observe or reciprocate.

(2006: 21)

Research into the impact of social inequality on Internet usage by communications researchers Eszter Hargittai and Amanda Hinnant highlights that "social inequalities may be perpetuated online, given that those who are already in more privileged positions are more likely to use the medium for activities from which they may benefit" (2008: 615). Nakamura explains that in order to

understand how power relations work in the digital visual field [it is necessary to] look... at subject/object relations in light of access to visual capital, who chooses and is chosen, who sells and is bought, who surfs and is surfed.

(2008: 33)

Registering the varying degrees of access to resources, mobility and visibility, is essential to analysing dancehall's positioning as both 'Jamaican' and 'intercultural'. Asking Jamaican DHQs about this topic I found that there exists a complex layering of sentiments surrounding the issue of dancehall's globalisation and the ensuing power dynamics. During a group interview at the Big Head mansion in Montego Bay, Jamaica, where DHQs were staying before the international DHQ competition in 2014, I collectively asked Jamaican DHQs Sista Flex, Jonesy and Supernova: "How do you feel about girls

coming to dance [at the international DHQ competition] from other countries?" Jonesy answered "We love dem... even more than the Jamaican one." Speaking more broadly Sista Flex explained: "Other nations love our culture... them want fi learn patois, rather than English." Supernova added: "Them nah come from here but them love what we do... them like mi colour, them like mi arse." Jonesy then provided an example from a discussion she had engaged in at the breakfast table with a Japanese dancer. Narrating, she explained: "I asked her... why you eat so much butter, and she said she love all da Jamaican girl dem shape and she want to put on some ass." Sista Flex and Jonesy appeared to read this in a largely positive light, however this needs to be tempered with a consideration of how they were performing in the interview setting. It is possible that my positionality as a white researcher caused them to respond positively and the group format also had encouraged them to respond in certain ways. It is important to mention, in terms of the transparency of my methodology that the interview was conducted in a group format at the dancers' request. When I originally approached them to do individual interviews they responded with the proposition of doing one together. Being in a group enabled the women to perform quantitative dominance. Although this format reduced the focus on each dancers' unique experience, it created a dynamic wherein I felt notably more vulnerable than in one-to-one interviews. The dancers were able to exert power in numbers, which, considering how the interview functions as a performative space, had a positive impact in that it helped to regulate the distribution of power between myself and the dancers. This was a point that later in the interview Jonesy commented on, in relation to the DHQ competition, in a wholly more derisive tone than the earlier commentary. She said:

Can I get something off my chest?! The whole world [is] not gunna like me for saying this. I believe that nations are supposed to come up here and dance – but for [this] to be a Jamaican Dancehall Queen event I don't tink I would really like to see a whole lot of more Chinese or white people take over that Jamaican aspect even more than Jamaicans. This year we have more nationalities taking over than us... for me if they're going to send... one dancer... that's fine... like one Japanese, one Chinese, but this is a Jamaican competition... because we cannot take up ten or twenty girls and send to Europe and send to any other nation, but them can take up how much girls and send out here... it is NOT FAIR, it is NOT! Mi happy for them be here, but not too much. Because they have their money... their ID. ... [and we do not].

(DHQ Jonesy, August 2014)

DHQ Jonesy added this point at the end of the interview when all of the other dancers were still present. It stood out as having a very different indignant tone to the rest of the interview dialogue. The way in which she held her breath and then exclaimed "Can I get something off my chest?!" read as if she had been thinking about it for a while. It appeared that she was speaking in a moment of courage – despite her apprehension that "the whole world" and perhaps the other dancers present,

did not want to hear it. The statement raises questions as to the authenticity of the rest of the interview commentary from Jonesy, and perhaps the other dancers also, as it is quite understandable that as these dancers rely on dancehall tourism for economic survival, they may have muted their own more critical views. The contrasting sentiment between Jonesy's comment and the earlier discussion suggests a multi-layered relationship to the discourse of cultural appropriation and dancehall's intercultural politics. In her first comment Jonesy highlighted her personal interactions with non-Jamaican dancers. Her statements suggested that on a personal level she had enjoyed hearing how the dancers claimed to be investing in learning Jamaican patois and aspired toward the commodification of a supposedly idealised 'Jamaican' body. However, her follow-up comment highlighted the injustices of the geopolitics and the (im)mobility of Jamaican dancers in comparison to non-Jamaican dancers from Europe and Asia.

On the subject of the neoliberal consumption of black social dance DeFrantz (2018) writes:

Our dances are not made to be distributed in mass reproduction, not really, even if they can be and almost always are. We've made scores of asocial dances for the stage and the camera (and soon enough, the VR hologram). These distributed dances—on *Saturday Night Live* or YouTube—do a great violence as they become impersonal shells that anyone can just *do*—whether they have a connection to black life and its variegations or not.

I argue that it is because of these stakes that black Jamaican dancers work to protect dancehall as a black cultural space. The influx of white bodies in dancehall has critical real life consequences for the black Jamaican dancers. For example, as black Jamaican dancer 'Luxe' explained that if a white European dancer takes up time in the dancehall circle and is filmed by a dominant cameraman during a dancehall party, this means that a Jamaican dancer's child will go to school without lunch money. Jamaican dancers get paid to dance, through informal trade agreements that exist between dancers, DJs and event organisers. Female dancers often only have about five to ten minutes dedicated to female songs during a party, so the opportunity to take up the centre, to get paid, is limited. Cameramen will readily film a foreign dancer over a Jamaican dancer if the opportunity arises, so the white European dancer who chooses to enter the circle for her own personal and social enjoyment and artistic development does so, according to Luxe, at the expense of another DHQ getting paid and feeding her child.

Cultural critic Steven Shaviro boldly asserts that to live in the network society is to "move... out of time and into space" arguing that "Anything you want is yours for the asking. You can get it right here and right now." (2014: 211). This is undoubtedly a description of those in privileged circumstances and in the case of the dancehall network, and as DHQ Jonesy's statement highlights, is not the experience of

the vast majority of Jamaican dancers. The promulgation of such a rhetoric ignores the inaccessibility and inequalities that the neoliberal global marketplace continues to produce. In fact, in many instances digital inequality exacerbates existent social inequalities (Hargittai and Hinnant, 2008). It is of utmost importance to register this in regard to this research, given the racial and class differentials within the intercultural dancehall network. The possibilities for global travel and virtual connectivity that are readily available to many dancers from Europe and other geopolitically dominant nations, are unavailable to many Jamaican dancers. In particular, many Jamaican dancers have reported repeated visa rejections when applying to teach in the UK. This demonstrates that certain areas of the network remain exclusively available to more privileged individuals and this ultimately impacts on the network capital (Prell, 2006) that less privileged dancers can achieve and their ability to economically survive via the dancehall industry. In real terms the varying degrees of virtual literacy, access and geographic mobility in the dancehall network, mean that it is the most vulnerable black Jamaican dancers who are least likely to experience the benefits of travel and financial security, that others are able to secure with relative ease. Considering the divergent levels of access within the virtual terrain, I therefore argue that whilst the Internet and globalisation may offer opportunities for some, they also perpetuate and deepen global inequalities. Thus, this area of research highlights that rather than consistently supporting the decolonial imperative within the *bruk out* epistemology of black DHQ performance, the intercultural virtual DHQ scene also works to reinstate racialised colonial power structures.

3.6 Embodying Network Connectivity

In contrast to the experience of Jamaican DHQs such as Jonesy, the role that Talent plays in dancehall's online sharing culture as a figure of 'authenticity' demonstrates how certain visible Jamaican dancehall dancers are able to carve powerful positions for themselves within the virtual manifestation of the dancehall scene. Talent's virtually-embodied labour and her exploitation of the authenticity symbol has secured her a pivotal role within the online and intercultural dancehall community. Nakamura explains, of such activity, that

while these women's autobiographical digital signatures are far from 'cutting edge' in terms of difficulty of production or conventional aesthetic qualities, they are revolutionary in terms of the power they take back from institutions that govern and produce particularly powerful types of visual signification...

(2008: 32-33)

Flava has also carved a central role for herself through her activities as CEO of JDS. Looking closer at the case studies of Flava and Talent, it is possible to envisage routes for moving beyond the injustices

of Global North privilege causing the erasure of Global South bodies and experiences. In addition to their work online and in Jamaica, Talent and Flava now also spend months at a time touring across continents to deliver workshops, perform, and to judge DHQ competitions funded by organisations in the host countries. In particular, they routinely tour Europe, North and South America and Asia. Hope describes the impact of international travel on a Jamaican dancehall patron's social status:

[A] trip abroad (going to foreign) is a highly prized avenue of social and economic mobility for many Jamaican men and women, particularly those from the inner cities and the lower classes. An opportunity to visit the United States, England or Canada is perceived as an instant marker of status and economic and social mobility.

(2006: 73-4)

In the case of Talent and Flava, their international tours have enabled them to garner network capital (Prell, 2006) and social status across the various areas of the dancehall network. During a discussion at a workshop in London, Talent expressed a personal sense of satisfaction in her ability to travel the world giving dancehall workshops, which allowed her to represent Jamaica within the international network. She positioned this as important, arguing that she brought 'authentic' dancehall to the UK, and that it was important for all dancehall dancers to experience this (Talent, 2017).

In her role as a dancehall gatekeeper in and between online and offline environments, Talent is, as Nakamura describes of a similar example, "an object of volitional ethnicity as she is constructed as an object of the user's volitional mobility" (Nakamura, 2008: 26). Talent, volunteers herself to be the object of commodifiable desire for non-Jamaican female dancers seeking to come into contact with the 'real deal' dancehall artist extraordinaire. At the same time as she takes on this role as volitional object, which is arguably an active positionality masked as a passive one for the comfort of the 'user', she is also the master of her own representation as she curates her image online. Nakamura asserts:

To possess access to the means of managing personal visual capital is crucial to establishing one's position as a digital subject rather than a digital object in the context of the Internet.

(2008: 33)

The use of digital media enables Talent and Flava to draw the associations that they see fit with their image, and to hyperlink through modes and across media of their own choosing.

The embodiment of 'authentic', black Jamaican dancehall by Talent and Flava is evidenced in their embodiment of 'cool' performativity, their Jamaican nationality and their mastery of the Jamaican dancehall style. Arguably due to their authentic 'ghetto-savvy' characteristics, in addition to their 'tech-savvy' activity online, and their fluid relationship to class, as they are both institutionally

educated and have links to Euro-American spaces, they are able to fluidly navigate across the various strands of the network.²¹ As they consistently dance with others at international workshops, at JDS, in Kingston's cityscape, and in a virtually-embodied form online, they have developed strong ties with a large variety of people within the network. I argue that through these activities they enable a form of 'urban poor' (Appadurai, 2013) interculturalism to take shape. This form of interculturalism is based on a shared engagement in dancehall by women from different cultural backgrounds, who in their sharing of praxis manifest a discourse that situates dancehall, as a black cultural form, at its centre and involves a "conflictual consensus" (Mouffé, 2012) around difference.

In their roles as gatekeepers to the dancehall scene in Jamaica, Flava and Talent have developed a level of control over international dancers' proximity to that space – a system that I term a 'currency of immediacy'. As gatekeepers, they aid others in travelling interculturally between the various strands of the network, both in Jamaica and also via the ability to 'be with' (Hansen, 2006) them in global dancehall spaces. Every time they go to a Kingston party, or post a picture on Instagram of themselves dancing at an event in Europe, they remind others of their network connectivity and their ability to move between the various strands. As connective enablers of dancers in Jamaica and Europe (and beyond) they hold a great deal of control over the connections that others are able to form. For Jamaican dancers this is most clearly apparent in the opportunities created by Flava for them to teach and network with international dancers who frequent JDS. Talent has also launched a project named *Talented Dancers* which is a platform for Jamaican and South American female dancers to gain visibility in the dancehall network. *Talented Dancers* arguably supports the careers of talented Jamaican and South American dancers, via the implicit opportunity to capitalise on Talent's own network capital (Prell, 2006).

For emerging European DHQs who have not visited Jamaica, but participate in workshops by Talent and Flava in Europe, dancing alongside these highly respected dancehall patrons offers the possibility of developing their network connectivity. These experiences are valuable because they promise 'authenticity' and visceral intersubjectivity. The majority of dancers interviewed for this study claimed that these physically co-present dance experiences are intensely sensorial. For example, DHQ Gabriella stated: "for me it's really important to know [a dancer] ... physically, because I want to have

²¹ This fluidity resembles the work, discussed by theorists B. Cooper (2012) and Bettina Love (2017), of black women to complicate binaries between 'respectable' and 'ratchet' behaviour and identities. Love describes "upper-class and professional Black women [who]... enjoy letting loose, dropping respectability politics for a moment in time, and getting "ratchet" (Love, 2017: 539). Arguably, Talent's and Flava's work typifies this deconstructive work to revoke class and taste binaries associated with black femininity.

a feeling for [her]" (2013). Such comments prize the materiality of the physical body as being loaded with meaning and affective potential.

The currency of authenticity that Flava and Talent capitalise upon may rely on overdetermined racialisation, but it fuels a system reliant on the presence and visibility of Jamaican female dancers. This situation is not without its flaws, as the reliance on 'authenticity' works to perpetuate notions of the racialised Other. Yet at the same time as this ongoing process is underpinned by a non-Jamaican desire for a somewhat fetishised Jamaican Other, there remains something to be said for the credible intentions of non-Jamaican dancers who recognise their privilege and the stakes of their participation, and are dedicated to re-imagining the power dynamics. Dance theorist Danielle Robinson (2006) argues that cultural appropriation happens routinely in instances of cultural learning. However, she points out that despite the multiple negative outcomes of cultural appropriation, dancers representing 'authenticity' often also negotiate positives out of these exchanges. I argue that the emphasis on roots and 'authenticity' in the dancehall network, although perpetuating essentialist tropes of naturalised 'cool' aesthetics, nevertheless involves a serious effort to shift away from the exploitative power systems so common in mainstream commercial popular culture. Further, the emphasis on 'authenticity' actually supports Jamaican dancers in being artistically productive, as these dancers invest in the physically-embodied vernacular dance experiences that nurture the ongoing development of the style.

In addition to Jamaican dancers travelling to give international workshops, programmes such as the DJCH support a growing area of network connectivity in Jamaica itself, fuelled by international dancers' quests for affective and personalised experiences of dancehall in Jamaica. DHQ Fraise explained that, "when you come [to Jamaica] another world is open because you can see every little moment" and added, "the confirm[ation] is always at the party" (2014). Describing why she valued learning at parties, she said:

You can see this moment you couldn't see before... a little moment on the shoulder, or fingers sometimes, and you realise something beautiful... You realise everything about the flow.

(DHQ Fraise, August 2014)

At dancehall parties dancers engage in improvised rhythmic synchronicity, which creates corporeal and visceral sensations. One of the ways in which network ties (Ellison et al., 2010) are created amongst dancers is by testing one's ability to physically follow each other's moves. In dancehall this is referred to as 'ketchin di vibes', which can mean to catch the rhythm and movement of a specific phrase of movement, but also signifies a holistic connection to the intentions, feelings and sensations

present in the party. The ability to 'ketch di vibes' quickly, with apparent ease, reads as embodied understanding of dancehall culture, and connectivity to the other dancers present. This ability to improvise is valued in dancehall culture, arguably because it demonstrates one's fluency with the movement language, but also one's skills in structured improvisation and the ability to synchronise one's own embodied rhythmicity with the collective. Such physical dance experiences are valuable because they offer the opportunity to perform embodied understanding of dancehall's black kinaesthetics, and references to black culture and history via collective structured improvisations. The sensorial corporeality of these engagements creates the ideal circumstance to realise and take pleasure in one's visceral sensitivity to the art form. The shared experience of this improvised artistry can help create cohesiveness amongst participants. I argue that in these moments, differentials in culture, race and class are ever-present, but there is a form of agonistic productivity (Mouffé, 2012) taking place. Mouffé argues that: "A collective identity, a "we is the result of a passionate affective investment which creates a strong identification between the members of a community" (2012: 631). According to this logic I argue that within the dancehall scene there exists the Jamaican 'we' as well as the intercultural 'we' and thus that multiple 'we's' overlap. So whilst it is arguable that European and Jamaican dancehall dancers are the 'they' against which each construct their identities, they also share a 'passionate affective investment' (Mouffé, 2012) in the scene that creates something shared.

The moments of synchronicity on the dance floor are highly desirable and have long-lasting effects on a dancers' network capital (Prell, 2006) and identity. The network capital (Prell, 2006) that individuals accumulate as a result of their physically co-present interactions, also depends on their posting media on SNSs in the form of images and videos from the event, which validates and publicises the shared dance experience. Doorn asserts that

'lived social relations' extend into digital space, where they are renegotiated within, and made possible by, hybrid assemblages of embodied users, cultural discourses and new media technologies.

(2011: 534-35)

The 'lived social relations' cultivated in physically co-present situations in the dancehall network transfer to virtual environments via the interactive capabilities of SNSs, such as views, reactions, comments and reciprocal videos, which allow for new ties (Ellison et al, 2010) and dynamics to flourish. Thus, the undergirding system that enables geographically dispersed individuals to retain connections with one another and therefore to maintain the existence of the network beyond physical proximity, relies heavily on the capabilities of online digital technologies.

The black Jamaican dancers who are unable to engage in virtually-embodied dancehall activities on a regular basis with the fluidity of a smartphone and the technological cultural framework to support this activity, become objectified in the virtual life of dancehall as symbols in a desiring machine (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977). For example, they are present in image form – their bodies used to market dancehall parties or music – but absent as digital producers of the material. For many Jamaican dancers, the physically co-present dancehall experience remains the primary (and sometimes only) site of connective networked experience and capital acquisition. This creates an intensive focus on the physically co-present dancehall environment, which works to retain the relationship between Jamaican urban environments and the ‘authentic’ (culturally valuable) dancehall image. At the central productive site of this black cultural practice, the labour of the immobile dancers in Jamaica is an essential, yet highly objectified, element in the neoliberal circulation of dancehall.

3.7 Dancehall Tourism and Reflexive Interculturalism

Two overarching questions which help to frame the discussion surrounding the nature of the interculturalism operating in women’s dancehall practices are: How do the women studied in this project navigate their whiteness and blackness in the exchanges? And what sensitivities and strategies are present? To unpick this issue I will look at the following quote, taken from a Facebook post by Swedish Alexia (2017), which is revealing of the consciousness amongst some non-Jamaican DHQs regarding identity politics and power in the intercultural dancehall scene and the complexities surrounding whiteness in black dancehall spaces.

I know it's really uncomfortable to talk about racial issues and racism but when we don't raise the issue injustice will reproduce itself and carry on forever. I'm dancing an Afro-Caribbean dance (Jamaican Dancehall) but I'm noticing that white women, including myself are overrepresented in the videos that get viral attention. There are many reasons... why [this is] ... one is that its controversial for a white woman to dance like a black woman, but It's not controversial for a black woman to dance like a white woman because typical white [people] dances are considered normal. Dancehall, as a black Jamaican dance is considered morally outrageous. I would love to see the big dancehall and dancing accounts review their content and see if black women are underrepresented. Here are some skilled black female dancers to follow, just to even out the injustice a tiny bit. I'm not doing anyone a favor, I simply try to even things out, since I'm realizing I've been getting un-proportional attention. All of these women inspire me in different ways.

