Tradition, Innovation and Fusion:
Local articulations of global scapes of girl dance

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KEYWORDS

Girls; dance; Sudanese refugees; Appadurai; feminism.

ABSTRACT

In this paper I theorize a dance workshop program that I designed and ran with a group of young Sudanese Australian refugee women as part of my postdoctoral research into the arts and young people at risk. In consultation with the girls involved, I designed dance workshops in relation to a selection of texts (music, dance practices, film clips and video recordings of rehearsals). These popular cultural texts served as teaching tools and also articulated what, mobilizing Appadurai (1996, 2000); I call scapes of 'non white feminine dance'. I offer an account of the process through which I devised and the girls performed a dance piece that was presented at a community education end of year celebration for the Sudanese community living in Melbourne. The girls' highly gendered movement styles can be considered as a dialogue between local and global aspects of these scapes of non-white feminine dance. Through such framing, I show how ethnic heritages and media texts became core tools through which the girls produced dancing identity.

Between 2006 and 2008 I conducted a postdoctoral research project into the roles played by the arts in the lives of young Australians at risk. At the time, I was working out of Monash University. The young people who participated in the research became involved through a well-known community education organization and a secondary school with a public profile grounded in their strong arts curriculum and activist role in Koori education. The participants were newly arrived refugees from the Sudan, Koori students and low socio-economic status students. In this article I explore one of a number of discreet dance projects that, along with ethnographic observation and other arts-based research techniques (Mc Niff 1998, Levy 2008), comprised the empirical dimensions of the research. The discreet project I theorize was based at the community education center and involved Sudanese girls. Through conceptualizing my ethnography as an extension of what Buroway (2000) has called 'global ethnography' and bringing this together with Appadurai's (1996, 2000) consideration of global flows, I explicate the ongoing dialogue between local and global aspects of the girls' movement styles. I show how ethnic heritages and media texts, which I conceive through Appadurai's concepts of ethnoscapes and mediascapes, became core tools through which the girls produced dancing identity.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS: GLOBAL ETHNOGRAPHY AND ARTS BASED PRACTICES

As suggested above, the research methods I employed for this project brought together arts-based research techniques (Mc Niff 1998, Levy 2008) along with a reinterpretation of what Buroway (2000) has called 'global ethnography'. I undertook ethnographic research in each of the educational sites through which the young people became involved in the research. In these sites I also taught dance as a curriculum area and facilitated the students' inquiry into their participation in dance through visual journals, photo essays and focus group discussions. The core tools used as empirical research methods were dance programs, the choreography of specific dance pieces and the young people's documentation of these processes through visual journals and photo essays, which they constructed with materials and cameras I provided. I also facilitated focus groups and undertook one on one interviews that explored the ways in which young people felt about their arts practices[i].

These methods articulated the arts based ethnography, which I conceptualized as a local expression of a global ethnography, that is, of an ethnographic project that brings a global imagination and awareness to localized practices. Through such a lens, the girl's dance project can be seen as an intersection between local and global mediascapes of non-white feminine dance. The popular American band The Pussycat Dolls (TPD's) song *'Beep'* marks this intersection through a branding of multiracial femininity that sells because it partly erases the embodied differences that it sites. While TPD celebrate ethnic diversity, their bodies are not diverse. TPD endeavor to imagine, or at least market, the non-white female body at the centre of popular 'girl culture' in ways that are naïve, yet can be considered as serving a political purpose because they locate non-white women in a prominent position in popular media texts aimed at younger female consumers.

Scapes of 'non white feminine dance' is an idea that brings Appadurai's (1996, 2000) concepts of ethno and mediascapes together to consider the cultural significances of the ways this group of young Sudanese Australian refugee and migrant women consumed, interpolated and reproduced '*Beep*'. These scapes are lived through the dance practices of non-white women and girls across the globe and imagined partly through media texts that depict non-white women dancing. Like thousands of other fans, the young migrant and refugee women wanted to be like TPD: they desired cultural visibility. TPD appealed to their sense of belonging to a global community, or 'ethnoscape' of non-white women. TPD also offered access to imagining fame and a sense of being part of a dominant culture through generating a mediascape of publically applauded, non-white femininity.

As I have explained elsewhere (Kenway & Hickey-Moody, 2009), Appadurai identifies five dimensions of global cultural flows, which articulate as scapes. Respectively, these are: financescapes, technoscapes, ethnoscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes (Appadurai 2000: 95). Through these scapes, Appadurai (1996, 2000) considers the global mobility of people, images, things and styles. Ethnoscapes are the "landscape[s] of persons that constitute the shifting world" (1996: 33) – mobile and stable populations fold together to make up enthoscapes. The idea of ethnoscapes is partly built around an acknowledgement of the divergent cultural histories that accompany mobile populations. Through this idea, the ethnic landscape in which we are positioned at any given time is brought into focus.

