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Find Your Places, Please:
Gender in 21st Century U.S. Amateur Ballroom Dance Practices

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
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by

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To my family.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation explores contemporary amateur ballroom dance practices in the U.S., paying special attention to the uses of gender. I focus on amateur ballroom dancers associated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and queer communities to see the different ways gender in employed through ballroom dance. I argue that these communities both re-inscribed and challenge gender through different interpretations of ballroom dance. In chapter one, I situate the debate over how to define a couple on the dancefloor within the larger political landscape around the issue of marriage equality. This chapter also provides background information on gender studies and Mormon studies to argue that Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) and LGBTQIA ballroom dancers are using the performance of ballroom dance to promote their respective conceptions of partnerships and gender performance not only in dance, but also in general. Chapter two provides an in depth look into the history of dance in the LDS community before turning to ethnographic research on ballroom dance practices at Brigham Young University and Utah Valley University, arguing that the division of

religious roles by gender in Mormonism is echoed in LDS practices of ballroom dance. Chapter three explains the specific aesthetic choices in partnering, costuming, and dance technique that are utilized by same-gender ballroom dancers to (re)define gender before teasing out the different visions for same-gender ballroom dance in the U.S. This chapter argues that despite the active attempts at inclusivity in this community, binary language and a fear of femininity still results in exclusionary practices. The fourth and final chapter examines the position of ballroom dance within the field of dance studies, arguing that histories of appropriation and assumptions about gender practices in ballroom dance contribute to its middlebrow status in dance studies. This middlebrow status is explored though ethnographic research at Pomona College, a school where the ballroom dance program is quite popular yet marginalized with relationship to Dance by being located in the Physical Education Department. Overall, this dissertation adds to the existing body of research on ballroom dance, problematizing the stereotype that ballroom is only heteronormative, through showing the ways ballroom dancers both uphold and challenged gender roles.

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A Preface on Positionality

The first time I competed in foxtrot, I did it as a man. In spring of 2010, after working hard to remember the counter-intuitive footwork, Jennifer, a fellow teammate, and I realized both of our partners were abandoning us for the last and biggest competition of the year—MIT. While Jennifer tried convincing her partner to compete, I decided to take matters into my own hands. Who needs a man anyways? I approached Jennifer with my plan—we would compete together. Though she thought it was a crazy idea at first, Jennifer eventually decided it was better to dance with me than to not dance at all. Before I had the opportunity to master the follow's footwork for the foxtrot, I found myself alone in a studio trying to intuit the lead's footwork. If I, as the follow, stepped backward here, then the lead must step forward. After a couple hours of breaking down my new role, I felt prepared to be the kind of lead all follows deserve to dance with.

I took my job very seriously. I found an orange tie to match Jennifer's dress and wore a black vest so the number on my back would stand out. Though I wore enough masculine attire to connote I was leading, I felt no need to hide myself as a woman. Jennifer and I sported matching makeup and hairstyles and I wore shiny earrings and bracelets like I normally would for a competition.

We made it to the semi-finals, or top twelve, in several dances out of the 150 couples in our division. I found myself adopting masculine hetero-normative characteristics throughout the weekend—I not only led Jennifer in dance, I carried her bag and protected her from unwanted attention from men. It seemed my attempt at presenting masculine energy in our performance altered the obligations I felt responsible for and the way I carried myself, on and off the dance floor. This experience piqued my interest in how gender is a performance, and can be mastered through practice, just like a dance.

Why ballroom dance? This is a question I often receive, whether in regards to my research, my job as a ballroom dance instructor and coach, or my personal participation in the activity. I think people are often looking for answers like, "I started at a young age," or, "my family has done it for generations." The truth is, I don't know. I took two ballroom dance classes at a local community college while on summer breaks in high school, and decided ballroom dance was *it*—I found my dance home. I only applied to colleges that had ballroom dance clubs and continue to participate in the community regularly.

Growing up in a predominantly Latino town in California, I never questioned my "mixed-ness." Born of a Hispanic father—a political refugee from Cuba—and white mother, I have fair skin and inadvertently pass as white. During my youth, much of my blithe approach to questions of race was due to white privilege—people who looked like me in complexion dominated mainstream media and, though the other students at my high school represented a range of skin tones, my curvy Hispanic body was not corporeally remarkable in this environment by any standard. Therefore, neither my coloring nor my shape resulted in me experiencing a disconnect between my body and my environment, or the way I identified and was identified.

This all changed when I arrived at Columbia University. During my freshman year I was admitted into the Columbia Mentoring Initiative, a support network for students from underrepresented populations. I quickly realized I "passed" as white when everyone kept trying to refer me to mentoring groups based on affinity, rather than ethnic or cultural background. When I finally made my way to the Hispanic and Latino group, I was the only student asked to declare my ethnicity, to prove I was in the right place. It was clear my peers did not *see* me as being "Hispanic enough." This opinion was further validated in my inability to speak Spanish and my nondescript first name, two non-visual markers that served as signs of difference and missed opportunities for belonging.

Side note—as a child, I was taught Cubans are Hispanic, not Latino, because we are not from "the continent." Hispanic generally refers to being from Spanish speaking countries, and Latino or Latinx refers to people from Latin America. Often, the categories of Hispanic and Latino are conflated, and I found I was called out for failing to occupy an

identity I was ascribed (Latina), when the identity I *felt* was Hispanic. Feeling out of place in college, I tried to come to terms with my whiteness. I realized even as my own whiteness erased my Hispanic identity, it afforded *me* undeniable privileges not accessible to most members of my family.

A few years later, however, I learned I was also "not white enough." In a ballet class at Barnard College I was publicly called out for my shape. My body was critiqued because of its contradictory mix of white skin and Hispanic curves, an aesthetic combination the teacher read as fat and lazy, not exotic and sexy. After a grueling class, I approached the instructor to tell her I credited her intense class with helping me finally return to my pre-injury physical condition. Without a second thought she responded, "And if you stick with me we will get the rest of that weight off of you." At the time, I was puzzled and noted that in this class, women who appeared black or Latina were not attacked for being equally or more curvy than I was. I now read this situation as the instructor buying into the stereotypes that white dancers are expected to look prepubescent, and dancers of color are expected to look like mature women, or sexually marked bodies. Regardless of the instructor's motives for targeting me, it was the disconnect between my skin color and my body type which made her feel it was necessary to comment, not my shape alone.

Brandi Wilkins Catanese, in *The Problem of the Color[blind]*, troubles the belief culturally that race is something we need to "get over," or that raced bodies simply need to "transcend" racist limitations. Catanese eloquently writes we must "acknowledg[e] the histories of social location that people wear on their bodies" (Catanese 22). While I agree

with the need to acknowledge race, what are we to do when the histories of experience do not match bodies? Where is the space for discrepancy between lived experience and bodily signifiers? Once an acquaintance told me originally he went to a "bad" elementary school where he did not learn because half of the students only spoke Spanish. He went on to say "fortunately" in the fourth grade he transferred to a "wealthier school, or whiter school, you know, however you say that." One minute later he asked me about what my parents do for a living. "Well, my mom teaches math and science at an after school program for the children of migrant farmworkers." I explained that as the wife of a political refugee, my mom understands the unique needs of this community. My acquaintance's face fell as he realized he had misread my body, had thought he saw certain shared social locations in my skin color that in fact weren't there.

My conflicted body found a home in ballroom dance. There are many reasons for this unrelated to race (such as my natural pigeon-toed-ness: while frowned upon in ballet, this trait is valuable in the smooth and standard dances). In addition, the racial conflict of my body did not pose a challenge in this environment in the same way it did in other forms, the ones seen as still existing in their communities of origin. Through a history of extreme hybridization of disparate inspirations, ballroom dance creates space for aesthetically mixed bodies often rejected, or never welcomed, in other forms.

This is not to dispute ballroom dance's history of appropriation, or to defend appropriation as a means to an end. Brenda Dixon Gottschild's research identifies that many popular American social dances are "rooted in black traditions," and the African origins and influences are often downplayed, if noted at all (Gottschild 187). Many

ballroom dances, from the jive to the quickstep, have histories that originated or greatly benefited from the African diaspora. These histories *need* to be acknowledged and celebrated. That said, this is not an apology for ballroom dances' hybrid existences. In dance studies it is tempting to defend dance practices remaining in their original communities, where cultural appropriation is a bad thing that *happens to* a form, and we as scholars in ivory towers can protect against this in the future through informing our students to be critical about how they engage with dance. And though it is easy to see the merits of these arguments, taken to their extreme interpretation this model does not leave space for bodies that do not have one original community, that do not have *one* culture of origin: mixed-race bodies which require mixed practices.

When thinking of the space ballroom dance can provide for mixed-race bodies, it is useful to think of Michel Foucault's "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." Utopias are defined as "sites with no real place," a concept contrasted with heterotopias, real spaces which exist in cultures outside of hegemonic structures (Foucault 3). One of the unique principles Foucault identifies is that "[t]he heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (6). Foucault is theorizing geographical locations, but as a dance scholar I want to theorize the dancing body as a location of meaning. One way, then, is to see mixed bodies as heterotopias, bodies capable of understanding, experiencing, and existing within several locations, both cultural and social, within one society. Alternatively—though not mutually exclusive—is to see heterotopias as being

welcoming mixed-sites where mixed bodies can experience their identities holistically, not compartmentally.

This is my experience within the heterotopia of the ballroom dance floor. In the span of seven and a half minutes, one round of competition, a ballroom dancer can traverse many cultural spaces. Take the category of International Latin, for instance. An International Latin round consists of International cha cha, rumba, samba, jive, and paso doble. The Latin category is often critiqued for not portraying authentic versions of these dances, as compared to their culture of origin. Nevertheless, as competitive ballroom dance, known as dancesport, has evolved, these dances have stopped claiming to be anything other than hybrids—which *is* a departure from previous conceptualizations of ballroom dance. And thus, in a round of Latin dancesport, a competitor experiences European (mostly British), Cuban, Brazilian, Spanish, and African-American influences, all on one floor, all in one mix. These are "incompatible" informants that coexist only in the heterotopic body of a dancer. I am not suggesting ballroom dance has magical properties not seen in other forms; rather, I wish to offer my experience with a hybrid form as an attempt to theorize the function of this category of dances in the larger dance community.

On most university campuses, including Pomona College where I teach, part of why ballroom dance can afford to be more welcoming is because it is not seen as a high art, and has not won a place in the university curriculum (with notable exceptions being at Utah Valley University and Brigham Young University). For example, at Pomona College ballroom dance is the only dance form offered through the Physical Education

Department instead of the Dance program, showing it does not hold the same cultural capital as forms like ballet and modern. This lack of cultural capital means there is less gatekeeping over which bodies are allowed to participate, and what capacities those bodies can fill. Ballroom dance's marginality with respect to dance in higher education means bodies that are marginalized in other dance forms can find a home there.

Ballroom dance's marginality in the American popular consciousness has also allowed it to transform into a battleground for other kinds of identity politics. Participants of varied background have all found that ballroom dance helps them in various ways to understand their identities. Using ethnographic methods, this dissertation explores different communities' use of ballroom dance, paying special attention to its utility in gender identity formation. Brigham Young University (BYU) is home to the largest collegiate ballroom dance program in the U.S., consistently winning the titles of United States National Dance Champions and British Open Ballroom Latin and Standard Formation Champions ("Ballroom Dance Company - BYU Performing Arts Management"). Utah Valley University (UVU) is home to the second largest collegiate ballroom dance programs in the U.S. and was the first university in the country to offer an undergraduate major in ballroom dance ("Utah Valley University Department of Dance"). I observed classes and rehearsals at BYU and UVU in October of 2016 and March of 2017 while serving as a Charles Redd Center for Western Studies scholar.

I also conducted ethnographic work at various same-gender competitions across the country, including the 2015 and 2016 Boston Open, the 2016 April Follies, the 2016 and 2017 Floorplay in the Desert. Finally, I have observed the Claremont College Ballroom

Dance Company (CCBDC), the largest collegiate ballroom dance program outside of Utah since October 2014. I became director of this program in August 2016, and still hold that position today. Therefore, this project relies on ethnography and autoethnography, as well as archival research, to provide context for understanding how these seemingly disparate communities are affecting the topography of ballroom dance in the United States. This dissertation is interdisciplinary, contributing to disparate fields. Dance studies readers will be exposed to the nuances in a community (that of ballroom dance) often treated as homogenous in scholarship. Mormon studies scholars will gain a dance studies perspective on the interaction of doctrine and dance. My dissertation will provide queer scholars with an example of queer identities being formed through movement. My introductory chapter will demonstrate how the debate over what constitutes a couple, a debate that has at times dominated national politics, has also played out, perhaps more quietly, on the ballroom dance floor. My first chapter will also provide a brief history of ballroom dance, an introduction to queer studies, and an introduction to Mormon studies.

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Chapter One: Prop 8- A Gender Debate

Late twentieth and early-twenty-first-century American history will be remembered for the debate over marriage equality. The Defense of Marriage Act, often referred to as DOMA, passed in 1996. In September of 1999, California Governor Gary Davis signed the Registered Partnership bill that gave same-gender couples limited rights. In 2000, California passed Proposition 22 by 61%, which limited marriage to opposite gender couples. On May 15, 2008, the California Supreme Court repealed this for being unconstitutional (Babst et al.). Eight months later, in 2008 California passed *Proposition 8 - Eliminates Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry* by a margin of 53%. Often simply referred to as Prop 8, this proposition was supported by a coordinated effort of Mormon, Catholic, and Protestant churches, making it the largest anti-gay campaign in history (Stone 36). This ballot measure was a clash over marriage ideals and all of the other cultural assumptions that come with it, and serves as a prominent example of how distinct gender roles are often treated as intrinsic to societal establishments. While anti-marriage equality laws are often posed as being homophobic, they are also sexist in their belief that two men or two women cannot function successfully as a unit. This understanding of marriage is predicated on the belief that men and women are different and need each other to be successful.

On March 5, 2009, after the success of Prop 8, the California Supreme Court heard arguments both for and against same-sex marriage (Babst et al.). The two main players in this debate were LGBTQIA activists and Utah-based members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), who provided most of Prop 8's funding,

despite not being able to vote on the proposition.[1] LDS Church members donated at least twenty million dollars to the cause, making Prop 8 the most expensive ballot race in U.S. history. The LGBTQIA activists were wary of this considerable out-of-state funding and argued against the constitutionality of this proposition (Babst et al.). This large financial contribution shows the extent to which the LDS Church is invested in defining marriage.

This debate, about so much more than just marriage, reveals the differences in attitudes towards the necessity of defined gender roles. The belief that marriage can only exist between a man and a woman relies on the assumption that men are distinct from women. It follows that what makes men and women different is their natural aptitudes and roles, which are assumed to complement each other. This debate is centered on asking what a partnership looks like.

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that marriage is a right that extends to same-gender couples. Though there are still opponents to marriage equality, U.S. society has slowly begun to accept this interpretation of marriage as the new standard. That said, debates over the innateness of gender distinction that same-gender marriage challenge persist in disputes over "bathroom bills," who can wear dresses to prom, and if a woman is really qualified to be the U.S. president.[2] I document this debate on ballroom dance floors.

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[1] Throughout my dissertation I will use various forms of the acronym LBGTQIA, standing for lesbian, bi-sexual, gay, trangender, queer and questioning, intersex, and asexual, based on the abbreviation a given community chooses.

[2] CNN reported on March 30, 2-17 that North Carolina repealed its bathroom bill that required people to use the gendered bathroom that matched their birth certificate, not necessarily their gender identity, in government run buildings (Hanna et al.) However, under the new provision local governments are not allowed to pass their own nondiscrimination ordinances until December 2020. In recent years high schools dress codes have made national news for being sexist in their general fixation on moderating women's

Though many Americans may not be versed in what distinguishes the LDS Church from other Christian-based religions, popular consciousness often relates Mormonism to polygamy, defined as marriage between one man and multiple women, despite the fact the LDS Church stopped practicing polygamy in the late 1800s. This raises the question of why Mormons would be so intent on defining marriage as being between one man and one woman when historically the LDS Church had more varied definitions for marriage (*Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah*). One reason given by LDS scholars for the LDS Church's investment in defining marriage as between one man and one women is that outlawing polygamy was a part of the terms under which Utah gained statehood. Now, to honor the sacrifice their ancestors made they also want other groups held to this definition of marriage. Mormonism is also built on the belief that men and women are different. Both same-gender marriage, and some versions of ballroom dance, challenge the necessity of assigning different roles to members based on gender. The belief that partnerships must be constituted as a man and a woman, whether in marriage or ballroom dance, is a notion that is not only homophobic but also sexist in its belief that genders determine abilities.

The fields of Queer Studies and Mormon studies are not often thought of as in dialogue with each other, but the Prop 8 debate is a reminder of their entwined history. This dissertation will reveal another site of their intersection, a connection necessary to understanding current U.S. dancesport practices. While dispute is happening over the

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bodies and their non-inclusive stances toward who can wear dresses to prom. In February of 2015 Bill O'Reilly states "there has got to be some downside to having a woman president, right?" (Rosenthal) All of these serve as examples of society still putting credence in differences in gender being real.

definition of a couple on the dance floor, most participants do not realize who influences the various national organizations at the heart of the debate. By comprehending this underlying debate, participants will be able to understand why only some competitions allow same-gender dancesport, as well as the source of various other dancesport policies popping up across the U.S. This chapter seeks to provide a larger context for that debate. First, I will provide a history of partner dance in the U.S., before turning to a discussion on the current politicization of ballroom dance. Next, I will provide necessary background information on queer studies and Mormon studies respectively, before analyzing another site of cross-over: the debate over marriage equality. I conclude with a roadmap for the remainder of this dissertation.

Social Dance to Dancesport: A Brief History of U.S. Partner Dance

Ballroom dance, dancesport, social dance, and partner dance are often conflated as terms, but most practitioners understand these as distinct categories. To dancesport practitioners, ballroom dance refers to a set of nineteen codified dances, acting as a formal category, whether staged or not, and dancesport refers to the competitive versions of those same nineteen dances. These nineteen dances are divided into two categories, International Style and American.

As its name connotes, International Style is competed internationally, and as a category is broken down further into International Standard and International Latin. International Standard is comprised of the international versions of waltz, tango, foxtrot, quickstep, and Viennese waltz. This category is sometimes also referred to as "Ballroom," but I personally find this confusing, and prefer to treat "ballroom" as the

large category these four subcategories are under. International Latin is comprised of cha cha, rumba, samba, jive, and paso doble. The American Style is broken down into Smooth and Rhythm and has gained more traction outside the U.S. recently. American Smooth encompasses waltz, tango, foxtrot, and Viennese waltz, and American Rhythm is comprised of cha cha, rumba, swing, bolero, and mambo. Though some of the categories contain dances of the same name, like waltz, the two versions are distinguishable by both the technique and choreography. For example, in International Standard, dancers must stay in frame—follow's right hand in the lead's left, lead's right hand placed on the follow's right shoulder blade, follow placing their left hand on the leads upper arm. However, in American Smooth, dancers may go into and out of this frame, sometimes connecting in other ways, sometimes dancing side by side with no contact. Similarly, in International cha cha and rumba the technique requires that dancers straighten their legs before transferring any weight, whereas in American cha cha and rumba dancers transfer their weight first, and straighten their legs after, creating distinct hip action.

Social ballroom dance is performing these same forms outside of a staged or competitive context. In this way ballroom dance is the larger category, and social ballroom and dancesport are two subcategories. Partner dance is an even larger category that encompasses the nineteen ballroom dances, as well as other dances that require two participants, such as salsa, west coast swing, and lindy hop.

Addressing the confusion over the terminology that accompanies these dances, political scientist and dance scholar Richard Kraus writes,

> Perhaps it would be better to say that, rather than dividing dance rigidly into 'spectator' and 'participant' forms, dance may range from the simple to the

> complex, and may under one circumstance or another, have as its primary purpose either performance or participation" (Kraus 14).

Kraus is introducing the idea that instead of debating the purposes of different dance forms, it might be more fruitful to think of all dance form as existing on a scale, sliding between different purposes depending on context.

Dance scholar Juliet McMains traces the formation of the formal category of ballroom dance back to Europe. The British dance scene from the end of World War One to the 1920s was "unregulated" and dance teachers realized that they needed to standardize dances in order to create a need for formal dance lessons. As McMains states, "British… [dance masters] overcame rivalries and difference to form a unified front to fight the epidemic [of individualistic dances]," which threatened their livelihood (McMains 127). This was also the time during which London, in addition to Paris, began to be recognized as an international dance capital. This, along with instructors' desire for standardization, prompted the planning of the *Dancing Times Conference*, sponsored by a dance magazine of the same name. Philip J.S. Richardson, the magazine's editor who chaired the conference, explained that during World War One dancers no longer looked to dancing masters for instruction, as,

> just as in the big world the struggle for liberty had on occasion gone to extremes and in places developed into bolshevism, so in the ballroom there had been a tendency towards artistic *bolshevism* (Richardson 42, emphasis mine).

Comparing unregulated dance to communism highlights how seriously the disorganization of social dance instruction was seen to be the early 1920s. This lack of organization inspired Richardson, and other instructors like him, to meet to discuss the

state of ballroom dance on May 12th, 1920. Committees were formed, and a syllabus of steps began to take shape.

In 1924, a "Ballroom Branch" was added to the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance (ISTD). Described as "one of the world's leading dance examination boards," this organization was created to regulate a wide range of dance genres, from ballet to tap, and to offer qualification examinations for instructors (*History - Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing*). The ISTD syllabus is still used and taught today.

In the U.S. ballroom dance popularity was aided by capitalist economic aims and the promise of upward social mobility. Whereas instructors in Britain aimed to create a unified community through teaching regulated dances, the U.S. ballroom dance community constantly experienced tension because of the competition between instructors trying to find and develop the next innovative dance that students could learn only from them. The instructors' goal was not to create a united community where all students could dance together, regardless of where they received their training. Rather, each instructor wanted to create a community where their specific dance expertise was required. In the U.S. personal gain and the prestige of instructors were prioritized over a mass dissemination of dance standards. This emphasis on economic gains occurred at the expense of creating a unified collective.

McMains attributes the codification of ballroom in the U.S. to Arthur Murray and his successful franchise, Arthur Murray Dance Studios, which still operates today. Prior to the proliferation of Arthur Murray Dance Studios, individuality was valued in American ballroom dancing, mirroring U.S. society's general emphasis on originality and

innovation. The creation of Murray's syllabus of steps "dealt a major blow to regional differences and individuality in American social ballroom dance," while buying into capitalist ideals (McMains 121). It emphasized that specific dances were the key to social success, and could only be learned and perfected in Murray studios. Unlike the initial reaction of British teachers to band together in order to disseminate a unified message, "U.S. dance teachers […] in the American tradition of entrepreneurship and capitalist market competition continued to develop rival styles of dance" (McMains 130). This approach of trying to create a demand for one's individual product reflects U.S. capitalist ideals. Dance teachers tried to make their skills valuable by providing one-of-a-kind information for unique dances. This economy also relied on the general public feeling that dances were achievable.

The ability to blur staged and social dance is made possible by the structure of partner dances. In the U.S., exhibition teams skilled at the social dance forms began performing in 1910, the most notable example being Irene and Vernon Castle. Vernon Castle often began their performance set with advice on how to dance what he and Irene were about to perform, highlighting to audiences the possibility of achieving their aesthetic as a couple through dance. This framing of the performance as a demonstration also purposefully blurred the line between staged ballroom and social partner dance. Dance scholar Julie Malnig provides a history of American ballroom dance in *Dancing till Dawn: A Century of Exhibition Ballroom Dance*, which helps explain the relationship between staged ballroom dance and social partner dance. The interaction with a partner, combined with sharing a dance floor with other couples, makes ballroom dance social in

nature. But the presence of those same other couples highlights the ever-present performance aspect.