Alexia's commentary goes on to list the names of several black Jamaican DHQs and includes links to videos of them dancing. Her discussion evidences an awareness of her own positionality as a white European dancer. Her attempt to “even things out”, may or may not have an impact. Nevertheless, it is significant that such a discourse is taking place and informing the types of decisions dancers make

and the conversations that they engage in. This motivation to actively “raise the issue” of black dance circulating as a desired commodity in a neoliberal digital marketplace that objectifies black bodies, suggests that amongst some white European dancehall dancers there exists an awareness of the geopolitical and sociocultural stakes involved. The historical relationships of exploitation and the cultural context, including the routine appropriation of black social dances, are in some domains, being tackled by white dancers. The steps they are taking toward resolving these injustices may not be wholly without issue themselves, but this consciousness and sense of responsibility, coming from dancers who actually benefit from the injustice, is noteworthy. It makes it harder for others to ignore the racial tensions surrounding the circulation of dancehall videos, and helps to articulate dancehall’s tumultuous position as a black performance practice that is engaged with interculturality.

International DHQs are a type of tourist in Jamaica, who in their drive to experience the ‘authentic’ dancehall scene, seek experiences that bring them out of ‘tourist spaces’ and closer to the urban lower classes, who are otherwise marginalised from the profits of tourism in Jamaica. Foreigners in Jamaica are usually confined to ‘tourist spaces’ which are “detached from local territoriality, [and] subject to highly controlled mobilities in and out of resort zones” (Sheller, 2009: 197). Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari’s (1977) theory of territorialisation, Sheller suggests that the development of these resort zones “are enabled by colonial histories, neocolonial presents and neoliberal policy decisions that reterritorialize previous histories and pathways of uneven development” (p198). DHQs’ interest in seeking out ‘authentic’ dancehall can be thwarted by the infrastructures that typically separate locals and tourists. Tourist spaces have their own nightlife and these spaces are often marketed as ‘authentic’.²² It can also be difficult for dancehall tourists to know where and when the downtown dancehall street parties are happening in Kingston, especially because within one given night the party often moves between two to three sites,²³ and knowledge of their whereabouts is typically shared by word-of-mouth only. Dancehall tourists therefore need to develop network connectivity within the local dancehall scene in order to access the knowledge required to locate the parties. Dancers who attend classes at JDS and participate in the DJCH are able to do this via their contact with highly-networked individuals such as Flava, Talent and DHQ Fraise. As dancehall tourists develop these connections they support the redistribution of power within Jamaica itself, as the urban communities

²² These nightclubs, targeted toward tourists, sometimes employ Jamaican dancers to perform at them to increase their apparent ‘authenticity’, but implement divisive zoning, so that the Jamaican dancers are physically separated from the tourists. (This information was sourced from an interview with a Lithuanian dancer, who described her own experience of being at nightclubs of this kind in Montego Bay). This contrived ‘authenticity’ highlights the instability of the authenticity construct, and how the ‘authentic ideal’ is commodified within tourist industries.

²³ This is a way for more patrons to make a living from the events and importantly enables the party to continue as they get shut down by the police after several hours in each location.

typically disenfranchised from the tourist economy find ways to gain access to the opportunities that dancehall tourism offers.

In recent years, an array of projects focused on positive social change and cultural awareness through dancehall have emerged both in Jamaica and in the wider transnational and virtual scene. The DJCH, as well as a project called *'Peoples' Dancehall'* organised by an Australian dancehall crew, in collaboration with various dancehall communities in Jamaica, are invested in such initiatives. These projects are involved in empowering and creating opportunities for Jamaican dancers to share their artistry and succeed in socioeconomic terms, whilst simultaneously enabling the global dancehall community to access and learn about Jamaican dancehall.

An additional example of this pro-active shift toward empowering Jamaican artists is the UK-based *'Roots'* organisation, established in 2015, which is dedicated to bringing Jamaican dancehall artists to the UK to deliver workshops. This organisation is noteworthy for the way in which its white-British organiser has structured it around a politics of empowering black dancers' in the intercultural dancehall scene. In consideration of coalitional solidarities between groups or individuals from different nations with shared sociopolitical goals, but different positionalities, Elswit identifies that there are "various ways in which solidarity might be constituted as communitarian alternatives to the imagined community of the nation" (2018: 27). The solidarity that is forged through the activity of Roots relies on specific forms of labour. The Jamaican dancers who come to deliver the workshops labour their bodies and minds as dance teachers in the leading of the workshops and in their participation in 'Question and Answer' sessions which typically accompany the workshops. The organisation director, Jane, enacts other forms of labour in putting the event on. This involves lengthy administrative duties in the application of visas for the artists, which are notoriously hard to access for travel to the UK in particular. It also requires the careful management of workshop participants and other satellite attendees (such as myself) who come to observe, support artists, or lead the Question and Answer sessions. Jane's approach to these activities is highly reflexive and discursive; she engages with the community of dancers in Jamaica and the UK and dancehall scholars in the politics of how the event is produced. On the day of the events she plays a largely non-dancing role, sometimes observing, but rarely taking part in the classes herself. This is significant because her lack of embodied involvement in the dance activity deflects the focus away from her. She makes it so that the black Jamaican dance teachers are the main focus at the events, while she works discretely from the side-lines to support them and the smooth running of the event. Jane's decision to focus the programme of workshops almost exclusively on bringing dancers from Jamaica highlights her awareness of the imbalances in power and the threats that surround the intercultural circulation of

dancehall. These include the ability of more privileged individuals, who do not face barriers to mobility, such as complex and expensive visa applications, to benefit from the dance culture at the expense of the labour of less-mobile Jamaican dancers. In this way Jane does the important work of “calling attention to... differentials of mobility capital inherent in national and supranational positionings.” (Elswit, 2018: 41). In drawing this focus, Jane frames the programme of workshops within a geopolitical conversation, that invites the workshop attendees to recognise their positionality in relationship to these power relations and to situate this awareness in relationship to their embodied pleasure in taking part in the dance event.

Altogether, I argue that Roots is a project that advances a “feminist, decolonial solidarity that resists complete identification in favour of a coalition that acknowledges unequal power relations” (Elswit, 2018: 29). I argue that Roots can be seen as such, because in addition to the work done to centralise and empower the Jamaican teachers who are paid for their work, Jane also emphasises, in the way she introduces and thanks the teachers, both at the workshops and in follow-up online media, their unique contribution. She also allows them to speak for themselves, both in the way they frame the workshops and in discussion during the Question and Answer sessions. I have witnessed some of the teachers perform forms of with-holding during these discursive moments through silence or the use of Jamaican patois (despite speaking in English in other contexts), which I argue can be seen as agonistic (Mouffé, 2012) in their approach to highlighting power relations.

I argue that Roots is an exemplar organisation in the development of a coalitional form of reflexive interculturalism in dancehall. I posit that Roots’ success in recent years – having growing numbers of participants, securing visas for artists, being referenced as a positive organisation by Jamaican artists, and securing Arts Council England funding – is because its consciousness of geopolitical imbalances, of racial injustices and its decision to centralise and empower black Jamaican artists is welcomed and championed by much of the dancehall community of intercultural participants. I therefore argue that within some areas of the intercultural European/Jamaican dancehall network there is a desire to find coalitional forms of participation that enable symbolic solidarities to materialise actual benefits to the Jamaican artists who are at the core of dancehall’s creative production.

This area of the DHQ scene invests in dialogical forms of exchange that benefit the artistic production and sociopolitical motivations of Jamaican dancers. In this iteration the interculturalism of the scene resembles Mitra’s analysis of Khan’s new interculturalism, which she argues “attempt[s] to complicate the one-way traffic that has historically characterised the borrowing of non-Western people, resources and performance traditions by Western practitioners” (2015: 22). However, as the Roots example demonstrates, the intercultural DHQ scene is focused on the Western adoption of dancehall

for its own pleasure, and also benefits individuals detached from its Jamaican locus. Thus, the scene continues the flow of black culture from black spaces outward. The question therefore, is whether this is exchanged fairly in benefitting the black cultural producers at the productive core of the scene. Many of the organisers of such projects are motivated by an awareness of cultural appropriation and the risk of this process taking place within the globalisation and commercialisation of dancehall. For such endeavours to be truly decolonial, the projects need to be led or at least co-led by Jamaican practitioners or producers. This is the case for the DJCT and Roots, which are collaborative projects between European and Jamaican dancers and organisers. Others, however, function more in a charitable format, where the privileged foreigner offsets their white guilt by apparently 'giving back' to black victims of poverty. According to critical race theorist Shelby Steele (1990) white guilt causes "the unacknowledged white need for redemption – not true redemption, which would have concentrated policy on development, but on the appearance of redemption" (p499). Thus, the nature of the collaborations between Jamaican and European dancers and project managers, determines their positions in relation to the decolonial politics of empowerment, self-preservation and self-determination for black Jamaican dancers. In cases when the intercultural dialogue focuses indirectly on defusing white guilt, this becomes a form of epistemic violence due to the centring of attention on whiteness.

The drive for the form of reflexive interculturalism that Roots and DJCT exhibit to figure in dancehall culture can also be seen in the embodied practices of many DHQs. Elswit (2018: 26) argues:

Many performance scholars understand the temporary event of the theatrical performance to be a site at which to test social possibilities and alternative, perhaps even utopian, ways of being in the world.

In line with this understanding I assert that certain DHQ activities, when women dance side-by-side at parties and workshops, act as social tests of this kind. For example, DHQ Fraise has repeatedly produced performances that stand out for their embodiment of a type of interculturalism. An example can be seen in the recording of her opening performance at the 2015 international DHQ competition in Montego Bay, Jamaica. At the beginning of the performance she walks in a circle, looking out toward the audience, head tilted down, eyes straight on. Then, facing front-on to the audience, she travels forward using deep and heavy strides and, as she reaches the front of the stage, kicks her left leg in the air, before jumping on the spot and circling her arm around her head, as if waving a flag. This section is identifiable for its use of a variety of 'male moves' and its smoothly choreographed transitions between positions. The performance of 'male moves' by a female dancer, coupled with highly rehearsed transitions creates a polished aesthetic, that is commonplace amongst non-Jamaican

DHQs at the competition and therefore reads as a style associated with intercultural dancehall. Fraise's performance in its discursive relationship to both dancehall's feminine black aesthetics and male moves – an identifiable intercultural stylistic change – tests the ability of these performance aesthetics and embodied cultural citations (DeFrantz, 2016) to co-exist both in friction and in harmony, for a conflictual consensus (Mouffé, 2012) to take on an embodied performative form.

Following this section of the performance, DHQ Fraise turns to face away from the audience and bends her upper body toward the ground, whilst maintaining an open straight-legged position. In this triangle shape, with her pelvis at the pinnacle, she creates a repetitive rhythmic impulse in her hips, causing a ripple effect in her buttocks. She then goes on to perform a complex variation of the 'head top' move: a stylised headstand, based on a triangular base with the dancer's head and two pillared hands either side. However, unlike traditional gymnastic headstands, that strive for linearity by creating a straight line from the head through to the toes, DHQ head tops involve a counter-balance wherein the pelvis juts backwards out of alignment from the spine, and the legs counter this by projecting out in the opposite direction. In the head top position, with her legs stretched wide, DHQ Fraise adds a bouncing motion between her hips and buttocks and a 360-degree turn enabling a vivid expressive and provocative dialogue between her joints and muscles to take place. Her movement choices here, and the *out and bad*²⁴ unapologetically hyperbolic quality with which she performs, are typical of a style of dancehall that is associated with black Jamaican female dancers, due to these women commonly being seen (or imagined) performing this way. The fluency with which she performs this style of dancehall, which was first developed by black Jamaican DHQs, and continues to be celebrated by the dancehall community as quintessentially black and Jamaican, indicates an embodied relationship to the art form in this context. However, Fraise performs her movement with a fast pace and creates clear lines and shapes with her body – characteristics of the international developments of the style and its integration of 'male' moves into DHQ aesthetics. Her navigation between the various styles and gender coded movement vocabularies, removes the fixity of their associations to Jamaican/non-Jamaican bodies and feminine/masculine constructs. Instead her style presents a multi-layered relationship to dancehall movement vocabulary, that recognises its codes as a black performance practice and puts this in dialogue with her whiteness. In its interculturalism her performance manifests a fluid positionality that resists reduction to an overdetermined nationalised body. In its dialogical construction, her performance potentialises new perspectives on the relationship between cultures.

²⁴ This is a vernacular term used in dancehall culture to describe a way of performing or living that is boldly visible and extraverted.

The move toward reflexive coalitional interculturalism seen in some DHQ practices and discourse is a significant step in the remodelling of relationships across racial and cultural lines and demonstrates the role that this popular dance form occupies in dialogues around the circulation of black dance and its engagement by non-black women. Through their embodied and rhetorical dialogues the DHQs across the trans-Atlantic scene – Jamaican, European, white and black – who are involved in these conversations invest in actualising a culture of reflexive interculturalism, that is commonly theorised amongst scholars, but less frequently recognised in 'real-world' popular culture contexts. There are, of course, DHQs who do not engage with these levels of awareness, but the energy invested in constructing models for responsible engagement by some prominent dancehall figures, is noteworthy for its work on constituting a popular culture practice of reflexive interculturalism. The complex constellation in the forms of engagement between the socially conscious to the more exploitative and the ways in which black Jamaican dancers are labouring to maintain control of the dance's European expansion is a defining feature of the form of interculturalism that I argue is emerging within the DHQ scene.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has identified a multifaceted dancehall network, that is experienced substantially differently according to one's positionality. The fabric of the scene between Jamaica and Europe is made-up of the flows in dancehall as a form of black cultural traffic (Elam and Jackson, 2005) between the various hubs and the criss-crossing web of activities between them. Dancers construct identities through strategic positions, and develop network connectivity and capital (Prell, 2006) through online embodied dialogue and shared performances of improvised rhythmic synchronicity at workshops and parties. The diverse levels of geographic mobility and inequalities in accessing physical and virtual dancehall spaces also shapes the network. This is because the divergent levels of engagement in virtually and physically co-present experience, impacts on the aesthetic and cultural identity and flows of influence within the network itself. For example, the heightened focus on physical co-presence in Jamaica creates a geographic node of corporeal labour, that is artistically productive and in-turn draws non-Jamaican dancers to this space. Equally, the intense concentration on virtually-embodied experience for some European dancers has ignited a culture of networked video-sharing in private domestic spaces.

The inequities in the levels of access to opportunities and degrees of (im)mobility are largely based on racial and national identity. Jamaican DHQ Jonesy's comments highlight the inaccessibility of the network beyond Jamaica for many Jamaican dancers, who face substantial barriers to international travel and virtual-connectivity. A remedy to the injustices, caused by these diverging levels of access

to opportunities, is materialising in the unlikely domain of Jamaican nationalism. This is because across all of the activities involved in the network, the taste value codified as 'Jamaican authenticity' prevails. Both Jamaican and non-Jamaican dancers recognise Jamaica as the source and life force of dancehall culture – as evidenced in the emergence of various initiatives to honour and make visible 'authentic' dancehall both in Jamaica and beyond. The currency of immediacy that the 'authentically Jamaican' Talent and Flava trade in, as they offer opportunities to 'be with' (Hansen, 2006) them through virtual and physically co-present embodied engagements, is a prime example of this.

The basis of the currency of immediacy relying on the symbol of 'authenticity' is problematic, due to its dependence on reductive stereotypes and constructed notions of history (Chasteen, 2004). Further, it creates a value system that positions the 'original' as somehow more complete as an art form, than its innovations (Shay and Sellers Young, 2016). However, in a global cultural climate of widespread appropriation and exploitation of cultural products from the Global South, in this case the authenticity symbol works to re-distribute power towards those positionalities that are so often disenfranchised from international power structures. The importance put on Jamaican 'authenticity' results in the dancehall network relying on the presence of black female corporealities and the work of black female Jamaican dancers. In this central position these women are able to negotiate the dancehall cultural framework on their own terms, albeit with continued resistance from various systems of geopolitical disempowerment.

Whilst the impulse to seek out shared dance experiences is often driven by the desire to commodify dancehall as a performance practice, acts of 'being with' (Hansen, 2006) others, pursuing creative opportunities to interact playfully, creating moments of synchronicity, and working through moments of tension and vulnerability, require a heightened awareness of one's own positionality. This highlights an underpinning interculturalism of the cosmopolitan poor (Appadurai, 2013) in the contemporary dancehall scene. As C. Cooper (2004: 256-7) highlights, this causes "distinctions between inside and outside, citizen and alien, self and other" to be re-imagined in the network. This re-imagining does not necessarily disassemble the power structures at play, but it acknowledges them and helps to build awareness. At the same time, other trends in activity, such as the lesser presence of many Jamaican dancers in the digital dancehall community and European dancers' ease of mobility in partaking in dancehall tourism in Jamaica, demonstrate the ways in which colonial power regimes persist in the contemporary neoliberal marketplace. Crucial to this chapter's analysis are the findings surrounding how black Jamaican dancers navigate and seize opportunities as enterprising dancers. Their engagements suggest they are open to dancehall's intercultural dimensions, but also invest labour in

maintaining control over the resources they have worked to create, through strategies such as positioning themselves as gatekeepers, and exercising their power to with-hold.

Chapter 4: The Dancehall Queen

4.1 Introduction

In October 2013 I travelled to Vienna, Austria, to undertake preliminary fieldwork at the European DHQ Competition. Whilst waiting in the queue for reception at the hostel where I was staying, I noticed a tall woman standing in front of me. I guessed she was competing in the competition, because she had the colours of the Jamaican flag painted onto her fingernails, and had a Jamaican flag tied around her Afro-hair. She wore bright red stilettos which she managed to balance herself upon with great poise. Altogether her demeanour came across as somewhat nonchalant, yet highly organised; it was clear that energy and time had been invested in her appearance – she had laboured to achieve her DHQ style.

I approached the woman, asking, "Are you competing in the Dancehall Queen Competition tonight by any chance?" Looking back at me she answered dutifully with a simple, "Yes." Her facial expression was stern, as if concentrating on something in her mind's eye. Struck by the tension she seemed to be holding in her face, I wondered what could be causing this serious mien. The queue shifted forward, putting the woman at the front. Not wanting to miss the opportunity to introduce myself, I told her who I was and about my research on DHQs, and subsequently asked if she would be interested in doing an interview. Lowering her head and giving a demure smile, she said, "Yes... but later." Sensing some trepidation, I said, "Of course, I expect you have a lot on today." "Yes" she agreed, "So much!" as she opened her eyes wide and expelled a long heavy breath.

This brief encounter gave me an idea of the types of intensity that this DHQ (who I would later learn was mixed-race German-Jamaican DHQ Katie) was feeling as she prepared for the DHQ competition. The words we exchanged were informative, but it was in analysis of how this exchange related to our embodied dialogue that I was able to recognise its significance. The way she spoke softly juxtaposed with the aesthetic she had created through her outfit. The intensity of her facial expressions and the words spoken suggested she had a lot riding on that night, and had already begun preparing for it. She seemed to be highly focused on her own somatic experience, as if she was travelling within herself – recoiling from the noise around her (of which I was a part) – transforming from an everyday self into a DHQ self. She politely welcomed my curiosity, but was not going to distract her focus from the process she was going through to prepare for the competitive event.