The young women involved in the ethnographic research are part of a particular ethnoscape of moving bodies: their families have moved from the war-torn areas of South Sudan, as part of a wave of refugee migration from this area across the globe. Like other young women in America, Canada and the U.K, the women involved in this ethnography were escaping the violence in Darfur and looking to weave their cultural histories into their multicultural present. Through his concept of mediascapes, Appadurai explores the roles played by different kinds of media in articulating shifting landscapes of people. While Appadurai does not suggest there are particular kinds of mediascapes, the notion of mediascapes of non-white femininity offers a way through which we can think about the cultural meanings that surround the TPD.

As ways of articulating ethnoscapes, mediascapes are "closely related landscapes of images" (Appadurai 1996: 35) created by electronically distributed newspapers, magazines, TV stations and film production studios. Appadurai further explains that:

> *'Mediascapes', whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-centered … accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements … out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places. These scripts can and do get disaggregated into complex sets of metaphors by which people live (Lakoff and Jbhnson, 1980) as they help to constitute narratives of the 'other' and proto-narratives of possible lives, fantasies which could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement. (Appadurai 1996: 35)*

Mediascapes facilitate imaginings of self. TPD belong to a global mediascape (Appadurai 2000: 95) of popular girl dance – a cultural catalogue[ii] of images and ideas that come together to constitute the ways dancing female bodies are known. The tastes of the young women in the dance program, which celebrated non-white celebrities, taught me to see scapes of non white feminine dance as they were configured in the imaginaries of the participants. TPD explicitly attempt to express globalizing ethnoscapes of cultural diversity. Different from mediascapes, ethnoscapes are more "directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power" (1996: 36). They include "a diaspora of key words, political ideas and values". Appadurai further characterizes ethnoscapes as:

> *… landscapes of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals [that] constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. (2000: 95)*

To my mind, ethnoscapes and mediascapes have a continuing relationality that is expressed in local ways differently. Together, ethnoscapes and mediascapes perform ideoscapes – imagined worlds that constitute frameworks for thinking about how people experience belonging and make culture. 'Ideoscapes' are social ideologies or:

> … concatenations of images, … [that] are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it. … ideoscapes are composed of elements of the Enlightenment world-view, which consists of … ideas, terms and images, including 'freedom', 'welfare', 'rights', 'sovereignty', 'representation' and the master-term 'democracy'. The master-narrative of the Enlightenment (and its many variants in England, France and the United States) was constructed with a certain internal logic and presupposed a certain relationship between reading, representation and the public sphere … But their diaspora across the world, especially since the nineteenth century, has loosened the internal coherence which held these terms and images together in a Euro-American master-narrative (Appadurai 1996: 35)

As this quotation suggests, ideoscapes are ideas that bind social formations. Ideas of nationality, sovereignty and religious beliefs are examples to which Appadurai refers in characterizing ideoscapes. Ethnoscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes are closely related and they offer a way through which we can see the everyday life experiences and desires of young people as constituting, and being constituted by, broader political landscapes. Appadurai explains this dialog between the local, national and global through stating: "Lived cultures of ethnoscapes are reconfigured in global ideoscapes (moving political ideas) and mediascapes (moving electronic images). These 'scapes' come together to form imagined worlds. Such worlds are "multiple [and] … constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (1996: 2).

Mediascapes, such as that of popular, non-white girl dance, partly constituted by TPD amongst other acts, are thus significant in the respect that they contribute to, and are partly made up by, dominant discourses about the social groups they come to articulate. They can change communities through facilitating new forms of belonging and they provide frameworks for imagining and/or performing alternative modes citizenship and experiencing belonging. Mediascapes are thus core parts of the ways in which social groups develop identities within communities and come to know themselves.

As I argue elsewhere (Hickey-Moody, in press), Australian mediascapes about young people, especially non-white young people, are often built around ways in which such young people might be 'at risk' of educational failure, or cause trouble to society. In Australia, Sudanese and Aboriginal youth are most often characterized in such ways[iii]. To the extent that such neo-panic narratives figure as prominent discourses of non-white youth, interventions that celebrate such bodies are clearly needed. In such a context, as I have suggested and will now explain, media texts that appreciate young female ethnic diversity are a welcome intervention in dominant discourses of non-white youth in Australia.

TRADITION, INNOVATION, FUSION

The process of designing the dance workshop program for the young Sudanese women unfolded in relation to a selection of cultural texts (music, dance practices, film clips and video recordings of rehearsals) which performed pedagogical functions. These texts also articulated the various ethnoscapes and mediascapes that informed identities and experiences of the participants.