Contemporary critics of the early 1900s found ballroom dance to be too racy compared to the quadrilles of the day. Ballroom dances only became "elevated" forms in the U.S. as "examples of social breeding and good manners," in comparison to popular dances of the 1920s, coming out of black culture (Malnig 13). Ironically, many contributors in *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader* point to the importance of African-American social dances in American social partner dance history, including the formation of American Ballroom dances, meaning African influences were present whether practitioners wanted to acknowledge them or not.

Part of the distinction between dances being seen as high art, or performance, versus low art, or social, has to do with the assumed training necessary. Social dances are seen as requiring less training, which is why forms associated with minority cultures are often called social dance, whether in a social, staged, or competitive context. A second issue at the heart of the distinction between social dance and stage dance are the participants and the audience—who is dancing versus who is watching. Salsa, for example, is often undisputedly categorized as social partner dance, even though salsa performances are not only possible but prevalent. Despite the common understanding of salsa as a quintessential social partner dance, dance scholar Cindy Garcia argues that social dance, by virtue of the very fact that it is *social*, is always already a performance. Social dancers try to impress their fellow participants, vie for the attention of celebrities

and club managers, and "audition" for future dance partners while dancing with current partners. Garcia's understanding of social partner dance as being defined through the participation of more than a pair of dancers' echoes Marta Savigliano's claim that it takes three to tango. Savigliano's work investigates the multiple economies that exist in Argentine tango, from the global economy of dancers that participate in the form to the personal economies that exists between dancers and observers.

An under-investigated aspect to why there is a debate around the relationship between social dance and stage dance lies in claims made about performers. In stage dance there is often, though not always, an understanding that performers are representing someone or something other than themselves. This is explicitly seen in ballet performances. For example, when watching *Swan Lake* the audience is following the love story of Prince Siegfried and Odette, not that of the dancers themselves. Part of the different treatment of ballroom and social partner dance is tied to the assumption that the partners are performing as themselves – that their dancing bodies are not representational. For instance, in "Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies," Jane Desmond uses the example of social ballroom dance to show that movement aesthetics can provide insight into social relations. For her, the interactions between dancers in ballroom dance are especially fruitful for understanding social relations on and off of the dance floor. The tacit implication is that ballroom and social partner dancers are engaged in "authentic" and not staged relationships. To take another example, Vernon and Irene Castle were understood to be representing *their* heterosexual monogamous marriage

through dance, not simply *a* heterosexual monogamous marriage, or an abstract relationship.

In most settings there is no physical separation between ballroom dancers and audience; there is no stage, and thus no off stage. This lack of separation, combined with Garcia and Savigliano's claim that social partner dance requires participants and observers, means that there is no distance, physical or metaphorical, that needs to be overcome to participate—you learn the steps, you watch others, you dance. McMains critiques this lack of separation, claiming that it is harmful for professional ballroom dancers who cannot retreat from their audiences. McMains's research on "pro/am" dancesport, a category where amateurs pay professionals to compete with them, suggests that while professional ballroom dancers give the appearance that they are competing and performing as themselves, actually they have the added burden of performing while not dancing. In other words, professional ballroom dancers are not truly performing as themselves; instead they are performing constantly—through lessons, social dances with students, and while being paid to compete.[3]

[3] Here McMains and Garcia are at odds, as McMains see salsa as an alternative to dancesport that is grounded in participants enjoying dance for themselves and not performing for others, whereas Garcia posits that in salsa communities all participants are "on" all the time, whether they identify as professionals or not. The tension between these two authors reveals their positionality as researchers. McMains is a former professional ballroom dancer who is recounting her experiences of feeling pressured to perform for entire competitions, not only while dancing. She sees salsa as inherently less staged, and therefore a place of respite from the intensive labor of constant performance. Garcia is a social salsa dancer who can attest that she feels "on" at salsa clubs. She challenges McMains assumption that dancers who do not identify as professionals feel less compelled to perform on and off the dance floor. What both of their experiences reveal is that many participants believe they are watching dancers perform as themselves, while they themselves acknowledge they are performing while on and off the dance floor. Belonging, therefore, is achieved through constantly reaffirming identities via performing, on and off the dance floor.

Mainstream pro/am, though an interesting facet of the US ballroom dance community, is not representative of all participants' experiences in ballroom dance. Current research on pro/am, such as McMains's, focuses on the relationships between teachers and students competing in heteronormative partnerships, where one person is paying to participate. McMains specifically notes that she does not cover collegiate dancesport or other groups that focus on community, including programs sponsored by the LDS Church. Despite their international reputation, Brigham Young University and the LDS Church are entirely absent from the last three books published on American ballroom dance: Jonathan Marion's *Ballroom: Culture and Costumes in Competitive Dance* (2008), Julia Ericksen's *Dance with Me: Ballroom Dancing and the Promise of Instant Intimacy* (2011), and Joanna Bosse's *Becoming Beautiful: Ballroom Dance in the American Heartland* (2015). Though some research exists on queer partner dance, to date little research has been devoted to same-gender dancesport. Same-gender ballroom is often entirely ignored, and the LDS Church's connection to ballroom dance is often a footnote that highlights BYU's world-renowned program, ignoring the ties between the LDS Church and national ballroom dance governing boards, such as the National Dance Counsel of America. My research seeks to rectify these oversights by examining the ways both of these communities engage in ballroom dance in their own terms, not assuming that ballroom dance functions in a universal manner across participants. First, it is necessary to take a closer look at the terrain of amateur ballroom dance in the U.S.

The Politicization of American Ballroom Dance

An implicit debate over what partnerships should look like continues between Mormons and LGBTQIA members through the partnered dance form of ballroom dance. Two people working together to create shapes and movements not possible with one person is a defining feature of the form. Traditional ballroom dance partnerships mirror heterosexual marriage, having a man lead a woman. Now the US ballroom dance community is being pulled in two directions. On one side, ballroom dance remains an activity that enacts and compels heterosexuality; on the other side, ballroom dance mirrors new conceptualizations of what a partnership can look like. I picture the influences of these two communities as a cell undergoing mitosis, where opposite edges of the cell are pulling apart. Echoing the marriage equality debate, LDS notions of what ballroom dance should look like is being challenged by the same-gender specific dancesport communities. These opposing groups are two poles that are causing all other ballroom dance communities to have to choose a side. Are men leaders who can only dance with women, or does ballroom dance have room in its construction for other kinds of relationality, such as women dancing with women, men dancing with men, women leading men, or eliminating the distinction between leaders and followers all together? Knowingly or not, everyone in the ballroom dance community has to choose a side in this debate, casting their vote through who they allow to constitute a couple at competitions.

Dance as a site of knowledge is important as it does not simply *reflect* culture, but rather is a method through which individuals embody and experience culture. In the debate over who constitutes a couple on the dance floor, for example, many different

groups have stakes in the outcome. The BYU program, as leaders in the activity, want their interpretation of ballroom dance to remain primary in field. The mainstream ballroom dance community defining couples under the same terms as the LDS Church means that not only will the LDS Church be in the position to continue dominating the competitive field, but it also normalizes their interpretations of gender roles. In the 1950s LDS and U.S. beliefs about gender roles briefly, but importantly, overlapped. Ballroom dance acts as a site where 1950s-esque imagery of couples remains acceptable.

The LGBTQIA community also has a lot at stake in the debate over whether partnerships of two men or two women can function in all places that heteronormative partnerships are allowed. It is important to note that, while some members of same-gender ballroom dance replicate heteronormative partnerships, highlighting that gender is performative, others create new relationalities where one dancer is not always the lead and the other the follow. This interpretation further calls into question the division of tasks and responsibilities in partnerships in general. In other words, the reimagining of how roles can even be divided on the dance floor allows the consideration of other places where the division of labor has not been called into questions, despite the people who fulfill those partnerships changing.

Queer Studies and the Malleability of Gender

There are a few terms necessary for understanding the current field of Queer Studies. The term heterocentric means assuming heterosexuality as the norm, thus making all other sexualities deviant, while ciscentric means assuming that cis-people, or people who identify with their gender assigned at birth, are the norm, thus making people

who do not identify with their assigned gender, such as genderqueer, transgender, and gender fluid people, deviant by default. In mainstream ballroom dance the two dance roles, lead and follow, are sometimes conflated with the genders assumed to fill those roles, man and woman.

Some schools of thought see sex as a biological known entity, whereas gender is a social construction, often built on top of and in relation to sex. For example, according to kinesiologist Jennifer J. Waldron, "(a) sex refers to being born biologically female or male, (b) gender is defining oneself as either feminine or masculine" (Waldron). Waldron's definitions differentiate between sex as an imposed category—how someone is born—and gender as a chosen category—how people define themselves. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines sex as being tied to reproductive functions, with the first definition of "sex" stating,

> Sex, n.1 Either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and many other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions; (hence) the members of these categories viewed as a group; the males or females of a particular species, esp. the human race, considered collectively. Occasionally with *pl.* verb. ("Sex, n.1")

This definition, listed as currently in use, demonstrates the prevalence of equating sex with biology. At the same time, the OED has been updated to have the "in extended use" definition of gender read, "other analogous categories into which nouns may be divided (regardless of any connection with sex)"("Gender, N."). Both Waldron and the OED's definitions of sex and gender differentiate between classification systems based on biology and classification systems based on felt attributes.

In contrast, others see both sex and gender as socially constructed. Gender studies pioneer Judith Butler famously theorized that there is no "real" gender; instead, acts create and inscribe gender into bodies. She distinguishes between gender being "expressive" and gender being "performative," as expressive implies gender is derived from an innate truth or absolute, whereas the term performative highlights that gender is a constant doing. For example, sociologists Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman separate sex, sex category, and gender as distinct, but related terms of classification. They write:

> *Sex* is a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males…Placement in a *sex category* is achieved through application of the sex criteria…one's sex category presumes one's sex and stands as proxy for it in many institutions, but sex and sex category can vary independently…*Gender*, in contrast, is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category. (West and Zimmerman 127 original emphasis)

The phase "socially agreed upon biological criteria" points to both the utility of defining sex for ease of communication as well as its inherent constructedness as a category. In a footnote attached to this definition, West and Zimmerman write, "the determination of an individual's sex classification is a *social* process through and through" (West and Zimmerman 148 original emphasis). They want there to be no ambiguity—for them sex and gender are both constructed and not innate categories.

Where gender was initially taught as immutable, scholars then started separating sex—immutable—from gender—socially constructed. Under this framework some tasks assigned to different genders are biological, such as females give birth, and other are cultural, such as mothers take on most of the childrearing duties. Now many gender

scholars see both sex and gender as learned, while members of the general population remain split. In my own research, and life, I tend to lean on West and Zimmerman's definitions. Though I see the utility in sex categories as a shorthand to share information, such as identifying as female to my doctor, I try to avoid the terms male and female in both my writing and my speech patterns as I want to make sure it is clear that I am referring to socially constructed differences, not innate attributes. As such, in my dissertation I refrain from using the terms "male" and "female" unless I am quoting an outside source, and instead use "man," "woman," and "genderqueer" even when not grammatically correct. I do this so that when I am referring to informants I am acknowledging that all of their genders are equally constructed, and not unintentionally implying that those who I refer to as male and female are innate and those I refer to as genderqueer are not. Changes in how identities are felt and perceived are often reflected in language.

Bodies are the sites where sex, gender, and sexuality are experienced, and therefore bodies are constantly read in attempts to identify and understand others. As dance privileges bodies, it provides many possibilities for exploring queer performativity, from suggesting new and alternative kinds of relationality in performance structures, to revealing that gendered movement is taught, and therefore constructed. In addition to gendered movement being taught, reading gendered movement is also a learned skill. For example, associating movement that is gendered as feminine with homosexuality when performed by a man are not naturally linked concepts, rather it is how reading feminine movement on men has been taught to be interpreted in twenty-first century U.S.

In *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940,* historian George Chauncey traces the evolution of homosexuality from a term that solely indicated sexual partner preference to a full identity. Chauncey explains that "Only in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s did the now-conventional division of men into 'homosexuals' and 'heterosexuals,' based on the sex of their sexual partners…" replace previous terminology that was only based on perceived gender (Chauncey 13). He clarifies that in the early nineteen hundreds, "queer" was used to reference men who were interested in men, but not effeminate, while "fairies" was used to address effeminate men, and "trade" was used to describe masculine men who "accepted a queer's sexual advances," though did not initiate sexual encounters with other men themselves (Chauncey 16). Chauncey's work highlights that the relationship between gender and sexuality has shifted over time. As political scientist Rickard G. Kraus noted by1969,

> … particularly in the United States today, the man who dances is considered by many to be a sexual deviant...American boys who are entirely normal in their sexual identification and who might wish to take up dance, often hesitate to study it … because of the expressed fears and resistance of parents, or the criticism of friends. (Kraus 344)

Kraus is describing how closely movement and assume attributes are tied in popular consciousness. As dance has historically been deemed feminine, men who partake in dance are assumed to be gay.[4]

There are many ways to view ballroom dance. One common method is seeing ballroom dance as an activity that facilitates heterosexuality, or the appearance of

[4] The intersection of dance and sexuality is also explored in Jane Desmond's *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and off the Stage,* Marlon Bailey's *Butch Queens up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit,* and Clare Croft's *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings.*

heterosexuality. A second view is seeing ballroom dance as a display of queer campiness. These seemingly contradictory images intersect on the dance floor through ballroom dances' varied uses by participants.

Therefore, the very act of participating in same-gender dancesport challenges traditional gender roles by pointing out that relegating women to following and men to leading is based on tradition and not naturally possessed abilities. When maintaining a division of labor associated with heterosexual couples, queer couples highlight the similarities in their relationality to those of mixed-gender partnerships, as Butler has argued. When queer couples switch who is leading and who is following they are suggesting a new form of relationality where labor is evenly divided between partners.

Understanding ballroom dance as a performance of exaggerated gender demonstrates some reasons why it might be attracted to a community invested in gender as performance. Queer ballroom illustrates that gender is performative, both revealing that gendered moves are taught, and that certain movements are not tied to a specific ability of a gender. For example, if a woman shakes her hips it is considered sexy, but if a man shakes his hips he is read as effeminate. Women are not predisposed to be good hip shakers, rather women are culturally allowed, and in some cases encouraged, to move their bodies that way. This phenomenon is explored in-depth by gender scholar Marlon Bailey through his ethnographic look into a very different queer ballroom culture. Bailey studies inner-city kinship structure that foster communities through competitions that combine fashion, performance, and vogueing. Bailey researches ball communities in

Detroit, which caters to fostering participants' intersectional identities of gender, sexuality, and blackness (Bailey).

In this ballroom culture "realness" is a means of adjudicating many categories, and means successfully performing dominate gender and sexuality stereotypes. The very existence of this term highlights the participants understanding that *all* gender is performative. Thus, mastering realness both makes participants competitive at balls, while also acting as a safety precaution for when members interact with dominant culture. The category "realness with a twist" describes what is commonly known as code switching—successfully portraying dominate culture, while being able to quickly flip back to subcultural ideals (Bailey, chap.2). Though not experienced exactly the same, the function of ballroom dance to train both stereotypical gender expression, and create room for queered interpretations of gender contributes to its appeal in queer communities.

In addition to marriage equality, other LGBTQIA social justice issues include the fight for inclusion and equal protections in sports, school clubs, scouting troupes, and other recreational environments. In January of 2017 progress was made when the Boy Scouts of America released the statement,

> For more than 100 years, the Boy Scouts of America, along with schools, youth sports and other youth organizations, relied on biological sex – such as on an individual's birth certificate – to determine eligibility for our single-gender programs. However, that approach is no longer sufficient as communities and state laws are interpreting gender identity differently, and these laws vary from state to state. As a result, the Boy Scouts of America accepts and registers boys in the Cub and Boy Scout programs based on the gender identity indicated on the application. (Boy Scouts of America)

This statement acknowledges that gender is not a clear-cut issue. Rather, there are various ways to determine someone's gender, and as such, the Boy Scouts of America have

updated their official stance to be one where the question of gender identity is left up to the person, not their birth certificate. Though this change is evidence of some larger shifts in societal understandings of gender, a month after this statement was released another news story broke that a boy was being forced to wrestle against girls because of his birth certificate. *USA Today* reported that Mack Beggs was forced to wrestle in the women's high school wrestling tournament in Cypress, Texas because his birth certificate did not match his gender identity (USA TODAY High School Sports). Together these two examples show that progress in inclusion for LGBTQIA members in recreational activities is a slow process, and a fight that continues today.

Mormons and Marriage: Polygamy and the Necessity of Distinct Gender Roles

The LDS Church sanctioned polygamy in the early 1840s, and in 1890 an LDS prophet and head of the church, Wilford Woodruff, ended polygamy, partly to appease the United States government as a necessary step in Utah's earning of its statehood. Until then, polygamy and priesthood, or the participation as a layman in church administrative and religious roles, served as devices to distinguish Mormon men from the general population. Religion scholar Amy Hoyt and theologist Sara M. Patterson explain that during this time period the LDS church believed there was a crisis in the lives of Mormon boys stemming from this outlawing of polygamy.

As an answer to this crisis, after 1920 there were four ways Mormon men were expected to distinguish themselves from non-Mormon men: priesthood, Word of Wisdom, mission trips, and monogamous heterosexuality. The priesthood is the name for the body of laymen who make up the LDS church's religious leaders. Only Mormon men

are allowed access to these roles, and until 1978, only non- black Mormon men could serve in the priesthood.[5] The Word of Wisdom is a code of ethics from church officials aimed at boys, as it was assumed that girls would already abstain from these "undesirable" practices, which outlines how to live a spiritually clean and healthy life. Examples of its teaching include avoiding alcohol and tobacco. Over time these church elders' statement earned the respect of doctrine despite not coming from revelation. Mission trips are a *strongly* encouraged step in LDS boys reaching manhood and involve traveling away from their families, often overseas, to convert new members. This again emphasizes that men are the head of the LDS Church. Each of these pillars and their reliance on gender roles illuminate how the LDS church came to be invested in the outcome of the marriage equality debate.

Gender roles and polygamy are complex. On the one hand, polygamy lowered the implied value placed on women, expressing a belief that many women were required to assist one man in achieving religious fulfillment through fathering a large flock. On the other hand, polygamy disbursed household labor and allotted women condoned time apart from their husbands, fostering their independence. Though I am not advocating for polygamy, I am not condemning it either. Rather, I am trying to highlight the how the practice of polygamy helped construct understandings of gender, and how the elimination of the practice has affected the current community. The abolition of polygamy only further increased the need for women to fit into traditional, maternal roles. As historian Roger Thompson explains, polygamist households that shared physical houses often

[5] Black men could not be ordained to the priesthood, but Native Americans, Asians, and Latin Americans men could.

resulted in a structure where "One wife might run a nursery school to care for the children while another ran a business or was a doctor or teacher" (Thompson 145). Multiple wives caused a greater financial burden, which was alleviated through allowing women to work for pay outside of the home. The complexities of polygamy demonstrates the sticky situation of judging the progression in gender roles from an outside context.

A reliance on gender in determining one's positionality in the church puts bodies at the center of LDS doctrine. In Mormonism, unlike in other Christian religions, the body and spirit together form the soul; therefore, bodies are seen as a source of happiness, not evil, and caring for the physical body is doctrinally and culturally encouraged (Sanborn Jones). Though the LDS Church posits that bodies are inherently corrupt, it also postulates that bodies can be saved from corruption when the spirit rules them through discipline and "cultivation"(Sanborn Jones 70). There are three ways bodies play a role in salvation in Mormonism. First, one receives a body at birth. Mormons believe God has a body, and thus having a body makes you more like God. Second, one learns how to control the passions of the body through doctrine and cultural codes. Lastly, one nurtures the union between body and spirit. Caring for the body on earth is encouraged as people's spirits are rejoined with a body after death to make their soul complete in Heaven (Cieslewicz).

Under this construction, LDS doctrine sets up a binary where bodies are both celebrated and feared, for a controlled body is the path to salvation and the uncontrolled body is the path to sin. Rosemary Avance, in "Worthy 'Gods' and 'Goddesses': The Meaning of Modesty in the Normalization of Latter-day Saint Gender Roles," examines

how the modesty associated with Mormonism reinforces gender division. Mormons appropriated U.S. society's general understanding of what provocative clothes mean and symbolize, then enforced the use of alternative dress to distance themselves from the general population. Whereas men have power bestowed on them through joining the priesthood, the power women are believed to have is "the feminine ability, through sexual beauty, to incite male desire"(Avance 11). This shows that men gain power through the church, whereas women are believed to have their power from outside of the church and the church acts as a regulatory mechanism. Avance explains, "it [feminine power] is also a burden, placing the responsibility for both female and male purity on the shoulders of the woman" (Avance 11). The distinction between men and women defines what kind of power an individual has in the LDS Church, and whether that power is celebrated or controlled.

At the level of the body, men and women are seen and treated as inherently different in the LDS Church. For example, a dress code is enforced in adults through sacred underwear, a undershirt and boxers for men and high waisted knee-length bloomers and a cap-sleeved shirt for women. Both men and women receive these undergarments after they go through the temple ceremonies for the first time. Traditionally this is done either before a mission or marriage, but it could be done at any time. This means that often men receive theirs first when they serve their mission trip, while women often wait until their wedding to receive theirs. Especially for women, these sacred garments, which are supposed to be unseen, mark on parishioners' bodies what is considered modest dress. As only adults wear these garments, explicit modesty

dress codes are aimed at teenagers. Dress codes are very specific about what women can wear [i.e. "avoid clothing that is low-cut in the front or back" (Avance 14)], but very general for men [i.e. "Young men should also maintain modesty in their appearance" (Avance 14)]. This difference in language is a tangible expression of the different social treatment of the genders.

Therefore, bodies are not only necessary for salvation, but the gender of that body determines the specific path to salvation, dictating which role a person will occupy within the church. In Mormon doctrine sex and gender are often conflated, meaning not only is sex predetermined by God, but so is gender. Genders as a divinely given entity leads to strict structures that reinforce this divide. Mormon scholar Jeffrey Keller explains that there is currently no consensus in the LDS Church as to when spirits become gendered, but church leaders advocate that spirits *are* gendered and that this gender matches the gender of the earthly body it inhabits. In 1976, Apostle Boyd K. Parker declared, "From our premortal life we were directed into a physical body. There is no mismatching of bodies and spirits" (Keller 172). In 1983, future President of the LDS Church Gordon B. Hinckley proclaimed that God, not individuals, choose our genders. According to Keller, under ideal circumstances people with certain genetic makeup develop into men and those with other genetic makeup develop into women. He elaborates that in the real world people can be born hermaphrodites, with parents and doctors choosing a gender, and sometimes boys are raised as girls after accidental amputations of their penises: "These cases, as a whole, are not as uncommon as one might think" (Keller 173). This could mean boys, raised as girls, are later sealed to men in temple marriages. All of this is based

on the assumption that individuals must be raised as either a boy or a girl. One solution to concerns of people being mis-gendered on Earth is to say God is omniscient, but this necessitates a level of predetermination not found elsewhere in LDS doctrine.