C. Cooper explains that "In the dancehall world...old roles can be contested and new identities assumed" (2004: 127). This chapter looks at processes of becoming that are involved in developing a DHQ identity, by studying the transformation process through several key stages. The first stage is

preparative, involving the ‘creative labor’ (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006) of adorning the body in ‘fabulous’²⁵ (Buckland, 2002) costumes to produce aesthetics of excess²⁶. The aesthetics of excess amongst women in dancehall include bright, flamboyant styles, for example fluorescent clothing and hair, big heavy jewellery and provocatively revealing clothing.

As well as costume, the body is itself theorised as an expressive medium in this chapter. As dance scholar Priya Srinivasan explains “the body not only creates physical or material effects but also produces its own form of discourse” (2012: 12). Thus, the preparatory stage of DHQ performance also involves the embodied labour required to train in specific techniques and movement vocabularies, which enable the dancer to develop her own embodied discourse. The final stage in the process of transformation into a DHQ identity is the performance itself, as dancers perform themselves into their DHQ identities at competitions, concerts, street parties and on SNSs such as Instagram and Facebook.

In theorising the DHQ through a lens of embodiment it is crucial to consider the racial and gendered particularities of those bodies. This involves considering the role of blackness, whiteness and heteronormative sexuality. As outlined in the previous chapters, DHQ culture is a black performance practice, which was developed by, and continues to be a meaningful practice for a largely black, lower-class, urban, Jamaican, youth demographic. In Europe too, DHQ culture is strongly aligned to blackness and black popular culture, but with white bodies also in the mix. As I discussed in Chapter Three, and will discuss in Chapter Five, the presence of white bodies in the DHQ scene in Europe and Jamaica (fuelled by dancehall tourism), sometimes creates tension due to the privileges that they perform and the epistemic violence this enacts upon the practice. In other instances, when white dancers and project managers work as allies to black Jamaican dancers, this can produce forms of reflexive interculturalism that inspire creative tensions that acknowledge difference and power dynamics.

This chapter theorises DHQ performance through an understanding of its relationship to a black epistemology. I theorise the nuance of this epistemology through a concept I have developed called *bruk out feminism*, which is introduced in this chapter and expanded in Chapter Five. To inform the investigation and theorisation of *bruk out feminism* I draw from a collective of black feminist scholars’

²⁵ The use of the term ‘fabulous’ in this analysis derives from a queer-world vocabulary (Moore, 2018), that is linked, in its vernacular use, to queering binary constructions of gender and sexuality. Although the term is not necessarily indigenous to the DHQ scene, it is used here because it pertains to the idea of subverting mainstream value systems, through unapologetic fashion and comportment activities, that can also be applied to the study of DHQs.

²⁶ Bakare-Yusuf suggests that the role of excess in the dancehall aesthetic is to do with investing in an imaginative response to one’s life circumstances. She explains that “sartorial excess is the way in which transcendence (however temporary) from the harshness of life in the ghetto is imagined and manifested” (2006: 475).

work, in particular Fleetwood (2011, 2012), Brown (2013) and Hartman (2018, 2018b). Hartman's theories of waywardness and living otherwise are key to the analysis in this chapter. Ideas around the politics of hypervisibility (Fleetwood, 2012) and the relationship between pleasure and pain in black women's performance (Fleetwood, 2011) are also influential. Additionally, Brown's resistive reading of material gratification in hip hop is central to my theorisation of excess and pleasure in *bruk out* feminist DHQ performance. Similarly to black feminism and hip hop feminism, I argue that *bruk out feminism* is a strategy for empowerment and upliftment that derives from and pertains to the cultural lives of black women. *Bruk out feminism* is particular to the social, cultural, political and personal experiences of lower-class black women in Jamaica.²⁷

The process the dancer goes through to 'become' a DHQ is theorised through the lens of masquerade, with particular reference to black Caribbean performance and epistemologies. Additionally, the chapter draws from world-making theory (Buckland, 2002; Pini, 2001; Stewart 2010), which supports the investigation into the DHQ world created by the collective of dancers. The chapter studies the subjects, issues and intentions that govern the DHQ world, focusing particularly on the concept of the *dare*. The investigation looks at DHQ performance as a kinaesthetic manifestation of, what I theorise as, the *will to dare*. It studies how the performances, underwritten by dancehall's valuing of fearlessness (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006) and boundarylessness (Niaah, 2010) act as opportunities for dancers to dare themselves to exceed norms and limitations and negotiate self-determination.

This chapter theorises the work that goes into crafting a DHQ identity as "a form of embodied, gendered labor" (Srinivasan, 2012). The concept of 'labour' is employed here to address how the process of becoming is driven by the desires, efforts and ingenuity of the female dancers involved. The nature of these processes are different depending on the positionality of the dancer. Here, I look at black Jamaican women's embodied work and pleasures. I also look at black European and white European women's engagements with DHQ aesthetics and style and study what this constellation of activity collectively creates. This is necessary because without recognising the labour that DHQs invest, the way in which this process is meaningful may be overlooked, due to the ephemerality of performance and the ostensibly frivolous nature of DHQ activities online and at parties. Drawing from ideas around traditionally feminine and subaltern forms of labour (Srinivasan, 2012), the chapter contends that the 'work' of becoming a DHQ requires resistant imaginings. I theorise the role of the imagination as both resistant and a form of labour, because it involves the will to dare. For all the

²⁷ As a white woman writing on this topic, I am sensitive to the need for this study to not silence these women, and depict them through the lens of my whiteness. At the same time, as discussed in Chapter Two, I have decided to not focus on white women's expressions as this too would centralise whiteness in this study of a black performance practice, and thus perform another form of epistemic violence.

DHQs involved, daring one's self to live-out one's imagined 'fabulous' (Moore, 2018) reality through adornment, performance and the cultivation of relationships, and subsequently dealing with various societal backlashes, requires emotional, physical and intellectual labour. For black Jamaican dancers, daring to be 'fabulous' (Moore, 2018) means actively placing value on their marginalised positionalities. The effort these women put into subverting hegemonic ideologies and power systems is theorised as a form of holistic labour, which involves emotional, intellectual and physical strength. It also requires them to be resourceful, drawing from the apparatus and physical capital to which they have access.

The dare is theorised as an interpersonal, yet individual venture, wherein the dancer challenges herself to take risks and exceed both her own and the audience's sense of limitation. Radley explains:

Risk for the rational mind, involves the breaching of convention, the breakdown of moral codes. Risk for the fun-loving, may well involve these things, but within a different experiential frame. This is one in which the juxtaposition of terror and pleasure are not alternative, but co-ingredients of a way of being, physically sensed.

(1995: 9)

Risk is central to the functioning of the dare in black DHQ culture, which focuses on aesthetics of pain and pleasure. Drawing from my audience observations of performances at the European DHQ Competition in Austria and the International DHQ Competition in Jamaica, this chapter analyses the constituent features of DHQ solo performances, wherein the relationship between pain and pleasure, as well as structured improvisation and kinaesthetic excess, are pinpointed as key working methods for engaging the will to dare.

Bakare-Yusuf (2006) positions the daring nature of dancehall performance through the lens of 'fearlessness'. Studying the sociopolitical context of Jamaican dancehall dancers, she posits that

Dancehall women live in such extreme circumstances—of crossfire, acid attacks, rape, spousal abuse, sole caregiver and negation—that fearlessness itself becomes the only mode of survival. It is the extremity of circumstance—the toughness of a life that has been pushed to the limit and is no longer afraid of death or pain—that enables fearlessness to arise.

(p477)

I argue that the 'dare' in DHQ culture stems from the conditions that Bakare-Yusuf outlines, but in DHQ culture's interculturalism, the will to dare has become a fundamental principle of DHQ performance across the globe, and therefore needs to be theorised beyond the conditions of the Jamaican social context that Bakare-Yusuf identifies. Although the boundaries and fears of DHQs

outside Jamaica are often drastically different from those in Jamaica, I contend that the will to dare principle crosses contextual frames, as it can be used by the diverse dancers in ways that enable them to each contend with their individual circumstances. In Chapter Five I will study the specifics of the European drive to participate and the politics of the dare in an intercultural context in more depth.

In this chapter I argue that the artistic labour that DHQs put into their performances, works to performatively construct and define *bruk out* as a black epistemology. As discussed earlier in the thesis, the term *bruk out* is used in Jamaican dancehall to describe notions of 'breaking-out' of social norms and physical boundaries of the body, through experiences of psychosocial and physical empowerment. In this thesis I expand an understanding of how the work of DHQs is involved in articulating *bruk out feminism*, which I introduce as a theory to understand DHQ culture as a decolonial black contemporary way of being in the world. Thus to clarify, *bruk out* is a term I use because it is indigenous to dancehall, but here I contribute a theorisation of what it means, in relation to black performance theory (DeFrantz and Gonzalez, 2014) and black feminism, with a particular focus on DHQs.

4.2 Becoming a Dancehall Queen

According to dancehall researchers C. Cooper (2004), Hope (2006) and Niaah (2010) a key theme in dancehall culture is the drive to 'become'. Niaah explains that during her research, participants made "...repeated references to feelings of becoming or assuming another persona or self" (p130). This is theorised, by this school of thought, in relation to the postcolonial condition, as the need to self-define amidst the backdrop of fractured identities and marginalised positionalities, particularly amongst the black urban working class segment of Jamaican society. Hope explains that

The expansive imaginings and fantastic images... transcend the narrow and dreary representations of self that have been handed down to... [the] lower working class by the hegemonic classes in Jamaica.

(p136)

DHQ spaces have become a supportive environment for participants to explore new personas. DHQ personas typically feature excessive characterisations, which dancers employ as a way to perform alternately positioned and empowered selves. In analysis of the process undergone by a dancer named 'Marcia' in the fictional film "*Dancehall Queen*" (1997) C. Cooper explains: "The persona of dancehall queen...generates residual benefits for Marcia, who... transfers to her 'real' life the embodied power that her fantasy had bestowed" (2004: 129). Thus, the facility to undertake these explorations, through processes of creative resistant imagining, enable agents to realise symbolic

forms of agency. For black Jamaican dancers, this process sometimes supports them in manifesting more powerful and visible positions within society. The practices of creative imagination that DHQs engage in have the potential to empower dancers to create changes in personal circumstance, through the accumulation of cultural, economic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in the dancehall space, and translating this into further forms of capital acquisition as performers, producers, choreographers and managers. However, DHQ practices can also result in social marginalisation as the identity marks them as clearly lower class. This is possibly one of the reasons socially-mobile black Jamaican dancers such as Talent and Flava choose not to align themselves to DHQ titles, as by not doing so they can mediate between social class categories more fluidly, and this plays to their advantage as entrepreneurs who need validation from all class sectors, locally and globally.

4.3 Adornment and World-Making

A key element in the becoming process is the work that goes into producing a DHQ aesthetic, through the adornment of the body. In analysis of the significance of dressing the body, sociologist Mike Featherstone argues:

Clothing, make-up and adornment are...not just the exterior signs, the constructed appearance of what one wants others to see, but also reflexively they provide an outward image which seeks confirmation in the returned glances of others, for the inner narrative of what one feels one should be. This is the... person... actualizing a particular temporary fiction, or moving through the life course to realize a particular larger narrative.

(2010: 198)

DHQs style their bodies through elaborate costuming practices, which through mechanisms such as the use of bright neon colours, and the strategic baring of flesh, signal a valuing of emphatic and arresting stylistics. References to cultural symbols in clothing items such as 'stripper' heels²⁸, batty rider shorts²⁹, and metal-studded lingerie work to position dancers in relation to widely-recognisable erotic signifiers. DHQs also use costumes to explore, define and play with multiple character images. For example, at the European DHQ Competition in 2013, featured characters included a builder, a firewoman, a farmer, a flamenco dancer, a disco-raver and a vampire, as well as some more eclectic styles, and many that signalled Jamaican 'cool' dancehall aesthetics, driven by the overdetermined aesthetic in music videos by artists such as Sean Paul as described in Chapter Three. It is important

²⁸ These are iconic high heels, associated with striptease dancers, that use clear plastic wedges to drastically increase the dancer's height.

²⁹ The term 'batty riders', drawn originally from vernacular Jamaican language, refers to a type of tightly fitting shorts that sit on (or ride) the buttocks, often revealing a part of the flesh of the 'batty' (buttocks).

here to register the symbolic potential of play, in order to interpret its significance in this context. Radley (1995: 14) explains that one of the reasons play is meaningful is because “of the way that [it] mirror[s] the remainder of life.” Thus, the play involved in cultivating modes of self-representation is significant, because of how it references, and elaborates, the everyday, in this case the aesthetics of manual and service jobs and nationalistic symbology.

World-making theory is useful here for understanding how adornment and creative labour (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006) are key to processes of *becoming*. In her study into queer world-making in the club scene Fiona Buckland looks into the act of ‘pulling a look’, explaining that it involves “taking care over appearance, [and] putting a unique outfit together... [through] acts of bricolage – putting things together to form more than the sum of their parts” (2002: 38). Buckland’s assertion highlights the creative labour (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006) invested in this preparation process. Some DHQs use bricolage to bring together supposedly oppositional masculine and feminine symbols, as well as symbols of blackness and interculturalism. For example, a trend amongst some DHQs is to wear heavy black boots (that signal masculinist imagery in their reference to physical labour and weight), alongside tight batty rider shorts, which are a codified symbol of a hyper-feminine black Caribbean aesthetic. At DHQ competitions dancers sometimes wear multiple layers of clothing and remove items during the performance at choreographed intervals. The removing of layers references striptease, but also renders specific identity references as fleeting and performative. A particularly multifaceted performance of this kind, which also spoke to an investment in intercultural dancehall came from mixed-race German-Jamaican DHQ Katie who wore a body suit in the colours of the German flag and during her performance pulled a Jamaican flag out from her cleavage. The imagery spoke of dancehall’s Jamaicanness, but also Katie’s relationship to it through her intercultural body (Osumare, 2002), as the multiplicity of the performance with the two flags being used, signalled a desire to complicate, somewhat satirically, any binary links made between her body and any one given nation. Instead her performance celebrated an identity involving multiple cultural affiliations. Katie’s performance expressed an ease with in-between states, multiplicity and the deconstruction of an overdetermined racialised national identity. To borrow from Osumare’s (2002) terminology she ‘kept it real’, as in she represented a style that used symbols and movement motifs that were at once consistent to both its cultural background and her unique relationship to it. This is an example of how identity signifiers relating to femininity, race and the nation are often playfully dismantled through intercultural embodied discursivity within women’s dancehall performance.

I theorise the process of ‘pulling a look’ (Buckland, 2002) through the concept of ‘doing-up’, which I define as not only the superficial evidence of having applied lip gloss, eye-liner, and carefully selected

clothes and jewellery, but as a cognitive and emotional process. The informal phrase invokes the idea of being elevated beyond the mundane mortality of skin and bones, of grooming one's body in preparation for something more than the everyday. It is a state-of-being that may begin, and be initially evident, materially, but also exceeds the superficial, as it impacts on one's self-perception. When I read DHQ Katie's body language, in the hostel foyer in Vienna, as a 'travelling within herself', I was perhaps witnessing a glimpse of her internal 'doing-up' process. Although physically she seemed 'done-up', internally, the process was still on-going. Thus, although the positioning of the term 'done up' in the past tense implies that the act happened in the past, on closer inspection it is observable that the done-up state requires maintenance, through constant creative labour (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006) and renewal, and is therefore an active process. Bakare-Yusuf asserts that “dancehall modes of adornment should be viewed as a form of work in its own right—the work of creative resistance as a product of a playful imaginative and historical retrieval” (p469). Acts such as the re-application of lipstick, the hoisting-up of stockings and the re-combing and braiding of hair all help to maintain the done-up aesthetic and contribute to the performative construction of *bruk out*. There is thus a contradiction in the language of *done*, which suggests completion, and the reality of the on-going work of fixing and priming, that *becoming* a DHQ is in fact dependent upon.

Much of the work of 'doing up' is also racialised work, for example in the stylisation of black women's hair. White DHQs often braid their hair also, mimicking this black aesthetic in a way that references and 'celebrates' blackness, but fails to express any sensitivity toward how their fashioning commodifies and fetishizes blackness. This notion of creation through the racialised labour of adornment applies to DHQ fashioning also. Buckland (2002) posits that through shared values of fabulousness “...participants felt encouraged to fashion themselves and to realise their imaginative possibilities through dress, social interactions, and dance.” (p36). More specifically in relation to this study, I read the forms of excess within DHQ fashioning as a determined will to perform waywardness (Hartman, 2018). My theorisation of waywardness in black women's performative lives, is aligned to Hartman's argument that it is important to recognise the potential of waywardness within the supposedly mundane “as the latent text to creating and living the social otherwise [expressive of] the desire for a radical other way of being in the world” (Hartman, 2018b). Hartman further explains that

The aesthetic, the political and the social cannot be separated as orders of experience or thought... so the desire for a beautiful life is the desire for a free life, is also the desire to escape the regime of wage labour, which is a desire to topple the walls of the ghetto, which is a desire to elude and destroy the color line.

(2018b)

I argue that DHQ fashion and the labour of doing-up invests in, and celebrates black aesthetics by expressively placing value on signifiers that are systematically otherwise marginalised as vulgar (C. Cooper, 2004), such as ‘stripper heels’, and excessive – for example the celebration of large ‘bling’ jewellery. In her article titled ‘*Hip hop, Pleasure and its Fulfilment*’ (2013) Jayna Brown argues for a space to express pleasure in ‘misbehaviour’, claiming: “I love [hip hop] for its bad manners and its immorality, its lack of respectability or restraint, for its illicit embrace of overabundance and excess” (p147). Because hip hop, and dancehall, both deal with black politics of respectability, it is vital to understand how the excessive symbols and the act of taking pleasure in them, are imbued with black racial politics. I therefore assert that the creative labour (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006) that goes into materialist consumption practices in the DHQ scene help black DHQs to construct a *bruk out* ‘world’, which is positioned as a contemporary radical black feminist performance culture invested in the politics of feminine pleasure.

Because the creative labour involved in DHQ adornment is racialised it does not carry this same meaning as a rejection of black respectability, from a black positionality when white European women engage with these same symbols of excess. Interestingly, some more recent DHQ practices in the UK suggest a departure from the aesthetics of excess. UK-based dance teacher Simone Fleek states:

Some people call themselves DHQ yet they go on the stage wearing black plimsoles and black cotton hot pants. Everything is jet black like they are about to take their GCSE Dance exams. It makes me cringe! COSTUMING is a big deal in DANCEHALL culture... back in the day, costumes were created with great imagination to the point of being TAILORED for entertainment purposes or for the person wearing it to express their 'alter ego'. You're supposed to rep your QUEEN status, DRESS and DANCE LIKE A BOSS on that stage! Dancehall Leaders can you please raise the bar again and make sure people taking part in competitions embody all aspects of Dancehall Queen culture in order to rep that status... if they are not costume ready they shouldn't take part... x them out the competition one time... Preserve the culture.