The workshop group began with a focus on traditional Sudanese dance and music knowledges and practices. This was unexpected, as the focus came largely from older women and the group was originally planned for young women. The planning and consultation that I had undertaken in preparation for the workshop series involved focus groups with young women who were incredibly enthusiastic about the prospect of dance classes. I got to know the women by joining in with their involvement in a jewelry-making workshop once a week for a month. Then I ran three focus groups in which we explored what the young women wanted from a dance workshop program and facilitated the process of gaining ethical consent[iv]. The young women were very excited about dancing and so were their mothers. The focus groups with the young women were quite difficult to facilitate, as they did not have English words to express their desire to dance in certain ways, so it was hard to locate desired styles with words[v]. Here, media texts became instructive– the young women brought in CDs and used my computer to show YouTube clips, so we could share understandings of what they wanted to listen to and how they wanted to dance. As such, mediascapes of non-white femininity played a key role in the planning process of the workshop program, and they could be considered as forming a core part of the curriculum for the girl's dance group.

 The first day of class presented a plethora of issues. The group unexpectedly began as over thirty women, consisting of a broad range of ages. Word had got out. Mothers, aunts, the women of the local Sudanese Australian community wanted to dance. The exact nature of what the women involved wanted to dance differed. Traditional dance forms were of great interest to the girls' mothers but of less interest to the younger women. The older women had extensive practical knowledges about Sudanese and Egyptian dance styles and music. These knowledges are part of the ethnoscapes or cultural histories of the women, they are not written and are thus living traditions. These women brought music along with them and taught me, and the younger members of the group, their folk dance practices.

This process illustrated the different investments that these generations had in dance as a practice. Sudan has a unique musical culture that extends into traditionally gendered dance practices. Because the constitution of the Sudanese population is diverse (five hundred plus ethnic groups spread across the country), the North, East and West African music and dance styles that constitute a mixture of African, Arab and Sub-Saharan traditions fold in to provide resources upon which women learning dance in Sudan draw. These knowledges are passed on practically and orally, many Sudanese dances can now be seen on YouTube or other online forums, but there is little literature, at least in English, detailing the nature of these dances.

South Sudan is the area from which most of the women and girls involved in the ethnographic work hailed. It has a rich tradition of folk music that reflects the diverse cultures of the region. The controversial history of music and dance in South Sudan informed part of the older women's desire to dance, as such cultural practices have been contested terrains in South Sudan[vi]. Traditional Sudanese women's dance knowledges thus founded the beginning of the workshop program, which was further adjusted in relation to the desires of the younger members of the group.

The young women involved in the workshop program were more interested in contemporary Sudanese, Egyptian and Western commercial popular music and dance than traditional Sudanese folk music and dance. As a people who bring together the North and South, the Dinka have developed their own contemporary folk music and have been part of a broader movement of Sudanese youth who are mobilizing hip hop as a vehicle for developing awareness of the social issues which trouble the South. The young women involved in the ethnography enjoyed listening to Sudanese contemporary popular music, especially hip hop and belly dance, as well as Western commercial popular music, particularly Shakira, Beyoncé and TPD. They brought in compact disc burns of contemporary Sudanese pop alongside Beyoncé tracks and danced in fusions of contemporary Southern Sudanese dance and Beyoncé-styled body rolls. As such, the dance practices in which these young women were invested were quite different from the folk dance styles that captured the hearts and imaginations of the older women. It seemed to me that the younger women and girls liked Shakira, Beyoncé and TPD because these stars offer popularly applauded, well-marketed articulations of non-white femininity. Indeed, they form part of what, through Appadurai, we might consider a global mediascape of non-white femininity.

As the leader for the series of dance workshops, I was presented with a problem. Not only was the initial group too large to be able to successfully facilitate (for example, we had to practice our folk dance on the oval, as the group was too big to dance in the hall), the desires of the group members were too diverse to successfully plan an agenda that would meet the needs of most participants. The older women wanted to pass on and celebrate tradition, while the younger women wanted to create particular kinds of contemporary non-white femininity through dance. After four weeks of classes it became clear I needed to construct more defined boundaries through which to run the workshops.

Upon further consultation with the group, and in collaboration with the community education organization through which I was running the workshop series, we decided to orient the workshops towards a performance outcome. I reminded the participants that the workshops were originally intended for younger women. Thus, I was able to refine the membership of the group substantially. The new group consisted of eight young women who wanted to devise a dance to be performed at a forthcoming community event. This event was an end of year celebration for the local Sudanese migrant and refugee community living in Melbourne. I was especially keen to mobilize the girls' innovative corporeity – their capacity to fuse new and old dance styles. Invested as they were in media that constituted non-white scapes of popular femininity, the girls chose '*Beep*' as the track to which they wanted a performance piece choreographed. Through becoming-like TPD, the girls imaginatively folded themselves into mediascapes of non-white femininity and developed a performance piece that offered them an unusual level of visibility in their community.