LDS members often see having children as a religious responsibility that must be fulfilled within a heterosexual marriage. Therefore, successful, i.e. reproductively fruitful, heterosexual relationships are the norm in LDS communities. In *Latter-day Lore: Mormon Folklore Studies,* Mormon scholars Eric Eliason and Tom Mould describe the stress placed on young Mormons to seek spouses because of the importance of marriage to the LDS Church. They argue that for youth, "inter-gender interactions take on greater significance in the LDS Church where marriage is so central to cultural, religious, and eternal life" (Eliason and Mould 97). This focus on marriage stems from the fact that "Unmarried people can never reach the highest exaltation of glory in the celestial kingdom. Nor, presumably, can they receive the blessings of having children" (Eliason and Mould 98).

Traditional views of marriage are often based in a gender hierarchy of men as leaders and women as followers, and this gender hierarchy is felt very early in Mormons' lives. Margaret Toscano, a notable Mormon feminist scholar and excommunicated member of the LDS Church, begins her article "'Are Boys More Important than Girls?' The Continuing Conflict of Gender Difference and Equality in Mormonism" with the story of an eight-year-old boy asking his mother the question contained in her title. He disagrees with his mother, who says they are equal, stating boys are more important because Jesus and God have male bodies and boys have the priesthood. Toscano

questions what kind of policies and habits in the church would lead a boy to come to this conclusion. Here, bodies are central to understanding Mormon hierarchies, suggesting that men are more *closely* created in the image of God than women, evidence this child cites to show that boys are more important than girls. Whereas in many religions images of God are known to be symbolic and not representative of how God actually looks, in Mormonism the language and constructed imagery of God as a man is central to understanding the current arguments that limit the priesthood to those made in God's truest image—men.

The understanding of gender roles as divinely given and intrinsic to one's salvation is translated onto dance floors, where men are expected to lead, and women are taught how to follow. Ballroom dance, therefore, becomes one of the mechanisms through which LDS youth students are gendered. Ballroom dance re-inscribes the traditional separation of gender roles based on sex. Now, just as before LDS felt their definition of marriage was being challenged by marriage equality, same-gender ballroom dancers' flexible performances of the lead and follow role push against the assumptions that certain genders are better suited to dance certain parts.

Prop 8 and the Battle to Define Couples

It is necessary to return to the struggle for marriage equality discussed at the outset of this chapter to understand the gravity of why it matters how ballroom dance partners are defined. The Supreme Court upholding that the right to marry as universal did not end the larger debate on why gender roles feel necessary in our society. As long as the LDS Church can successfully defend that there are spaces in which only

heteronormative couples can succeed, they can defend their belief in innate and distinct genders.

Boyd Jay Petersen, author of "'The Greatest Glory of True Womanhood': Eve and the Construction of Mormon Gender Identity," explains that in 1994, the LDS Church was strategizing how to suppress same-gender marriage in the population at large. Their first step was to publish The Family: A Proclamation to the World, written "to demonstrate authoritatively that the LDS Church has a stake in the same-sex marriage debate" to both LDS followers and mainstream politicians (Petersen 50). This document is example of a statement from church officials being treated as doctrine. Peterson explains that attached to the fear of gay marriage is the upheaval of gender role divisions; he writes, "Same-sex marriage, in other words, unmasks the arbitrary nature of gender roles, calling them into question and destabilizing our long-held customs and beliefs about the essential nature of what it means to be male or female" (Petersen 54). Peterson is pointing out here that Mormonism anti-gay marriage stance is not only rooted in homophobia; it is also a projection of the belief that men and women are inherently different and necessarily oppositional, with women in a secondary position.

In *LDS in the USA: Mormonism and the Making of American Culture*, authors Lee Trepanier and Lynita K. Newswander explain the church's stake in this debate:

> [Since] polygamous communities [that are offshoots of the LDS Church] receive attention in the national media and culture, [then] it is incumbent upon the LDS Church to remind the public that it is committed to the American institution of monogamous marriage between a man and a woman. (Trepanier and Newswander 46)

In other words, "This desire to separate itself from Mormon fundamentalism and align itself more closely with the American mainstream may also partially explain what appears at first contradictory political behavior by Mormons on the same-sex marriage question" (Trepanier and Newswander 47). The LDS Church has complex feelings towards homosexuality, as the church condemns homosexual behavior, which has manifested in the strong position against marriage equality legislation; however, the LDS Church does not inherently condemn homosexuality. This is demonstrated in Salt Lake City's commitment to anti-discrimination legislation for housing and employment, which explains how someone can be both a devout Mormon and openly homosexual—the sin is only acting on homosexual desire. Furthermore, Trepanier and Newswander remind us of the cultural loss the LDS Church experienced from redefining marriage:

> The LDS Church paid an enormous price to enter into American civilization by renouncing the practice of polygamy in favor of monogamous marriage between one man and one woman. To give up this position for same-sex marriage would be an affront to those ancestors who made that sacrifice. Recent statements made by the LDS Church leaders that 'marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children' affirm this position. (Trepanier and Newswander 47)

The outlawing of polygamy has led to an extreme new emphasis on heterosexual monogamy, as part of the LDS Church proving its inherent "conservative Americanness." Now US ideals have moved on, but Mormons cling to the Americanisms for which they originally changed their religious practices. Mormons limited their religious freedom in order to be incorporated into US society and now want their new beliefs respected and held as the standard.

In "The Religion Clauses and Same-Sex Marriages," Emily R. Gill argues that, "Although a great deal has been written about same-sex marriage from varying standpoints, relatively little has focused on possible comparisons and contrasts between religious freedom and sexual freedom" (Gill 51). Gill argues that while marriage equality and religious freedoms are often pitted against each other as oppositional forces, she believes they "share an affinity that often goes unnoticed" (Gill 51). This similarity is that both religious beliefs and sexual orientations are considered private matters, but

> [i]n the case of both religion and sexual orientation, privacy does not protect those whose beliefs, identities, and practices diverge from the norm, but instead marginalizes them, preventing them from participating fully in the public sphere while being open about their belief and identities. (Gill 51)

Here Gill is suggesting that using the concept of religious freedom to limit freedom to express sexual identities is hypocritical in its very essence. Freedom of religion is the desire to practice one's beliefs free from the constraints of others' beliefs, just as freedom to express sexual identities is the desire to express one's sexuality without having to conform to others' beliefs. Mormons had to conform to gain acceptance into U.S. society and they expect queer communities to make a similar sacrifice.

According to Amy Stone, the "Religious Right" is a nationally recognized anti-gay movement that began to form in the 1970s (Stone). Stone uses this term to describe the collective that proposed conservative legislation specifically because it includes members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whereas a term such as the Christian Right does not. She attributes the solidification of right-wing conservatives into a political activism group in the 1970s with the pro-life movement and anti-Equal Rights Movement. Stone posits that LGBTQIA activists cannot pursue their own agendas as the

very existence of the Religious Right and their strong political presence places LGBTQIA activists constantly in a defensive position. The Religious Right constantly changes the targets of their movement, from gay teachers to same-gender marriage, and the method of their legislative attacks, including referendums and constitutional amendments. Stone argues that these tactics are deployed in this way to try to catch the LGBTQIA community off guard. Twenty-five percent of all attempted direct legislation by the Religious Right targets marriage equality, and two thirds of this attempted legislation is in battleground states such as Oregon, California, Michigan, Florida, Washington, Maine, and Colorado (Stone 7).

Stone reports that between 1974 and 2009, the Religious Right attempted to have more than 245 referendums and initiatives put on ballots, and of the 158 anti-gay referendums that made it to ballots, LGBTQIA rights have been rejected 70% of the time (Stone). Changing laws through ballot measure is a form of direct democracy, defined by Stone as "the limited ability of citizens in most states to rescind legislation by referendum or to create new laws with an initiative or constitutional amendment" (Stone xv). She explains, "The Religious Right is far more successful at the ballot box, where it can rely on voters' homophobia, than in legislative or judicial arenas" (Stone xv). This highlights the necessity of the check the judicial branch provides, as the opinions of the majority do not always have minorities' best interest in mind. Through direct and indirect democracy alone, subcultures like queer communities have their rights determined by the mainstream culture. In the case of marriage equality, it is the Supreme Court that constantly takes into account the impact of this legislation on minority groups.

The Deseret News, an LDS Newspaper, reported in an article titled "LDS Official Lauds Work for California's Prop 8" that the Mormon Church did not directly financially fund Prop 8, but it did cover the associated costs such as travel expenses for church leaders like Elder L. Whitney Clayton to visit California. The LDS Prop 8 supporters defended their stance, stating, "the court's 5-4 ruling did not reflect the will of California voters and would put their children at risk for indoctrination by putting gay marriage on par with traditional marriage" (*LDS Official Lauds Work for California's Prop. 8 | Deseret News*). This attitude is why "Elder Clayton said the church didn't consider the vote a political issue but a moral issue, and that whether the church will become involved to the same extent on future moral questions "depends on the issue and the time"(*LDS Official Lauds Work for California's Prop. 8 | Deseret News*). Clayton's justifications suggest that the will of the majority should be respected even if it has negative consequences for the minority. Again, Mormons recapitulate the belief that because they had to conform to the marriage standards set by other Americans in the 1890s, they expect other Americans to be held to similar standards. Clayton continues to argue that the LDS Church is "not anti-gay but pro-marriage," elaborating that the Church "does not oppose civil unions or domestic partnerships," the kind that would provide same-gender couples with some of the legal benefits associated with marriage (*LDS Official Lauds Work for California's Prop. 8 | Deseret News*). Rather, Clayton feels Prop 8 is about religious freedom, stating, "we feel religious liberty is *safer* when marriage is legally defined as between a man and a woman" (*LDS Official Lauds Work for California's*

Prop. 8 | Deseret News, emphasis mine).[6] This larger debate, over how to define a couple, though not recognized as being driven by the divide between LDS and LGBTQIA values, is coming to a head in another location: on the dance floor.

Though same-gender ballroom dance is not a new phenomenon in the U.S., the increased visibility in the last decade of this traditionally heteronormative form performed by same-gender couples correlates with strides in national politics regarding marriage equality, and an overall rise in the popularity of ballroom dance.[1] Dance scholar Claire Croft points out that not everyone sees marriage equality as a victory for queer politics. Political scientist H. Howell Williams explains that the, "court's decision [that marriage is a right for same-gender couples] simply reaffirmed the central place of the family in contemporary politics"(*Is Marriage Equality a Conservative Victory? Public Seminar*). In other words, allowing same gender marriage does not queer marriage, it un-queers homosexual relationships. These complexities are seen in the same-gender ballroom dance community's interpretation of ballroom dance, as some couples strives to create similar aesthetics to mainstream couples, while other strive to queer the movement and costumes.

Ballroom dance provides an exciting location to start teasing apart the complexities of gender in twenty-first century U.S. Through a closer look at the LDS and

[6] Prop 8 was a more complicated measure than simply outlawing same-gender marriage. Between the time the California Supreme Court allowed same-sex marriage and Prop 8 was passed (both in 2008) more than 18,000 same-sex marriages occurred (*Gay Rights at the Ballot Box* xiii). While LGBTQIA activists spent $43.3 million trying to defeat Prop 8, there were many critics of the movement. Many LGBTQIA activists felt marginalized by the movement that did not reach out to voters of color, relied on images of LGBTQIA members who passed as normative in their media, and made internal decisions as a campaign, as opposed to asking for community input. Unfortunately, I do not have time to address all of these issues with the attention they deserve, but I look forward to further research that gives these topics proper investigation.

queer communities I reveal that gender is not experienced as clear-cut. Rather, gender is both re-inscribed and challenged simultaneously in the body of a dancer.

Moving Forward

In the chapters that follow I set out to investigate further how gender politics are negotiated on dancefloors, sometimes among a community, other times between dance partners. Chapter two, "Gender Inscription in Motion," investigates the LDS Church's impact on U.S. dancesport, and explores the ways Mormon youth both reaffirm and subvert LDS doctrine through participation in Utah collegiate dancesport culture. Through historical data I consider the impact that the gender binary evident in the Mormon faith has on the division of roles in ballroom dance. This chapter provides a history of dance in the LDS Church as well as recounts my own experiences with the ballroom dance programs at Brigham Young University and Utah Valley University. Chapter three, "Taking the Lead: Queering of Dancesport Practices," explores the growing same-gender dancesport community, examining what norms are challenged and what norms are upheld in this subculture. This chapter investigates how same-gender dancesport is treated at different competitions, including competitions specifically for same-gender dancesport, collegiate competitions, NDCA competitions, and USA Dance competitions. This chapter includes a discussion of how same-gender participants individualize dancesport through their aesthetic choices. Chapter four, "Everyone is Beautiful in the Ballroom" examines why ballroom dance is marginalized in dance studies, contextualized through a brief history of dance in academia. I examine how ballroom dance is treated in communities located between the poles of the LDS Church

and queer communities' interpretations of ballroom dance, focusing on Pomona College. Together these four chapters provide a glimpse into the varied ways amateur ballroom dance is treated in the U.S., and used ballroom dance as a lens to understand the range of ways people both experience and create gender.

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Chapter Two: Gender Inscription in Motion

It is not an accident that excellence has become synonymous with Utah Mormons in ballroom dance circles. Mainstream ballroom dance serves as a site where the tradition of complementary genders, men and women, filling complementary roles, leading and following, is validated and physically inscribed into bodies. Utah-based Mormons capitalize on this understanding of ballroom dance, utilizing it as a way to reinforce gender difference in youth. This understanding of ballroom dance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy—ballroom dance creates the illusion that people of different genders are particularly suited for specific tasks because persons of different genders are taught different skills, thus making what skills a person possesses seem to be based on their gender.

Adults in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) appreciate the community that ballroom dance provides to youth, as well as the skills it teaches, from artistry to communication. At the same time, youth use ballroom dance as a mechanism to transgress against some of the church's more conservative rules in a seemingly innocuous setting. From wearing costumes slightly outside of strict modesty rules, to participating in intimate physical contact with members of the "opposite gender," ballroom dance provides space for gender identity formation within an LDS context that has wiggle room for exploration. [7] This chapter explores how the practice of ballroom dance by some communities of Mormons in Utah simultaneously reinforces and destabilizes the rigidity of gender norms.

[7] Opposite sex and opposite gender were phrases used by informants in Utah to describe men and women. My use of these terms is meant to understand informants' experiences and not propagate a binary.

The research for this chapter is based on fieldwork at Brigham Young University (BYU) and Utah Valley University (UVU) in October of 2016 and March of 2017. I was able to observe classes and performance team rehearsals, as well as interview various dance department personnel, including faculty, academic advisors, and administrative staff. Formal interviews at BYU were conducted with company director and department chair Curt Holman and department secretary Eleanor Wiblin. Formal interviews at UVU were conducted with department chair Doris Hudson de Trujillo, professor and ballroom program coordinator Christopher Witt, and Dance Department academic advisor Brianna Larson. Informal interviews were conducted at both institutions with students and instructors. In addition, I participated in classes at both institutions and attended a social dance event at UVU. I am not a member of the LDS Church or affiliated with either university. Consequently, my observations are from the viewpoint of a member of the larger ballroom dance community, but not a member of these specific subcultures.

My identity as a cis-woman also affected my access and resulted in me having more opportunities to speak to men students than women students, especially in classes where we rotated partners. Also, I work full-time at a private, non-religious university in California teaching similar classes and running a smaller scale performance team. Therefore, I entered these spaces as a director of another collegiate ballroom program originally founded by BYU alum Wes Acker, and was treated as a peer of the directors and instructors, not the students. This manifested in conversations where faculty asked me questions about how I run my program, and offered advice and support to me from their positions as more experienced directors. In many cases my positionality as a fellow

collegiate ballroom dance program director seemed to override my outsider status as a non-LDS member, granting me access I might not have received otherwise. At the same time, I acknowledge that my own viewpoints as a non-religious, mixed-raced, cis-woman affected what interactions stood out to me, and how I interpreted those situations. I have elected to rely on extended quotes from interviews to help alleviate shortcomings from my outsider status.

In order to chart the gendered dynamics operating within these Mormon ballroom communities, I will first discuss the importance of the gender binary in the LDS Church and how it affects the religious positions available to members. I will do this through a discussion of the development of the priesthood/motherhood dichotomy. Next, I will provide a history of dance at large in the LDS Church, demonstrating how early Mormon values created an environment for recreation to flourish. This will lead into my discussion of BYU, the largest collegiate ballroom dance program in the country, providing a history of the program, an analysis of their national competition, and an examination of their costume policies before I delve into my own experiences observing their practices. From there, I will provide a history of UVU's program, the second largest program in the country. I will demonstrate the effects the LDS community has on this state-sponsored institution and conclude this section by recounting my fieldwork with this community. At the end of the chapter, I will propose that, while the church sponsors ballroom dance to inscribe gender difference in youth and perform this difference on an international stage, youth use ballroom dance to find space for transgressive behavior within the LDS context. This gender policing and gender resistance happens concurrently, often

overlapping (Hoyt and Patterson), and reveals how actions associated with gender are taught, with ballroom dance being one method of inscription.

The Gender Binary in the LDS Church: The Priesthood/Motherhood Divide

The tensions that exist around bodies and their genders in the Mormon Church are visibilized in partner dance. One tenet of the LDS religion is monogamous, heterosexual marriages between highly gendered bodies.[8] Ballroom dance becomes a visible, public, condoned representation of heterosexuality that necessitates separate gender roles, aligning with separately gendered bodies, while also highlighting that training and discipline are essential to coed interactions and gender performance.

Teenagers are separated by gender—the Aaronic Priesthood and Young Men program for boys and the Young Women program for girls. One study published in 1985 by Karla Gunnell and Nicole Hoffman investigated the church politics that lead to children understanding the church through gender difference by examining the church's official teachings. The 1977 girls' program states that its objective is that "She [the young Mormon woman] should learn to honor the priesthood and those who bear it. She should *also* learn more about living the principles and laws of the gospel" (Gunnell and Hoffman 35). Even within the language of the program's objective, girls were taught that supporting boys in their religious life was more important than their own spiritual growth. For teenage boys, "the purpose of this course of study is to help each priest see himself as a son of God, endowed with the priesthood" (Gunnell and Hoffman 36). Though the LDS

[8] Polygamy, often associated with Mormon, was outlawed in 1890. In response Mormon men were expected to meet the same standards of chastity and monogamy as Mormon women (Hoyt and Patterson 88).

Church has since updated their training manuals, this study of the 1970s and1980s offers insight into why ballroom dance gained popularity among its members in the second half of the twentieth century. The language used emphasized teaching boys to lead, and girls to follow, gendered skill sets mirrored in ballroom dance.

Current church teachings have drastically changed, emphasizing the importance of being able to lead and follow in the church for both boys and girls. This change in language seems to be in response to the Ordain Women movement, a grassroots movement to allow women to fully participate in the LDS Church through being ordained to priesthood. The lesson assures young women that "some will try to persuade you that because you are not ordained to the priesthood, you have been shortchanged. They are simply wrong, and they do not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). The language cited above, pulled from an online resource from the LDS Church's official website, is a part of a lesson trying to show young Mormon women that receiving the blessings associated with the priesthood is separate from being ordained to the priesthood. This careful articulation is meant to teach young Mormon women that women who want to be ordained to the priesthood are being power hungry for the title of priest, as all Mormon women already have the blessing that come from the priesthood.

It is worth noting that many Mormon feminist scholars believe that there is a precedence of Mormon women filling greater spiritual roles in the past. These scholars question the recent tradition of focusing on training boys to be spiritual leaders. Women have always received priesthood authority in the temple but do not have the ordination to

act as priest, or priestess, outside the temple, eliminating the possibility of them serving in roles such as bishop. In the 1900s, the priesthood gained significance for men who could no longer practice polygamy as a sign of difference from non-Mormon men, which resulted in LDS women losing religious responsibilities. By 1907, the sixth president of the church, Joseph F. Smith, clarified that women do not hold the priesthood through their husbands, they simply share in the benefits, and in 1913 he made the Relief society, the women's organization that works with the priesthood, an auxiliary organization. This meant that only men in the Melchizedek Priesthood could perform ritual healings. From that time forward, the Women's Relief society was no longer treated as parallel to the priesthood, but rather seen as a women's club and aid society (Hanks 2, 13). An article written in response to his actions in a 1914 Relief Society Bulletin states:

> Women do not hold the Priesthood. This fact must be faced calmly by mothers and explained clearly to young women, for the spirit that is now abroad in the world makes for women's demand for every place and office enjoyed by men, and a few more that men can't enter. Women in this church must not forget that they have rights which men do not possess.(King Newell 37)

Here LDS Church leaders are defending the notion of innate gender difference. The "rights which men do not possess" refer to the ability to bear children. The magazine also reports, "the superior women will marry 'the right one,' identifiable because 'he will be just one or more degrees superior in intelligence and power to the superior women'" (King Newell 37). This is not explained in-depth, but it seems to imply even a superior woman—in intelligence and power—will find her equal in a man who is even a degree or two smarter or powerful. Thus a woman's "equal" must be her superior. As Linda King Newell points out, "The message could not be clearer. The Relief Society had been firmly

subordinated to the Melchizedek priesthood as an auxiliary" (King Newell 37). Coinciding with contemporary American ideals that promoted nuclear families, with men as the head of the household, from "the 1950s to the early 1980s, equal citizenship for women was replaced by glorification of motherhood, ignoring both single or childless women, and fatherhood as the equivalent of motherhood" (King Newell 42). This is the beginning of the motherhood/priesthood dichotomy, an ideology that dominated mid-twentieth century Mormon thought, and not only ignored the history of LDS women experiencing spiritual roles and motherhood simultaneously, but also attached the "separate but equal" argument to distinct gender roles.

It is evident that word choice was part of the 1950s LDS project of making gender difference, including distinctly gendered abilities, appear innate and infallible. Carolyn M. Wallace points out that there is an "asymmetry" in the motherhood/priesthood dichotomy, which stems from the different sources from which genders obtain their authority and respect. She explains,

> …the role women play in the divine plan of salvation centers on maternity, a biological function, with the role men play center[ed] on exercising the spiritual authority of the priesthood, a social act with profound implications for the process of eternal progression. Thus official LDS doctrine defines gender roles as asymmetrical. (Bynum et al. 120)

Men and women are both expected to contribute to building a religious flock: "women create bodies for spirits and nurture them, while men, through the priesthood, link mortal existence and the future life" (Bynum et al. 119). It is important to note, however, that historically, "fatherhood is secondary to the priesthood for males," whereas motherhood is taught to be the women's equivalent role to priesthood (Bynum et al. 123). The

extreme perspective of this view was expressed by Professor Rodney Turner at a BYU fireside talk in 1966, proclaiming, "The stewardship of women is encircled in the stewardship of man…Woman therefore finds her fulfillment in man as man finds his in God" (Bynum et al. 42). Turner is claiming that men should hold the place in women's lives that God holds in men's lives, cementing the notion that just as men are followers of God, women must be followers of men. Turner is also revealing why finding a spouse is so significant within the LDS Church and highlighted on college campuses like BYU.