(Email Correspondence with Fleek, August 2018, capitalisation in original text)

Fleek’s observation of dancers who, she claims, wear black plimsoles and black cotton hot pants, points to a recent absorption of everyday fabrics and drab colours into DHQ aesthetics. Fleek’s assertions about these observations highlight the view that DHQ fashioning is a crucial element of the DHQ ‘becoming’ process, as she suggests dancers who fail to produce a ‘boss’-like aesthetic are not ready to take part in the competition. This implies that there is an expectation amongst some segments of the dancehall community, that one needs to go through such transformations in order to ‘become’ a DHQ. The creative labour required to imagine and produce a unique DHQ identity, that dares to reject black respectability politics, is thus perceived, by this segment of the community, as

being critical to the 'becoming' process. Because this labour is crucial to performing *bruk out*, without it the performance is no longer aligned to the *bruk out* epistemology. This calls into question the cultural framework that these performances are operating within; in particular, it raises debate about whether the black performance codes are still present here. If the labour of adornment and the rejection of 'respectability', are key to performing *bruk out*, then these newer costume choices threaten the alignment to these codes. Fleek places importance on the maintenance of the codes, perhaps because of their blackness and a motivation to protect black performance from cultural appropriation. This raises questions as to how dancers from different racial positionalities may engage with DHQ aesthetics with cultural integrity. The removal of all signifiers of excess, as in the cases that Fleek describes, appears to be a refusal to participate in the culture of excessive adornment altogether. But Fleek's comments call for dancers to engage with the labour practices, arguably because to not do so risks a form of depoliticisation which detracts from the black political impetus within dancehall. The task for white European dancers is thus to find ways of participating in the adornment culture from their individual cultural positionalities, in ways that do not detract from the complex negotiations surrounding black respectability already present within the style.

4.4 Performative Masquerade

The transformative 'doing-up' process draws heavily from a sociocultural legacy of meaning-making through masquerade in the Caribbean region (C. Cooper, 2004). The metaphorical 'mask' has been theorised in critical race studies in relation to the construction of racial identities in the Caribbean region (Fanon, 1967).³⁰ This school of thought conceives of the performance of racial constructs as the wearing of masks, in relation to experiences of self and Other. Discussing a particularly subversive reading of masking in Caribbean cultural discourse, C. Cooper explains that "Contemporary dancehall culture in Jamaica discloses new variants of the shape-shifting motifs that are inscribed in traditional folktales" (2004: 131). Acts of masquerade have also been an integral part of Caribbean cultural life at celebratory events such as annual carnival festivities, which have themselves been read as guises for the cultivation of resistive energy (Riggio, 2006). Research on the significance of masking at carnival highlights the black phenomenological undertones of the event, which are disguised as frivolous and light-hearted. Dancehall critic and scholar Rex Nettleford, for example, posits that:

³⁰ In Frantz Fanon's seminal text 'Black Skin, White Masks' (1952) he critiques racist social orders that construct whiteness as superior to blackness. He discusses a process through which this social order is internalised and reproduced within postcolonial societies wherein social 'success' is relational to white cultural standards, that undermine the value of blackness. He analyses a system in which he sees as black people aligning themselves to whiteness by metaphorically 'wearing the mask' of whiteness, through performative acts in daily life.

The ambush of a less than just society under the cover of festive masquerades has been one way of experiencing control, if only...temporary... Being King or Queen for a day was a way of having a taste for power, even if it was mock power and fleeting... For the costume is a mask helping to transform the persona to do wild and uninhibited things.

(1993: 16)

Niaah explains that the 'masks' that are worn in the dancehall, in the form of costumes, wigs and flamboyant behaviour act as "aggrandizement tools" (2010: 132). She adds that "The dramatic... encompasses the display of real and imagined (sexual) prowess, and overinflated, larger-than-life selves" (p50). Looking at the impetus behind these characterisations Bakare-Yusuf describes the condition that produces this in a black Jamaican context. She explains:

When a group is pushed to the limit of existence and marginalized from the normative centers of the production of meaning and cultural symbolization, the expressive energy that seeks output... cannot be released smoothly and easily... What often emerges... is an uncontrollable... explosion of creative excessive energy... For dancehall women, the maximal intensity of their clothing, jewelry and hairstyle is the body's response to the existential conditions of their lifeworld...

(2006: 475)

This explanation highlights how the excessive expressivity of black Jamaican DHQs is in dialogue with their sociopolitical positionalities as black Jamaican women.

Considering the adoption of such strategies of embodied discourse by non-Jamaican participants in intercultural contexts Fleek's critique of recent trends toward drab colours and fabrics in DHQ costume practices in the UK becomes pertinent. Her comment was made in reference to performances by a largely non-Jamaican and often white group of dancers, so based on this it could be assumed that the move away from the 'excessive' styling demonstrates a shift in aesthetics amongst this section of the DHQ scene. My research observations highlight however, that it is not a simple case of Jamaican dancers reflecting the 'excessive' aesthetics, whilst non-Jamaicans – white and black – move away from this. As described, at the European DHQ Competition in 2013, there were a range of examples of non-Jamaican dancers investing heavily in excess, character and the 'Jamaican cool'. For the racially diverse DHQs in Europe this is a vital aspect of their process of constructing a DHQ persona and connecting with the DHQ community. Nevertheless, tensions around the valuing of adornment in relation to the 'becoming' process are clearly in circulation, as some dancers place value primarily on the exhibition of dance skill and focus their training and energy on embodied labour, rather than the body's creative adornment and the visual culture this creates. These alterations in emphasis and value between dance training and creative adornment practices, highlight the

complexities being drawn as DHQ culture flows into new contexts, and becomes a part of an intercultural dialogue that threatens the black epistemology of *bruk out*, which underpins DHQ practice as a decolonial performance style.

4.5 Dancehall Queens Online

The aggrandisement involved in crafting a DHQ identity takes place in and between physically-embodied and virtually-embodied contexts. Many DHQs use the technological and connective potential of SNSs such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat to further articulate and aggrandise their DHQ aesthetic through “virtual practices of becoming” (Doorn, 2011: 535-6). Virtual embodiment also offers forms of creative representation through filters, emoticons and live streaming video ‘stories’ that help build the dancers’ online visual identity. Some DHQs carefully craft images and videos that present them as ‘fabulously’ (Moore, 2018) living-out their desired realities, and use editing technology to produce excessive images that typically play into either a playfully obscure or ‘Jamaican cool’ aesthetic. Image filters that alter the colour and saturation set-up of media offer creative visual modifications, which help to achieve this. Additional features such as applying comical animation masks that distort the face, also enable dancers to take pleasure in disguise and virtually-embodied re-conditioning. Symbols and text can also be placed on-top of images to reflect ideas about the image’s significance and meaning, often, as Nakamura (2008) highlights, in relation to the performative identity politics of race, and also class and gender. DHQ Katie regularly posts playful videos and images on her Instagram story of herself with comical animated ‘masks’, such as bunny ears and a bunny nose and uses audio editing software to distort her voice as she speaks in Jamaican patois. She also frequently posts apparently airbrushed images of herself in revealing DHQ outfits with done-up hair and make-up and overlaid symbols including Jamaican flags, sound symbols and text about an upcoming or previous event she has performed at. These techniques are not exclusive to DHQ communities, but they have been harnessed by many DHQs as an integral part of their process of becoming, and maintaining their DHQ persona. Nakamura suggests it is important to study

modes of production, especially amateur and low-end do-it-yourself digital cultures, [which] are usually more readily adopted by newer and less traditionally skilled or trained users, and the paths by which images of the body are appropriated from other offline media.

(2008: 6)

In analysis of media representation, Featherstone explains that “...the image is related to imagination, not what is ‘there’, but what one imagines one should be” (Featherstone, 2010: 198). Thus, in analysis of the online visual culture produced by DHQs, I argue that they dare to imagine themselves differently

and realise this through virtual 'doing-up'. This is, for some, an important part of their process of becoming, and in DHQ Katie's case the construction of a playfully erotic digitally raced DHQ identity.

DHQs also use classic modelling techniques to aggrandise the apparent size of body parts – in particular the buttocks. For example, DHQ Donna, who is a well-known black Jamaican DHQ, regularly posts pictures in which she visibly arches her back to accentuate the curve of her lower spine. DHQ Donna curates these images on Instagram using specific editing techniques, such as the triple-image feature, that allows the user to upload three images side-by-side. She often places three photos of herself in the same outfit, each displaying her costume and her body from a different viewpoint to create a 360-degree aspect. Other DHQs also use the mirror feature, that allows them to post one image and have it replicated in an adjacent image to create a mirror effect. The reproduction of the image highlights its commodifiability and thus offers it for scopical consumption. In addition, many DHQ pseudonyms use object-symbol references such as 'Doll' and 'Barbie', thus creating a connection between DHQ culture and capitalist systems of commercial mass production and consumption. When considering the signification of such activities I turn to Fleetwood's (2011: 110) provocation:

Can the enactment of excess flesh by black female cultural producers trouble the particularities of being racialized and sexualised as black women in the visual field? Can hypervisibility be a performative strategy that points to the problem of the black female body in the visual field? Can visibility be deployed to redress the excessive black female body?

The notion of the commodified DHQ image also highlights the vexed relationship between object/subject positionalities that are inherent to DHQ identities. According to Blanco Borelli and Burrill (2014), the digital "body as object" creates an "ontological slippage," which "allow subjects and objects to speak in new ways" (p438). The virtual body is ever-reliant on the material body, but surpasses some of the limits of the physical.

The production of a digitized body, by those dancers who have access potential to SNSs, is an additional way for dancers to shape their DHQ identities. This body-object is manifested through the production of a social media gallery across various platforms that is updated on a regular basis and curated to produce a specific personalised style, and ultimately to act as a cultural artefact. These spaces are highly racialised – visual references are loaded with cultural and socioeconomic details that signal a specific positionality in the world. For example, as well as filters, DHQ Katie also posts comments critiquing the sets she films in, such as "It even mek mi dance inna mi dressing room... and yea you can tell I love clothes and shoes" (Instagram, 2018). Katie's continual posting of comical Instagram stories and the updates on her professional activities create a virtual persona that is linked

to her DHQ identity, but exists in an alternate digital form. The digitized body has capabilities that her physical self does not – she can alter her voice, her image and the appearance of her body, and can signal ideas through text, symbols and voice-over commentary. DHQ Katie’s digital identity has developed a distinct character from her physical DHQ identity and living through her digital self enables her to explore dimensions and connectivities in a new form via alternative processes. The digital self is therefore not necessarily an extension of the DHQ identity, but through the unique style and content developed it can exist with a distinct sense of self, which is arguably a part of the allure of the digital.

In their digital work DHQs transcend the limitations of the corporeal, whilst still prescribing to a system that centralises the body (in its virtual form) as a meaning making cultural entity. Blanco Borelli and Burrill posit that

Online social media allows the user to customize and enhance their profile and through this optimization, customize and enhance their (online) self. Online, the profile serves as an ever-present chance to alter and perfect what the social circle will see.

(2014: 432)

The way in which filter software allows dancers to play with their own representation means they have a further avenue for creative self-presentation, in addition to the adornment processes discussed earlier in this chapter. This, in turn, promotes a vast field of futuristic imaginings of *bruk out* performance, that have the potential to empower agents through the virtual agency afforded. The cultivation of such realities is also reminiscent of the masquerade practices used by Caribbean communities to resist (post)colonial external definition and control (C. Cooper, 2004).

As described in reference to the dancehall network in Chapter Three, it is important to recognise that access to these forms of virtual play and self-actualisation are unequally distributed between dancers. This unequal distribution of access impacts not only on power dynamics between the differentially positioned dancers, but also on the forms of participation, play, and resistance that they individually engage with. As Bakare-Yusuf (2006) explains, restricted access to creative space impacts the form and style of one’s creative labour. For example, dancers with heightened access to Instagram often invest heavily in virtual creativity, whereas dancers in Jamaica, who typically are less active online are often more involved in producing new dance material that references a relationship to quotidian Jamaican street life and culture. Such citational references (DeFrantz, 2016) can be seen in the names of some dance moves, such as ‘Digg Road’ and ‘Bread Fruit – Roast or Fry’. The dance material produced in vernacular Jamaican settings is highly influential in shaping the dance material that circulates online. However, virtual screen activities also inform dance production, as evidenced in

dance moves such as ‘Upload’ and ‘Sesame Street’.³¹ These dynamics further highlight the processual (Benthaus, 2015) nature of the dance’s circulation, that was described in Chapter Three, as it moves between virtual and physical contexts and garners influences from both along the way.

The emphasis on the will to dare that this study has identified in DHQ performance also manifests in the style and content of the dancers’ virtually-embodied practices. Some DHQs produce virtual media that invests so heavily in the will to dare, through the display of provocative imagery, that external forces work to censor their publications. For example, DHQ Donna, who posted images of herself in a revealing outfit displaying her breasts on Instagram had her account blocked due to reports of inappropriate content. She responded by creating a new account and publicly defaming the individuals who reported her profile as inappropriate. This is an example of the continuously tenuous relationship between DHQ activities and authoritative controlling forces. Fleetwood observes a similar use of the dare in Rihanna’s performance: “Rihanna sticks close to the scene of her assault and continues to rehearse and restage the interplay of love, violence, and erotic attachments in deliberately shocking ways” (2011: 421). Later she adds: “Rihanna performs the classic masochist... in control of the scripts that degrade, define, and ultimately reinforce her power” (2011: 428). Both Rihanna and DHQ Donna take a leading role in defining the narrative surrounding their sexuality by positioning themselves through an aesthetic of hypervisibility and excess flesh. This, as Fleetwood recognises, enables them to shape a discourse around their subjectivity that refuses an over-simplified victim position. In these clashes the dancers relentlessly invest in, and are empowered by, the will to dare, as they confront and engage with the restrictions that surround them.

4.6 Dancehall Queen Celebrities and Commercial ‘Success’

Dancehall culture invests heavily in commercial markers of value and an example of this is in dancehall lyrics, which consistently celebrate American and European brands, such as Clarks and Gucci.³² This celebration of the Euro-American commercial marketplace creates a proximate relationship with commercial capitalism, which dancehall patrons further enforce through overt allegiances to specific brands in their choices of attire, and the valuing of aesthetics of excess, such as large ‘bling’ jewellery

³¹ This is a reference to the name of a popular North American children’s television show.

³² Examples of these references include the track by Vybz Kartel, Popcaan and Gaza Slim titled “Clarks” (2010) which celebrates the shoe brand and describes the role they play in one’s personal fashion aesthetic. The chorus includes the lines “the leather hard, the suede soft, toothbrush get off the dust fast, everybody haffi ask where mi get mi Clarks.” Other references to Euro-American brands include the lines “Pool and the Benz just wash, if a Givenchy shoes, then the belt must match, Gucci loafers with a tough top” from the track “Yeah Yeah” (2017) by Aidonia.

and brightly coloured hair.³³ Through affiliation to vocal artists³⁴ who support and are sponsored by companies,³⁵ dancers become affiliated to specific branded qualities also. The increased visibility from brand connections works to inflate the dancer's status. In the logic of consumer capitalism, the brand's endorsement connotes a form of cultural success that labels them a celebrity and accredits them with cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Dancers also labour to achieve visibility in dancehall cultural spaces at parties. They invest in creative labour to set aesthetic trends and maintain kinaesthetic influence, through the invention of new dance moves and fashions. Accumulatively these activities and efforts produce a stylised DHQ kinaesthetic and Jamaica's street party scene offers dancers opportunities to share these kinaesthetics. Niaah explains that at these parties "Modelling and 'profiling' are seen as secondary to dancing, yet essential" (2010: 137). Thus, the way one moves to and from and in the party, traveling solo or in groups, and one's comportment whilst at the parties, are important character-building activities. For example, dance crews often arrive at parties in large groups, sometimes riding on motorbikes or in flashy cars. Once in the dance space they can be seen moving through the crowd in an apparently organised fashion toward a prime dancing and profiling spot, where party-goers and cameramen are sure to see them. Some crews wear matching outfits or have a dress code, such as wearing high heels or a certain type of hair style. The often highly colourful and flamboyant styles are modelled by the dancers with a sense of care and pride, thus further displaying the creative labour (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006) involved in the construction of their dancehall personas and the alignment to a *bruk out* epistemology. These forms of collective self-care and profiling are black cultural practices that draw from performative respectability politics in a way that refracts and recontextualises them. What remains is the respectability implied by a performance of self-care, evidenced in the visible labour of putting one's outfit together. There is a form of pleasure in this process and the revealing of the outfit as a product, which revels in materialism and its personalisation. Brown (2013: 147) argues: "Consumption is about the senses, the pleasure of taking something into the body: tasting, feeling, hearing, seeing; of frottage, pressure, rhythm, temperature." Pulling off a 'fabulous' (Moore, 2018) and innovative look allows the dancer to enjoy a form of capitalist gratification, that Brown argues is empowering because

³³ This is similar to North American hip hop culture, but dancehall aesthetics are characteristically heightened in their level of excess. The colours, amount of bling, and so on are typically even brighter and even more flamboyant than in U.S. hip hop culture.

³⁴ Many dancers become a part of an artist's 'team', which involves performing on tour with them.

³⁵ A few examples of dancehall artist sponsorship deals include Shenseea who was sponsored by Campari, Flow and Pepsi Jamaica in 2017, Beenie Man who endorsed the brand Yaad Swag Rum in 2011, and Konshens who was sponsored by Mackeson beer between 2007 to 2010.

when shaped by capitalist systems of exchange, lust can actually never be gratified, and we are left in a constant state of desire; so we should all then practice gratification regularly in protest.

(2013: 147)

Thus, taking pleasure in the aesthetics of excess, bricolage fashion, and other laborious adornment exercises is a form of resistance to commercial capitalism's constant emphasis on what is missing and the need for more. Gratification expresses fulfilment.

The labouring involved in achieving celebrity status now also crucially involves digital labour – developing an online DHQ visuality and collecting followers and likes. Altogether the emphasis on accumulating social status as a DHQ celebrity highlights that social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) are integral to identity production in the dancehall network. Celebrity status is perhaps the ideal in this culture, because it is a form of acknowledgement that is aligned to a neoliberal capitalist world view that dancers in Jamaica and beyond, who are entwined in these globalised intercultural processes that centralise commodity exchange and knowledge transfer, are familiar with and take pleasure in.

4.7 Dancehall Queen Competitions

The discussion around the production of DHQ identities requires a pointed inspection of DHQ performances at competitions. This is because DHQ competitions act as a platform for dancers to explore their DHQ identities and share a *bruk out* world view with a live audience through solo performance. The solo performance format, dedicated to female dancers, is what marks DHQ competitions out from other dancehall activities, such as the popular dancehall parties of downtown Kingston. Unlike other events that typically involve either heteronormative coupling, or the constant re-negotiation of power and space between groups of female and male dancers, the competitions are dedicated solely to female performance. Further, in their structuring as a sequence of solos, rather than battle-style dance-offs or group choreographies, DHQ competitions offer individual performers the possibility to explore and popularise personalised styles, through the development of unique performance characteristics. The competition is thus an open-stage dedicated to individualised female creativity.