Our process opened up readings of the TPD in a couple of ways: firstly, the girls' bodies provided sites that re-wrote TPD's dance moves by nature of their materiality, as the array of forms of female embodiment that were presented by the performance ensemble featured radically different corporealities to those of any given TPD. Secondly, I encouraged partner work and facilitated some development of original material, along with the incorporation of TPDs' moves. This seemed like a desirable middle ground that met the needs of the young women dancers and addressed my own concern to not overly exult TPD. The use of video technology was a core part of the choreographic process and it constituted the means through which the young women wrote themselves into dancescapes of non-white femininity: which, through our process, shifted from global mediascapes of femininity crafted by TPD to local video recordings made in our community rehearsal space.

VISUALITY AND FEMININITY

Visuality and visibility played core roles for the young women in the workshop program in relation to their knowledge of, and desires for, the re-production of the female dancing body. The girl's desire to look at female dancing bodies on screens and to learn dance through watching brought the importance of visuality into the process from the outset. The film clip to '*Beep*' was a primary pedagogical tool for the dance class – the girls watched the clip and tried to dance like TPD. The song is specifically concerned with the objectification of the female body through the male gaze. The lyrics and the dance moves featured in the film clip explore, amongst other things, the pleasure felt by TPD when subjected to men gazing at their bottoms.

Figures 1: The Pussycat Dolls

Some of the young women were concerned with the pleasure of the male gaze, but they were also more broadly interested in the pleasure of movement, in being part of a group activity. They were particularly invested in the idea of, and the disciplinary pleasures associated with, 'learning steps' in order to 'get the dance right'. This investment in 'learning steps' in order to 'get the dance right' was interesting to me in terms of the girl's desire for certain kinds of subjection as learners. The girls wanted to be instructed and they derived great pleasure from explicit direction.

As someone who has practiced for many years in community cultural development, I am generally not interested in dictating 'steps' as a choreographic method. I have been trained to focus my interest on performance pieces in

which young people devise their own movement material and this material is then choreographed into performances in collaboration with dancers. However, such a process-based methodology is simply not pleasurable for some young people. Based, as they are, around processes through which participants' devise their own dance moves as physical explorations of particular themes, community cultural development methodologies do not involve teaching pre-existing choreography. Rather, they are explorative and the performance texts they create obviously differ from the 'popular' funk dance routines generally featured in mainstream film clips.

I tried to work with this group of girls as much as possible in the generative, collaborative fashion I prefer, because it offers space for the personal input of participants. For example, dance movements devised by participants are expressions of the participants' lives rather than the participants learning moves made in someone else's life. The idea of dancing without learning moves that were not already popular wasn't great fun for the girls. In order to fit in with mainstream representations of femininity, they wanted to do 'dance steps' to TPD. As young women who had experienced much displacement and who occupied a culturally marginal position in their broad local community, they wanted to 'fit in' with a mainstream, largely white, image of popular femininity.

I was faced with a dilemma - I wanted to give the girls the pleasure of 'fitting in' but, as I have suggested, I also wanted to maintain what I would call my own integrity as a community cultural development practitioner and a feminist. In this respect, I felt ambivalent about explicitly celebrating TPD because, while the members of TPD clearly derive great pleasure and make a substantial amount of money from, their carefully crafted version of femininity, they do not offer as much as a scope for celebrating non-white femininity as I wanted to provide for the young women involved.

To my mind, Michelle Obama or Opera Winfrey constitute more desirable non-white role models because the modes of femininity they espouse appear to have been produced more through a focus on the self's relation to self and less through a focus on the self in relation to the gaze of the other as a primary source of pride and self worth. This said; my concern was to provide the girls with an experience they enjoyed and to which they felt committed. They had clearly chosen TPDs' dance and music because TPD expressed the kind of girl or woman they would like to be.

In learning to teach TPD dance moves and thinking through the significance of TPD as role models for femininity, I became aware that TPD occupy a particular position in contemporary mediascapes of 'girl power'. In some respects, TPD could be considered exemplars of mediascapes of what we might call 'girl power', if we take the term to be emblematic of contemporary girl cultures which emerged alongside third wave feminist[vii] practices and debates since the mid 1980's [viii]. You Tube is peppered with clips of girls performing TPD routines to their music and, as I discuss below, involvement in lived cultures of girlhood is a core marketing strategy employed by the band. In other respects, TPD might be regarded as the antithesis of any claim to feminism. For example, because TPD embody a dominant, commercial model of femininity, to the extent that first and second wave feminist movements have pioneered critiques of such forms of femininity, the group might be seen as opposing exactly such a politic.