This coupling of motherhood and priesthood in the 1950s is significant as it marks an instance in which LDS values coincided with larger American ideals. Mormon and communications scholar Sonja Farnsworth calls the coupling of motherhood and priesthood a "marriage of convenience" (Brooks et al. 169). Motherhood and priesthood were first officially linked in 1954 through the revision of John A. Widtsoe's book Priesthood and Church Government. Farnsworth believes motherhood rhetoric is primarily used when the church senses dissatisfaction from women or a challenging of gender roles. She argues that there is a lot of evidence that these opinions match secular views and are not rooted in divine insight, stating, "An idea absolutely germane to the partnership of motherhood and priesthood is that of sex-role separation, a secular concept which has been mistaken for one that is divine" (Farnsworth 310). This juxtaposition of motherhood and priesthood is not rooted in scripture, but in 1950s American ideals. Historian Elaine Tyler May argues that "…the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that postwar American society experienced a surge in family life and a reaffirmation of domesticity that rested on distinct roles for women and men" (May 2). This represents a

moment in history where LDS ideals were reinforced by mainstream American ideals. More recently, by contrast, many Mormons argue that the attachment of leadership roles to gender has not always been the case in the Mormon Church (King Newell). In the 1950s, fatherhood became recognized as Mormon men's main purpose, but the First Counselor of the Young Men General Presidency, Larry M. Gibson, explained in a 2015 speech, "Fulfilling your Aaronic Priesthood duties is preparing you young men for *fatherhood*" (Gibson). This quote shows that now priesthood is seen as a part of fatherhood, not as superseding fatherhood.

Mormon feminist scholar Jennifer Huss Basquiat alleges that "Although the church does not like to admit it, change has often occurred in reference to significant revelations," such as the fact that black men were forbidden from the priesthood until June 9, 1978, when a revelation allowed black men to seek the priesthood (Basquiat 35). Revelations are defined as "communication from God to His children," and though all members of the LDS Church can receive personal revelations, only the Prophet can receive a revelation on behalf of the church (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). Basquiat points out that the revelation to include black men in the priesthood "came … during intense social pressure from civil-rights advocates" (Basquiat 35). This example is often cited in debates over whether women will ever be ordained to the priesthood, as it highlights the ability for revelation to address social change.

As the body of the church is made up of physical bodies, doctrine tends to align with policies that support bringing in new members rather than adding additional support for current ones. David Howlett, author of "Why LDS Women Will Not Be Ordained to

the Priesthood," examines the pragmatic factors that influence LDS policies. Unlike other authors who compare women receiving the priesthood to black men receiving the priesthood, Howlett does not see these as similar situations (Howlett). The revelation that allows black men to serve as priests has led to many more converts, while women becoming ordained would not necessarily attract a new population. Sociologist Ryan T. Cragun and psychologist Michael Nielsen have investigated the larger Mormon population's belief on the changes in doctrine, discovering that, when asked what would be the primary reason for allowing the ordination of women, almost 50% said a revelation from God, but when asked about the revelation that allowed Black men to join the priesthood, most respondents thought it was a revelation from God directly answering inquiries from church leaders (Cragun and Nielsen). This allows for two not mutually exclusive interpretations. One, in order for church leaders to receive revelations on the ordination of women they would need to specifically ask God, and two, God answering church leaders' inquiries can account for the seemingly convenient timing of certain mainstream beliefs affecting Mormon doctrine.

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

"The Family Proclamation," a document that defines the importance of marriage and family to both the LDS religious and the general society, has become a cornerstone of modern LDS beliefs. President Gordon B. Hinckley presented this proclamation on behalf of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles at a General Relief Society meeting in 1995. Since then the proclamation has been celebrated in the LDS community and used to defend the definition of marriage between a man and a woman in

legal cases. The last line of the proclamation is addressed to members of the church and non-members alike, stating, "We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society" (Presidency and Saints). This call is meant to demonstrate that the LDS Church has an investment in the definition of marriage and gender in the culture at large.

In addition to claiming that marriage is divinely between a man and a woman, the proclamation also discusses the different roles of men and women within a family, claiming that though gender difference is innate, and thus gender roles are inherently different, men and women are equal partners in marriage. This "different but equal" status is explained as:

> By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. (Presidency and Saints)

Despite the claim that men and women are "equal partners," I argue that different is intrinsically not equal. As Mormon Studies scholar Caroline Kline writes, "contemporary Mormonism occupies a discursive space that paradoxically contains both the narrative of male presiding and the narrative of equal partnership within the family," which, she notes, is a shift from when the LDS Church was "unapologetically patriarchal" (Mason and Turner 214–215). In addition to the inherent power difference in any relationship where one person is *governing* over another, it takes twenty-eight words to describe men's role in a marriage and family, whereas it only takes ten to describe women's role.

The 20th anniversary of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" was celebrated in April 2015 with a testimony by the Young Women General President, Bonnie L. Oscarson. She explained that the proclamation continues to be the "benchmark for judging the philosophies of the world…" as the claims in this statement are "… as true today as they were when they were given to us by a prophet of God nearly 20 years ago" (Oscarson). Oscarson calls on women to become the defender of the proclamation, "even when the world is shouting in our ears that these principles are outdated, limiting, or no longer relevant" (Oscarson). While Oscarson does highlight the importance of fathers as well as mothers, she defends the importance of motherhood with a story about her daughter speaking about it at a school's career day. Her daughter's presentation ended with children writing thank you notes to their mothers, not parents, which again shows that although fathers and mothers are both revered in LDS language, in practice women are shown that motherhood is their main job, while men are raised to be providers and leaders.

It is important to point out that women have recently made strides in procuring leadership roles in the church through serving on mission trips. In October of 2012, LDS President Thomas S. Monson lowered the minimum age to serve a mission from 19 to 18 for men, and from 21 to 19 for women. This caused the number of women who serve missions to almost triple in one year's time, demonstrating LDS women's desire to have the opportunity to participate (Walch). The increase in women serving on mission trips created the need for new women leadership positions, and on April 5th of 2013, the LDS Church announced the formation of the role of sister training leader. These women are

responsible for the well-being of sister missionaries assigned to them, as well as serve on the mission leadership council, which is comprised of a mission president (man) and his wife, assistants to the president (all men), zone leaders (all men), and sister training leaders (all women) ("Church Adjusts Mission Organization to Implement 'Mission Leadership Council'").

Such examples show that women have indeed made progress in the church. At the same time, it is worth noting that their roles are still delineated based on gender. For example, in an article in the *Desert News,* many sister missionaries expressed interest in being the *wife* of a mission president in the future, a goal that demonstrates that they cannot currently hope to serve as mission presidents themselves. Also, the new leadership role afforded to them has "sister," a highly gendered term, in the title, whereas men missionaries serve as "zone leaders," a title lacking gendered language. This shows that all leadership roles are assumed to go to men unless there is gendered language in the title. The same article quoted a sister missionary saying, "It's helping us be the leaders we need to be in the church in the future. It's helping us be the mothers we need to be in the future," revealing that women are finding ways to assert themselves as leaders without abandoning their duties as mothers (Walch). Additionally, while both men and women missionaries have strict guidelines about appearances while representing the church, women missionaries have to receive special permission to wear pants, and this permission in only granted in response to mosquitoes and disease control, and not personal preference. The official LDS website also points that that "You are not required to wear makeup; however, wearing makeup can help you look your best" (*Missionary*

Dress and Grooming). Regulations like these highlight the tension between the LDS Church's desires for more progressive policies that encourage women to seek leadership positions in the church while simultaneously holding onto conservative views of innate gender difference in roles and appearance. The makeup and clothing examples also reveal the paradox between treating gender difference as innate and admitting that gender difference is created through purposeful representation, such as having women be required to wear dresses and encouraged to wear make-up as a sign of difference from men.

Throughout my research, I have been constantly reminded by informants that the LDS Church has greatly changed their leadership practices over the last twenty years, with many women serving in leadership roles at the local level as well as filling larger leadership roles, and that it is my outsider status that inhibits me from seeing the strides in women leadership in the church. While I want to acknowledge that my lens for this research is one of a non-church member, I feel it is important to note that in this hierarchical structure of 129 spiritual leaders only nine are women, and men and women never serve in the same leadership roles. It is also important to acknowledge that many religious groups do not allow women to serve as religious leaders, such as Orthodox Judaism, the Roman Catholic Church, and Islam, and even in denominations in the U.S. where women can serve as clergy, only 11% of American congregations are led by women (Masci). While my informants have made it very clear that the LDS Church has moved away from understanding gender through the priesthood/motherhood dichotomy popularized in the 1950s and towards a more egalitarian understanding of leadership, it is

important to note that the informants who defended this to me were all men proud of the strides the church has made, and none of the women I interviewed mentioned this shift. This juxtaposition can also be attributed to the fact I had the opportunity to casually interview more men than women, as I was only allowed to dance with men in classes. The paradox between the relationship of gender roles and leadership is best explained by feminist Mormon blogger Kiskiliki who believes it is not that the Mormon Church is no longer a patriarchy, rather it is operating as a "Chicken Patriarchy." She writes:

> Chicken Patriarchy never allows itself to be pinned down to a single perspective; chameleonlike, it alters its attitude from day to day and sometimes even from sentence to sentence, too chicken to stand up for what it believes. By refusing to settle down in any one place on the map, Chicken Patriarchs can embrace egalitarianism and still continue to uphold time-honored traditions of male authority. (Kiskilili)

Whereas the LDS Church was openly operating as a patriarchy before, Kiskiliki maintains that the LDS leadership is now trying to propagate an understanding that accounts for modern expectations of gender equality while still only creating space for men to lead. Though current LDS practices claim that women now have access to serve in more leadership roles, all except the priesthood, I would agree with Mormon feminist writers who argue that "If one class of people always presides and the other class never has the opportunity to do so, there is an inherent and undeniable inequality in that system" (Amelia).

Women's role in the LDS church, like all things, has evolved over time. During the late nineteenth century, "Mormon women healed the sick, spoke in tongues, cast out devils, had visions, and prophesied" (Eliason and Mould 223). And though women can now serve in leadership roles like sister training leaders, none of these religious activities

are afforded to current LDS women. Mainstream feminism has inspired LDS leaders to further regulate women through stricter interpretations of modesty standards. Ballroom dance then becomes both a space that propagates 1950s gender ideals while also revealing how gender is actively constructed through training and discipline.

A Tradition of Dance in the LDS Church

Dance has always been highly valued and supported within the LDS community. This deeply rooted support stands in contrast to other early American religious traditions' view of dance. The U.S. was colonized by people who disagreed with European bourgeoisie, meaning that early Americans did not want to be associated with the same leisure activities as Europeans. As former BYU faculty Leona Holbrook notes,

> In earlier Colonial America the state, too, shared the attitude [of hostility toward recreation]…America had been founded by people who revolted against the leisure class of Europe. These first comers to our shores had resented the idleness and the pleasures of their oppressors. They rationalized and called those things sinful which were quite beyond their reach. (Holbrook 2)

As Holbrook goes on to explain, the LDS Church, in contrast, was isolated from the general population. This isolation allowed for a very different perspective on recreation, play, and dance to develop in the church's early years. One reason dance is important in the LDS Church is because bodies are seen as gifts from God that, while naturally flawed, are redeemable through training. The non-LDS magazine *Dance Spirit* reports that a "major factor in Utah's dance success is religion: 60 percent of the population is Mormon. Mormonism encourages children to sing, dance, and participate in healthy forms of entertainment," thereby emphasizing how LDS culture values developing artistic talents.

Church founder Joseph Smith began the tradition of dance sponsorship and other leisure activities, but this does not mean the church was not critical of the kind of dance it supported. As early as the 1800s, the LDS Church was concerned over the general popularity of partner dances and their potential to corrupt, as opposed to regulate, the body. Mormon historian Davis Bitton explains that in 1825, round dances, the precursors to ballroom dances, were becoming popular and replacing square dances and quadrilles.[9] The original concern was not over the steps necessarily but rather the closed hold dancing position, which had dancers in frame with each other, meaning holding hands on one side and having the man's right hand on the woman's waist on the other, as opposed to holding hands.[10]

In the 1870s, organizations like the Mutual Improvement Association [MIA] shunned round dances because they were "not approved of by the Presidency of the Church" (Bitton 20).[11] However, Bitton found that when youth organizations passed resolutions about refraining from round dances, they were voting to "try" to abstain from round dances or to not perform these dances "to excess," not outright agreeing to refrain entirely (Bitton 20). This provides an early example of dances' use in the LDS Church for

[9] For example, at this time the waltz was considered vulgar, with LDS leadership going so far as to connect it to brothel houses.

[10] A closed dancing position, sometimes referred to as frame, is described in mainstream dance communities as the man holding the woman's right hand in his left hand, while his right hand is on the woman's shoulder blade and the woman's left hand rests on top of the man's right arm.

[11] According to Jessie L. Embry, Brigham Young started the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association (MIA) in 1869 because he wanted an organization through which his daughters could experience the Church. This organization taught girls about scripture as well as provided recreation opportunities. The Young Men's MIA was not started until 1875, as men gained church experiences through the priesthood and missions. The men's organization, in contrast to the women's organization, focused on recreation, as men already had a mechanism to receive scripture through, and athletics were seen as a way to bring boys and men to the church.

transgressions by youth. By 1910, the waltz was supported by the MIA. The fear over youth dancing in frame was abated by the expectation that there would be no body contact, meaning that dancers would keep their torsos separate from one another.

Bitton attributes some of the fear of the waltz to a general uneasiness of disorder by older generations at the turn of the twentieth century. Square dances followed specific floor patterns, but round dances, without formations, seemed to lack order. Bitton argues,

> When seen in this context the Mormon Church's reaction to the new dance styles was understandable. The desire to provide structured aids for young people—the new Mutual Improvement Association, the lesson manuals in Sunday Schools, and the carefully graded steps in Priesthood activities—was part of the same impulse toward curbing the wildness of youth. (Bitton 25)

The LDS Church believed strongly in providing training for taming and disciplining the body, especially in unmarried persons. Ballroom dance, without set floor patterns, represented uncharted territory. Eventually, with the development of a set syllabus, ballroom dance came to have the structure necessary to be seen as capable of training bodies.[12] Bitton also reminds us, "It is equally erroneous, of course, to see the issue in terms of theological truth…Taste in music and art, fashions in dance and dress—these are matters not of truth and error but of prudence," the implication being that it is reasonable to expect feelings regarding prudence to change over time, not just through official doctrine (Bitton 25). This reiterates the possibility for change in the church over time, through both revelation and mainstream pressures.

[12] Imani Kai Johnson, an American studies and dance studies scholar, points out the racial implications of the waltz becoming acceptable at the start of the 1920s, when African diasporic social dances were becoming popular. In comparison, the waltz began to appear as the more socially acceptable dance form. Professor Imani Kai Johnson made this connection in a meeting while discussing my research.

By 1939, the MIA's support of ballroom dances went so far as to publish a dance manual that covered rhythm awareness, positions, poise, relaxation, and knowledge of the steps. The manual explained, "If one has the fundamentals of the dance forms—waltz, tango, foxtrot—well grounded, one can easily pick up the popular variations" (Embry 150). MIA's dance program was phased out in the 1970s, along with other Church-wide sponsored recreation, so as to allow regions to focus on activities that made the most sense for them. [13] As Utah had previously been home to the all-church dance activities, it retained the infrastructure and resources to continue supporting dance on a statewide level. Bitton believes that dance provides a beneficial case study for examining the tension created through the LDS church in its advising its members to "be in the world, but not of the world."[14] Even today tensions exist around dance practices, dance costumes, and the appropriate time and place for dancing. In the past these tensions were dealt with by encouraging Mormons to only dance in the company of other Mormons. However, the LDS Church is currently less isolated; whereas previous church leaders sought to have their communities only interact internally, now Mormons are known for their proselytizing. This has led to slightly greater racial diversity among their members as well as slightly more variation in approaches to gender.[15]

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[13] Ending large LDS Church sponsored activities was done to acknowledge that dances and sports that might be appropriate for members in one region, might not serve members in another region. This does not mean the LDS Church did not continue to support dance but rather its support became localized.

[14] Those this exact phrasing appears in many LDS texts, it is often cited as coming from John 17:15-16, 18, which states, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

[15] Currently, 86% of Mormons living in the US are white, while that number for Mormons worldwide drops to 71%. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2015 91.2% of Utah, a population where almost 60% of people are members of the LDS Church, identified as only white. Conversely, both UVU and BYU have student populations of 83% that identify as white. 10.8% of UVU students are Hispanic or Latino,

Lindsy Cieslewicz, a dance scholar who studied at BYU, found the Mormon attitude of seeing bodies as existing in natural pairs of men and women reflected in Mormon approaches to dance (Cieslewicz). Ballroom dance's reliance on the gender binary is part of the appeal to the LDS community, and the separate roles students experience in ballroom dance mirror their other experiences with gender difference. Scott Asbell, the former director of UVU's Ballroom Dance Program believes, "many studios in Utah teach ballroom from a young age in part because the area's conservative, religious parents appreciate the structured environment for boys and girls to enjoy each other's company" (Adams 82). Paul Freeman, a BYU Company member for three years and president from 1997-98, initially signed up "because I had just returned from my mission and wanted to feel more comfortable around girls" (Adams 5). As ballroom dancing and its competitive counterpart dancesport historically emphasize classic gender roles, every partnership is comprised of a lead, traditionally a man, and follow, traditionally a woman.

As I discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, ballroom dance is an umbrella term that encompasses many dances, each with their own unique history, but as a category the dances were formalized in the early 1900s in line with the gender politics of the times (Richardson 1). Though many individuals choose to compete within the context of these gendered practices, a growing movement has begun to use ballroom dance to challenge strict gender norms, as my study of same gender ballroom dance communities in this dissertation shows. The existence of this countermovement

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whereas only 6% of BYU students identify the same way. For both schools Hispanic/Latino is the largest minority population.

highlights the fact that ballroom dance programs have a choice in the extent to which they will attempt to maintain a division between genders. Programs in Utah are making this choice in the context of the larger LDS structure that emphasizes the difference between men and women. In a very telling passage in a journal article, Megan Sanborn Jones, both a theatre scholar at BYU and a participant in Utah dance training, writes,

> In partner dancing, whether casually in social dance or more formally in ballroom dance, the pleasure comes from following the rules of patterning that dictate movement through space. The special relationship between partners models heteronormative, gender-organized pairings that are played out with aesthetic beauty and grace. (Sanborn Jones 69)

Sanborn Jones is arguing that not only is ballroom dance's ability to train the body desired from an institutional standpoint, but also that participating in structured movement is part of the enjoyment. She cites the specific example of ballroom dancers acting out seemingly perfect, heteronormative partnerships. In other words, the act of walking through, or dancing through, pre-scripted coed interactions that go according to a plan creates expectations for how future coed interactions, both on and off the floor, should go.

At the same time, the perceived connection between sex and dancing gives rise to concerns over dancing with people other than your significant other. One student at BYU I interviewed explained that, originally, her husband was not comfortable with her dancing with other men, so he tried to learn. He discovered that he hates dancing, so now he allows her to dance with other men. It is worth noting that more advanced dancers were comfortable with their significant other dancing with other people. This suggests that novices have more trouble distinguishing between how relationships differ on and off

the dance floor, whereas advanced dancers understand the necessity and advantages of occasionally dancing with people other than your spouse. Novice dancers were also more likely to explain that they were taking a ballroom dance class because they wanted to meet new people, including a possible romantic partner. When asked the same question, advanced dancers discussed pursuing a professional career in ballroom dance, their hopes of making it onto the more advanced performance team at school, or their desire to win competitions. Therefore, novice dancers saw ballroom dance as an opportunity to interact with members of the opposite gender, while advanced dancers saw interacting with a partner as necessary to excel in the activity. This differentiation between experiences and intention relates to dance scholar Juliet McMains's concerns over amateur students taking advantage of their paid instructors (McMains, chap.1). The instructors are professionals, and thus advanced dancers, meaning they have an understanding of a separation of physical contact and intimacy. Mirroring the motives of dancers at BYU, less experienced students might pursue ballroom dance as an opportunity to experience physical contact.

Ballroom dance has become a point of pride in the Mormon community at large and for BYU specifically. Ballroom dance performances are used to remind current members of the church what they stand for, and offer incentive to donate money. As Christopher Witt, BYU alum and UVU professor, told me:

> One of the main benefits of being here in Utah is the general acceptance and support of dance by the LDS Church. And you can see that at the dance program at BYU. In fact that's like, those are their headliners when they go out touring, or if they ever have any fundraising that they need to do, they take a dance team and say, look how wonderful we are, now write us a check. (Witt, *Christopher Witt*)

I attended a rehearsal for the BYU Touring Company where they were preparing for a performance in honor of a family that donates multiple full-ride scholarships to their team. Though dance's repercussions have often been scrutinized and carefully watched, it has always been supported in the LDS Church. This support means that ballroom dance is a primary site for the rehearsal of gender identity among young Mormon men and women.

Natural Opposites: Ballroom Dancing at BYU

Brigham Young, the a spiritual leader in the LDS Church, founded Brigham Young Academy, the precursor to what would eventually be the LDS Church's premier university BYU, in 1875 ("Tom Perry Special Collections"). According to BYU alum and UVU professor Chris Witt, "Dance has been one of the University's primary social activities because these men and women believe that dancing was a good physical, social, and recreational activity which would invigorate the mind and the soul of the individual," with school sponsored social dances starting in the late 1800s, near the founding of the school (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 18). BYU's department of dance offers a BA and students can emphasize in ballet, contemporary dance, world dance, or ballroom, making it one of the only universities in the country with this kind of emphasis.[16]

[16] "BYU Department of Dance – Ballroom.", UVU offers a BS in Dancesport, BYU officers a degree in Dance with a Concentration in Ballroom, and New Mexico State University offers a DA in dance with a concentration in Dancesport.

A History of Social Ballroom Dance at BYU:

… I believe social dance is the highest type of dance because it takes more discipline and training. In folk dance, you do as history has written it. In square dance the challenge is keeping up with the caller. The challenge in creative dancing is fe[e]ling the rhythm and dance as inspires you. But in social dance, the man feels the rhythm and leads the girl so two people become one—she feels the same rhythm. Ballet dancing—you have no freedom—you dance as the teacher tells you. Rock dancing has no challenge; that is why it is the lowest form of dancing. You do the same four-legged stool dance to the same four beats of music for four hours every Saturday night.

Alma Heaton, 22 Sept 1983

Alma Heaton, the self-proclaimed "professor of fun," was a professor at BYU from 1953 to 1979, and is credited with starting their ballroom dance program. Heaton believed that "Along with ballroom dancing comes certain concomitant learning, such as etiquette, social courtesies, grooming, consideration for others, and aesthetic implications" (Heaton, *Social Dance Rhythms*). Heaton saw these other aims as instrumental to youth's college experience, advocating for students to learn how to build strong families. Heaton's lifelong philosophy was;

> …a family that plays together, stays together. By developing experiences in which families share good times together, they develop more love and harmony. Family recreation consists of activities that will bring about proper adjustments and developments according to acceptable social standards. (Heaton, *Social Dance Rhythms*)

For Heaton, ballroom dancing was a form of recreation that had the potential to teach young people the skills and temperament necessary to build strong families. Heaton believed ballroom dance taught men and women how to interact, forming the foundation for a strong family.

Archival research at BYU makes it clear that Heaton did not always agree with his colleagues who were moving the ballroom dance program in a performative and competitive direction. An article titled "Professor Fun" by Alf Pratte reports that:

> Heaton believes that the major problem in America is that people spend more time watching instead of doing, buying, instead of making. Since he is outspoken in his opinions, not everyone is a fan of Professor Fun. Heaton has occasionally ruffled feathers with his passionate philosophy that recreation classes as [are] among the most-important subjects for students to take. (Heaton, *Behind the Taj Mahal* 113)

Heaton lamented that "After I had gone to all this work and trouble, it was thrown out the window by someone who didn't understand what I was trying to do" (Heaton, *Family Solidarity through Activities, Alma Heaton Autobiographical Writing: Alma Heaton's Life History, From 1980-1990* 248). Heaton saw the most valuable aspect of ballroom dance as its potential to serve as coed recreation that taught youths the communication skills necessary to build strong families, and felt very misunderstood by a department treating social dance as performative in the same way folk dance and ballet are performative.