The physicality of the dancing body at DHQ competitions manifests the DHQ world and the performative will to dare in a distinctive and unique way. At the International DHQ Competition in Jamaica in 2014 a black Jamaican dancer named DHQ Fire came onto the stage wearing heavy black boots, a sparkly black and gold bodysuit and bright red hair. Before performing any specific dance

'moves', she strode down the alley stage toward the audience. As she travelled she bent her knees, so that she was low to the ground, lifted her shoulders into her neck, and bent her elbows to round her arms on each alternating step. Reaching half way down the catwalk-style stage, she stopped and glared at the audience, tilting her head to one side. Her pensive and authoritative posture, created a sense of control, as the audience attentively waited to find out what she would do next. She proceeded to run back up the stage, which was wet from the rain, and jump onto a small plastic stool, landing on her back. In a ball position upon the stool, she then propelled herself up and down in a bouncing motion. This stool trick became a signature move, which earned her great success and popularity. This performance was memorable, because within the space of the ninety-second solo, she engaged the will to dare to produce a gravity-defying anarchic spectacle that referenced a relationship to the intensities of pleasure and pain.

The importance of the solo performance is partly due to the meaning accredited to the live and improvised performance act. Unlike in online DHQ activities, on the competition stage dancers cannot rely on editing technology to produce the visuals of their choice. Here they must draw on their improvisatory performance skills to express their individual DHQ personas. Although some dancers will prepare choreographed sections, most dancers report improvisation as their main performance technique, using the music, the energy from the crowd – known as 'vibes' – the stage setting, and props as inspiration. Performances often involve dancers climbing stage sets, performing head tops on top of speakers and jumping from heights into cataclysmic gymnastic positions. DHQs typically pack their solos with many of these stunts in quick succession, saving little time for fanciful or smooth transitions between moves. This focus on content over structure, creates an intensity for dancers and audiences alike, as dancers choose dramatic impact over choreographic flow. The dangerous and largely improvisatory nature of these performance acts, work to emphasise the will to dare at an embodied level within DHQ performance. A dancers' ability to communicate with an audience, within the pressure of a ninety-second time frame, and with the risk of injury, due to the real dangers posed by the moves, becomes a decisive point in her identity construction. With the emphasis on the will to dare, speed, intensity and pain, she must be ready to use her imagination to produce a quality that the audience and judges deem to be skilful, if she is to reach the subsequent round. Thus, improvisational innovation and the exhibition of embodied labour are key to the value system of *bruk out* expressed in DHQ performance culture. These characteristics are significant in a black cultural framework because they are distinguishable and valued as markers of the ingenuity of black Caribbean performativity. As DeFrantz (2018) notes "black dance thrives when it surprises itself; when the dancer moves the dancing to a place of unexpected physical innovation and embodied understanding." I theorise the improvisational notes of DHQ performance through the idea of the will to dare as well as

pleasure and pain, because of the dancers' focus during improvisatory moments. DHQ Fire's facial expression was intense, and at times exhibited a self-assured sense of glee. There was something provocative in the tilt of her head, as if she was daring her audience to provoke her – and was warning them to beware of the performance she was about to present.

It is essential to register the physical labour that goes into producing such performances in order to understand their social significance. Srinivasan explains: "...labor is equivalent to the product in dance: the dancing body's very 'liveness' and the display of its labor in performance produces a dance product." (Srinivasan, 2012: 11). This labour is often measured through the traces that are left on the bodies' surfaces, in forms of bruises, scrapes, and sometimes other more serious injuries, as well as the residue of the earth's materiality – mud stains and grit on one's skin and clothes. In interviews DHQs frequently spoke of incurring injuries as a result of their training and performances. For example, DHQ Maximum proclaimed, on the morning after the International DHQ Competition in 2014, "we [DHQs] all have so many bruises!" These traces reference the labour, the friction created and the pain endured in the dance. On friction Elswit (2018: 41) writes:

Friction is most commonly understood as the force that resists the sliding of one object over another. But as an oppositional force that needs to be overcome for motion to begin or continue, friction is also the basis of all movement – without traction there could be no push. Through this necessary force of opposition that both slows and enables mobility, friction causes wear and tear.

Thus, friction is a sign of repeated usage. In this case, its evidence infers commitment to the dance through the labour of the will to dare and the focus on taking physical risks by practicing and performing dangerous acrobatic moves.

Dancers typically treat the competitions with tremendous importance, training for months in preparation and creating elaborate costumes and set designs for their solo performances. Dancer testimonies speak of lengthy daily training sessions to achieve the rhythmic articulation of body parts, in particular the buttocks, in the practicing of certain iconic moves such as the 'Tic Toc', 'Puppy Tail', and 'Butterfly.' They also train intensively to develop skills – particularly balance and flexibility – to perform gymnastic stunts such as head tops with added spins and jumps, and cataclysmic leaps and falls. The performance of these gymnastic tricks creates a thematic focus on exceeding physical boundaries, as there is a drive to perform stunts that appear to defy normal restrictions of the body. This pushing of physical boundaries further entrenches the emphasis on the technical requirements and thus the labour of the dance. The ability of the dancers to perform stunts that evidence great levels of strength, flexibility, control and coordination references the work that has come before. It

also further connects the style to notions of pain and risk, as the stunts are often performed without protective wear and onto hard surfaces, which any audience can see risks serious pain and physical damage. The lack of regard for the consequences is part and parcel of the DHQ aesthetic – it creates a sense of abandon for the future and signals an intimate embodied commitment to a painful performance style, that the dancers are keen to re-produce and celebrate. These features position the form firmly in the aesthetics of black performance, as the visible labour of the dance combined with the kinaesthetic and aesthetic evidence of pain and pleasure highlights the bitter/sweet synergy that Fleetwood (2011) explains is aligned to the embodied experiences of many black women.

The training practices prepare the dancer psychologically and physically to take risks in performance – to dare themselves on stage and to manage the consequences. Niaah explains that “A dancer at the level of a queen, with superior dancing abilities, can challenge limits that are unattainable by others” (2010: 140). Improvisatory skills and the ability to construct creative relationships to props and costumes are key to these investments in the will to dare and in *bruk out*. At the International DHQ Competition in 2015 this manifested in a performance by DHQ Cushy who opened her performance by riding a donkey onto the stage. After the entrance, she remained on the donkey for a while, willing it to walk around the stage – to somehow perform. The donkey, paced across the stage, while Cushy, restricted by her position on its back, was unable to perform any moves of her own. The point of this entrance was clearly not to demonstrate dancing skill or style, but to create a shock amongst the audience, by performing the unexpected. The crowd, who roared in appreciation, seemed to support the daring act, and welcomed its ridiculousness, despite the conspicuous lack of ‘dance’ content. It seems that what was valued by the dancer in her decision to involve the donkey, and in the audience's appreciation of it, was the will to dare – the impetus to ‘*bruk out*’ of any real, or perceived, restrictions governing what ‘should’, or ‘should not’, be included in DHQ performance and to revel in the unexpected.

4.8 Resistance and Processes of Re-Positioning and Disregarding

Taking the role of a DHQ allows dancers to engage in aesthetic and improvisatory play and to invest their energy in defying conventions in ways that are often inaccessible in their everyday lives (C. Cooper, 2004; Niaah, 2010). This dramatic form of improvisation, again, positions the form within an aesthetic framework of black performance. These forms of expression allow the dancers to explore creative forms of self-determination and perform their own experience of reality or fantasy. To analyse this process it is important to identify which forces and structures DHQs are disrupting and re-positioning themselves within. The research findings presented here support my interpretation of

DHQ practices as decolonial in their subverting of the hegemony of white epistemologies, by operating within and for the development of *bruk out* as a black performance culture.

The conceptualisation of cultural resistance in this chapter stems from black performance theory (DeFrantz and Gonzalez, 2014). DeFrantz, in particular, presents a particularly nuanced and balanced view on the resistive capacity of hip hop, that through its global popularity is complicit with the very regimes of power that it simultaneously resists. He states “hip hop straddles, often uncomfortably, its own capacities as [a] resistant and compliant practice...” (2014: 237). This is a useful concept in relation to this study, because the intercultural dancehall scene involves various frictional forces, which like the ‘straddling’ that DeFrantz, pictures, also create an agonistic climate (Mouffé, 2012) of being on the brink of various dichotomous positions.

Rather than ‘resistance’, Radley (1995) makes the pointed decision to use the term ‘disregard’, which infers the act of looking away from, rather than an act of pushing back toward, as the term *resistance* suggests. The difference between looking away and pushing back is one of focus – to push back is to disrupt a force through direct antagonism. To look away is to disrupt by operating the agency to re-position one’s focus away from that force. Both processes invest in decentring a mechanism of power, but they are distinct in their use of different forms of negotiation. The different strategies for decentring possess alternate value systems and epistemologies. I theorise the idea of disregarding as a mechanism within dancehall’s decolonial embodied politics because the disregard takes place through the performances of hypervisibility that are set against a culture of with-holding. The apparent dichotomy between these performative traits acts as a refusal to be totally understood. I read this as relating to the decolonial imaginary that Pérez explains is: “that interstitial space where differential politics and social dilemmas are negotiated.” (1999: 6). Black performance that disregards white cultural epistemologies invests in the black epistemologies they pertain to, rather than investing in the effort to push against the hegemony of whiteness. The performance decolonises itself, by operating within and focusing on its own epistemic structure, rather than on resisting whiteness.

DHQ practices invest in the disruption of various value systems. The celebration of commercial ‘success’ and the celebrated connection to North American and European brands disregards the value system inherent to Reggae – its progenitor popular culture – which rejects capitalism as being complicit with whiteness as an oppressive regime of power. In this disregarding of Reggae and by association the Rastafari disparagement of systems of power that centralise the Global North, DHQ culture re-positions itself as a distinct black cultural practice. Due to this re-positioning, dancehall culture at large is sometimes dismissed as being compliant with neocolonial and capitalist systems of economic and cultural control from the Global North by other black cultural critics (Hope, 2006).

However, this is complicated by the DHQ scene's simultaneous disregard for a white cultural order in its celebration of black aesthetics. DHQ practices thus reject the restrictions of 'uptown' Jamaica and with them certain elements of a white 'Western' value system, whilst simultaneously re-positioning themselves as distinct from the black epistemology associated with Reggae. This complexity, I argue, highlights that the proximity with commerciality is tied to interculturalism in dancehall, both in Jamaica and Europe.

For the DHQs studied here, the 'dare' acts as a way to disregard specific social values that they express an awareness of, such as whiteness. DHQ culture can be understood as honing a cultural politics of disruption, that disregards a range of conflicting value systems. The process of looking away from various structures of meaning highlights the focus on self-determination. However, the disregarding of the various systems of value that surround DHQ culture, is not permanent or consistent as dancehall moves between fluctuating and sometimes contradictory symbols. By negotiating a position of temporary disregard to the various structures that surround it, the DHQ scene disrupts its own subjugation. The process that a DHQ goes through is less about aligning herself to a particular value system than it is about manifesting her agency to position herself in variously disruptive/ supportive postures. The DHQ's re-positioning is therefore an expression of awareness of the various forces surrounding her, and her ability to '*bruk out*' from being under their control. Fleetwood (2011: 111) describes the 'productive look' of black female cultural producers who use excess flesh to "construct an identification that acknowledges but does not adhere to racialized and sexualized aberrance":

[The productive look] is an enactment of the gaze that does not necessarily attempt to heal or redress the naked, exploited, denigrated black female body tethered to the black imago but understands the function of this figuration in dominant visual culture.

(Fleetwood, 2011: 111)

In the case of this study, the DHQs demonstrated ability to see and act upon the forces that surround her, enables her to hone a degree of power. Her performative alignment to a black, wayward (Hartman, 2018), embodied aesthetic through *bruk out* sensibilities is a decolonising act that makes visible her determination as a self-defining black subject.

4.9 *Bruk Out*

The labour that dancers invest in self-actualising their DHQ identities and the resulting forms of agency this promotes, enable them to encounter a state of harmony that "can be experienced as more real, more vital than... [what Radley terms] ... the mundane sphere." (Radley, 1995: 14). This experience is typically fleeting and is rarely experienced outside the conditions of a dancehall event in the early

hours of the morning, when collective labour has been invested in creating a dancehall space that will nurture and support these moments of harmony. At DHQ competitions this state can be achieved through the psychosocial, embodied, and creative labour that goes into producing the will to dare through performative pleasure and pain. In this process a dancer goes through a type of transformation, using the will to dare, to achieve a sense of harmonious alignment of her psychosocial, cultural and physical self. Although this is a personal experience, it is co-created with the audience who, through their interactions with the dancer, such as cheers and dancing, help to produce the harmonious conditions for the experience to take place. At parties, elements such as improvised synchronicity on the dance floor, wherein dancers collaboratively perform themselves into the dancehall, create a shared sensorial experience. These experiences might include sharing embodied understandings of the rhythm cycle and musical codes such as the 'pull-up',³⁶ and the communal singing of lyrics. Participants may also share intoxication practices, including the use of marijuana and alcohol. Kinaesthetic sensation, through the labouring body in song and polyrhythmic rotations and undulations in the dance, are also a part of this shared sensorial experience. In addition to the experiences of synchronicity between agents, individualised sensorial experiences also work toward creating this sense of harmony. Niaah (2010: 130) explains that during her research a "dancer admitted that she loves 'wining' her hips because when she does it feels like renewing energy radiating through her body, and when these 'vibes' take over she steps out of herself." Dancers interviewed for this study often used the term 'vibes' to describe such experiences. I study this theme of embodied harmony and the notions of 'vibes' in relation to the epistemology of *bruk out*. Many of the testimonies collected from dancers highlight being overwhelmed with a type of force when dancing. For example, DHQ Maximum states: "You can't describe [it]... its like a fire – it takes your brain... you are not in your body" (2014). Further, Talent (2014) posits that "...when [the dancer] wake up the next morning she probably wonder how she did that, cause sometime it really get to ya head". Niaah (2010: 130) highlights that dancers describe "feeling as if they were in a dream world while... dancing." Additionally, MCs at dancehall events sometimes comment on a dancer's performance by saying 'she get *bruk out*', implying that she enters a *bruk out* state in the dance. I argue that during *bruk out* DHQ performances dancers reach climactic states that are brought about through the labour of *becoming*. These are embodied process, that requires an internal focus (note my perception of Katie's travelling 'within herself' in the hostel foyer), but also rely on the support of a community, hence Beenie Man's emphasis on *bruk out* happening in public space: 'inna di streets'.

³⁶ The 'pull up' is a musical practice, wherein if after the introduction of a song, a certain degree of excitement and joy has been expressed by the party-goers, then the DJ will shout 'pull-up!' (and others often join in), and will subsequently replay the track from the beginning.

I theorise the process of 'getting *bruk out*' as the harnessed ability to invest forms of qualitative physical, emotional and cognitive labour, that altogether create the conditions for an experience of psychosocial and physical harmony. In this way, *bruk out* performance is a realm of experience that is often described as being 'like a dream', but is grounded in the body's labour – it is self-actualised. *Bruk out* may appear to happen to the dancer; but it is the dancer who creates *bruk out*. My argument is aligned to Niaah's assertion that "dancehall cannot be understood simply as a 'world of make-believe'... but rather as an intense personal and communal ritual" (2010: 50). These 'rituals' or practices, require the creative labour that invests in a *bruk out* epistemology to produce a shared decolonial black aesthetic. Creating and transitioning into one's DHQ identity, through the performative "wearing of masks" (Niaah, 2010: 132), in the form of excessive costumes and donning of characters, is a necessary aspect of this. The work involved in 'becoming' a DHQ is therefore essential to manifesting a *bruk out* performative world view.

Although *bruk out* performance always requires this pre-meditative labour, it can never be fully pre-planned or pre-empted, due to its reliance on a wide variety of intangible variables, such as its interpersonal nature and its highly nuanced quality. *Bruk out* performance is thus an improvisatory mode of performing that depends upon the alignment and coalescence of certain structures and variables. To fully comprehend the symbolic gravitas of *bruk out* performance as a black expressive medium, I argue that it is crucial to register both the fluidity with which elements align to produce it, but also the labour that goes into producing this fluidity. The labour that supports transcendental performance in dancehall, such as *bruk out*, is often under-estimated (Wright, 2004; Patten, 2017), leaving the experiences to be seen as something that happens to a somewhat passive subject. Instead, I argue, that because *bruk out* performance requires the labour to develop nuanced relationality to the structures and variables involved, it is very much an active and reciprocal achievement and therefore signals the intricate forms of symbolic agency that the dancer operates in her work as a DHQ.

4.10 Living as a Dancehall Queen and Strategies for Unmasking

Finally, this chapter will explore how differently positioned dancers navigate between their 'everyday' lives and their DHQ identities. The first thing to note is that each dancer has a unique relationship to her DHQ identity and there are a range of ways in which DHQs negotiate the title. For many DHQs there is a clear division between their everyday persona and their DHQ identity. DHQ Elizabeth, a black Swedish dancer, explained:

As a DHQ I prefer to call myself 'Queen Elizabeth' and then I have the runway name which is 'Miss Shaky Legs' so its like three personas...The queen one and the voguing³⁷ one that's alter egos kinda... and then I'm always Libby Total.

(DHQ Elizabeth, July 2014)

The division between DHQ and non-DHQ identities is made further evident in testimonies from certain Queens who claim to have taken actions to prevent media of their DHQ identities from crossing-over into their 'daytime' lives. DHQ Elizabeth describes her experience of navigating virtual media in the passage below, in which she discusses viewing YouTube videos of herself dancing at a DHQ competition.

I have been concerned [about]... what I should put on YouTube because... if it was only dancehall people I would not care... but I'm thinking in terms of like getting a job in the future... I did it in a 'classy' way,... but there's a lot of movements in DHQ where you actually touch yourself... and I was doing that... between the legs and... watching it I felt a bit uncomfortable, just because I know that people who don't know the dancehall culture will be like "huh!?" Even though I know what it is... I'm really just thinking of the people that don't know it, who [are] not in our generation and in terms of getting some kind of job in the future where they actually might Google me and be like 'Is that you?' But for me it was like frustrating even having those thoughts. And to me I'm not saying its wrong that I had them, but it would be better if they weren't there, like if people could just be [shrugs her shoulders].

(DHQ Elizabeth, July 2014)

This passage highlights that although once in the dancehall space dancers may feel safe to engage the will to dare and realise anarchic erotic desires through *bruk out* performance, navigating back into an 'everyday' mode of existence can be a contentious process. If a dancer has transgressed boundaries of acceptable conduct in the DHQ state and this experience slips into her everyday non-DHQ world, her local community may find ways to punish her for her transgressions (Shah, 2017). The particularities of this experience depend on one's cultural environment and identity markers of race and class, as these impact their positionality in relationship to social boundaries. For Elizabeth, looking back at the videos of herself once she was outside of the dancehall space, she became aware of how the dancing in the video, and in particular, her veneration of her vagina in performance, did not fit within the expectations of potential employers and mainstream Western society. There was some concern that her *bruk out* performance aesthetic in the competition, could jeopardise her prospects in other areas of her life.

³⁷ Voguing is a dance style that emerged in 1980s New York out of the LGBTQ black and latino community. Although substantially different in its gender politics, voguing shares certain qualities with dancehall, such as its celebration of fierce characters, virtuosity and playfulness.

In contrast to the evidence regarding dancers who perpetuate these binaries, evidence such as the relentless posting of media by other DHQs such as Katie, suggests that *some* European DHQs spend much, if not all, of their time living as DHQs. Looking at Jamaica, Niaah argues that because dancehall parties take place every night in Kingston, they are part of the city's everyday community fabric:

One could...argue, based on dancehall's mostly non-seasonal nature, that it exists within a kind of social limbo for key participants such as dancehall queens...There is really never incorporation back into everyday life, since what is everyday becomes the entire ritual of preparation, communion, withdrawal and rest, then back to preparation all over again.