Even the group's name illustrates their commercialization of sexualized, mainstream, dominant forms of feminine embodiment. 'The Pussycat Dolls' brings together two symbols of a commodified femininity that reflect the desires of the mainstream heterosexual male gaze: the doll (this doll would be a Barbie, or Cindy) and the

pussycat; women dressed as stylized cats are classic figures of hyper sexualized femininity. The abbreviation of pussycat is also employed as a euphemism for the vagina. Bringing the Barbie and the pussy together, a feminist cultural semiotics of the group's name could read them as 'the Vagina toys'. While I consider the women performers who make up the group as the antithesis of first and second wave feminism, they often feature prominently in what we might consider to be mediascapes of girl power.

For example, *The Washington Post* published an article exploring fashion in girl power written by one of the newspaper's staff writers, who compares TPD to the Spice Girls in order to suggest that differences in the two bands illustrate strands of 'MTV feminism' (Givhan 2007: online). The writer states:

> *Consider the success of the Pussycat Dolls, who have embraced their inner stripper and the pleasures of slutdom. While the Spice Girls sang, "If you wanna be my lover, you gotta get with my friends / Make it last forever, friendship never ends," the Pussycat Dolls purred, "Don't cha wish your girlfriend was hot like me? / Don't cha wish your girlfriend was a freak like me?" (Givhan 2007: online)*

According to Givhan, TPD represent "… the Madonna philosophy, which advocated the power in a half-naked tush." (2007: online) Yet, the nature of the 'tush' which TPD celebrate is clearly very selective. TPD members have individual versions of a particular form of small, muscular, cellulite free bottom. As such, one could qualify the suggestion that TPD "advocated the power in a half-naked tush" – they seem to only advocate power in small, well toned, cellulite free bottoms. I am skeptical about the extent to which MTV feminism might offer a range of young women any tools with which to appreciate their own body outside an unrealistically strict set of perimeters.

TPDs' positioning in scapes of non-white feminine dance thus seems to be manufactured primarily for marketing purposes. While the group sells their 'range' of ethnic backgrounds, as the image above demonstrates, they all have very similar bodyshapes. To signify cultural 'difference', they dye their hair different colors. In what is ostensibly a radical overcoding of the embodiment of racial difference, TPD have become branded as 'diverse' although obvious signs of bodily diversity have been erased.

McGee (2010: 7) discusses some of the problematics of TPDs' success as icons of girl power "because of the ways that their particular musical, visual and dance-oriented texts embody public intimacies (Berlant 2008) by stimulating an always already exoticized feminism." She acknowledges the role that TPD have played in de-politicizing the everyday cultural labor associated with multiculturalism, suggesting:

> *While the group's multicultural performances provide contemporary examples of real life intercultural collaboration, their cultural politics remain unvoiced. Although multiculturalism has recently fallen from favour in academic circles, twenty first century media execs. quickly recognized its profitability in the international arena of multinational, musical commodities. More recently, the widely branded term "multiculti", reflects current tendencies to dismissively abbreviate heavily-weighted cultural concepts. The term's flippant brevity also indirectly mimics what some view as an overly-commodified, "politically correct" performative gimmickry. McGee (2010: 12).*

The marketing link between TPD as de-politicized multicultural icons who offer an example of "twenty-first century Orientalism" (McGee 2010: 11) and lived 'girl power' as a culture is clearly strategic. This link is examined by Mc Gee in relation to third wave feminism in her analysis of the group's "find your inner doll" campaign. In an early

interview with the band, the then TPD member Christina Applegate stated, "inside every woman is a Pussycat Doll" (McGee 2010: 14). This statement was taken up by the band as a marketing strategy. It also became a branding slogan and, later, a reality TV show in which the band search for a new member.

McGee discusses the political utility of this slogan, acknowledging its significance for TPD in terms of marketing and branding, but she also canvasses the shallow nature of the sentiment of self-empowerment which lies at the heart of the project for women to find their inner doll, through examining some of the aggressive, at times abusive practices of embodiment associated with becoming a TPD. McGee's mapping of the falsity of the empowerment narrative is instructive:

> *Since 2003's "inner doll" slogan branding, other feminist and new age sounding phrases began to crop up on internet blogs and interviews with various band members … In reference to the female empowerment tip, Nicole [the lead singer of TPD] claimed that the Pussycat Dolls was "the next generation of girl power". In the same interview, "Red-headed" Carmit Bachar offered another explanation of doll power claiming: "It's essentially female power. It's having a sense of strength and confidence and self-expression of who you are. (McGee 2010: 14, author's parentheses).*