Heaton intentionally treated social dance more as a recreational activity than an art form. In keeping with his beliefs that recreation was important, "Heaton made it a point to make his classes 'social.' He encouraged his students to talk to each other and enjoy themselves" (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 20). Heaton's classes were very successful, and soon the department was offering five or six sections a term, with fifty to sixty students in each section (Heaton, *Family Solidarity through Activities, Alma Heaton Autobiographical Writing: Alma Heaton's Life History, From 1980-1990* 227). In

1959, an advanced class was added for the first time (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 21).

Heaton valued social interaction over performance, which led to disagreements with the folk-dance instructor Mary Jenson, as Jenson had the school add more folk-dance classes. Folk dance often has set steps in set floor patterns, meaning that it is often taught in more of a staged manner. Social dance has steps that can be done in any order in various floor patterns, allowing for more spontaneous interactions between a couple dancing together and the other couples on the floor. Jenson's move to add more folk-dance classes over social ballroom dance classes is in line with the desire to build a more traditional dance program with an emphasis on performance. Heaton felt very strongly that the ballroom dance program was being under recognized, writing:

> We never had enough sections to take care of all the kids who wanted to take dance classes. They never let me have enough sections. I was always really disgusted with them because kids wanted social dancing. The Dean wouldn't let me have them because they wouldn't be able to fill up the other sections of P.E. Dancing had become so popular that more kids took this class (which wasn't required) than any other class on campus." (Heaton, *Family Solidarity through Activities, Alma Heaton Autobiographical Writing: Alma Heaton's Life History, From 1980-1990* 228)

One of the reasons BYU has a ballroom program today is because of Heaton's constant insistence that ballroom was important, and his defense of offering non-mandatory ballroom dance classes. To address the strong desire to dance, Heaton started Friday night dance labs and help sections, creating a space for people to social dance as well as improve their technique. Today both UVU and BYU continue to include dance labs as part of their curriculum. Additionally, as classes grew, BYU added more instructors, including Burton Osen, Torry Zimmerman, and Bruce Elm. In 1960, Ben DeHoyos, an

Arthur Murray franchise instructor, joined the faculty. He formed the first Ballroom Dance Performance Team, starting with just six couples in 1960 and growing the program to 30 couples in 1966 (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 21).

A Shift from Social to Staged: BYU on the Competition Floor

The shift from social dancing to staged dancing was institutionally supported. In 1965, two international ballroom dancers from Australia, Roy and June Mavor, converted to the LDS Church. Afterwards the Mavors were invited to perform at the All-Church Dance Festival in Utah. Impressed by the performance, the dean of the College of Physical Education, Milton Hartvigsen, offered them a job at BYU, introducing international style ballroom dance to the campus for the first time (Heaton, *Family Solidarity through Activities, Alma Heaton Autobiographical Writing: Alma Heaton's Life History, From 1980-1990* 228). In 1967, while the Dehoyos were on sabbatical, the Mavors became the directors of the Ballroom Dance Team (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 20). The Mavors are remembered for increasing the technical level of BYU dancers by starting tests where adjudicators assess students' proficiency level. This also intentionally moved the team away from prioritizing social dance to prioritizing technical ability. Ballroom dance scholar Juliet McMains notes that in the 1960s most ballroom dancers in the U.S. turned to competition because ballroom dance was no longer functioning as a means of courtship or seen as a skill necessary for social mobility (McMains 140). By 1970, the BYU team reached 100 couples, which led to the precedent of having multiple teams based on level and commitment (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 20).

Part of ballroom's success at BYU was due to concerns over the popularity of "rock dancing," a social dance fad that did not require a partner. Rock-and-roll dancing's popularity marks an incorporation of black aesthetics into mainstream American dance. Though this was not the first time black culture was appropriated by white Americans, dance scholar Cynthia Jean Cohen Bull argues that what makes the incorporation of rock dancing especially noteworthy is its development during the 1950s civil rights movement, a time of desegregating, and its wide dissemination through the growing popularity of television, meaning youth had access to forms not practiced in their local communities for the first time.[17] As Witt notes, "With the predominance of rock dancing during the 60s and 70s, the University and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints quickly embraced the international style ballroom as a wholesome alternative to other questionable forms of dance" (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 61). The university's support of ballroom dance is evident through President Wilkinson providing funding to the program (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 22).

Ballroom dance, therefore, was seen as less structured and more social than folk dance, while being seen as more structured and less threatening than rock-and-roll dance. Dance anthropologist Cynthia J. Novack notes that "...the lack of differentiation between male and female movement, abhorred by rock's critics, was a positive emblem for some people of a rebellion against American gender roles" (Novack 107). This observation highlights that, while proponents of rock dancing saw its individualist nature as positive, others saw it as antisocial. Through rejecting rock dancing the LDS Church marked both

[17] *Looking at Movement as Culture: Contact Improvisation to Disco* pg 107

black movement aesthetics and dancing that encouraged individuality as undesirable. As a form ballroom dance seemed to hit a sweet spot where it encouraged collaborations between dancers without inspiring off-floor "inappropriate" interactions.

In May of 1971, the Mavors took the now technically proficient BYU team to the Blackpool Dance Festival for the first time.[18] In unforeseen results, BYU became the first U.S. team to ever win the formation event. Though Heaton preferred ballroom as a recreation activity, he was very proud of BYU winning Blackpool, writing, "The Mormons are carrying dance on and doing one of the best jobs in this field of championship contest work" (Heaton, *Family Solidarity through Activities, Alma Heaton Autobiographical Writing: Alma Heaton's Life History, From 1980-1990* 229). In 1973, the Mavors left for other coaching opportunities, leaving husband and wife Emerson and LeGene Lyman as directors of the ballroom teams (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 28). In 1977, the ballroom dance program expanded with the creation of a new social dance touring team, headed by undergrad Lee Wakefield (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 30–31). In 1978, Lee and his wife Linda graduated and left BYU to pursue a career dancing professionally (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 32).

1980 was a pivotal year in the history of the company. First, the social dance team and international teams combined to form the now iconic BYU Ballroom Dance Company. Second, Lee and Linda Wakefield returned to take over the newly formed company, described as "aggressive and competitive in their leadership of the Ballroom

[18] The Blackpool Dance Festival is the most prestigious ballroom dance competition in the world, after colloquially described as the Superbowl of ballroom dance.

Dance Division" (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 58). And third, Heaton retired. The Wakefields served as directors until 2015, when Curt and Sharon Holman took over the department (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 32–33, 58). Curt Holman also began serving as the Chair of the Dance Department in 2017.

This shift over time from ballroom dance as a recreational activity to a competitive activity is parallel to other shifts the LDS Church was experiencing at the time. In the 1950s, LDS family values paralleled mainstream United States family values, but in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, mainstream American ideals changed. During this time, BYU changed the aim of their ballroom dance practice from one that created strong families internally, to one that projected their ideals in performance. Partner dancing became less about the experience of a specific man dancing with a specific woman and more about ballroom dance performing LDS beliefs about how men and women should interact before a general audience. Through this shift, BYU and the LDS Church embraced ballroom dance as a non-controversial symbol to represent them on the international stage.

This shift also resulted in taking more risks in their treatment of ballroom dance. Unlike social dancing, competition dancing encouraged men and women to dance together based on who would win, as opposed to the assumption spouses should compete together. This focus on competition also resulted in the addition of glitzy costumes and more lifts. These complex lifts often necessitate intimate coed and same-gender physical contact, including men carrying women over their heads with one arm, two men locking

arms together then each lifting a woman with their free arms, and a row of men keeping a woman off the ground as they swing her from partner to partner.

Holman has recently spearheaded a rebranding of the company. Whereas the different groups were previously referred to as teams, now they are called ensembles. Additionally, the Back-up Tour team is now Ballroom Dance Showcase Company and the Touring Team is now Ballroom Dance Touring Company.[19] These name changes are designed to reflect professional companies, highlighting that BYU and the LDS community do not see these performers as college students, but as professionals representing BYU specifically, and the LDS community at large.

Through BYU dancers had to sacrifice some values, such as ballroom being primarily used to find a spouse and build a relationship, the tradeoff was that through participating in the global structure of competition, BYU and the LDS church gained worldwide recognition. Ballroom dance remains a medium where Americans, and people at large, preserve and perform conservative facets of gendered roles. In addition to BYU being the most successful program of its kind in the ballroom competition realm, BYU also has the largest ballroom dance program in the United States, with over 4,000 undergraduates taking ballroom dance classes on campus every year (*BYU Department of Dance – Ballroom*).

[19] Wiblin explains that BYU's basic principle is to produce excellence in everything their students do. One way they do this for the BYU Touring company is requiring a culture class- a semester long class on the country they are going to go visit, taught by the cultural advisor who will travel with the team. This is BYU's protocol for all of their touring groups.

Holman attributes this success in part to a theory on LDS conformity originally shared with him by a former student who is not a member of the LDS Church. Holman recounts her theory as follows:

> [S]he said 'and I think one of the reasons it's so successful here is that the religion itself is a religion of conformity and a lot of what [the competitive ballroom dance] team is about is conforming,' so she said, 'I think it kinda fits well with the religion … I think that culture of conformity really helps what happens when they come here' because being part of teams and that sorta thing is about being the same and kinda conforming, so she said 'I think it really helps'…I think she's probably right, I think there is something about what we do here, and who we are, that makes it [ballroom formation] a fit. (Holman)

Holman agrees with his former student's theory that the LDS Church predisposes its students to valuing conformity, a value at the center of competitive formation dance. I agree with his assertion: formation ballroom dance, as performed by BYU and other successful competition teams, is predicated on valuing uniformity and using the individual to make a greater whole. Formation ballroom dance leaves little room for those seeking stardom. Just as the LDS Church emphasizes the way individual members make up the body of the church, formation ballroom dance emphasizes the way individual dancers make a larger picture when working as a group. Building on the community forming aspects of ballroom dance Eleanor Wiblin, BYU's long-standing Ballroom Dance Secretary, explains that one of the forms main benefits is its ability to teach communication. [20] She describes ballroom dance as "not just a selfish pastime, because you are communicating with other people" (Wiblin). The gendered nature of ballroom dance is intrinsic to Wiblin's understanding of ballroom dance. In our interview she

[20] A dancer herself, Eleanor Wiblin moved to Utah to follow her son Roger who danced on BYU's tour team.

stated, “The couple dancing is…I don’t know what it is, it’s almost a basic instinct of getting on with the opposite sex” (Wiblin). To her, opposite genders are necessary for ballroom dance because there is a natural instinct between men and women. Ballroom dance helps validate her beliefs on gender difference and default heterosexuality.

For the many members of the LDS Church, gender is innate and immutable. As Holman explained,

> If you know anything about our religious beliefs, we do have a strong feeling that the man and the woman are complementary to each other; they’re equal to each other. There are always conversations that women should have more of ‘this.’ …We believe that it takes two to make it work…My viewpoint is that the world has done a really good job of telling you that this role, the role of the woman is less, so therefore, they’ve made her believe that anything associated with that [the role of the woman] is less than this [the role of the man], which I think is the real shame…I feel like the world has told them [women] these roles are not valuable, the only thing that's valuable is this [men’s roles]…and in my opinion, no-no, this role [the woman] is really valuable, and this role [the man] is really valuable, and together they can do amazing things. (Holman)

Holman is expressing here something similar to the formerly mentioned motherhood/priesthood dichotomy. He feels that people who see motherhood as less than priesthood have been taught to devalue women’s work. The argument, then, is that if you think motherhood is less than priesthood it is because you have been convinced that only masculine roles and traits are valuable. LDS feelings about gender help reveal one of the reasons ballroom dance speaks to this community so much: ballroom dance teaches men to be leaders and women to follow men while demonstrating that it is necessary to work as a couple together to succeed.

Even with the switch from a social focus to a competitive focus, the courtship aspect of ballroom dance remains. Holman explained that Mormons have always danced,

but he thinks it is "our religious culture, not our religious beliefs because it has nothing to do with our beliefs, the culture of this community of people always valued the arts" (Holman). This sentiment is echoed by Terrly Givens, who clarifies that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young supported dance and other forms of recreation not because they saw it as a part of religion, but, rather, they "embraced vibrant physicality along with spiritual discipline" (Givens). This distinction is important as it shows the way art is seen as adding to a religious life but not a religious act on its own. Holman describes the program as providing a

> man/woman relationship class where these are the boys, these are the girls, all that stuff, it fits a little bit our religious belief. We believe that it's important to get married, and that's part of our religious beliefs. You know the family unit. So what better way to get to know a girl than to go to a dance? (Holman)

It is clear that BYU faculty acknowledge that the lessons ballroom dance teaches off of the dance floor add value to BYU's campus. Currently BYU's program is large enough that now it supports a social dance track that runs separately from the ballroom dance performance and competition track, meaning that students who are looking to ballroom dance for primarily social reasons still have a place in the dance community. Many people I interacted with at BYU, from a post-baccalaureate student, to workers from the library archive, shared that they have young sons in ballroom because it is a form of appropriate coed interaction that teaches boys how to be gentlemen, a belief that has carried through from the 1950s. This belief is also present for college aged youth, and BYU even has a beginning social dance class only open to engaged and married couples (BYU Registrar's Office). Heaton's original intention of the ballroom dance program

acting as a space for coed recreation has remained intact, even if it is not publicized as the main goal of the current program.

The Wakefields, former directors, the Holmans, current directors, and Heaton, the founder of the program, all believed in the power of dance to bring people to the church. In his personal writings, Heaton describes a woman being so impressed by him at a workshop that she converted to Mormonism. The Wakefields "believed strongly that the ballroom dance teams are an excellent missionary tool for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (Witt, *History of Ballroom Dance at BYU* 58). Linda Wakefield stated, "The company's *primary* goal is to spread the gospel through dance" (Adams). Evangelizing as the company's main goal means that more than dance is being supported through this large program. A 1998 *BYU Magazine* article, "Amazing Grace," by Ricks Adams Kellene, tells the story of a woman being moved to tears by a BYU Ballroom Dance Company performance. He writes, "The dancers' undeniable impact stems from a direct charge to represent the university and its sponsoring church as well as from a university ballroom dance program that is like no other" (Adams 2). The Touring Company's show builds dances around narratives that are strongly heteronormative, including a romantic rumba about a married couple that depicts different stages of their life, and a piece centered around a marriage proposal. At the same time, BYU's ballroom program creates a space that condones intimate contact outside of marriage. Ballroom dance becomes a display of rigid genders roles that align with LDS Church Doctrine while also demonstrating that amazing physical feats are possible when youth are raised

in a LDS environment (i.e. being brought-up to wear modest dress and abstaining from alcohol and premarital sex).

Ballroom dance is just one of four styles institutionally supported at BYU. While ballet, contemporary, and folk dance all have similar programs with nationally recognized companies, ballroom dance is one of the most visible. Holman explains:

> These two groups [ballroom and folk dance] will always speak louder to the general population, whereas ballet has more of a niche market, and contemporary even more of a niche market. So those two programs by themselves maybe don't have the capacity to reach to the larger, whereas these other groups they go 'oh, wow' because they reach to a less dance literate audience…ballroom dancing and folk dancing people can get 'it' without having to invest themselves. (Holman)

Part of what makes ballroom dance attractive to BYU is its legibility to wide audiences. Holman believes that promoting ballroom dance is not specifically one of BYU's goals as an institution, but rather that ballroom dance allows faculty to meets other aims BYU lays out ("Aims of a BYU Education | Mission & Aims"). For example, one of BYU's institutional goals is to be Intellectually Enlarging. According to Holman and Wiblin, ballroom dance does this through helping to develop the whole person. For example, it is a physical activity that also involves artistry. Another campus wide aim is Character Building, which is emphasized in the ballroom dance classes that rely on working together. Though Holman feels the ballroom company speaks less to the aim of Spiritually Strengthening, the lessons learned through working together are part of the LDS belief system and the touring company goes to venues set up by faith organizations. The last aim of BYU is promoting Life-long Learning. Many alums of the BYU program take what they learn on campus and develop other programs other places, such as a BYU alum founding the Claremont Colleges Ballroom Dance Company. Wiblin explains,

> Our students, once they graduate, go out into the schools and they teach dancing, and right down to the elementary schools there's ballroom dance going on, and that's a great place to start to teach boys to get on with girls, etc., etc., in the proper manner (Wiblin).

Wiblin is describing the way ballroom dance is used as a tool to teach youth how to behave in coed interactions. Therefore, LDS ideas about gender are being propagated through LDS instructors teaching ballroom dance. These LDS instructors do not only teach in Mormon communities, meaning that LDS interpretations of ballroom dance as proof of the innateness of gender difference are being taught much more widely as part of ballroom dance conventions.

Amateur American Titles: BYU's National Influence

BYU's large program has made ballroom dance a spectator sport in Utah, drawing audiences in the thousands, including many non-Mormons. The BYU team started building an audience with their reputation as World champions in the1970s, but it is worth noting that the growth of this non-Mormon audience coincided with mainstream American ideals becoming more progressive and moving on from 1950s understandings of marriage and gender. In other words, BYU started staging ballroom dance for the general public to build a bridge across a growing divide between how Mormons and how mainstream Americans lived their daily life. This suggests that BYU intentionally or unintentionally saw these large-scale performances as opportunities to continue displaying their understanding of the relationships between men and women.

Part of building these sizable audiences is done through hosting large competitions that encourage ballroom dancers from across the country to travel to

Provo.[21] BYU's relationship with the National Dance Council of America (NDCA), the governing board for professional ballroom dancers in the U.S., started because Lee Wakefield was a NDCA adjudicator, and for the last twenty years the NDCA has donated a tuition scholarship to the BYU team.[22] Wiblin describes the modern relationship between BYU and the NDCA as follows:

> It's quite a unique relationship in that National Dance Counsel is a counsel. Member organizations are like Arthur Murray [studio franchise], Fred Astaire [studio franchise], all those kind of things, and they come together and monitor and help ballroom dance maintain a high standard, particularly in competitions. When competitions are run properly, and authentically… and helps that standard of ballroom dance maintain a high standard, I think really. (Wiblin)

BYU is a member organization that has their competitions sanctioned under the NDCA, including an annual competition that gives out the "United States National Amateur Dance Championships" titles. As Holman explains:

> The National Dance Counsel of America, they are a counsel. The actual title that we award doesn't even belong to the NDCA, it belongs to a company called American Ballroom Company [ABC]. American Ballroom Company years ago trademarked the title 'United States National Amateur Dance Championships. It's a legal thing- they own that title. So we [BYU] actually lease that title from the American Ballroom Company. (Holman)

In short, BYU pays the ABC to award the titles, and theoretically the ABC could choose to change which competition gives out these titles at any time. Furthermore, as an NDCA

[21] In the fall of 1990 a youth ballroom program for kids age 10-17 was started BYU. This program was meant to help with recruitment and "provide the community with a place where its young people could be taught these skills in an environment with high moral standards" (Witt 47). In March of 1993 BYU's 1993 International Ball was concurrently hosted with the World Amateur Standard Dancesport Championships. There were 66 couples from 41 countries in attendance (Witt 49). The following April BYU hosted the 1994 Dancesport Championship (Witt 51) and in April of 1995 BYU Dancesport Championships were moved to the Marriot Center where they are still hosted today (Witt 53). In March 1997 BYU hosted US dancesport championships for US professional standard and US Rising Star (Witt 55).

[22] Every person on the company is on 50% or full tuition scholarship.

competition, BYU has to follow certain protocols, but they are also allowed to have additional policies. This gives the appearance that the National titles that BYU gives out are on the behalf of the NDCA, where, in actuality, BYU happens to give out these titles at a competition that is also NDCA sanctioned. This means that dancers nationwide have to agree to LDS guidelines in order to compete for these national titles, such as following LDS modesty standards in their costuming. Used ballroom dresses are often described as "Utah approved," or sellers specify that dresses have extra panels to meet the required dress standards for amateur nationals.

Costuming, Casting, and the Gendered Mormon Body

As early as 1988, BYU faculty were concerned about what costumes other dancers would wear at BYU competitions. In reference to one of BYU's first competitions, Heaton once wrote, "What will the dancers do about dress standards?" (Heaton, *Family Solidarity through Activities, Alma Heaton Autobiographical Writing: Alma Heaton's Life History, From 1980-1990* 92) This question of how to regulate ballroom dance attire among people with less modesty standards remains at play today. BYU imposes additional costume modesty standards for their competitions, such as: straps must be an inch thick for women, and men cannot wear V-neck shirts that open more than five inches, demonstrating another way they are "in the world, but not of the world." This means that non-LDS dancers have to invest in specific attire to participate in a competition at the LDS-owned BYU. These costume standards create the potential for non-LDS ballroom dancers to experience the modesty restrictions that apply to LDS members. In other words, BYU standards are felt beyond the school, and this is not new.

Heaton wrote, "We have people come to BYU to go to school because of our dance program. The world is looking to BYU for leadership in the dance program" (Heaton, *Family Solidarity through Activities, Alma Heaton Autobiographical Writing: Alma Heaton's Life History, From 1980-1990* 230).

As BYU hosts their competitions at the Marriott Center, located in Provo, much of the audience is comprised of local LDS families. Holman feels it's important for the ballroom team to respect the expectations of both their conservative audience and their sponsoring religious institution. He explains,

> Because we are a religious based university we have certain expectations for coverage of the body…we respect what the university would expect from us, so we do have costume guidelines…Those are guidelines that we have put together in the ballroom area knowing that that's what would be expected of us from the university. No one from the university has called up and said 'you must do this,' we have said we are going to be respectful of the university. And I can say because we've done that there is no reason for the university to be involved to say 'we don't feel good about this.' If we didn't come up with that I think there would come a time when they would say 'I think it's better that this event [BYU's dancesport competitions] goes some place besides here. By and large everyone [non-LDS participants who travel to Provo to compete] has been gracious and willing to respect what we ask of them. I have talked with lots of people that come and say "thank you so much for being willing to follow these guidelines." (Holman)

Holman is revealing that the LDS Church's regulation of BYU's ballroom team works implicitly, rather than explicitly. This creates the potential that the ballroom team errs on the side of caution and uses costumes even more modest than perhaps the church would ask for rather than risk admonishment. Holman also allows context to affect which costumes are appropriate in different scenarios. For example, while the costume standards for the BYU sponsored competitions are stricter than most around the country, the dance company follows even more conservative guidelines out of respect for the LDS

wards that they visit on their various tours. For instance, the women's dresses are cut with long sleeves and high necklines that cover their collarbones, whereas BYU's competition guidelines allow one-inch shoulder straps. Marci Edgington, another faculty member, explained that the ballroom program is very careful about what the dancers wear. She described the need of the department to show the good of ballroom dance because they know the program will loose institutional support if there are concerns over how ballroom dance aligns with LDS values. The faculty is very aware that ballroom dance is not necessarily seen as intrinsically valuable on its own, but receives support because it is seen as wholesome alternative to more risqué dances.

At the same time, costuming also allows for a condoned expression of sexuality. While the women wear knee length skirts, like the honor code requires, they are often held upside down or sideways, or are turning, all of which causes their legs, and sometimes their covered buttocks, to be revealed. Though this exposes women to the possibility of objectification, from which policies like the honor code are supposed to protect them, it also allows women to experience wearing clothing that is not in line with what is socially acceptable by BYU's honor code without forfeiting their reputation in the church.