(Niaah, 2010: 98)

Whether a DHQ moves in and out of her DHQ identity, or occupies it consistently, often depends on context, and whether it is more or less advantageous for a dancer to perform their DHQ status during their quotidian lives. Regardless of how frequently or systematically dancers engage with their DHQ identity, it is important to note that how they self-identify, in this highly performative state, is as much an assertion of how they want to be perceived, as how they do not, or what they do not want to be associated with. When dancers spend most of their time in their DHQ state, this often marks a stark contrast with their surroundings; often their highly organised and modelled aesthetic juxtaposes with their environment. Dancers who live in poverty, who create hyper-done-up DHQ profiles via social media, position this imagery in contrast to the destitution that surrounds them. There are therefore racial, cultural and class factors which contextualise the forms of labour that the differently positioned dancers engage with to maintain a DHQ aesthetic, or contrastingly to create a divide between their DHQ identities and their everyday lives. Many European women labour to create these divides, as evidenced in the case of Elizabeth, as well as the women described in Chapter Three who engage with the online DHQ scene in secret. Organising one's life into these categories takes intercultural work too. These dancers make constant shifts in their performativity – their ways of moving and talking – and their adornment, which signal alignment to different cultural taste values (Bourdieu, 1986). Despite these various performances of taste culminating in their intercultural bodies (Osumare, 2002), many of the women work to compartmentalise these signifiers as separate. However, this work to maintain this divide, only further highlights their awareness of, and fluency within, an intercultural field of relations, where black performance aesthetics are increasingly interwoven into the social subtexts of many European (inter)cultural contexts.

4.11 Conclusion

The evidence and discussion presented in this chapter reveals the various methods that DHQs employ in their processes of transformation into DHQs. The chapter has identified key elements in the

becoming process, including adornment, training and maintaining an online presence. The theorisation of these processes highlights how world-making (Buckland, 2002) and masquerade (C. Cooper, 2004) are deeply reliant on the creative and embodied labour (Srinivasan, 2012) of the dancers. The role of social media and virtual embodiment is particularly potent with examples of the DHQ world existing as an alternate realm of experience, that continues to centralise the body, but allows the dancer to playfully re-position herself through creative imagining and the will to dare. The notion of the dare that DHQs embody in their costuming and dance practices signals the valuing of fearlessness and the dual presence of pain and pleasure in the DHQ world. Analysing these practices through ideas of reversing the gaze in performances of excess flesh, (Fleetwood, 2011) and disregarding (Radley, 1995), the chapter theorises black DHQ identities through a decolonial lens. It argues that the combination of hypervisibility and with-holding practices, work to disregard hegemonic sociocultural structures and invest in a practice of living otherwise (Hartman, 2018), underpinned by the black Caribbean epistemology of *bruk out*.

The chapter demonstrates that DHQ performance empowers women as the producers of the visual culture surrounding them as artists. These women's ability to perform *bruk out* via daring choreographies and characterisation processes, is sociopolitically significant because typically there is a hegemonic focus on male fantasy within global mass media. Thus, DHQ culture encourages women to take up space and resources to explore and share their imaginings, within a sociocultural framework that typically under-values them.

This chapter argues that the labour required of European dancers, black and white, is centred on the work of cultural proficiency in the sociocultural symbols that are embedded in Jamaican dancehall, such as the importance of adornment, and their intercultural navigation of these symbols. In Chapter Five I extend the theorisation of interculturalism in relation to *bruk out*, by examining the concept of *bruk out feminism*, which I argue is a decolonial black feminist movement that is taking on intercultural life.

Chapter 5: *Bruk Out* Feminism and Interculturalism

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter develops a theorisation of how the performative articulation of *bruk out* by DHQs brings into being a form of feminism which has until now not been studied, which I term *bruk out* feminism. I situate *bruk out* feminism in relation to discourse from black feminism (Hartman, 2018, 2018b; Fleetwood, 2011, 2012; B. Cooper, 2015) and hip hop feminism (Brown, 2013; Durham, B. Cooper & Morris, 2013). The chapter develops an analysis of the body politics embedded in the aesthetics of *bruk out* DHQ performance by looking at the centralisation of the pelvis, hips, buttocks and vagina. This analysis draws from ethnographic observation of DHQ performances, as well as the assertions made by dancehall scholars, in particular C. Cooper's (2004) and Wright's (2004) observations about the existence of alternative feminist politics embedded within dancehall aesthetics. It also engages with theories surrounding the aesthetics and multiple power struggles within feminine Caribbean popular performance from Thorington Springer (2007), Pinto (2009) and Blanco Borelli (2015) as outlined in Chapter One. The discussion uses movement description to study and analyse how the centralised bodily sites create meaning through their kinaesthetic expressivity and the invocation of daring *bruk out* sensibilities. Specifically, the chapter locates movements of the hips and buttocks and gestures toward the vagina as symbolic of a particular decolonial black feminist politics.

I contend that the manifestation of *bruk out* feminism in dancehall needs to be theorised in relation to blackness, because similarly to other black performance cultures it "refer[s] rhetorically to a black past" (DeFrantz, 2014: 226) and furthering that, it is expressive of contemporary black cultural politics in Jamaica. It is imperative that it is understood through the feminist epistemologies and legacies of the black women who have created it. This analytical framing is steered by the work of postcolonial feminists Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich who in their respective discussions of 'The Master's Tools' (Lorde, 2003³⁸) and 'The Politics of Location' (Rich, 2003³⁹), raise awareness of the need to account for epistemological and pedagogical differences in the resistant practices of women. Later in the chapter

³⁸ This text was originally presented as a speech at a conference titled 'The Second Sex- Thirty Years Later' in 1979. It was sourced for this thesis in the *Feminist Postcolonial Reader* (2003), and as the page numbers attributed correspond to this version, the date of this latter publication is used throughout the chapter.

³⁹ This text was originally published in 1984. It was sourced for this thesis in the *Feminist Postcolonial Reader* (2003), and as the page numbers attributed correspond to this version, the date of this latter publication is used throughout the chapter.

I will explain that even when the *bruk out* world takes root in the lives of European dancers, it is important to recognise it is a black Caribbean feminist cultural manifestation.

The concept of *bruk out* feminism is theorised in relation to Lorde's (1978) concept of erotic power, which champions the capacity of the dancing female body to use its own expressions of embodied pleasure to resist patriarchal determination. In my analysis, similarly to Fleetwood (2011), I complicate this view by highlighting that the power of the erotic figuration is its multiplicity, as in the relationship between hypervisibility and with-holding, which enables the dancer to retain a decolonial right to opacity (Glissant, 1990).

The discussion draws from Brown's theory of materialist gratification (2013) to study how *bruk out* feminism operates in relation to transnational and neoliberal capitalist circuits. The analysis then develops a reading of how this decolonial black expression is configured in the intercultural DHQ scene. The chapter draws from intercultural theory (Mouffé, 2012; Mitra, 2015; McIvor, 2015; Elswit, 2018) to frame the analysis of cultural difference within the exchanges between Jamaican and European women. I theorise *bruk out* feminism as a form of black feminism that finds a way to maintain a politics of female agency negotiation, while simultaneously celebrating the commercial capitalist culture of 'branding' and materialism. The argument in this chapter highlights the role of world-making (Pini, 2001, Buckland 2002; Stewart, 2010) and labour (Srinivasan, 2012) in the intercultural dynamics of this feminist movement. It maintains that *bruk out* feminism's close relationship with consumerism is underwritten by a will to construct a practice of femininity that co-opts consumer culture as a mechanism for identity production and pleasure. This argument extends the interpretations posited by scholars, such as C. Cooper (2004) and Bakare-Yusuf (2006) which view DHQ practices as expressing a form of feminine fortitude and pleasure, while maintaining a position within an essentially patriarchal popular culture paradigm. It studies this supposed paradox and argues that the *bruk out* epistemology balances these elements in such a way that they exist in a fluctuating state of tension and harmony.

The analysis works to shed light on how *bruk out* resonates in the relationships between black Jamaican and white and black European women. This analysis highlights how the *bruk out* DHQ world is shaped by globalisation and neoliberal commercial capitalism, charting how the European manifestation, in particular, is supported by the connectivity within the DHQ network outlined in Chapter Three. It contends that the existence of the intercultural DHQ world supports the development of creative spaces for resistant, sometimes anarchic, identity explorations, and in particular works to increase the visibility of complex feminine, sexual, and national identifications for women in both Jamaica and Europe.

The discussion looks at the ways in which black and white European women engage with the body politics and black feminist principles of *bruk out* dancehall. The differentials created as a consequence of Global North privileges are investigated, as these are important for understanding the relationship between a European positionality and the *bruk out* epistemology. This study into the European participation aims to discern the broader significance of European bodies – black and white – taking up space and claiming visibility within the DHQ scene. Drawing from the theorisation of labour in Chapter Four, this chapter argues that the dancers invest bodily capital in *bruk out* feminism through their performance practices. It argues that this physical investment becomes meaningful because it creates a point of contact between diversely positioned dancers, who engage in embodied discourses that open up a space for agonistic difference.

Altogether, the chapter aims to shed light on the epistemological logic of *bruk out* feminism as a sociopolitically engaged movement that has taken on an intercultural form. It studies how women in the scene use reflexive positionalities and embodied coalitional strategies to envisage a new feminist body politics. These politics reflect the controversies and contradictions surrounding the interculturalism of a decolonial movement that holds dear capitalist markers of value.

5.2 Pleasure and Pain Politics

As outlined in Chapter One, the aesthetic composition of DHQ styling revolves around a value system that reveres a sexually-charged feminine physique. The specific body parts of the hips, buttocks, pelvis, and vagina are central to the values of this aesthetic. Niaah (2010) asserts that DHQ styling

not only...require[s] fluid movement of the hips, [it] also feature[s] a particular aesthetic of the buttock... A dancer with a posterior that can be manipulated will command attention...

(pp.145-6)

This highlights how the control and rhythmic articulation of the gluteus muscles constitutes a core meaning making activity within the DHQ value system. During fieldwork at the European DHQ Competition 2013 in Vienna I witnessed a performance by mixed-race German-Jamaican DHQ Katie, which resonated with this point. Reflecting on the performance, I wrote the following notes:

Katie performs wearing a juxtaposing military-chic outfit, made up of bright red stiletto heels, jean batty riders, a gold-studded bra and an over-sized military shirt, which playfully dismantles aesthetic gender binaries. The heels are a risky choice, but she manages them well, performing her dance with grace and balance. Half way through the performance, when the base line to the song "One Drop" (QQ and Venemus, 2013) begins

to play, her face suddenly takes a serious expression. With a sense of purpose, she picks up her right leg, swiftly removes her shoe and throws it to the back of the stage, and then repeats this on the other side. As she removes the disciplining stilettos she creates freedom in her hips, as they are released from the elevation and awkward forward tilt created by the thin heels. She bends her knees and tilts her chest forward, lowering her centre of gravity toward the ground. The heavy beat of the song kicks in and she pounds her right foot flat on the floor, maintaining the bent knee, so that the shockwave travels up her leg and jolts her hip and buttocks. She pounds again, then switches her weight onto her right foot and repeats the action with her left side. The beat quickens and Katie begins to alternate repeatedly from one foot to the other, gradually increasing the speed of the movement in time with the song. Her quickening movement creates a bounce in her hips. She performs the sequence twice with her back to the audience with a 360° jump in-between. She performs with prowess, as if her labouring body pronounces its strength, and rhythmic intelligence. She then strides across the stage toward the judging panel and repeats the sequence with her back to them. Her positioning with her front away from the judges, confirms the role of her hips and buttocks at the centre of this performance.

DHQ Katie's decisive positioning of her body with her back to the audience for the first phrase and subsequent re-positioning so that her back was to the judges for the second, was a device used to direct the audience's attention toward her buttocks and position these body parts at the forefront of her embodied enunciations. Her expression did not simply privilege the body, rather it could only be expressed by these body parts, because the pounding of her feet and the relationship between this motion and the inter-play of her hips and buttocks articulated a sentiment that is understood through corporeal sensation; the knowledge of the body. I argue that this sentiment needed to be expressed through these body parts, because this primacy of the body was both the ideological impetus and the methodological device for her expression. I draw this analysis not just through observation of this performance, but its relationship to my meeting with Katie in the hostel foyer earlier that day in Vienna, as well as my interview with her in Jamaica the following year, and also in dialogue with her curation of a hypervisible online visual identity. On each occasion that I spoke with Katie face-to-face she was reserved – she spoke little and her body language was withdrawn. As I discussed in Chapter Two, these were dialogical encounters and she was ultimately performing in response to my performance as a researcher. Her denial of verbal expressivity, which may well have been a form of protest to my probing – the epistemic violence signified by my attempt to gather information about her for the benefit of my study (my educational, racial, class statuses all marking me as privileged). As discussed in Chapter Four, Katie's online presence contrasts with this, as she posts highly dynamic,

humorous videos with lengthy captions describing her emotional and cultural relationship to dancehall. In analysing her performance described here alongside these other forms of evidence, I note the contrast between the power of embodied articulation in her performance, as well as the expressive cultural awareness online, compared to the minimalism of our verbal dialogues. Altogether, this evidence might suggest that unlike in online and dance performance scenarios where Katie welcomed attention toward her ethnic and feminine identities, our one-on-one encounters were for her a place to practice with-holding, and therefore resist information sharing. Katie's performative with-holding exercised her right to opacity (Glissant, 1990) and in effect functioned as an agonistic act (Mouffé, 2012). Altogether, I interpret Katie's juxtaposing practices of hypervisibility in performance, racialised online visual culture and verbal opacity as an example of the decolonial politics of *bruk out* feminism being staged by a European woman of colour. In this way Katie practices a form of decolonial interculturalism that subverts the neutrality of whiteness (by resisting my gaze), but claims a hypervisible positionality as a woman of colour. Her own references to her nationality as '*Ger-maican*' is an act of taking control of the narrative surrounding her identity.

DHQ Katie's performance was decisively sexual in its tone. However, before discussing these sexual politics, and in order to not over-emphasise the sexual reading, I will first highlight that the dynamics of shaking, rolling, or undulating the buttocks can also express a plethora of meanings and emotions that have little to do with sexuality in its literal sense. Scholars including Dixon Gottschild (1998) highlight that such movements can be expressive of themes such as vitality, strength, joy and play, and others have explored how such movement vocabularies are used to conjure deities with complex sociocultural implications. C. Cooper (2004), Bakare-Yusuf (2006) and Blanco Borelli (2015) each highlight connections between contemporary popular Caribbean performance and Orishas⁴⁰ from Santeria and Condomblé, including Oshun, the spirit of female fertility, and Oya the "Goddess of... masquerade" (C. Cooper, 2004: 123). Thus, it is important to recognise that readings of movement in these areas of the body as automatically sexually-loaded, do not account for the various significations that such enactments can have.

⁴⁰ The Orishas are gods and goddesses from the spiritual belief systems of Santeria (Cuba) and Condomblé (Brazil), which are derived from Yoruba, and other African spiritualities. Jamaica, Haiti and many other parts of Central America and the Caribbean are known to host other connected forms of African-derived spirituality, which share the worshipping of certain Orishas.

Nonetheless, DHQ Katie's performance can equally be read as an expressive performance of a particular form of female sexuality. Furthermore, such articulations of the hips and buttocks, which are foundational techniques in DHQ performance, are often performed as the precursor to even more overt expressions of sexuality and pleasure located in the bodily region of the dancer's vagina. Dance moves such as 'Hot Wuk' involve motions of the hand on, or in the vicinity of, the vagina, including patting, fast waving (as if to signify heat), stroking, and flicking the air to express an appreciation of the bodily site's 'awesomeness'. By this I mean its apparent ability to produce awe, on the part of the performer, as a result of their appreciation and respect for their own body's capabilities. The gestures direct attention toward the vagina and culminate to construct it as a symbol of power, beauty and pleasure. This further perpetuates the centrality of the vagina within DHQ performance, as discussed in Chapter One (Wright, 2004; C. Cooper, 2004). The following description, taken from ethnographic fieldnotes at the International DHQ Competition in 2014, provides an example of one such performance.

With her back to the audience, Dancehall Queen Monica steps into a deep bend and lowers her upper body towards the ground. She reaches her hands between her legs to anchor her arms around her thighs. With her waist tightly scrunched into a ball and her chest squeezed between her outstretched legs, her body creates a triangle-shape with her pelvis at the tip. Adorned in an embellished G-string belt, on which gold spikes form a V-shape down her crotch, her vagina takes centre stage. Still in the triangular contortion, she bends her knees forward and back, so that her pelvis dances at the top of her body and captures the stage's light beams glistening down from above. Peering between her legs, she looks intently at her crotch and then the audience, repeating this back-and-forth gaze eight times. Monica then re-positions herself to an upright kneel, front-on to the audience. With her head lowered and her eyes staring defiantly out at the crowd, she softly strokes her crotch with alternate hands signalling a sense of adoration.

As this passage highlights, in addition to the gestures of the hands, dancers often accompany their vagina-centralising moves and gestures with strong facial expressions. These include the biting of lips, pouting, and squinting (as if to express intensity). In this way, the sexual symbolism of the vagina is directed toward the woman's own embodied experience of sensorial pleasure coupled with pain, generated from the corporeal performance act. Fleetwood asserts that such performances express "...complex attachments and drives that affect intimate practices of pleasure and pain, of longing and belonging, that register differently, based on subject positioning" (Fleetwood, 2012: 422). Through her public display of pleasure, and through her dynamic movement, the dancer expresses a position

as a complex subject, rather than an overdetermined object. This is a rhetorical and embodied posture that demonstrates her awareness of multiple sociopolitical forces, and her complex relationships to each of them, as she challenges, complies with, and questions them through her movements. In her polyrhythmic articulations of her hips and buttocks, undulations through her torso, and controlled use of her lower abdomen, she uses her capabilities to produce multiple rhythms, shapes and spatial dynamics to articulate a multidimensional schema of awareness. Further, when she performs an inversion of aesthetic form, for example through a gravity-defying head top, she performs her own versatility and manifests the politics of re-positioning, as described in Chapter Four, in physical form. These physical performances of multidimensionality and inversion enable her to avoid fixity, and overdetermination.

I argue that the courage and creative labour that goes into producing these performances engages a form of “erotic power”, which is “... an assertion of the life force of women; of that creative energy empowered” (Lorde, 1978: 89). Lorde states that erotic power is systematically ignored and therefore diminished in Western cultures, because by not recognising it, and positioning erotic performance instead as further evidence of the degradation of women, one supports the repression of female sexual subjectivity. She argues that contrary to this representation erotic performance can, in fact, be utilised as a mechanism for resisting patriarchal determination. My argument is slightly different, in that I emphasise how the erotic performance functions as a part of a constellation of other activities, involving with-holding and silence. I argue that the power of the erotic is in its relationship to these acts of with-holding and the opacity this creates.

Additionally, I argue that by engaging in the public sphere of popular culture the dancer claims a space in the public domain for the complexities of black female sexual pleasure and its historical relationship with pain to be articulated in cultural life. C. Cooper explains

Woman as sexual being claims the right to sexual pleasure as an essential sign of her identity... [W]omen... are... entitled to display themselves in the public sphere as queens of revelry.