The limited nature of this rhetoric is then made plain, as McGee (2010: 14) notes that the TPD's "public philosophizing about the nature of performing women began to change from new-age, self-help inspirational slogans and DIY determinism to assertions reflecting the culture of hyper-masculinized, media mogals". Not surprisingly, she points out that the reality TV show searching for the next great Doll canvassed women fighting with each other more than anything else, and had fairly limited success when it came to finding new group members because "the 'extreme' requirement to be athletic, fit, thin, beautiful, multitalented, and multicultural meant that very few women actually had the chance to express 'Doll Power'" (McGee 2010: 15).
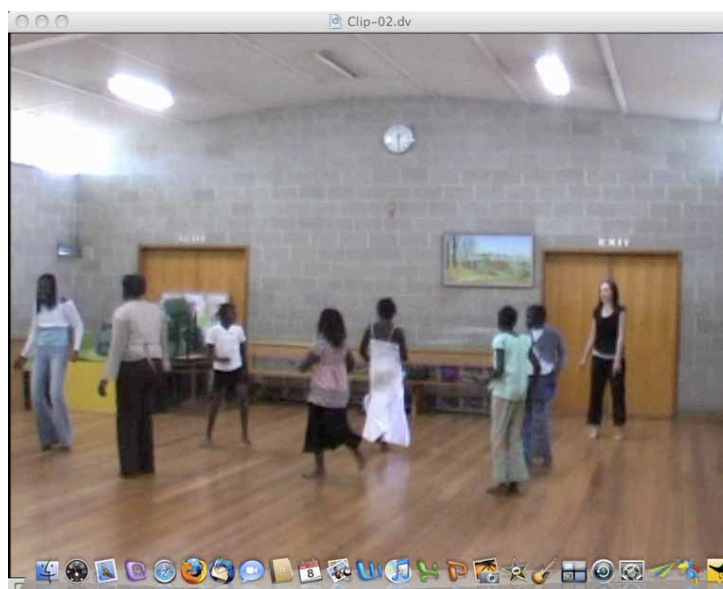

Figure 2: Screen capture of the video of the girls and young women dancing.

In contrast to the uniform physiques of TPD, members of the group of young women with whom I worked with were physically very diverse and, unlike the TPD, they were all very dark skinned: they embodied rather than signified non-white femininity. The girls had been born in either Sudan or Egypt and their ages ranged from 5 to 16. As suggested by the image above, their bodies and styles were individual, although all were quite shy and scant with words. Attendance, commitment to the rehearsal process and obedience (in the respect that they endeavored, to the best of their capacity, to do what I asked of them) showed me that the girls were keen to dance. This said, the movement ranges and physical capacities of the girls varied greatly. Despite their enthusiasm, actually getting some of the girls to dance entailed modifying choreography and finding quite simple moves that all the girls could perform.

As such, the choreography I employed in working with the girls was very simple and was not entirely a copy of TPDs' film clip. I encouraged the girls to devise at least some original movements and I tried to bring 'steps' that the girls chose from TPDs' film clip together with these simple movements. This balance between generating choreography and teaching it was important because I wanted to write the girls into the dance in as many ways as I could, but it was also a necessity, because the girls couldn't execute the full range of movements featured in the film clip. Layering aspects of TPDs' dance alongside a few of the girls' movements was also an expression of my desire to increase the young women's connection to, and investment in, their dance.

As the rehearsals progressed, the role played by the young women's investment in visuality changed. Rather than continuing to watch other dances, such as TPD or Beyoncé on the screen, we recorded our rehearsals with a video camera and employed videotexts of the girls dancing as a way of remembering, analyzing and responding to rehearsals. I recorded rehearsals from a tripod or, when possible, I would enlist a free member of the community education group to record us. The girls' dancing bodies on screen re-produced, but also re-worked, the mediascape created by TPDs' film clip, as they physically and imaginatively cut themselves into the landscape of bodies and images that fascinated them, by reproducing the moves they coveted. At the end of each rehearsal, our group would watch footage for 'accuracy of the moves' and to plan improvements.

The quality and tenor of movement were foci of importance here and our examination of these aspects of the movement was greatly aided by the use of the video camera: watching back over rehearsal footage, we had time to examine the dance moves and decide if we wanted some moves to be 'stronger', others more 'sexy', some moves were intentionally light and playful. I sought to craft a dance that allowed the young women's femininity to articulate in different ways. Through making sequences that brought together as many different movement qualities as I could elicit from the young women, I tried to facilitate a process through which they were able to embody a multifaceted femininity. The rehearsal process was thus a consistent negotiation of the practical limitations of our resources, the girls' desires, their capacities and my concerns as the director/choreographer. These negotiations occurred through, across and about music, media and videotexts and technologies. As such, mediascapes remained central to the process of refining, as well as developing, the performance piece.

The final piece was structured in three sections, each of which were designed to generate senses of being the beginning, middle and end of an event, so each featured quite different movement qualities. They also provided us with opportunities to use the space in different ways. The first part began on the floor at the very back of the stage, or what, in theatrical terms, would be considered to be upstage. The girls sat side by side in a row with their backs to the audience, their bottoms on the left hand side of their body and their legs bunched on their right. This was a 'lounging' pose: their left hands were pushed to the ground to support them and they were leaning onto them. The music starting was their cue, *'Beep'* begins in a lilting fashion and so the beginning moment of the

dance was relaxed and slightly sultry. As the music's tempo increased, which happens quite quickly, the girls rolled over their feet (to the right), to face the audience. This turn was in canon –the girls took successive cues from each other, turning one after the other. As soon as all the girls were facing the audience, they stood up together, in a line, with one hand on their right hip.