BYU's ballroom dance program is most notable for their world-renowned formation teams, a category where having a team of physically similar dancers is rewarded. This includes height, body shape, even hair color. As Wiblin explains, though there are not set height requirements for the BYU ensembles, shorter students comprise the Latin formation team and taller students the Standard formation team. She elaborates,

"There [aren't] really set requirements, but that does have to be considered, especially on the tour team. On the other teams it's not quite as strict, but on the tour team you have to be reasonable" (Wiblin). One of the tour hopeful students I spoke with explained the impact of these policies. Even though she considers herself more of a Latin dancer, she knows that if she ever makes the Touring Ensemble she will be placed on the Standard team because of her "tall and more a standard build." Dancers of similar heights and sizes are also placed on similar teams because it simplifies costuming. As Holman explained, "we can't make a costume for a particular body type because you've got to use that costume for five years or seven years, so we try to find a similar look" (Holman). By having dancers of similar body types—petite and thin women, tall and muscular men – year after year, the team can most easily reuse costumes with minimum alterations.

It is important to understand the tacit approach to choosing students of a specific body type. BYU used to have set requirements, but have moved away from that to generally looking for a uniformed look across their dancers. In the passage below you see that Holman feels this is justified the same way that varsity athletic teams select for a specific body type, and that the team wants to be frugal in their use of university money to buy costumes. Holman explains,

> There were times when we said, "you must have this, you must have this, you must have this." …I think as a society we sorta frown down upon that stuff, so we are kinda past that… I tell them upfront it is a casting call, if I'm doing a Broadway Show and the Broadway show is Beauty and the Beast, I'm probably not going to choose someone that's five-feet-two to be the beast. If I go play basketball they are probably going to look for someone that's taller than me, if I play football they are probably going to look for someone that's bigger than me. Our form requires a lot of looking at the body types, so we are going to construct a team that has the most same look as possible… That's as far as I go. (Holman)

Holman explained that too strict requirements can lead to eating disorders and the like, but that formation teams benefit from a uniform look, and BYU's program is large enough to be able to choose based on aesthetics and personality, not just dance ability. Team aesthetics at BYU are also affected by the LDS religion. Because LDS men are required to serve a two-year mission starting at 19, members of the BYU touring ensemble are generally older than their counterparts at other institutions. BYU's team benefits not only from an increased emotional maturity, but also physically more developed men, which allows for some of their iconic lifts. Tour Company men generally range from twenty-one to twenty-five and tour company women from nineteen to twenty-three.

BYU's Ballroom Company's approach to costuming and selection of dancers shows the number of forces coaches are responding to. Costuming guidelines are adhered to because of LDS community pressure for ballroom dance to represent a wholesome activity, and dancers' bodies are evaluated based on what will be most attractive by judges at formation team competitions. Where it might appear that BYU dancers are placed under high scrutiny by BYU faculty, a closer examination reveals that the leaderships is reacting to constant examination, which is in turn reflected in how they evaluate the dancers.

The Gesticulations of Masculinity:

The LDS Church takes coed relationships very seriously. All BYU students must agree to an honor code, which not only prohibits offenses like plagiarism and wearing revealing clothing, but also prohibits premarital sex and "physical intimacy that give[s]

expression to homosexual feelings." ("Tom Perry Special Collections").[23] The existence of these policies underscores the kind of relationships expected between people of different genders, meaning that unmarried heterosexual couples must remain chaste, and homosexual touching is not tolerated. Policies like these have the result of Mormon men's dancing not being automatically read as feminine or queer. This is not to suggest that dance in Mormonism never results in the challenging of men's sexuality, but rather to suggest that there is an option where participation is read as socially acceptable. In other words, the gendered separation of roles in ballroom dances creates a space where dance by boys is deemed masculine.

The understanding that dance is for both genders allows ballroom, an activity requiring an equal number of men and women, to thrive in this community. I asked Holman if he was afraid during college that others would perceive him as gay for participating in ballroom dance. He replied:

> No I didn't…I guess maybe I was aware that I didn't want to be perceived as that, so I would be more conscious not to come across in a feminine way… I don't know if our students feel that here…So I think some guys might be turned off if they're in class with guys that have more feminine tendencies, or act in a little bit more of a feminine way, that might make them go like this [rolls away from me in his chair] where I don't think we have as much of that. So we've got guys who are

[23] Students are allowed to be openly homosexual at BYU, but the topic was still treated as taboo during my research trips, never brought up by students or faculty. The current BYU Honor Code reads, "Brigham Young University will respond to homosexual behavior rather than to feelings or attraction and welcomes as full members of the university community all whose behavior meets university standards." (https://policy.byu.edu/view/index.php?p=26). Though this means that students can be openly homosexual as long as they do not participate in homosexual behavior. BYU does not have a Queer Resource Center, however Understanding Same-Gender Attraction (USGA) is an unofficial group that has existed at BYU since 2010. Their members seek to, "strengthen families and the BYU community by providing a place for open, respectful discussions on the topic of same-gender attraction and LGBTQ issues" ("USGA at BYU"). In contrast, at UVU students often openly discussed their sexualities.

> just regular guys, so I think other regular guys go 'I don't feel threatened.' …Well ballroom dancing seems to be a less threatening place than to put on a pair of tights and go do ballet, it might be more threatening to do that…or if I can just go as a guy, put my arms up, I've got a beautiful girl in my arms, there's less problems, so I don't know if I feel that, that people don't want to be here, be involved, because they might be perceived as gay. (Holman)

Holman's extensive answer show that ballroom dance's masculine space for men to lead women helps to counteract the stigma that dance is not for straight men. Dance scholar Maxine Leeds Craig explains that the "Avoidance of the appearance of homosexuality is central to normative masculine embodiment" (173). Unlike general American sentiments, Mormon men appear to be shielded from being perceived as gay in ballroom dance because of their assumed heterosexuality and the fact that the LDS's interpretation of the art form is centered on projecting a heteronormative aesthetic.

The Rose or the Bull: Obedience and Resistance in Motion

Brent Keck, one of the head faculty members at BYU, guest taught an advanced Latin ballroom dance class in October of 2016, while Sharon Homan was on tour with the company. Unlike the other men instructors I observed at BYU, Keck danced with a man student while demonstrating the follow's part, showing how he specifically wanted women to use their arms to entice their partners. Observing Keck teach resulted in a very telling interaction. At BYU "lead" and "follow" are not used to describe the two roles, but they are also not used to describe the actions the dancers are doing. My field notes read:

> Keck: Sister Kim[24] what count do we come in on?
> Kim's Partner: that was my fault, it's 3, but I pulled her in on 2.

[24] Name of student changed.

Keck: So you were just being obedient to the boy?
Kim: Yes.

As this conversation notes, Keck describes the women as being *obedient*, not *following*. Obedient as a word implies less agency, and less choice, whereas as following might imply knowing your options and choosing to follow. Later in class, Keck asked the students why the men offer their hand before the dance begins, and the women students responded, "because it is courteous." Keck proceeded to ask the women, "is that what you look for on a date?" Most of the women responded "yes." Keck then turned to the men and said, "yes, exactly! Men really offer your hand." These observations make clear that dance class is being used to teach norms that are valued by this community both on and off of the dance floor.

The gender of the instructors also affects classroom dynamics. While most classes are taught by one instructor and one assistant, always of opposite genders so they could demonstrate together, one woman was forced to teach a class alone when her man assistant never showed up. She could not remember what foot the follows should use, declaring "sorry, sometimes I have a gender crisis…by myself…as a woman." The fact that this teacher needed to clarify that she is a woman while joking about her gender shows how important gender innateness is to identity. Even in a joke about gender she could not leave herself open to the possibility that her students would not know that she is a woman. In an advanced standard class a very high level couple came in to guest teach. The man did almost all of the talking, only deferring to his partner to tell the women specifics about the follow's part. In order to keep classes balanced when it comes to gender, every class is run as two simultaneous sections taught by the same instructor, one

that only men can register for and one only women can register for. This prevents classes from having too many students of one gender register.

Role-reversal, or dancing the non-traditional role for a specific gender, was very uncommon at BYU. Even in unbalanced classes I only saw two women attempt to dance together once. The woman leading seemed very unsure and only made it through half of the combination. These two women were waiting for partners. In interviews, when I asked if it was common for students to dance the opposite role in class to help balance a class, a staff member replied, "Not generally, not usually. I mean, somebody might want to do it just to help, but it's not a common thing" (Wiblin). When asked if students could take technique classes in the opposite role to improve as coaches and teachers, a staff member replied, "You know we don't…there's kinda…there's never been a need. And um…it's never come up" (Wiblin). I asked Holman the same question. He explained,

> You know what…no. It's not really set up that way. Because the technique classes are really set up to develop the individual technical level. So…I don't know that we would really do that. Because we are really working on the dancing, rather than having it be a laboratory for you to learn the man's part. So I don't think we have done that in the past. What you probably haven't seen is we have our social dance program which is significantly less technical. Maybe if somebody came and said 'hey, I'd like to learn the man's part, we'd probably say …ok, we'd probably entertain the thought. I think by and large it's not really part of our program, of what we do. (Holman)

Holman is showing that technique is tied to separate gender roles, meaning it is seen as a further development of a "natural" talent for specific skills as predetermined by gender. Though Holman admits they might "entertain" allowing someone to take social dance in the opposite role because it requires less skill, he does not present any conditions under which students could take ballroom classes in the role not associated with their gender

because these classes are more "technical." This implies simultaneous beliefs that students of certain genders are better predisposed for certain roles while at the same time believing that technical training is required to reinforce the apparent "naturalness" of strict gender divisions. Students are tested on the steps of both roles in their dance theory class, but this is seen as preparing them for their adjudicator examination, the test that qualifies them to judge competitions, not for teaching or performing in both roles.

As described in examples above, ballroom dance creates a safe and condoned space for the genders to mix. Ballroom dance inherently requires couples to touch, from holding hands, to doing complex lifts that require touching thighs, backs, buttocks, etc. The choreography from the competition formation teams demonstrates that ballroom dance justifies a form of intimacy normally not condoned outside of marriage through the use of lifts that rely on contact between mostly men's hands and women's legs and sides. Choreography that requires two men dancers to hold hands, support each other's weight, and use large amounts of body contact creates ambiguous spaces for same-gender, public, physical intimacy that might challenge the honor code. Ballroom dance thus allows for leeway in following the honor code's policies surrounding homosocial and homosexual behavior. Ballroom dance is a mechanism used both to reinforce the gender roles these youths will be expected to fill while also exposing them to ways to find agency within a seemingly rigid structure. As BYU scholar Sanborn Jones writes,

> Partner dancing also brings with it the pleasures of intimate physical encounter—the playful mimesis of sex –in the relative moral safety of a public venue. The long tradition of social dance in Mormon culture is marked by the tensions between the possibilities of partnership imagined in dance and the possibilities for sexual immorality that might be inspired by dance. (Sanborn Jones 69)

Within a hegemonic structure of the LDS church, ballroom dance serves both to inscribe and encourage the gender roles that will serve the students after they graduate from BYU, while also creating a flexible space where both men and women can experience sexuality outside what is expected, demonstrating the inherent flexibility that exists in hegemonic structures.

Rehearsals themselves create space for students to take advantage of the acceptability of physical contact in partner dance. I observed a BYU Touring Company rehearsal, and during a big group number while director Holman was busy talking to another couple, a man dancing the quickstep took the opportunity of lack of supervision to reach his right hand down from his partner's back and grab her buttocks. She laughed while quickly grabbing his hand and placing it back on her back. Later I learned that this couple is married.

Over the course of my observations, several trends in classroom language emerged. All of the instructors used "man's part" and "lady's part" to refer to the different roles, choosing to describe the agent, man and woman, as opposed to the action, leading and following. This puts the emphasis on who a person is, or is read as, and not what a person is doing. In classes where there were two instructors, the man would teach the men a new step while the woman would teach the women a new step. As this would happen simultaneously, students would not have the chance to see what the other role is doing, let alone learn both parts during one class. Though there were a few exceptions, generally men were expected to ask women to dance, and women never refused a partner during a class. One of the times a man instructor had the women ask the men to dance, a

man student groaned, to which the instructor replied, "Women have power, they can ask men to dance." Through this example we see that this man student feels that part of the "man's part" in dancing is asking women to dance, but that to the man instructor anyone can initiate the dance. This also reveals this man student's insecurities, as if you are always the one doing the asking you will always have a partner. When women have the power to choose a partner you might not be selected. Multiple teachers use "natural opposite" to describe women's footwork, which Holman clarified is not an LDS specific phrase. This phase implies a naturalness to the way ballroom steps fit in together that is mirrored in the presumed naturalness of separate genders.

I also witnessed many examples of women resisting, often in small ways, in the wiggle room ballroom dance provides on BYU's campus. In an intermediate Latin class, the man instructor asked the women what role they are portraying in paso doble if the man is the matador. All of the women loudly replied, "the bull!" The instructor responded, "I would argue you are more refined, you are the cape, the rose, the Spanish lady the matador is falling in love with." This interaction shows that the women saw themselves as active agents in the scenario—the bull—whereas the man instructor saw them as filling more passive roles—either as a woman not directly involved in the bullfight or as inanimate objects. This also highlights that there are multiple ways to interpret the separate gender roles, where men might see women's roles as inherently passive and women see women's roles as inherently active.

In this class, the instructor discussed the importance of competing and how it aids in improving technical capabilities. After class an overweight and socially awkward man

student spoke to the instructor, asking for advice in finding a competition partner. This student had approached me before class because he "always notice[s] when there are new women available." Even with a lack of men in his class he is having trouble finding a partner, implying that women do not feel desperate to dance with a man they deem unattractive. These women are exercising their right to not participate as opposed to feeling obligated to dance with something they deem below their expectations.

Another way women took advantage of wiggle room in ballroom dance is through back leading, or the practice of the follow guiding the lead through choreography. In October of 2016, I participated in a beginning Latin class on samba. I helped a man student get through the routine, turning myself, and gentling guiding him forward or backwards. At the end of class, he commented, "it's good you led me through that!" showing that he acknowledged that I was leading him through the combination in spite of my gender. I also witnessed women in the Tour Company gently guide their partners through choreography that they were clearly more familiar with, pointing with their free hands where they were supposed to go in the next formation or actually whispering to their partners while Director Holman was not looking.

One beginning social dance class at BYU stood out when it came to gender roles. Before class started two women were talking when a man approached them dancing. They made small talk about his dancing entrance, to which he replied, "you know me, just jamming before class." Then one of the women asked him to demonstrate the cha cha arms they learned in the last class, and he performed exaggerated, broken wrist movement, which garnered laughter. He proceeded to sit on the lap of another man

causing a woman to remark, “It’s good you guys are best buds.” As another student entered the room, the man sitting on the other man’s lap said, “Come on in the water is just fine.” After he got up and walked away to talk to another group, a woman approached and asked, “what was he just doing?” and someone responded, “you know, X just being X.” Later during the class the same man did exaggerated hip action while making a face, and the woman he was dancing with laughed. This man, attempting to display his queerness openly, was either failing at being read as queer in front of an illiterate audience or being read as queer quietly. His classmates either lack the knowledge to associate such behavior with queerness, or choose to misread his body language out of politeness.

A woman taught this social dance class with a man as her assistant. When explaining the man’s part, both instructors danced, but when demonstrating the woman’s part, only the woman demonstrated. After trying to explain something, the woman started leading the assistant, and afterwards the students clapped while the man assistant bowed. The woman instructor announced, “I like to lead.” This prompted the man who made a dance entrance at the beginning of class to ask, “what dances do girls lead?” The woman instructor responded, “None, that's why I like to teach, I like to lead.” This interaction between a woman who became a teacher because she likes to lead and a man student so interested in following that he thinks there are dances where the men follows highlights that both men and women are affected by the policies that require students to dance in the roles associated with their assigned gender, and how students find ways to push back on gender roles through the ballroom program.

BYU ballroom dance program secretary Eleanor Wiblin's son, Roger Wiblin, is a ballroom dance scholar and BYU alum. He and I have served on conferences panels together, and he has guest taught my students. One of the conferences we attended together included a dance performance that had an interactive contra-dance component at the end. Contra-dance is a form that combines line dance and partner dancing. The students leading the demonstration made it very clear in their instructions to the audience that anyone could lead and follow. Roger asked me if I would like to dance. When we joined the line, there was no debate—Roger placed himself as the lead and me as the follow. Roger and I both know how to lead and follow because we are instructors, but in a social context it was clear that our gender dictated our positions.

Tacit Religiosity: Ballroom Dancing at UVU

Despite bearing no official affiliation with the LDS Church, Utah Valley University (UVU), located ten minutes from BYU, follows many of the same ballroom dance guidelines as BYU, from strict costume policies at competitions, to separate dance class sections for men and women, to a general belief in the innateness of gender, which acts as a lens through which the classes are taught. UVU was founded as a state-supported vocational school in 1943, and by 1967, started awarding associate's degrees.[25] UVU has continued to grow, offering bachelor degrees starting in 1992, and master's degrees starting in 2008. Through all of these changes UVU has remained an open

[25] "UVU | History | About UVU | Home." Utah Valley University. Accessed July 30, 2017. https://www.uvu.edu/visitors/aboutuvu/history.html.

enrollment institution. While UVU is a secular school, Mormon values are still accounted for when designing performances, as LDS families are UVU's main audience.

A History of Ballroom Dance at UVU:

UVU is one of the premier locations to study ballroom dance, both technically and scholastically, in the United States. Doris Hudson de Trujillo, the current Dance Department chair, explains that University President Kerry D. Romesburg was the first person to bring ballroom dance to UVU in the 1990s. She elaborates:

> He [president Romesburg] saw the benefit, the interest in this valley in ballroom dance. And this valley is quite unique in terms of the desire for it, the amount of ballroom dance that is currently happening in studios, and schools, and in universities within this valley. I believe he most likely saw what Brigham Young University was doing and wanted to duplicate that here. (Hudson de Trujillo)

Even though UVU did not have a dance department yet, Romesburg invited Scott Asbel, a ballroom instructor in the community, to be adjunct faculty and teach ballroom dance classes. With the formalization of dance studies on UVU's campus, Romesburg invited Jacqueline Colledge, who was the founder and director of Utah Regional Ballet, onto the new faculty. This started a joint venture between UVU's Dance Department and Utah Regional Ballet, which still exists today. This, along with BYU's structure, set a precedent for a company model in the dance department, meaning at UVU a large amount of the students' training and curriculum comes from participating in one of the department's companies, including the Ballroom Dance Company, Synergy, Contemporary Dance Ensemble, Repertory Ballet Ensemble, and Mos.A.I.C.

Romesburg continued expanding dance offerings at UVU by hiring BYU alum Kathleen A. Debenham to a full-time position in the Physical Education Department, and

in 2000, when the Dance Department was founded, she served as the first chair. Debenham was instructed to build the program, designing three separate associate's degrees in ballet, modern dance, and ballroom dance.

Hudson de Trujillo was added to the faculty in 2001, and aided in the writing of four-year degrees: a BFA in ballet, a BFA in modern dance, a BS in ballroom dance, and a BS in dance education. The faculty made the ballroom dance program's degree a BS, as opposed to BFA, because of its "sport-like" characteristics. These four degrees were approved in 2005, and currently the department offers these four degrees along with an Associates of Science Pre-major in Dance.

LDS Values at UVU:

UVU's location in Provo means many of the faculty, as well as students, are Mormon.[26] Though the dance department does not have to follow all LDS standards when it comes to things like modesty in costuming – for example midriff-baring costumes, tank tops, and short shorts are all allowed in department shows and classes – they do follow the same strict costume policy when they host a competition (Larson). Current faculty member Christopher Witt explained in an interview,

> You know, we try to keep the costumes tasteful, and relatively modest just to fit the modesty standards of the community, but yes, some of our costumes have lower backs, some might have a spaghetti strap instead of the one-inch strap, but in general our costumes are relatively modest. (Witt, *Christopher Witt*)

Witt here is pointing to the effect of UVU's location in Utah on how they run their program. Though being a state school does provide them with wiggle room when it

[26] This is according to Brianna J. Larson, UVU's Dance Department Academic advisor and former admissions officer. UVU is a state school, so non-anecdotal information on student's religious affiliation is hard to determine.

comes to university policies, they still have to acknowledge that their physical location dictates the students and audience they cater to, making sure their shows will attract the large audience for ballroom dance that BYU has already cultivated.

Witt is one of the former directors of the Claremont Colleges Ballroom Dance Company (CCBDC), the program I am now the director of. Witt explained that during his time at Pomona College in the early 2000s, students were experimenting with dancing the roles not associated with their gender in social dance settings, but never for performance. Witt expressed how his positionality affected students' interactions with ballroom dance:

> When I was there [CCBDC], no we were not really pushing the boundaries as far as the performing team goes. That probably was just because of my experience and my personal preferences with regards to ballroom dance and performance. And I think times have definitely changed in the past fifteen years. I remember it was quite common to have social dancing where there were female leads and male follows—that was very common. And for me [laughter] it was just kind of a fun novelty to see that because all of my training happened here in conservative Utah Valley and that was unheard of. I think that at this point as far as competing and performing here in Utah that still doesn't happen, but I've seen, you know, different genders leading and following in social dancing situation. (Witt, *Christopher Witt*)

As previously described by Holman, social dancing is a seen as less serious, and therefore a place where students experience more leniency. Also, while stage performance is used to convey larger ideals, social dance is never used to represent the school, meaning students can take advantage of un-staged dancing opportunities to explore roles not associated with their assigned genders.

Witt further explained that ballroom dance majors at UVU are allowed and encouraged to take classes in both roles to increase their marketability as future instructors. For example, a solo instructor teaches all of UVU's dance classes. This means students are exposed to the concept of coaches needing to know both roles.

Though Witt says this is encouraged, I never observed students actively taking a class in their non-traditional part, such as men taking a class as a follower. Although multiple instructors said some students would switch roles in technique classes to help balance classes, in all of the classes I observed the extra men or women would wait their turn to get a partner. In an interview, I pressed Witt to see if students could choose to focus in their non-traditional role out of personal preference, or if instructors need to see a more pragmatic reason for learning the opposite role. He responded, "If a man comes in [saying] 'I only want to dance as a follow,' Sure, great. I wouldn't have a problem with that," but that he does not see role-reversal making it to the concert stage or competition floor anytime soon at UVU (Witt, *Christopher Witt*).

Hudson de Trujillo also does not see norms around dance roles changing soon. She describes the UVU ballroom dance faculty as "very traditional," and not interested in having conversations around challenging the traditional structure. One of the required classes for all dance majors is "Current Issues," a class that, "Examines current trends and issues in dance," many students discuss same-gender ballroom dance even if their faculty do not realize it (*Dance UVU Catalog*). Hudson de Trujillo shared that, "For many years our ballroom students [in this class] did bring that [same-gender dancing] up as *happening* in the field, not necessarily that *they* were comfortable in wanting that. But they are aware of it" (Hudson de Trujillo, original emphasis). Whereas Chair Hudson de Trujillo and Professor Witt never expressed that they saw a need or desire of current students to participate in same-gender dancing, department academic advisor Brianna Larson admitted that some students are "more fluid" when it comes to gender identities at

UVU, and she could see a desire to learn both parts or the opposite role than the one instructors would assume they should dance (Larson). UVU, like BYU, has officially equated gender and role in the course catalogue, having concurrent men's-only and women's-only sections of the same class in an attempt to balance the leads and follows. This means that for a man to claim a spot as a follow in class, he would need to register as a woman.