(2004: 126-127)

The performative occupation of public space is at once an opportunity for the black DHQ to be sexualised by peering colonial and male gazes, but it is also a performative refusal to play a passive role in the construction of her imagined sexuality. Her claiming of an active role in producing her own visible corporeal pleasure thus confronts the invisibility of female sexual subjectivity. Wright explains:

Women in particular, despite the arguably misogynist and sexually violent lyrics, are highly visible in the dancehall; with a celebratory boldness they bare their bodies, dance

the erotic dances and clearly engage in the pleasure of the dancehall.

(2004: 78)

Further, the dynamism and power put into the erotic performances of DHQs, alongside the unapologetically bold stylisation and the anarchic performance style (Hartman, 2018) creates an image of feminine fortitude, grounded in both pleasure and pain.

This view coincides with the postcolonial feminist deconstruction of the relationship between sexuality, feminine body parts and race. Pinto explains that

slavery... created a strange intersection of hypervisibility, race, and sex, where the language of physiognomy created a direct discursive link or convergence among black women's bodies, sexuality, and "objects" of study. Such convergence is not coincidental or merely supplemental to the mission of the construction of citizenship. As such, institutional and legal regulation in the Caribbean and the Americas at large was historically enacted to police the sexual "problem" of black women's bodies.

(2009: 145)

As discussed in Chapter One, the black female body was depicted through a grotesque lens during the colonial project, and this projected image was driven by a fetishised fascination with the supposed 'over-sized' sexualised body parts of the black woman's genitalia and buttocks (Gilman, 1985; hooks, 1997). A crude example of this is the story of Sarah Baartman, a South African woman who was put on show at exhibitions across Europe, to support this image of black female corporeality⁴¹. Baartman was depicted as the Hottentot Venus icon – a symbol that became "representative of the essence of the... black woman" (Gilman, 1985: 225). The grotesque depiction of the black female's buttocks and vagina created a clear visual Other, against which these same body parts could be depicted for white females (Gilman, 1985; hooks, 1997). Rather than the sexuality present in *bruk out* DHQ performance entrenching these negative tropes about black female sexuality, the evidence from the dancers themselves suggests that excessive, hypervisibility is being used here, in coalition with opacity in other spaces, to seize control of their self-image.

In recognising *bruk out* DHQ performance as a black feminist practice, it is also crucial to consider the role of kinaesthetic and rhythmic pleasure; as in the positive personal experiences involved in the kinaesthetic sensation of the materiality of mobilising one's own hips. As dance anthropologist Pallabi Chakravorty states: "The actual physical sensation of movement is pleasurable" (2004: 7). This production of pleasure has the capacity to incite agency because, as geographer Tim Creswell argues:

⁴¹ This was a part of the Great Exhibitions series which began in London in 1851 and celebrated the accomplishments of the British Empire.

"the production of pleasure itself [is] powerful" (2006: 74). Articulations of the hips and buttocks is enjoyable because there is a corporeal pleasure associated with the creative labour of playfully mobilising one's joints, and the experience of reaching high levels of control over these body parts. The command of one's buttocks to perform complex twitches, rotations, flicks and jabs presents the dancer as having a developed awareness of, and control over, the body part's ability to engage in this pleasurable rhythmic play.

Looking at dancehall culture more broadly, Niaah argues that

Dance halls, bars and clubs, and the street together construct a politics of enjoyment... The existence of such enjoyment assaults and mocks oppression, and those who construct and maintain it... Thus the very spaces created for consumption and production of cultural forms and access to pleasure constitute sites of political power for that practice and the people who create them.

(2010: 190)

These discussions surrounding how power negotiation is embedded within performances of pleasure and pain at dancehall events, leads me to consider the significance of dancehall's couple dance, known as 'dagging'.⁴² Dagging is often highly criticised for the immobility of the female dancer within the partnership, as she is often whirled around in a rather brutal manner, by a male partner. Dagging also involves the male dancer gyrating his pelvis against the woman's buttocks, who bends her upper body forward, or in some instances creates a triangle shape with her hands and feet on the floor and her pelvis in the air. These moves and positions are read by some critics as an expression of female sexual submission (Wilkinson, 2012) and sexual violence. Scrolling through Instagram videos during the cyber-ethnography for this project I came across many videos of this popular dancehall practice. I was struck by one particular video, which highlighted the complex relationship between pleasure and pain within this heterosexual partnership dance. In this video a male dancer, named DaggerMan, is involved in a dagging feat with five female dancers. They are performing a popular dance-act, wherein a male dancer lies on the ground on his back, and a woman jumps cataclysmically onto his crotch, striking him in a way that often invokes empathic gasps from bystanders. On this occasion DaggerMan is laid on the floor waiting for a female dancer to perform the stunt. At this moment four of the five female dancers each grab one of his limbs and the fifth dancer steps one leg over his body, so that she is standing with his crotch between her legs. The four dancers lift him up by his limbs and begin turning in a circle, so that DaggerMan turns on a vertical axis. Meanwhile, the dancer standing

⁴² The term "dagging," refers to a particular practice in dancehall, which involves a man and a woman dancing together, in a particularly vigorous fashion. It usually emphasizes the joining of the hips, coupled with jabs and gyrations, with the man standing behind the woman.

over him, now gyrates on his hips, which have been lifted up to meet her crotch, whilst also incrementally pivoting on the spot to stay aligned to his body. The circling builds momentum, causing the surrounding crowd to spread out to allow space for the dance-act to take place. DaggerMan is then placed back on the ground, and the female dancer in the middle proceeds to gyrate upon him in this position.

Notably, this female-led dance-act was charged with the female dancers' shared desire for control and pleasure, and the male dancer and observers cooperated in enabling the stunt to take place. Although there are other daggering videos showing very different scenes and dynamics where the male dancer could be read as dominant, this video provides an example of the ways in which women in dancehall culture continue to improvise new ways of creatively asserting their tumultuous relationships to sexualised pleasure and pain, that resist respectability politics and invisibility (Fleetwood, 2012). This speaks to the multidimensionality of the heterosexual dynamics within dancehall culture as female and male dancers engage in a dramatic staging of power interplay, as they allow one another to take the lead at different moments in the dance. All the while this interplay of power is underwritten by a degree of social trust – for example, the trust the man bestows on the female dancers to spin him around with the skill to manage physical risk. Similarly, there is a trust in male dancers to manage risk when they perform certain lifts and falls that could put female dancers in danger. The power play between the male and female dancers suggests that although daggering (and I extend this to dancehall culture more broadly, as daggering is a prime location for meaning making in the scene) may be understood as deeply heterosexually codified, this does not necessarily mean that it is always underwritten by misogynistic patriarchal logic. As I conceded earlier in the thesis, patriarchal social structures are present within the majority of the sociocultural contexts where dancehall culture exists, however as the dance-act described above highlights, this is also complicated through embodied interpersonal dynamics in the dance.

To clarify, my argument is not that patriarchal systems such as the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975) do not continue to work toward the objectification of DHQ bodies, but that there are multiple forces at play, and it is important to recognise the strategies that the performers are themselves investing in, rather than simply positioning them through an agency-denying lens of victimhood (Fleetwood, 2012). These strategies include the embodied labour and articulations of pleasure and pain as discussed in this chapter. They also include the dancers' work to cultivate influence in the network through carefully curated online profiles, as well as broader sociocultural influence as teachers across the globe in the case of Flava and Talent, who in turn also have the ability to support and empower other women to cultivate self-determination. There are, of course, instances when a dancer's agency is compromised,

for example some DHQs perform in music videos that produce an aesthetic of fragmented female bodies, which work to undermine the performer's agency through the controlling grasp of the camera lens (Mulvey, 1975). As Professor of African American Studies Natasha Barnes concedes: "acts of libidinal self-assertion exist uneasily with the pleasures and real dangers of commodification and fetishism" (2000: 105). My argument is that it is crucial to account for the complex interplay of power that goes on during the (re)presentation of such performances, and to recognise the forms of power that the dancer *does* harness.

5.3 Interculturalism and the *Bruk Out* Dancehall Queen Scene

This chapter now turns its attention to how *bruk out* feminism functions interculturally. This section considers in particular the politics of European women engaging with the embodied politics of this black performance culture. It studies the postcolonial politics that historically contextualise the significance of white European bodies taking up positions within the *bruk out* DHQ world. The question I seek to investigate here is not whether or not white European dancers can 'understand' *bruk out* feminism, as I recognise that 'understanding' is always shaped by positionality. Instead, I examine how the dancers themselves deal with this diversity of experience and their divergent ways of knowing *bruk out* feminism. I question the extent to which Lorde's (2003) vision that difference can be "a fund of necessary polarities between which... creativity can spark like a dialectic" (Lorde, 2003: 26) is fulfilled in the intercultural DHQ scene. To do this I draw from Mouffé's conception of agonistic acts (2012). In consideration of the evidence presented in Chapters Three and Four, I investigate whether the white dancers in their engagement and exchanges with black European and black Jamaican women in the scene, perform as coalitional allies in solidarity with the decolonial politics of *bruk out* feminism.

As outlined in Chapter One, DHQ stylistics, in their pushing of boundaries surrounding 'respectability', disrupt the national gender norms of Jamaica that are tied to a Victorian morality system. The European dancers' investment in the style is distinct from this, because it does not represent the disregarding of a foreign-imposed gender system. Pinto explains that

The articulation, regulation, and visibility of bodies and their movements map differently across (trans)national borders, performing their own "dangerous" mixing of colonial/anti-colonial histories and struggles.

(2009: 144)

The white European identification with *bruk out* DHQ aesthetics is an example of whiteness and its connection to feminine purity being disrupted through the association to blackness.

The question of white European (and general non-Jamaican) participation in DHQ culture is constantly being raised within the dancehall scene. At the workshops and events that I attended during fieldwork, there was often a white European female dancer asking an 'authentic' Jamaican dancehall artist about the politics of their participation. Responses varied, and trends emerged wherein younger Jamaican artists responded with remarks about unity, often contending that it was appropriate for European dancers to be taking part, as long as they did it with respect by developing their knowledge, supporting the Jamaican dancehall scene, and investing in Jamaican teachers. These positions signalled the view that it is possible to engage responsibly by employing a reflexive positionality. Some more experienced Jamaican dancehall pioneers emphasised that a non-Jamaican person cannot 'fully understand' dancehall, due to its integral relationship to Jamaican sociocultural experience. Further frictions were highlighted during discussions of the systematic exploitation and commodification of black expressive culture for white consumption and benefit in audiovisual media such as music videos. At the time of the ethnographic research, topical debates often centred around the controversial dancehall-inspired video for white-Canadian artist Justin Bieber's "Sorry" (2015).⁴³

Drawing from Mouffé's (2012) notion of agonism, I offer the view that within the *bruk out* scene dancers in different contexts share the symbolic space of the dancehall, and use this space to articulate a 'conflictual consensus', wherein geopolitics and sociocultural conflicts are expressively debated and shared across the dancing bodies of the participants. These 'debates', I argue, take place largely through embodied dialogues, on the dancefloor. In dancehall, as in many black performance styles, there is a sacred central space on the dancefloor (Zanfagna, 2009), which is preserved for only elite dancers. It is in this central space that *bruk out* dancehall typically takes place. At parties in Jamaica I observed European dancers not entering this sacred space unless they were well-established dancers. When European female dancers – in particular white European dancers – *did* enter the centre in a way that was deemed inappropriate by other dancers, for example, entering during a song that is coded as being for men to dance to, or before they had a sufficient level of skill, other dancers, including other white European dancers, often exerted certain controls to stop them. They did this by telling them directly not to, or by standing in their way. One dancer expressed that when she was in Jamaica on a dancehall experience holiday she was explicitly told by her white European teacher to not enter the dance circle out of respect.

⁴³ 'Sorry' (2015) was released with a music video that featured a white-washed cast of dancers, performing dancehall movement vocabulary. The dancehall scene reacted rather negatively when the choreographer for the music video, Parris Goebel, was asked about her inspiration for the choreography and she failed to cite dancehall.

These experiences of dancing/observing and negotiating when and how to dance at dancehall parties can help to create a positively agonistic space and a shared respect between dancers. This promotes a nuanced embodied appreciation between dancers that enables a form of intercultural reflexivity and coalitional solidarity to take form. So, is dancehall still decolonial in its intercultural form? The answer to this complex question, when considering the multiple layers of evidence throughout this thesis is that it is not decolonial in the same way. The decoloniality of women's dancehall practice is limited in its intercultural form by the forms of epistemic violence inflicted by white privilege- in other words how this dance perpetuates systems of cultural exploitation that have been documented within Dance Studies and Popular Culture Studies for several decades (Monroe, 2014; Shay and Sellers Young, 2016; DeFrantz, 2018).

Yet the evidence also shows that the decolonial impetus that relies on the visible blackness of this performance practice has found new ways to remain in force in dancehall's intercultural form. The practice of with-holding through strategic forms of silence is one such way in which intercultural dancehall remains decolonial. This practice of with-holding enables certain complexities of dancehall's black epistemology to be off-limits until a great amount of labour, on the part of non-Jamaican and particularly non-black dancers, is exerted. For example, the way in which black Jamaican women keep their domestic spaces out of their online social media profiles, means that they, unlike most European dancers, with-hold a degree of privacy concerning how their dancing features in their personal lives. European dancers who pay to be in contact with these Jamaican dancers through dancehall tourism in Jamaica, gain access to the dancers and often eventually get to learn about these more intimate details of their dancehall lives. The choice remains with the Jamaican dancers who, in their roles as gatekeepers, are in control of how and when such revelations may take place. This practice of with-holding in conjunction with the juxtaposing aesthetics of hypervisibility by black Jamaican women at dancehall parties reifies the strategy observed by Fleetwood (2011, 2012) wherein hypervisibility is performed in conjunction with forms of silence and with-holding, so that the viewer cannot fully 'grasp' her. The juxtaposition between the hypervisibility and opacity of black Jamaican and some black European dancers amounts to another decolonial force within intercultural dancehall, because it enables the black Jamaican dancer to assert control over her own exposure and to refuse her optic possession by colonising gazes.

However, to interpret the dynamics fully it is important to consider how dancehall factors in dancers' lives more broadly. For example, the fact that DHQ Elizabeth – a black European dancer – was concerned about her wayward (Hartman, 2018) dancehall performances damaging her reputation outside of the dancehall community, signals her access to opportunities outside of a dancehall

context, which is itself a marker of privilege. So, I argue, how one navigates one's position in the dancehall scene is influenced by one's access to other forms of prosperity beyond dancehall and this is determined by class, nationality and ethnicity. This ultimately means that the decolonial impetus behind *bruk out* changes when it is configured into the lives of European women. Although many of these women may intend to enter the scene as allies in coalition with Jamaican Queens, their participation often reifies existing differentials between women in Jamaican and Europe.

This difference in how European and Jamaican dancers engage in dancehall practices, demonstrates how the dance culture is transforming as it takes on new life as a black cultural practice, beyond a Jamaican black cultural space. As Niaah (2010) described, in the Jamaican context, dancehall is a survival strategy, and thus dancers use the dance as a space to fulfil various needs – personal, social and economic. But in Europe the dance culture operates at a level where participation mainly fulfils personal needs/goals of feeling physical sensations – ‘vibes’ – but the stakes of participation are drastically different. Participation, for white and black European dancers, is not typically a form of social or economic survival. In fact, it is often advantageous for European dancers to limit the visibility of their dancehall activities in broader society, as it is perceived to clash with other more formal socioeconomic activities and professional identities. Ultimately, when a Jamaican dancer dares herself to *bruk out* the stakes are sharpened to a degree that European dancers do not experience. For a Jamaican dancer the economic stakes are acute and real, and participation in the scene is an opportunity to economically survive by winning competitions, gaining status, and getting paid. The European dancer does indeed take risks in her performance of dangerous tricks and in transcending sociocultural norms, but the socioeconomic risks of her performance are different, and tend to be a matter of thriving, not surviving.

During an interview in Vienna the day before the European DHQ Competition in 2013 I asked a group of European DHQs about how they relate to the sexual component of DHQ culture. In response DHQ Gabriella made the following point:

European girls, I think they have to learn it's not a problem to feel sexy... you have to feel good with your body... this you learn in Jamaica... [to] respect your body, respect [that] you're sexy,... [and that]... you [are] female and there's nothing wrong with that.

In rejecting the ‘problem’ of feeling sexy as a white European woman, and in constructing Jamaica as a place to learn about one's sexuality, Gabriella is complicit in the overdetermination of black Jamaican femininity as ‘naturally’ sexy. This highlights how the exchanges between black Jamaican and white European dancers in the intercultural scene are often underwritten with essentialist tropes that perpetuate racist imaginaries and fetishisation. Thus, the agonism within the intercultural DHQ

scene is sometimes circum-navigated through a discourse of 'difference' that cements over-simplified celebratory perspectives. This is countered by the form of policing undertaken by black European Fleek in her comments about the importance of DHQ adornment practices, and black Jamaican DHQ Jonesy in her remarks about fairness and mobility in regard to representation at competitions. Another effective mechanism for producing an agonistic productive space is the form of coalition that white Swedish Alexia asserts in her recounting of her own privilege and her sensitive approach to redressing power imbalances and access to resources, as described in Chapter Three.

Altogether, this study's reflexive and observational ethnographic data highlights that intercultural *bruk out* feminist practices enable dancers to form coalitional intercultural embodied dialogues, through physical synchronicity and conflictual consensus. This supports the findings in Chapters Three and Four regarding the bonds that dancers form through dancing together and competing alongside one another at DHQ competitions. However, for intercultural *bruk out* feminism to invest in these progressive interpersonal politics, much reflexive labour needs to take place. Lorde (2003) argues that when the "interdependence of (non-dominant) mutual difference" is recognised, this has the potential to "enable... us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future," as she asserts that "Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged" (p26). In the case of the *bruk out* world, it must be acknowledged that, in reality, the level of reflexivity invested by dancers fluctuates greatly. This impacts the degree to which privilege and Othering are challenged. Additionally, the white European motivation for such politics must be examined very closely, as although there is evidence of an intention of solidarity to amend social injustices, this is underscored, to an extent, by a motivation to relieve a sense of white guilt. If the emphasis amongst white European dancers on empowering Jamaican DHQs is a form of white repent, this can work antagonistically against the progressive intentions and re-centre whiteness in ways that in fact fortify privilege.

Significantly, Jamaican dancers, such as Flava and Talent, work to create an intercultural framework wherein black feminine bodies are centralised, and the complexities of intercultural subjectivity remains the core text of enunciation. When white European dancers recognise their privilege they are able to perform forms of solidarity, which as described by the dancer who chose to not dance in the dancehall circle in Jamaica, sometimes means stepping aside to make space for others.

Despite the varying degrees to which difference and privilege are acknowledged within the *bruk out* DHQ world, both Jamaican and European dancers claim a transnational feminine presence, and this positioning works toward reconfiguring their own reduction into essentialised identity constructs.

Therefore, intercultural *bruk out* feminism expresses the desire to obscure overdetermined nationalised and racialised femininity both in Europe and in Jamaica.