We worked for a long time on the 'moment' of the line assembling. It was a strong, sexy moment where the girls faced the audience directly and had a sense of being a group: being strong both individually and together. Once this 'arrival' in the line had occurred, the girls walked towards the audience. This walk was important to me, because I saw it as an opportunity for the girls to establish their sense of self as physically strong. It was also an opportunity for the girls to cover the entire length of the performance space fairly quickly: they were not runners, so it was the most movement through space some of the girls undertook in the performance. In rehearsals, to encourage strength and presence in this walk, I stood alongside the girls and stated loudly 'you are proud, you are strong, heads up, girls, walk with strength'. Most of the girl's natural walking styles saw them staring at the ground when they walked, so they needed direct advice on this matter. They certainly developed a proud, strong walk. They swaggered their hips, held their heads high and moved through the space with strength and purpose. They arrived downstage, facing the audience, and formed two lines facing each other, so that each had a partner. These pairs then performed duets in unison. The duets were all the same and were modeled as directly on the TPDs' choreography as the young women's physical capacities would allow. I took moves from part of a group chorus dance routine featured in the film clip, in which TPD dance in a V shape, in unison, and translated these movements into duets in which the girls faced their partner and 'danced off' each other, with a friendly, slightly competitive air. After facing their partners, the young women krumped[ix], body rolled and articulated their shoulders, waist and hips in circular movements. They then turned in their two lines to face house stage left, where they toe-tapped and rolled their arms. This movement is an example of the modified, simple kinds of choreography that I employed to get the young women moving when they were not able to follow the film clip: either because in the clip the dance sequence cuts to a moment which does not involve dance, or because the girls were not able to perform the choreography.

The middle section of the dance involved balances and weight shares and these took a considerable amount of time to teach, as the girls needed to develop trust in themselves, in their own bodies and in each other, in order to carry the weight of others and to give their weight. For example, the young women formed a pyramid in which they balanced on all fours on top of each other. This was a performance of trust and teamwork, as they were carrying each other's body weight and, more than this, they were relying on each other for stability and support. They also crafted small duets that involved weight shares. Often these were as simple as a lean, pulling on each other's arms, or enjoying a back-to-back rest, but some were more complex balances, such as one partner lying on the ground with both legs in the air and the other partner balancing on the base's legs.

In the final section of the dance, I dispersed the girls on diagonal lines across the space, which meant that audience members could see each of them well, from a range of different angles. The young women each had three movements through which they explored low, medium and high levels of space, holding a freeze position as the end point of the dance, to mark a closure. This was the section of the dance in which the girls were required to devise their own material, and while it took longer to set the choreography for this sequence than for other parts of the dance, the rehearsal of this section provided interesting evidence to me that the process of devising one's own moves is physically empowering. While the other sections of the dance were simple to choreograph in the respect that the process was largely based on following my instruction, these sections took hours to rehearse partly because movement quality had to be layered into the work but also because timing was especially crucial.

This section where the girls got to perform their own work, took an incredibly long time to devise because the young women needed lots of support and encouragement in order to move creatively. I gave them some directives, such as asking them to include a reach, a jump, or a roll and I also employed visual and emotional images (thinking about something that makes you happy, thinking about home, thinking about reaching out) in order to support the process of devising movement. However, once the movements had been developed and refined, this section of the dance ran incredibly smoothly and required less detailing for movement quality than other parts. The movement quality was built into the nature of the movements for the young women, more so than with dance moves learnt from TPD or taught by me as a way of keeping them moving and linking sections together. Interestingly, the most rehearsal required for this final section was the freeze at the end, the timing and the stillness of which took more work than one might imagine.

As such, the final performance was made from a combination of movements that I encouraged the participants to develop themselves, movements learnt from watching TPD on screen, and those which I taught as a way of skill building or for pragmatic purposes. We practiced each weekend for months in order to perfect the timing. There was a considerable amount of strength, teamwork, creativity and care demonstrated by these young women in executing their performance piece. Working together on a weekly basis was in itself a great achievement. The fact that the girls learnt to weight share, were brave enough to develop their own dance moves and built a physical pyramid appeased the guilt which plagued my consciousness about the possibly unethical nature of encouraging a group of young women to body roll like a member of TPD. As I have explained, I remained ambiguous about the extent to which TPD could be seen as figureheads of empowerment or agency.