Mormon Masculinity in Secular Settings:

Though many UVU instructors strongly feel that dancers, especially leads, should know both parts to improve their dancing, multiple informants mentioned that some of the men will not follow due to a fear of being mistaken for gay, something still seen as an insult. This fear, not described at BYU, is a unique challenge at UVU, where homosexuality is an identity students can more openly claim.[27] Ironically the acceptability of queerness on UVU's campus made the threat of appearing queer more eminent, and therefore more feared. Stereotypes around men's sexuality are particularly questioned in the Latin category, as seen in a Latin rehearsal where the coach had instructed all of the dancers to do the same action, but wanted "the guys to look more like guys." Originally the women stood with their feet together, one heel popped, and brought their fists up and down at alternating times while slighting blending forward and keeping their elbows next to their bodies. This stance emphasized their chests through the position

[27] UVU has a LGBTQIA resource center, located on the same hallway as the ballroom dance studios. Though the resource center was started in the fall of 2015, the program coordinator Karen Deysher said UVU has had an active queer student community for a lot longer. The Ballroom Dance Company and the LGBTQIA program do not hold any shared events.

of the arms bringing their breasts together. At first, the men did the same movement except they were standing with their feet shoulder width apart. In the end the woman choreographer decided that the women should pump their arms and the men should pump their ribcages side to side while keeping their hands on their ribs, as the side-to side action visually took up more space, making the man appear dominant next to their partners.

I asked a few students if they wanted to learn the opposite role. An upper-class student shared that most advanced dancers at UVU, whether officially in classes or unofficially in practices, learn both parts but that students "never genderswap [role-reversal dancing], since we are defined by gender here," meaning that many learned the opposite steps but only danced them by themselves. Unlike BYU students, he consistently used the terms "lead" and "follow," an acknowledgement that while these tasks were taught in reference to a specific gender, he saw the actions as separate from the gender. The student cited the famous example of world champions Riccardo Cocchi and Yulia Zagoryuchenko switching who is leading samba rolls in their routine to demonstrate their collective mastery of the challenging step. Like many Utah-based dancers, he shared that he switched from a single gender activity, in his case football, to social dance because he was interested in coed interactions, meaning the gendered nature of ballroom was part of the original attraction. Now that he is really committed to dancing, interacting with women has become a second priority.

I do not know the sexualities of the students who I observed and spoke to, but at UVU students openly talked with each other about sexuality. At a rehearsal in October of

2016, dancers from the Back-Up Tour Team were chosen to perform one of the numbers. As these dancers set their formations, the men who were not chosen sat in a circle discussing their frustration at their partners being "stolen." This led into a conversation about who on the team was gay, and thus not a "threat." The students were distinguishing between who was a sexual threat to who was a dance threat- i.e. it was better for a gay man to "steal" your dance partner because he was only a threat on the dance floor, not off. Though no students self-identified as gay to me, students openly talked about others' queerness in front of me, or discussed their sexuality with other students while they knew I was present. This is a departure from what I witnessed at BYU, where no one discussed being gay or knowing a peer or student was gay. Multiple UVU instructors shared that being queer in Utah is hard, meaning that instructors and fellow students alike were very aware that at least some of the students present identify as queer. It is important to note that no women discussed their sexuality, and queerness was only ever discussed in relationship to men.

Though the men rarely said sexually explicit comments to the women outright, men students at UVU did not try to hide their opinions on things like their women peer's appearance, often making loud, public comments to verify their heterosexuality. During a joint rehearsal between the Tour Team and the Back-Up Tour Team a couple of men from the Back-Up Tour Team noticed a man from the Tour Team was missing. One asked if he could stand in for the missing dancer, and a man from the Tour Team replied, "yeah, and you get two girls," as this part of the routine had one man leading two women in a salsa section. The other student looked at the two partner-less women and replied

while making a disgusted face, "I don't want either of them." It was clear that the desirability of a lead's part in a dance relied on the desirability of the partner(s) it came with. Also, this conversation highlights that women needed to be considered a good dancer *and* physically attractive to be a desirable partner. One example of a more explicit misogynistic moment came when a man was hugging his dance partner, a woman, and he declared that he "owns" his dance partner. A nearby man replies, "I am pretty sure she belongs to someone else." The woman laughed, but did not respond to either comment. No one questioned these two men openly discussing their woman peer as an object that could be owned. I did not observe these kinds of interactions in same-gender ballroom settings, on college teams that allowed same-gender dancing, or at BYU. This suggests that programs that both highlight a more rigid gendered engagement with ballroom dance, and allows more sexually explicit relationships, create an environment where men feel comfortable discussing women, rather than speaking to them.

It is possible to interpret intimate physical contact, such as cuddling, between team members as an expression of sexual curiosity. Based on my observations, most physical contact, whether it was between two men or a man and a woman, was initiated by a man. For example, in a joint rehearsal of two teams, the coaches directed the students to get into a semi-circle that alternates men and women. A man from the Back-Up Tour Team was originally placed behind a woman from the Tour Team. While standing in the formation waiting for further instruction from the coaches, he placed his hand on the small of her back. She did not react, not even turning around to acknowledge him. Later he was switched in this formation with another man who does not feel the

need to touch this woman unnecessarily. Men also used ballroom dance rehearsal time to explore same-gender contact. During an Advanced Back-Up Team rehearsal one man student talked to another man from the team who was seated. The standing man kept touching the sitting man's face, which the seated man neither encouraged nor discouraged. Later, the standing man walked over to another man lying face down on the ground. He proceeds to, unsolicited, try to crack the man's on the ground back. After cracking his back, the man stayed draped over the man on the ground for a second, then sat to the side of the man, leaving his right hand on the other man's chest. A few minutes later the man whose back was cracked jumps into the arm of the original man. All of these interactions had one man initiating the physical contact, and the other man not stopping the action. It is important to note that the receiver of the action never objected to the contact, but also never actively participated.

Physical contact between team members is a constant topic among instructors and students at UVU. Witt shares that every year staff and faculty from other departments contact the Dance Department about the ballroom students being too physical with each other in the hallway outside of the studio, and another instructor suggested that instead they should go cuddle outside of the Drama Department. This anecdote reveals policing from departments that have inherently less physical contact as a part of their official curriculum, and one student felt the PDA was a result of ballroom dance training students to have no sense of personal space. Some students referred to this hallway as the "bi-hallway," implying that part of the discomfort comes from the physical contact between students of the same gender, and both faculty and students explained that this fear is

explicitly around men cuddling with men. During class, one man instructor said there are "too many men hugging men" in the hallway. He quickly backtracked to say, "not that there is anything wrong with that, we are accepting." After his class I asked him if there a problem related to sexuality on the team. He said no but there are "gender things," sharing that out gay members of the team have a hard time, and in general it is challenging to be gay in the state of Utah. Again, fears around homosexuality are always couched in the context of a relationship between two men. In general masculinity at UVU was more aggressive than at BYU since alternatives to heteronormative masculinity readily exist.

A more explicit example of homosocial contact came when a man at UVU shared that there is another man on the tour team he enjoys dancing with, but made it very clear that he was the one leading, and that the other man was the one who followed. The student I interviewed explained that the man who likes to follow enjoys exploring the emotional capabilities of ballroom dance, and in their opinion the follow part allows for more emoting. He implied that the instructors do not know that the men practice together because while some see the value in perfecting both roles or do not care, others have made it clear that they are morally against it, which he found "ironic" because "dance is normally open to challenging social norms," an idea he picked up from his dance history classes. He made it clear that he had interest in same-gender dancing, bringing up an idea that many of the men on the team desired an all-men paso doble where they could take turns leading and following. It is clear that to many of the students, desiring same-gender dancing is separate from their sexual orientations.

Man's Part and/or Lady's Part: Flexibility in Rigidity

In March 2017, I witnessed a man student dance the follow role while he practiced teaching the rumba to his classmates in a ballroom dance composition class. The assignment was to choreograph a short ballroom section only using beginning dance figure from the NDCA syllabus, a syllabus of steps ranked based on difficulty, and teach it to the class. I anticipated that the student would demonstrate the steps for both parts but only dance as a lead, especially since the class consisted of him, four college-aged women, and a man faculty member. Instead he started the class by asking, "which of you ladies wants to learn both the lady's and gentleman's part?" He explained that whoever danced with him was going to be expected to flip back and forth between roles. All of the women in the class seemed open to this idea, and eventually the professor danced with one woman student, the two of them never switching roles, the student leading the exercise danced with one woman, switching constantly throughout the class, and the last two woman danced together and also switched who was leading and who was following. It was clear that the gender imbalance is what created the opportunity for the women in class to lead, but the only man student also intentionally created an opportunity for himself to follow in an environment already short on men. Even in this more fluid context, the student activity leader used "ladies' step" and "gentlemen's' step" to describe what he was teaching. At one point, while referring to the leaders, who at that moment consisted of two men and one women, the student activity leader proclaimed- "we are men, we let the ladies do all of the work!" referencing that in syllabus rumba the follow's steps are more challenging.

Sometimes he would get confused while switching between the footwork for the two parts, but it was clear that he had practiced both. This was a choreography class, not a pedagogy class, but the assignment highlighted to students that choreographers must be able to do both parts. The students did not struggle with steps, such as the rumba basic, where the lead and follow footwork is the same, just starting at different point in the combination, but did need to actually learn the opposite part for steps like rope spin, a silver figure that involves the follow dancing around the lead while the lead dances in place.

The student instructor was not shy about showing sexuality while dancing, or using language to evoke a more sexual performance from his peers. He would say things like, "ladies, I don't want you looking out in the stratosphere, your focus needs to be on your partner. We are all adults here, we all know what the rumba is."[28] To him, the character of the dance was sensual in nature, and he portrayed these aesthetics in his movements, especially when he was following. He would run his left hand around his head and down his chest while in fan position as a follow, touching his own body as much as possible with specificity and energy, but simply leave his limp right arm out to the side while leading the fan. He also exaggerated his hip actions, making slightly larger than is technically correct figure eights with his hips while following, using his feet and

[28] Dance scholar Juliet McMains offers an in-depth analysis of the intersection of race and sexuality in Latin dances in her book *Glamour Addiction: Inside the American Ballroom Dance Industry*. McMains demonstrates how tanning practices in dancesport allow white dancers to perform sexual movement associated with otherness while not losing their white privilege. She connects this to how the Latin category allows for gender subversion in a way that the standard category does not, such as both partners moving their hips, implying dances with non-western roots have space in them for men to experiment with expressing gender that forms from western cultures do not.

knees to accomplish these actions, but only moved his hips as much as he could while maintaining straight legs while leading. In general, his following was more dynamic, as he would use different body parts to create shapes, and his leading was stiffer, demonstrated through moving his whole leg as one piece. This man student not only found a way to officially follow in class, but he chose rumba, the most sensual of the dances, to do so.

After the lesson, during a debrief discussion, the student leading the activity shared that his use of "flamboyancy" was part of his teaching style. The other students and professor agreed that his teaching style was engaging, but the professor clarified that more explicit language on the sexuality and sensuality of rumba was only appropriate because it was an all adult class. He explained that some people feel that children also need to know more about the sensuality of rumba, but that he is "of the opinion they don't—they get enough of that!" For the professor, the important part is ballroom dance, the technical execution of steps, not the storylines that can be layered on top of the steps, such as the sexual nature of the rumba.

During my time at UVU I watched many men instructors and faculty teach classes. Though they demonstrated the steps for both the "man's part" and "lady's part," they danced only as a lead when dancing with another person. From this example, I expected this student to do the same- demonstrate both parts, but only dance full out as a lead. Instead, in an already unbalanced class, the student took the opportunity as the exercise leader to create a space where he was allowed to dance the follow's part under the guise of needing to as the instructor.

Women also demonstrated their authority in class and rehearsal settings. During a standard rehearsal, a woman was marking the foxtrot choreography at the front of the room alone. This caused the instructor to scold a group of three men who were sitting on the ground instead of participating, insisting one should dance with her. One of the men stood up, called her by name, and lightly stomped his right foot while pointing down- implying he wants her to come to him. The woman reciprocated by scowling while stomping her foot loudly and pointing down, causing the man to slump his shoulders and walk to her. The instructor said to no one in particular, "that's how you do it." In this example, it is clear that the man student felt he had the power to call a partner to him as he is the "lead", and the women student, a noticeably better dancer, publically drew attention to her desirability as a partner by denying his request, highlighting that her role as a "follow" does not mean she does not have the ability to decided where she dances. At another rehearsal, a woman's actual partner was absent and the understudy knew the choreography so poorly that, as a joke, another woman offered to dance with her. The instructor decided it was best for her to dance alone, adding that she "is strong enough to be both a man and a woman." She responded by going into the men's starting pose, a wide legged stand designed to support a partner in a dip, and then back into the women's starting pose, a dip where she stood on her right foot, arched herself backwards, and pointed her left foot. The man's pose was easy to stand in, with weight in both feet, while the woman's pose, balanced on one leg with their heads thrown back, was more decorative and less stable. Even without a partner she was able to hold the follow's starting pose.

These examples together show that in rehearsal spaces, where students have set choreography and no one is really leading or following, gender policing and gender resistance happen alongside each other, almost in the same moments. The moments of gender policing did not come off as retaliation to moments of resistance, but rather read as the men being unaware of their privilege. The moments of gender resistance, however, often did follow a moment of policing, such as implying that men were unnecessary and a woman would rather dance alone than dance with a man below her skill level.

The gender of the teacher also determined the kind of instruction and experience they have in class. At UVU there are four men and five women who teach ballroom dance, but it is important to note that all of the women are adjunct instructors, whereas two of the men are assistant professors, one of whom serves as the director of the Ballroom Company.

One man instructor when describing the lead's step would say things like, "we do this" or "you do this," speaking directly to and with the men in class. However, when demonstrating the follow's steps, he would say, "she will do this," speaking about the women, not to the women. Also, while woman instructors can dance with both men and women, one man instructor informed me that he would never follow a man student on UVU's campus or while coaching privately in Utah, stating, "that wouldn't fly," implying that culturally teaching was not enough of a reason to condone same-gender contact. When asked if he follows men students while coaching in other states, he said he does in California and Massachusetts. This means men students only have the opportunity to dance with instructors in classes taught by women, and in general women

students are more likely to have the opportunity to dance with instructors, since it is more likely that a class will have extra women, and all instructors, regardless of gender, are culturally allowed to dance with women.

The gender of the student impacts the student's experience in the program. For example, on days students are being graded on their standard routines women receive extra credit for dancing in a long skirt and men receive extra credit for wearing a tie. One woman instructor discussed arm styling for smooth waltz, stating, "men we don't expect much, so just bring your arm in and out, ladies make sure it is graceful. Ladies you can style the wrist—men don't, that's a girl thing." The instructor was describing the community-agreed upon belief that forming a straight line from your shoulder to your fingertips is read as masculine, and breaking that line at the wrist and spreading out your fingers is read as feminine. The phenomenon of gestures being coded as feminine on some dancers and effeminate on others is explored in depth by dance scholar David Gere in *29 Effeminate Gesture* (Gere).

These performances of gender and their meaning are clearly taught. On the lowest level of the team, a man inadvertently learned the women's choreography because he didn't recognize it as not masculine movement, whereas an advanced student would have known it was the follow's part whether or not they had been told by an instructor. This means that students are trained over time to see certain actions as masculine, such as lifting partners, and certain actions as feminine, such as bending the wrist. As a whole, in the lower level groups it was unclear who was leading or following until they danced in pairs because their movement was less-gendered, and more generally awkward, than the

more advanced teams. By the time the students reach more advanced levels, the belief that gender is tied to steps becomes so strong that even when steps are the same, students cannot see it. For example, after Witt taught a side-by-side grapevine combination, a man student asked if he was also going to go over the men's footwork. Witt reminded the students that the steps were the same for both parts.

A student demonstrated her interest in challenging the relationship between gender roles in dance by choreographing a piece for her senior capstone that had brief sections of men following and women leading. This progressive choreography used reverse role dancing to show that the theme of domestic violence affects everyone. However, she only played with gender in the non-ballroom sections of the piece, such as brief modern dance combinations, or the pantomime sections, such as acting out being beat-up. Even though this was the most progressive choreography I saw in Utah, gender was still only played with in modern dance, a form students were already trained to see as not explicitly tied to their genders.

I also attended a Social Dance Lab at UVU, or a party where the social dance classes and the performance teams compete and perform for their peers, and participate in social dancing. Despite faculty members' multiple claims that their students are not interested or participating in same-gender dancing, many students danced with members of the same gender that night, right in front of their instructors. Most of these where woman/woman partnerships where it was clear that neither woman knew the footwork for the lead part, but there were also a couple of men who danced together. When women danced together no one responded, but when men danced together most of the students

cheered supportively. It is clear that men dancing together is seen as more of a statement, whereas women dancing together is seen as an act of desperation, and thus not worth cheering.

This social event included a "Jack and Jill" competition, where dancers are randomly assigned to new partners after every round. These kinds of competitions are designed to encourage students to dance with new people. Students were asked to volunteer in couples so that there were an equal number of leads and follows. A woman I met earlier was pleading with a man to be her partner so that she could participate, and he kept refusing. Since I saw same-gender social dancing happening right before, I asked her if she would like to be my partner, offering to lead. She enthusiastically accepted, and we took our place in the circle, her standing in the smaller circle with all of the women, and me standing in the outer circle with all of the men. A man standing next to me in the circle looked at me with confusion, then ran to get the original man who kept refusing to participate. They both joined the circle of men, and without saying anything to me or making eye contact, made it very clear that I was not welcome to lead. I waved goodbye to the woman, and removed myself from the dance floor. Though the students seemed fine with same-gender dancing in a social context, even a silly, for-fun competition was too serious to allow me as a woman to take one of their spots. The man who kept saying that he did not want to dance decided that he would rather participate than watch me lead.

Transgressive Opportunities Make for Unfinished Conclusions:

The LDS Church has historically been supportive of dance. Today ballroom dance is used to visibly represent the LDS Church's historical construction of gender, where

men are trained to lead and women are trained to be obedient. Dance in general remains an important part of the image of the LDS Church as it is seen as a way to train and discipline bodies. Institutionally, ballroom dance is assumed to re-inscribe ideas of gender supported by the mainstream LDS community, but further investigation reveals the ways this historically gendered form creates space to subvert norms and imagine alternative possibilities for relationality between genders. Ballroom dance in the LDS community allows for exploration of sexuality through the use of costuming, choreography, and physical contact—both hetero- and homo-social. When asked if they see changes to approaches in gender in the future of UVU or BYU, one BYU alum and UVU instructor said that BYU will never change, and UVU will not change in the foreseeable future.

Holman acknowledged that he is aware of the movement in the larger dancesport community to use the terms "lead" and "follow" over "gentleman's part" and "lady's part." He attends NDCA meetings where competition organizers discuss questions of whether same-gender couples should be allowed at competitions and stated he "sense[s] a general reluctance." He was careful to defend that even gay men in the NDCA are against allowing same-gender couples because ballroom is about a man/woman couple. Holman admitted that he is not sure if one's opinion on same-gender dancing has to do with sexual orientation, but thinks it is connected to people's understanding of what makes ballroom dance ballroom dance. For Holman, ballroom dance is about a partnership, and the LDS Church only condones mixed-gendered partnerships. UVU, as a state school, has

much laxer official policies, but culturally still experiences some of the same stigmas as BYU, resulting in similar policies and community standards.

The program at BYU has changed a great deal since its formation in the 1950s. Originally designed to highlight the social possibilities of ballroom dance, the BYU program has shifted its focus to become one of the most competitive ballroom dance communities in the world. BYU is particularly known for competitive formation dancing, a version of ballroom dance that relies on group work and highlights LDS's students' predisposition to conformity. BYU's understanding of gender and ballroom dance is communicated internationally through hosting prestigious competitions that require all participants to follow BYU dress standards, intentionally or unintentionally shifting standards felt nationally. The church continues its financial support of this expensive ballroom dance program because it helps prepare young men and women to fill the gendered roles required by the religious institution, and students continue volunteering to be a part of the program because it allows them acceptable ways to digress from BYU's strict honor code. In a community where the LDS Church controls two influential ideological apparatuses, religious and educational, ballroom dance acts as a rare space of sexual agency.

UVU has more leeway as a state institution, but is very aware that its placement in Provo means it must run a program that appeals to the values of the surrounding community. Even though UVU students show a desire for same-gender dancing that students at BYU do not, faculty, who are mostly trained at BYU, shy away from creating opportunities for more progressive versions of ballroom dance. This has forced UVU

dancers to practice same-gender dancing in arenas outside of their formal performing. These examples together show the way a structured form like ballroom dance can still create space for identity exploration. In the next chapter I will address how ballroom dance is used in queer U.S. communities.

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Chapter Three: Taking the Lead: Queering of Dancesport Practices

Gender scholar Lisa Duggan summarizes the phenomenon of "homonormativity," as "queerness" being accepted into mainstream society through queer persons gaining access to establishments, such as marriage and nuclear families, which are often seen as white and heteronormative, as opposed to queer ways of being becoming socially acceptable (Duggan, 179). Same-gender ballroom dance challenges the notion that opposite gender partners are necessary for something to be considered ballroom dance. The basic structure of ballroom dance, given that it is typically performed between two people, creates opportunities for exploring relationality through motion. My research grapples with queer ballroom dancers pushing the bounds of ballroom dance, while also acknowledging the bounds of ballroom dance that still affect queer ballroom dancers. Do same-gender ballroom dancers queer ballroom dance, or does ballroom dance un-queer same-gender ballroom dancers?

Dance in the U.S. is viewed as a highly feminized art form, which contributes to the different experiences of men and women, including queer men and queer women. Dance scholar Jane Desmond attributes this in part to the "greater social latitude that adolescent girls or women have for dancing together" (J. Desmond 22). Whereas other activities can center queerness and create space for queer sociality, the activity of appropriating a heterocentric partner dance form validates relationships often seen as counter-normative by demonstrating that they can both successfully fill and re-imagine normative roles.

While I and others refer to *the* same-gender ballroom dance community, what I actually found were multiple same-gender ballroom dance communities that overlap when convenient, and function separately when necessary. This chapter challenges the assumption that same-gender dancesport can be understood through the current research on mainstream dancesport, pointing to alternative aesthetic values in the same-gender dancesport movement and clothing as warranting specific study, as well as the distinct experiences of participants. The chapter also explores the different treatment of same-gender ballroom dance at various U.S. competitions, and the queer community's different visions for how same-gender ballroom dance should function in the U.S. Finally, this chapter will delve into the weaknesses in a model of ballroom dance that strives for inclusion, such as a lack of space for gender fluid individuals, and a still present misogynistic view towards femininity.

Methods: Out on the Dance Floor

Grounded in field work conducted at several locations across the U.S. from 2014 to 2018, this chapter examines the norms of a community that finds identity empowerment through appropriating a dance style often criticized for being sexist in its division of labor and heterocentric in its portrayal of "traditional" couples. This chapter focuses on my observations at the following competitions: Boston Open Dancesport 2015 and 2016, Floorplay in the Desert 2016 and 2017, and April Follies 2016, in addition to various collegiate competitions. In addition to observing events, I competed with an informant at April Follies 2016 and Floorplay 2017. When I was only observing I was able to take more notes in the moment, speak casually with those sitting near me, and

take videos I could closely analyze later. When I was also dancing, I was more deeply immersed in the community, which included being able to talk to dancers in the "on-deck" waiting area, where competitors waited for their events to start, and in dressing rooms while changing to compete. Through my dancing, informants saw that I was not a journalist parachuting into ballroom dance in general, and same-gender ballroom dance, specifically. My technical ability signaled to them my dedication to the form over time, and my ability to lead and follow during social dances between competitive events showed a commitment to same-gender ballroom dancing specifically. The individual with whom I was competing felt strongly about leading, so with the exception of a small part of a smooth Viennese waltz routine, I only competed as a follow in this community.