5.4 *Bruk Out* Feminism, Intercultural Dancehall Queens and Commercial Capitalism

The celebration of the commercial sphere appeals to a European cohort of DHQs for whom meaning-making systems are naturalised within neoliberal capitalist consumer culture and multimedia technology. The DHQ scene offers a cultural framework through which this naturalised proximity to capitalist systems can be expressed symbiotically with an embodied feminist discourse of sexual subjectivity. In dancehall these often-contentious value systems become interlinked as fundamental principles of its epistemological logic.

Brown (2013) expresses an academic appreciation of a black epistemology that

listens to our lusts and their gratification, to our need for taste and touch, for our desire to experience ourselves on different terms than as commodity or as (self-) disciplined subjects.

(p147)

With a similar logic, I argue that the DHQ scene can be seen to represent a twenty-first century desire for a relatable form of feminism grounded in black aesthetics, that speaks to a particularly sensitised experience of globalisation and commerciality. This scene is interested in fighting for female empowerment, but also revels in the iconography of branded commercial capitalism, for example the celebration of material commodities as markers of success and social legitimacy, as outlined in Chapter Four. There is a form of friction between these perspectives that is productive. *Bruk out* DHQ performance enables the women to perform this friction as they co-opt commercial capitalist value systems for a feminist cause.

The intercultural DHQ scene between Jamaica and Europe comprises a collective of women, who seek out a black feminist epistemology that is pleasure-positive yet uses pain as a symbiotic ur-text, that punctuates and intensifies this pleasure in ways that can be disconcerting, but are consistent with female (especially black female) embodied experience. The *bruk out* feminist movement is about empowering feminine body politics within a neoliberal capitalist paradigm. It attracts women who identify with an intercultural, commercial, hypervisible and (kin)aesthetically focused world. Rather than seeing these things as vulgar, or as forms of exploitation, they position themselves as agents constructing meaningful and often complicated relationships to these structures, through experiences of harmony, conflict and exchange. This is not to say that capitalist forces, such as advertising

companies, do not profit from positioning the women through the male and colonial gaze, indeed they do, but the point is that there are multiple parties profiting. The women are benefiting, because they are curating a world in which they have the space and support structures, including their exploitation of virtual embodiment, in place to invest in their own creativity, and through their performances, they are empowered to claim the right to experience pleasure.

5.5 Conclusion

Bruk out feminism is at once engaged with feminine power brokering through self-determined identity negotiation and the politics of pleasure, while simultaneously expressing the complexities surrounding their lived experiences of heteronormativity and gender. Although *bruk out* feminist performance is positioned within a patriarchal social order, the emphasis on performances of masturbatory self-pleasure work to undermine the centrality of the phallus that patriarchal structures of power, including those within the broader dancehall scene itself, purport. The concept of *bruk out* feminism, that this thesis has introduced, contends that within the *bruk out* epistemology there lies a decolonial feminist politics conditioned around a neoliberal capitalist value system.

The celebration of consumerism and capitalist markers of value within *bruk out* feminism works to build intercultural connectivities through a shared exploration, celebration and familiarity with black popular culture aesthetics. Dancers build relationships by signalling and recognising in one another a shared appreciation for the black aesthetics of *bruk out*, and within this the valuing of the will to dare. Thus, investing in colourful hair extensions, branded clothing, and ‘bling-bling’ jewellery is an expression of a personal will to dare and also an act of allegiance to *bruk out* feminism. *Bruk out* feminism is as much about re-positioning female body politics and pleasure as it is about re-articulating the intercultural experience. It is about creating physical space in the transnational public domain for female embodied pleasure and challenging the patriarchal cultural insistence on male pleasure – scopic and embodied – as the primary impetus behind Western visual culture. By contrast, the principle of the dancer’s own pleasure leading the (kin)aesthetics of this dance world, becomes a way to undermine the emphasis on the viewer’s visual pleasure.

Bruk out DHQ practices create a momentum that is focused on interculturalism, black expressive cultures, feminine pleasure, and the sharing of belligerently virtuosic and daring choreographies of the self. There is a slippery terrain between the more reflexive and exploitative modes of engagement by white European women. White supremacy and patriarchal paradigms are not consistently undermined within DHQ aesthetics, but the work of *bruk out* feminism creates a shift in intention. In this act of re-positioning, the *bruk out* world labours to find new routes and potentialities through the

overdetermining and exploitative sociopolitical structures that continue to operate. The progressive elements are centred on creating opportunities for black female expressivity and developing spaces for coalitional solidarity between European and Jamaican dancers.

Conclusion

The focus of this thesis has been the intercultural DHQ network and the experiences of Jamaican and European dancers within it in relation to performative explorations of femininity, race, and nation. Prior to, and during this research study, I developed an awareness of how tumultuous this moment in dancehall's history is, as the *en masse* influx of European dancers into the scene, both in Jamaica and in the establishment of DHQ sites in Europe, responds to pre-existing geopolitical and racial ties and tensions relating to power, privilege and the exploitation and fetishisation of the black dancing body. The dancers' performances and broader DHQ activities have been considered in relation to the contexts of decolonial black feminism and intercultural connectivity involving digital visual cultures, globalised media circuits and neoliberal capitalism. In this conclusion the research findings and argument will be summarised and the implications of the findings will be addressed in relation to the disciplines of dance studies, as well as digital and black feminist studies. These closing remarks also look at potential topics of future research, relating to the findings and argument of this study.

The thesis has developed an ethnographic methodology for conducting embodied dance research across a trans-Atlantic constellation of physical and virtual sites. The observational descriptions and cues from participant interviews have proven to be a rich source of data, which as forms of dialogical copformance, highlight the value of investigating the body and relations between bodies as sites of meaning production in the ethnographic encounter. The discussion of reflexive ethnographic techniques for accounting for silence in intercultural ethnographic research (that risks centring whiteness), offers an approach to ethically discussing the circulation of black performance practices in a neocolonial context, without speaking *for* black subjects. The development of the theory surrounding the politics of with-holding in relation to these performative silences, and a broader decolonial politics of practicing one's right to opacity (Glissant, 1990), is also a significant contribution to knowledge. In particular, this study raises awareness of how, in the case of black Jamaican women in dancehall, hypervisibility in performances of excessive flesh speaks to moments of dialogical silence in interviews and the curation of visibility in digital contexts.

This study's literature review uncovered a theoretical terrain that is expansive but not exhaustive in its consideration of how dancehall functions as a black performance practice outside of Jamaica. This highlighted the need for a study that accounted for the DHQ scene's intercultural dimensions across virtual and physically-embodied form and across Jamaican and non-Jamaican, white and black European positionalities. The lack of scholarly work on these topics points to a theoretical emphasis on dancehall's unique relationship to Jamaican social politics, as a form that is expressive of a lower-class, black Jamaican experience, in studies to date. *This* research study, also recognises the

particularities of Jamaican blackness to DHQ performance and *bruk out* feminism, but it sought to delve into the finer complexities of how this element co-exists with the growing presence of European participants in the scene. With this came an analysis of the role of whiteness and black European subjectivities in the intercultural exchanges that take place as DHQ culture emerges online and as Jamaican and European dancers travel between Jamaica and Europe to encounter the dance culture and dance with one another. The thesis analyses the cultural significance of these exchanges and presents a new perspective on this particular aspect of the DHQ scene. It contributes a new conceptualisation of the term *bruk out*, which I assert is an epistemology that is rooted in black culture and undergirds a form of feminism in the scene.

The introduction of *bruk out* feminist theory in this study is a key contribution to knowledge in the fields of feminist studies, dancehall studies, critical race theory, and dance studies. In arguing that women's dancehall is a decolonial black performance culture, I root this area of research firmly in relation to black feminist thought, (Fleetwood, 2011, 2012; Brown, 2013; B. Cooper, 2015; Hartman 2018, 2018b) acknowledging that the dance culture, in its online and intercultural manifestations and developments, continues to thrive off the energy and labour of black women's performative labour in their dancing, adorning and creative digital work.

This study argues that research into online virtuality cannot be thoroughly undertaken without accounting for the role of the racialised body. It also presents evidence and analysis of the increasingly central role of virtual embodiment in contemporary popular dance world-making practices. Its consideration of virtual embodiment from a Dance Studies perspective contributes to Digital Studies a new grounded example and nuanced perspective on the inseparability between the racialised and gendered body and online visual culture. The employment of ethnographic and dance movement analysis methods across the virtual and physical field sites enabled the study to build a clear picture of how racialised forms of embodiment connect these contexts, and how power differentials are both exacerbated and re-written through these exchanges. The discussion found that black dancehall figures use the online environment to extend their performative expressions of *bruk out*, by choosing to present themselves through imagery that break boundaries surrounding explicitness and black respectability politics.

The research contributes key insights to Digital Studies in its findings on how creative forms of virtual embodiment enable women to explore self-representation and accumulate network capital. Through its close analysis of DHQs activities it provides a focused example and draws debates concerning online visual culture toward the forms of racialised labour involved. For example, the thesis found differentials in the circulation practices of videos by differently positioned dancers. The study found

that Jamaican dancers posted videos more often in public space, whereas dancers in Europe often presented themselves in domestic spaces. The Jamaican dancers' positioning in street locations made visible their embodied relationships to Jamaican public space, and also enabled them to retain a sense of privacy over their domestic lives and assert power through the act of with-holding.

The study found differentials in the ways in which online visibility equates to job opportunities for the dancers, as black Jamaican dancers were often cut-off from the job market in Europe due to economic and administrative restrictions, whereas European dancers – black and white – were able to capitalise on their digital network by seizing opportunities and creating their own business ventures. The investigation revealed that although virtual environments are spaces of opportunity that are exploited by some black Jamaican and many European dancers, for many Jamaican dancers the reality of a life in poverty means that their access potential is thwarted. For women who identify with the injustices brought to light by DHQ Jonesy's comments about the differences between Jamaican and non-Jamaican dancers', virtual embodiment often further entrenches privilege divides more than it enables empowerment. These findings further highlight the pivotal role of virtuality in shaping the contemporary DHQ scene in a neoliberal context, both as a platform for exploration, connectivity and empowerment, and as a framework that intensifies existing socioeconomic and racialised disparities. Nevertheless, the cases of Talent and Flava demonstrate how black Jamaican dancers are labouring to counter these inequities through their entrepreneurial and creative ventures that centre their black bodies and other black Jamaican women in the visual culture of dancehall online. Further, white European women DHQ Fraise and Jane, the organisers of DJCT and Roots respectively, also work in coalition with black Jamaican artists to centralise the expressive Jamaican dancing body and to build spaces of support and exchange.

The *bruk out* feminist theory introduced in this study emphasises the importance of registering black feminist practices that use distinct empowerment strategies relating to black women's lives and are guided by black epistemological perspectives. *Bruk out* is an epistemology that is performatively articulated through black women's dancehall activities. The corporeal investments involve kinaesthetic play in the form of improvisatory rhythmic skill, and the creative labour also manifests through dancers' daring costume choices, and online visual cultures. The resourceful use of corporeal, virtual and material tools enable black women in dancehall to perform as unapologetically self-pleasuring subjects, yet the excessive nature of their performances also makes visible the close relationship that this intensity has to risk-taking and pain. This use of the female body challenges its symbolic function as an objectified tool for the advancement of white supremacist patriarchy. Instead, it presents the black body's corporeality as a personal resource laboured by and for black women in

the articulation of a multidimensional subject position. This area of the research has wider significance for thinking through embodiment in feminist politics more generally and for connecting online and offline identities and community-building. There are signs within this study's research findings that the intercultural DHQ scene is finding ways to engage with the black epistemological principles of *bruk out* feminism, specifically through coalitional strategies that refuse white centrality and neutrality and recognise the risks of epistemic violence when white bodies take up space in black performance practices.

One of the issues surrounding the focus on sexual pleasure in the DHQ scene is how this sits in relation to the current socioeconomic and cultural era of commercial neoliberal capitalism, which has featured an exponential growth in pornographic representations of people of all genders (McNair, 2002). This abuse of liberal sensibilities creates a blurring of lines between that which is empowering and that which is oppressive to women. At this point it becomes even more crucial than ever that intentionality be put under a microscope and that the principle of the agent's subjectivity, pleasure and agency be accounted for, which this study's focus on the dancer's' experience facilitates. In its introduction of *bruk out* feminist theory this study claims that black women in dancehall realise a sense of authorship over their identities through the labour and pleasure of realising *bruk out* in performance, and this active positionality disregards (Radley, 1995) the pornographic lens. They use the principles of disregarding to independently manoeuvre themselves within and beyond the structures that surround them. In particular, the study highlights that the aesthetics of excess and dramatic play within DHQ performance construct a satirical decolonial schema that acts as a refusal to be totally understood or defined. In their performative manoeuvring beyond the grasp of exploitative forces, they create moments of relief and triumph in the form of expressive pleasure and creating space for expressions of pain also. The disregarding techniques sometimes only function for the duration of the ninety-second solo performance at DHQ competitions, but this thesis emphasises the need to acknowledge these micro-resistances, because despite their brevity, the repetitive engagement has a cumulative impact on identity production, which nevertheless disrupts hegemonic structures by interrupting the circumstances of the dancers' day-to-day world, and thus express an "attempt to make life otherwise" (Hartman, 2018b).

This research has found that the black aesthetics of DHQ performance makes it attractive to European women. For black and white European women it is a space to engage with race politics and racial signifiers in both reflexive and fetishising form. Thus, a key finding of this study is that the postcoloniality that contextualises dancehall's production in Jamaica also needs to be considered when studying the European DHQ scene. In its interculturalism the DHQ scene does not leave behind

the histories of colonialism in the Caribbean because the European manifestation of DHQ culture is also embroiled in this colonial legacy. An implication of this research, therefore, is that postcoloniality and race studies need to be factored integrally into studies of European culture. Race is too often seen as a non-white subject, allowing the leveraging of whiteness as a neutral, privileged and unscrutinised position to become further entrenched. This study demonstrates the detailed reflexive labour that needs to take place in order for the condition of whiteness to be recognised and for its constructed neutrality to be debunked.

These findings respond to the question of how the DHQ scene figures in relation to appropriating power systems between the Global South and North. In particular, this study raises awareness of the beneficiaries of racial and misogynistic regimes of difference, as the intercultural DHQ scene is located within a field of antagonistic flows and efforts to control and limit feminine expressive cultures. However, the analysis also found that the scene plays a significant role in working out reflexive strategies for coalition between white and black positionalities in intercultural exchange practices. The conflicting activities within the intercultural DHQ scene highlight how it both reflects the original complexities of colonial relations and also generates new intercultural intricacies, as dancers begin to recognise the creative potentialities of difference (Lorde, 2003; Mouffé, 2012) and friction (Elswit, 2018).

The research offers a new reflective view on some of the contemporary complexities surrounding how postcolonial ties and decolonial politics between the Caribbean and Europe shape intercultural popular performance practices. It recognises the disjunctures in the meaning produced by the variously positioned dancers and the tensions created by privileged white women in Europe taking up space in a decolonial black performance culture. The study suggests that as well as the on-going issues with white privilege causing epistemic violence toward dancehall and its black practitioners, there is also within the intercultural *bruk out* feminist movement, a potential for coalition and solidarity. The findings regarding the performativity of silence and with-holding in relation to decolonial politics and the right to opacity (Glissant, 1990), led this study to recognise that the cultural sensitivity required by white European dancers often meant accepting the limits of one's participation and understanding.

The study advances critical dance studies through its contribution to knowledge regarding the meanings attached to virtuosic and excessive *bruk out* DHQ performance. This is valuable because it highlights the relevance of popular dance practices to discussions surrounding the sociopolitical resonance of dance. This contribution is important because these characteristics of popular performance are often side-lined from critical discussions within dance studies, due to their dismissal as vulgar manifestations of popular culture's limited capacity for 'tasteful' aesthetics. This study has

detailed how the bruk out DHQ scene functions in alignment with a certain black epistemology and plays a significant role in the lived experiences of the participants, not least because participation involves major creative initiatives and embodied training. This study therefore contributes to the dismantlement of the high art canon in critical dance studies, through its recognition of the complex aesthetic and social resonances of this popular dance practice.

The research also offers new insights into the role of online engagement in popular dance world-making and online identity constructions. In particular, it demonstrates the way in which digital activity on social media networks extend racialisation processes (Nakamura, 2008), which can limit social equality, but is also being used by specific 'tech-savvy' women to increase their centrality in the dancehall network as black Jamaican women. This research highlights the combined relevance of online/offline interactions in building new cultural forms and connections, as virtual and physical co-presence become experientially integrated in processes of identity construction and community-building. However, because there are differences in the access potential to virtual activity between the dancers in Jamaican and Europe, the Internet becomes another space where inequality is forged.

Future research could study the make-up of *bruk out* feminism in relation to globalised media circuits and commercial dance choreography, in particular its growing presence in mainstream pop culture music videos and in videos of commercial dance classes and performances. This broader conversation about dancehall culture in relation to mass media consumption patterns could further develop an understanding of both the exploitative processes taking place in dancehall's commercialisation, and dancehall's co-option of commerciality for its own means. An analysis of the flows of people and power in sponsorship, dance games, and advertisements involving dancehall could also be considered. This area of research would have the potential to further extend an understanding of the form of interculturalism that is developing within the international dancehall scene, and how neoliberal markets are involved in the exchanges of power and knowledge.

Correspondingly, an additional area for future research that also touches upon the relationship between the concretisation of dancehall's increasing visibility in new cultural contexts and the dancehall scene in Jamaica, would be an analysis into a recent change in the DHQ competition scene. After nineteen years of the annual International DHQ Competition taking place in Jamaica, in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 the competition did not take place. This was, according to the organisers, due to unforeseen issues with sponsorship and was also linked to a period of violent unrest in Montego Bay. However, in regard to questions concerning the shape of the DHQ network highlighted in this study, it is significant to note that during this same period increasingly large-scale DHQ competitions have been organised in other sites, which have been officially affiliated with the International DHQ

Competition brand. In Europe DHQ Fraise has collaborated with other dancers to bring about the transnational 'Head Top Dancehall Queens' organisation, which organises competitions and workshops across several European sites including the Netherlands, Hungary and Portugal. These developments mark a shift in the structure of the DHQ network as sites outside of Jamaica become increasingly crucial to the continuation of DHQ competition culture, which remains a central feature of the DHQ calendar of activities. As these developments took place largely after the data collection period for this study, they have not been analysed as a part of the thesis' discussion. However, as they speak to the investigatory focus, and also the findings of this research, this would be a significant area of study for future research into the intercultural dancehall scene and the exchanges and distribution of power between Jamaican and European women.

The developments that this study has discussed, as well as these very recent changes in the structure of the DHQ scene, highlight the hovering, un-fixed state that the scene occupies as it retains a black decolonial politics in an intercultural context, and traverses virtual and physical space. The investigation in this thesis reveals that much like the dancers' experiences, the scene as a whole is also deeply invested in the process and labour of becoming, as it refuses to be fully comprehended. The *bruk out* feminist project is made by and for women and centres primarily on black Jamaican women's labour. In its dual centring on female corporeal pleasure and pain it enables black Jamaican and black European women, in particular, to explore and share parts of themselves, their realities and their fantasies that are at once playfully provocative and intently serious. For black European, black Jamaican and white European women, the intercultural *bruk out* feminist scene has the potential to be a space to work through these complex areas relating to sexuality, race and class in ways that foreground positional difference, yet create a "common symbolic space" (Mouffé, 2012: 632) that nurtures exchange, dialogue and cultural sensitivity.

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