The final dance was performed in front of the girls' family, friends and other significant leaders in the Sudanese migrant and refugee community at a large community Christmas event. This was the first time the girls had performed in front of an audience. Their performance was incredibly well received and, perhaps of more importance to me, the girls enjoye`d performing. The young women's dance piece can be considered a performance of what, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, I think of as 'minoritarian girl power'. They inserted themselves into scapes of non-white femininity but also into the ethnoscape of their local community as socially visible figures. Deleuze and Guattari use minoritarian to refer to a cultural position, a political minority rather than a physical mass. They explain this through suggesting:

> *When we say majority, we are referring not to a greater relative quantity but to the determination of a state or standard in relation to which larger quantities, as well as the smallest, can be said to be minoritarian: white-man, adult-male, etc. Majority implies a state of domination, not the reverse. It is not a question of knowing whether there are more mosquitoes or flies than men, but of knowing how 'man' constituted a standard in the universe in relation to which men necessarily (analytically) form a majority … the majority in the universe assumes as a pregiven the right and power of man. (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:291)*

The minoritarian stands against the majoritarian stance, or that which constitutes an analytic majority and which is assumed as a benchmark for the 'power of man' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 291). This incorporeal body of power is the analytic position of 'average', 'standardized' and certainly not the collective of young refugee women with whom I worked. These women were minoritarian, or 'minor', in terms of the patriarchal nature of their own Sudanese migrant/refugee culture (James 2010) and in terms of their membership of the dominant, largely white, Anglo Saxon Australian culture.

The significance of the young women's performance at a community event was considerable, as, while personable, the girls were often very shy. The local and global politics of the girls' performance also need to be considered when thinking about the girls' achievements. While I have suggested that the globally distributed texts produced by TPD effect an overcoding of ethnic difference, to the extent that they advocate '…the power in a half-naked [very slender, cellulite free] tush' (Givhan 2007 author's parentheses), the young women with whom I worked were not solely concerned with being overly 'sexy' – they wanted to be sexy, but they also wanted to be strong and be part of team. The girls' investment in TPD was largely a concern with being part of a global community that celebrated a diverse range of feminine ethnicities. Through re-choreographing and re-staging '*Beep*' both onscreen, through the use of video cameras and in front of their community, the girls wrote race, femininity and community into the TPD text. This happened with their bodies: their skins are black, they have very different and individual figures and their trust work in building pyramids formed a minoritarian community of young women in front of their own larger community.

In many ways, the project of 'teaching' girls to dance in time to TPD was politically and aesthetically challenging. It wasn't what I recognized as 'feminism'. Yet, the young women's bodies, movements and pleasure in dance clearly demonstrated to me that this project had negotiated a space in the middle of Third Wave feminism in which moving to TPD was not necessarily only about participating in dominant cultural imaginings of heterosex. The girls felt they were writing themselves into mediascapes of non-white femininity through utilizing a text that, to their mind, celebrated ethnic diversity. Scapes of non-white feminine dance became a means through which these young women and girls imagined themselves as global citizens and crafted a public identity within their community.

NOTES

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[i] These focus groups and interviews considered relationships between the young people's arts practices of choice and possible futures, and discussed the roles played by sub-cultural knowledges in their arts practices.

[ii] In this instance, the landscape is image and sound based.

[iii] Mediascapes in Australia come to play a crucial role in the ways young refugee bodies are figured in cultural imaginings. Windle (2008) makes this point through suggesting that refugee youth from Africa living in Australia are depicted through media discourses of moral panic.

[iv] This process was time consuming and not ethically straightforward, as the girls were not literate in English and neither were their mothers. I had consent forms translated into Dinka for the mothers to sign and this process also spread the word about the dance program.

[v] Age differences, the girl's shyness and verbal language barriers punctuated our communication. I trusted that through the process of running the dance workshops, questions around dance styles; musical genres and the structure of the workshops would be resolved.

[vi] E.g. in 1992 the government controllers of the Southern Sudanese radio station, 'Radio Juba' wiped all original tapes of the celebrated Southern Sudanese singer Yousif Fataki.

[vii] Employing the term third wave feminism, I refer in part to feminist responses to second wave feminism since the 1980's, especially those that have called for attention to be paid to women of colour.

[viii] Ednie Kaeh Garrison (2004: 24), amongst others, problematizes the term third wave feminism, stating:

"The very claim to know what third wave feminism means is riddled with contradictions and problems. Few can agree about what and whom it encapsulates ... The only general consensus to have emerged is that it has become a name for young women who identify as feminists (but not the feminists of the sixties and seventies) and, especially among its detractors, it is a name assigned to those who have no real clear sense of what feminist ideology/praxis, feminist movement, or feminist identity have meant across time and place." (2004: 24-25)

[ixixix] A krump is a contemporary form of hip hop dance. In vernacular terms, a krump is a whole body movement bringing together aspects of hip hop dance such as the body roll and chest pops.