Unlike my research at BYU and UVU discussed in the previous chapter, most of my interviews about same-gender ballroom dance were conducted through informal interviews. While BYU and UVU have directors who very much speak for their respective communities, the same-gender dancesport community is more diverse. As such, I chose to hear from as many voices as possible, rather than conducting a few in depth interviews. Also different from my research at BYU and UVU, this field site as a location was much more fluid. Whereas a university program is highly grounded in a sense of place, same-gender competitions often last one day, with a few social events happening the night before and the morning after at different locations. These sites quickly materialized with the arrival of participants from across the U.S., and after the competition dissolved as dancers returned to their homes. For safety reasons, I have also chosen to leave most of my interviewees anonymous. A few shared that they are not out

in their home communities, and that part of the draw of the queer friendly competitions is being able to fully celebrate their sense of self in public, even if just for a couple of weekends a year. As such, I am prioritizing the safety and anonymity of my informants over transparency. To make up for this, I draw heavily from my field notes. Also unlike my research at BYU and UVU where I mostly spoke to men who served as director of programs or men with whom I danced in social or class settings, in this community I mostly had the opportunity to speak to women. In social dances I almost exclusively danced with women, and therefore found myself invited to sit with women during the competitions, which led to most of my conversations being with women.

Through an ethnographic process I parsed what values, aesthetic and otherwise, same-gender dancers resist and which ones they maintain, in addition to exploring how and when same-gender dancesport is co-opted by mainstream dancesport. It is necessary to clarify that, compared to ballroom dance in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), many informants in this community have very different interpretations of what is happening in their community and different goals for the future of same-gender dancesport. This stems from the less structured format of the governing board that connects these competitions, the North American Same Sex Partner Dance Association (NASSPDA). In addition, many of these dancers live far away from each other in vastly different political climates and are only able to spend three or four weekends a year together, whereas many of the LDS Church ballroom dancers reside in Utah and see each other regularly in contexts both inside and outside of ballroom dance.

Definitions and Distinctions

There are a few terms necessary to understand same-gender ballroom dance. First, instead of designating the two roles as "man's part" and "lady's part," the same-gender ballroom dance community uses "lead" and "follow." Many people both inside and outside the community refer to "same-sex ballroom," not "same-gender ballroom." I have opted to primarily use "same-gender," as it is more inclusive of participants of all genders, but have left the term "same-sex" when used by informants or media. Also, "same-sex" and "same-gender" often refer to both partnerships comprised of two men and two women, as well as partnerships where a woman is leading a man. Effectively, many people use same-sex to refer to anything other than a man leading a woman. To be more specific, the term "reverse-role" is used to refer to couples where a woman is leading a man. In same-gender dance partnerships it is common for people to alternate who is portraying what role. Though there is not a universal term for this, people have referred to this as "switching," "switch," or "liquid leading," among other things. Ballroom dancing where a man leads a woman is referred to as "traditional ballroom," "straight ballroom," or "mainstream ballroom." I have opted to use "mainstream ballroom" as this term does not make assumptions about the genders or sexualities of the participants, nor prioritize one form of ballroom as true and another as dissenting. As is true for mainstream ballroom dance, "pro/am" refers to an amateur paying a professional to compete with them. Following dance scholar Clare Croft's lead, in my work the term "queer" "functions as an umbrella term for LGBTQ people and recognizes non-normativity more broadly "(Croft 9).

Though appropriating an activity traditionally done by one man and one woman, same-gender ballroom dancers are not participating in drag culture. Sociologist Verta Taylor and women's studies scholar Leila J. Rupp define drag queens as "gay men who dress and perform as but do not want to be women or have women's bodies," which is distinct from men following or women leading (Taylor and Rupp 115). As drag is its own art form layered with different meanings, this chapter will not delve deep into motives behind drag performers and how they differ from same-gender ballroom dancers, but will rather highlight that drag is generally interpreted as performing a gender identity separate from one's gender identity, whereas same-gender ballroom competition organizers make it clear that the expectation is dancers compete based on their daily lived gender. For example, at NASSPDA competitions both trans-men, or individuals who were not assigned male at birth, and cis-men, individuals who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, would both compete in the man/man category. This distinction is important because, while drag performers highlight the superficiality of gender through fulfilling the aesthetic roles of another gender, same-gender ballroom dancers highlight the superficially of gender through showing that gender does not affect one's ability to fill different roles.[29]

[29] There is recent controversy surrounding the reality television show *RuPaul's Drag Race* as the host RuPaul said in an interview, "Drag loses its sense of danger and its sense of irony once it's not men doing it, because at its core it's a social statement and a big f-you to male-dominated culture. So, for men to do it, it's really punk rock, because it's a real rejection of masculinity." Transwomen who participate in the drag community have been critical of RuPaul stating that drag queens in transition could not participate in his show. RuPaul has since apologized (Aitkenhead).

Same-Gender Dancing: A Historiography

In *Gay New York,* historian George Chauncey traces the use of the term "gay." He explains that "*Gay* emerged as a coded homosexual term and as a widely known term for homosexuals" well before World War Two (Chauncey 14). "Gay" became "a code word. Gay men could use it to identify themselves to other gays without revealing their identity to those not in the wise, for not everyone…knew that it implied a specifically sexual preference," protecting homosexuals from persecution while affording them great mobility in New York (Chauncey 17). American studies scholar Sherrie Tucker explains that, historically in the United States, same-gender dance partnerships were not read as queer, but rather "held particular visions of possibility," meaning they opened the option of performing in non-heterocentric partnerships, but were not automatically read as already representing a different vision in the moment. Tucker's research on the World War II Hollywood Canteen, a popular jitterbug dance club, suggests that while same-gender partner dance has been around for a long time, equating it with queerness is a modern phenomenon. She links this to a change in American understanding of sexuality from a range of options in the 1920s to more limited and defined roles recently. In other words, the conflation of gender and sexuality has led to a current queering of same-gender partner dance in the United States. This chapter investigates the possibilities Tucker alludes to, both reclaiming same-gender dance as queer, and expanding an understanding of queering in dance as not being limited to sexuality expression, but also gender.

In “Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies” dance scholar Jane Desmond relies on examples of social ballroom dances to show that movement aesthetics can provide insight into social relations. Even though she does not provide in-depth explorations of these examples, her tendency to use ballroom forms for this purpose implies that she sees forms that have dancers directly interacting with each other as explicitly fruitful for understanding social relations on and off the dance floor, shying away from stage forms like ballet to make this argument. Desmond argues that social relations are not “merely inscribed” on bodies but are created through movement (Desmond 38). This implies that social dance does not just reflect existing social relations, it helps facilitate their creation and maintenance. I argue this is because of the assumption that ballroom and social partner dancers are engaged in authentic, and not staged, relationships. In another publication, *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and off the Stage,* Desmond has illuminated the link between sexuality and dance, explaining that, “How one moves, and how one moves in relation to others, constitutes a public enactment of sexuality and gender” (J. Desmond 6). This centers sexuality and gender in dance studies, acknowledging that bodies are not abstract performers, but rather are constituted of the thoughts and feelings of the performer through the lens of the observers and participants. In social dance, this means dancers are not only participating, they are also performing and serving as audience members simultaneously.

Most recently, dance scholar Clare Croft’s anthology *Queer Dance: Meanings and Making* investigates queer dance in “three areas: the stage (generally the concert

stage), the social (the club, the street, etc.), and the intimate (the solo, the duet, sex)" (Croft 20). This anthology expands dance studies' interpretation of queerness in dance by challenging readers to constantly think of dance in relationship to race, power, and to broaden an understanding of queerness to challenges to norms in general. While this anthology briefly discusses queerness in other forms of competition, such as in Irish step dancing, my research seeks to ask how queerness and competition intersect in ballroom dance specifically. Together these various projects highlight the complicated issues and assumptions that are revealed through same-gender partner dance.

Little investigation has been conducted into same-gender dancesport in the U.S specifically. According to the North American Same Sex Partner Dance Association (NASSPDA) website, the 1990 Gay Games included a same-gender ballroom demonstration for the first time.[30] Four years later, in 1994, the first known same-gender stand-alone competition was held in Oldenburg, Germany. In 2005, the first April Follies competition, an event run by a board of mostly women, was hosted in California. In 2007, NASSPDA members met for the first time to formalize their organization. In 2013, the first Boston Open was held; it moved to Provincetown in 2015. This event is run by Kalin Mitov, a ballroom dancer from Bulgaria. In 2016, Floorplay in the Desert, a competition organized by Eddie Alba, a professional ballroom dancer who owns Century Dancesport Studio, was established in Palm Springs. This is the newest competition on the same-gender dancesport circuit.

[30] The Gay Games were first held in San Francisco in 1982 with the mission of "promoting equality through sport and culture" (*Federation of Gay Games - Mission & Vision*).

Though little research has been done to date on same-gender ballroom dance in specific, a growing body of research does attend to same-gender partner dancing practices. Dance studies scholar Juliet McMains conducts research on same-gender Argentine tango in Argentina, specifically between women.[31] She notes that a dramatic shift occurred after 2005, one that is witnessed through a visible increase in the number of women dancing together at milongas. McMains has perceived two related but separately occurring causes of this change in attitudes towards same-gender tango dancing. One group responsible for this shift are women who are a part of what she terms the "Rebellion of the Wallflowers." This rebellion consists of a predominantly, but not exclusively, Western heterosexual women who do not want to wait for men to ask them to dance, or who are frustrated with having to dance with men of subpar ability. Instead, they have begun opting to dance with each other. McMains observed this rebellion leads to the second reason more women are dancing together in public:

> …as more and more foreign women began to be seen in public dancing together, more Argentine women, many of whom had always danced together in private, felt freer to take to the dance floor in the role commonly reserved for men. (J. McMains)

Through this increase in acceptability, queer women in Argentina join the worldwide queer tango movement and begin to reclaim public spaces for homosociality and homosexuality.

Dance studies scholar Cindy Garcia addresses same-gender salsa dancing at the turn of the twenty-first century in the U.S. In Los Angeles salsa clubs, women with dance

[31] Presentation at the Congress on Research in Dance and Society for Dance History Scholars joint 2013 Conference.

ability who choose to dance together in same-gender partnerships are equated with lesbians and are seen as removing themselves from the salsa community and the pool of potential partners men choose from. At the same time, women who are not seen as having dance ability, often white women, and who dance with each other, are seen as lacking the skills necessary to receive a partner in the first place, thus not being read as lesbians but also not being read as potential partners. In this way men salsa dancers protect their masculinity by assuming that high-level same-gender women salsa dancers are lesbians and do not want to dance with *men*, rather than having to face the reality that these women do not want to dance with *them*. Attention to context and positionality is important while reading same-gender dance, as its meaning both shifts other time and space. In other words, same-gender dance has not always been read as queer, nor do all same-gender dancers wish to be read as queer. Complicating what same-gender dance can mean and do reveals with complexities of gender and the conflations of gender with sexuality.

National Organizations

The National Dance Council of America (NDCA), the ballroom organization with which BYU is affiliated, does not allow same-gender ballroom dance. The NDCA's definition of a couple used to only state it was comprised of a male and a female. In July of 2017, it was updated to specify which role must be performed by which gender. Currently the NCDA's definition reads:

> A couple is defined as a male and a female, with the male dancing the part of the lead and the female dancing the part of the follow. This rule applies to all competition classifications: Professional, Amateur, Pro/Am Student Dancers,

> Student/Student, and Mixed Amateur. Exceptions are not allowed. (*Rules & Results, National Dance Council of America* 5)

This updated definition implies that, whereas before the NDCA could rely on cultural norms to dictate who would perform what role, now other interpretations of ballroom dance, such as reverse-role, are prevalent enough that this level of specificity is necessary. Professional dancer David Weise told me that originally the NDCA did not define what constituted a couple.[32] He reports that this ban was written in response to him dancing with a man student at a competition.

In contrast, the organization USA Dance, the U.S. governing board for amateur ballroom dancers whose mission is to "improve the quality and the quantity of ballroom dancing in the United States," has taken the "separate but equal" approach, allowing same-gender dancing, but only if it is run as a separate event (*About - Our National Mission - USADance.Org*). This treatment, while attempting to be more inclusive, suggests that changing the structure of who is leading does change the dance. USA Dance's April 2017 definitions read:

> Couple is comprised of two DanceSport Athletes, one male (lead) and one female (follow).
> Same Sex Couple is comprised of two DanceSport Athletes, either a male/male or female/female partnership. (*DanceSport Rulebook, USA Dance Edition 19* 10)

In other words, a woman leading a woman is different enough as to require a separate event from a man leading a women, suggesting that different genders do have different inherent qualities. USA Dance's official guidelines state that same-gender dancing is allowed at all sanctioned competitions, but "Competition organizers will have the option

[32] Weise gave me permission to use his name. Also, this story is something others can research, meaning that in sharing it his anonymity is inherently compromised.

of including these events" ("DanceSport Rulebook, USA Dance Edition 19" 15). Same-gender dancers are required to follow the same costume guidelines as mainstream competitors, which suggests that USA Dance envision woman/woman couples being costumed in dresses and man/man couples wearing traditional leading attire. They also state that "male/male" and "female/female" events must be run separately unless there are fewer than three couples in the separate events, in which case the events may be combined, implying man/man is different enough to warrant a separate category from woman/woman unless it is inconvenient to have separate categories. Unlike other USA Dance categories, same-gender is not additionally separated by age or proficiency, suggesting that it is not popular enough to warrant separate groups, and that differences in gender are more important to acknowledge than differences in age. Under these rules a same-gender couple both in their 80s would compete against a same-gender couple both in their teens rather than against other couples of a similar age who are mixed gender.

Appropriating as Empowerment

According to my informants, there is a difference between same-gender dancesport as a queer-centered activity and queer-centered basketball. They explained that people can find solidarity in many kinds of communities, but dancesport has special meaning when it comes to reaffirming identities because queer participants are appropriating a heterosexual practice. In other words, a group of straight men can just as easily play basketball together as a group of queer men, but a queer couple waltzing together, an activity associated with heterosexual partnerships, gains power through reimagining what a couple can look like. One woman shared at the Boston Open 2015,

"the best compliment is when straight women come up and compliment me and my wife on dancing because it means they felt the emotional connection." To her, comments like these mean members outside of the queer community not only understand her relationship, but can see parallels to their own relationships.

Performance studies scholar Fiona Buckland acknowledges the power of dance to create opportunities for queer persons to explore their identities in a validating and supportive environment. Specifically, Buckland praises improvisational dance, which she argues is comprised of less gendered movement (Buckland). She recounts a specific instance of same-gender partner dancing in an informal club setting in relation to a "butch" proposing to a "femme." To her, "This scene seemed to equate gay liberation with heteronormative sanctioned couplings reflected in formalized gender-role courtship rituals in dance" (Buckland 121). For Buckland partner dance represents homonormativity, as an example of more formalized dance that reinforces the butch/femme dichotomy, rather than pushes against heteronormativity.

While Buckland sees butch/femme partnerships as being inherently heteronormative, gender studies pioneer Judith Butler points out that the heteronormative construction of a butch/femme lesbian partnership highlights how constructed heterosexual relationships are to begin with. In dancesport woman/woman partnerships are more prone to compete in mainstream style couples, or ones that replicate a masculine dancer leading a feminine dancer, than man/man partnerships, where both dancers maintain masculine attributes in their dancing and costuming. For an example of the breakdown between which couples choose to switch and which ones do not, I will

explain the demographics from the grading rounds of the 2015 Boston Open competition, which also served as NASSPDA's 2015 US Same-Sex Championship. At this competition there were two couples in woman/woman smooth and two couples in the woman/woman rhythm. None of the competitors in these events switched roles or placed high enough to win a championship. In the woman/woman standard event there were three couples. Two maintained separate roles, and one was the only couple, man/man or woman/woman, to switch roles in standard at the entire event. In the men's events there was one man/man couple in rhythm who consistently switched but did not place high enough to compete for a championship. There were two man/man couples in Latin, and though both maintained a division of roles for most of their routines, each couple switched briefly, making sure the audience and judges knew they were capable of completing both parts. In man/man smooth, there were four couples that switch constantly, and in man/man standard there were four couples who never switched. This breakdown shows the varied approaches and interpretations of same-gender ballroom. International Latin, American Rhythm, and American Smooth are easier to switch during than International Standard. This is because Standard requires dancers to maintain a dance hold or frame for all of the dance, meaning to switch who is leading in Standard, same-gender dancers must devise new techniques. In the other categories the mainstream techniques and steps can be adapted to alternate the roles.

Where Buckland interprets same-gender partner dance as still existing in a heteronormative context where "one was the woman and one was the man, regardless of biological sex," these butch/femme partnerships can also be interpreted as a political

performance, reminding people of the constructedness of gender roles (Buckland 121). Buckland sees queer club dance as a means of appropriating otherwise heterosexual spaces, but does not see the potential same-gender partner dance has for queering heterosexual practices. While Buckland sees partner dance as less freeing than improvised club dancing, I contend that queer communities are reclaiming spaces relegated for heterosexual couples through the performance of codified heterosexual dances. Appropriating dancesport is an example of queering a space through queer acts.

One of the benefits of same-gender ballroom dance competitions specifically is the creation of physical space where same-gender couples are not only permitted or tolerated, but literally cheered on. The encouragement from the crowd is powerful—competitors receive real-time endorsements. Unlike same-gender social dance, which also create safe spaces, the interaction with the crowd forms an acknowledged feedback loop of ratification. For example, at the Floorplay 2016 competition, there was one event where a man/man couple had to dance a round of samba alone on the floor. They were a mid-level couple, not competing at the higher levels, but also clearly not beginners. As they took their positions and the audience, comprised of friends, dancers from other categories, significant others, and a few local members of the queer community, noticed that they would be dancing this event alone and offered extra support in the form of a loud cheer before the music started. Once the men started dancing, the audience looked for every opportunity to cheer during their routine. When they hit a pose or pointed at the audience, the crowd nearest them erupted. The samba is a traveling dance, which means they made their way around the dancefloor. As they rounded one end of the ballroom, a

table comprised of women competitors sitting briefly before competing in the next event supportively yelled “YAY” while pumping their arms in the air in a “raise the roof” fashion. At the same competition, the MC tried to give dancers a break between two energetic dances by introducing the different couples on the floor. When it was announced that one of the couples had been together for nearly two decades, the audience “Aww”-ed and cheered, expressing their admiration for this couple. This couple briefly kissed after completing their bows to the audience.

Though a competition, the structure of amateur dancesport encourages an inviting atmosphere. For one thing, there are many levels based on experience, which creates space for new dancers to be successful. Second, audience members are encouraged to cheer for dancing they like, but booing bad dancing is something I have never seen at any competition. This means there is only affirmative cheering, aided by the fact that judges’ remarks are only released after the fact (unlike a sporting event where you can see teams scoring points). Lastly, NASSPDA and collegiate amateur events I have attended are known for their supportive environment. For example, some of the loudest cheering happens during the events for newcomers as advanced competitors want to welcome new members to the community. Audiences will cheer when they see a couple recover from colliding with another couple, for an impressive trick, or when they can sense that dancers need extra support, such as having to dance an event alone. The environment at the NASSPDA competitions is very similar to the environments of collegiate competitions, while the environments of NDCA and USA Dance competitions are more competitive.

One informant shared over a dinner at an Italian restaurant in Provincetown that "people in the queer community are used to being uncertain in regards to questions of gender, so seeing people interpret gender differently in dancesport is not a shock to the system." Many commented that for members of "straight ballroom," seeing these kinds of couplings might cause people to take a second look. Multiple times I was told that ballroom dance communities, particularly in more conservative parts of the county, acted as safe spaces for dancers not "out" in their work places. Another informant at this same dinner commented that "queer dancesport communities are inherently more supportive than straight communities," citing that queer community members have already bonded over their shared experiences of marginalization in a way straight ballroom dancers might not have. When I asked how this supportiveness played out in queer dancesport communities, she shared a story about how, once, her wife danced with a woman at a competition whose partner backed out at the last minute. She described how other members of the community lent them shoes and clothes to make this unexpected partnership happen. Later that weekend a different woman at the same competition volunteered to lead a woman whose pro/am partner did not show up. These kind of occurrences are also common at low-level collegiate competitions, but I have never witnessed or heard about them at privately-run mainstream ballroom dance competitions.

Aesthetics: Re/deconstructing Ballroom Dance

Same-gender dancesport is not only distinct from mainstream dancesport because of the gender identities of the participants, but also in the way the dancing is done. Same-gender dancesport has developed its own set of aesthetic values regarding technique, the

division of labor within a dance partnership, costuming, and which bodies are acceptable. Through these values we see where same-gender ballroom dancers try to push the envelope, expanding how ballroom dance can be interpreted, but we also see where same-gender ballroom dancers are conservative in their portrayal of ballroom dance.

Some same-gender dancesport couples, both men and women, choose to maintain a strict division of labor in their dancing, the same way mainstream couples do, leaning into a heteronormative interpretation of ballroom dance. This means one competitor consistently leads while their partner consistently follows. Competitors individualize their dancing in this arrangement by deciding if, aesthetically, they would still like to achieve masculine and feminine personas, or if both dancers will present the aesthetics aligned with their presenting gender (e.g., do two women dancing together want to look like two women dancing together, or do they want to project a similar aesthetic to a woman dancing with a man). Other competitors switch between who is leading and who is following while dancing. This requires a higher level of dance proficiency as competitors have to learn the different techniques associated with leading and following, as well as the additional skill of switching roles while dancing. "Taking the lead" describes the act of switching who is leading. For example, the jive basic consists of two people "rock-stepping" away from each other, leads stepping back with their left foot, follows with their right foot, and triple stepping twice before restarting the pattern. To steal the lead, the person following can lead a rock-step after one triple step, thereby switching who is rock-stepping with their left and who is rock-stepping with their right. In the Standard category of ballroom dance, a couple might begin a set of fleckerls (a fast rotation step

done in the center of the floor during Viennese waltz) with one partner leading, and end with the other partner leading. Or in rumba one partner can lead an under-arm turn, followed by the other partner immediately leading an under-arm turn, thus switching who is leading.

Hetero-aesthetic as a term was not used by participants, but rather one I assigned to describe women who "danced like men in the lead role." Informants who participate in same-gender ballroom who might be considered employing hetero-aesthetic ideals repeatedly explained that they are not trying to "pass" as a straight couple. As gender scholar Joan Nestle has explained,

> Butch-femme relationships, as I experienced them, were complex erotic statements, not phony heterosexual replicas. They were filled with a deeply Lesbian language of stance, dress, gesture, loving, courage, and autonomy. (Nestle 323)

For example, one woman I met at the Boston Open in 2015 explained that leading while in a tail suit gave her the opportunity to express the masculinity she feels while very much still identifying as a cis-woman. She explained that finding clothing she felt comfortable dancing in was a challenge until she tried on a suit, sharing, " I just feel really good in a tail suit." This assertion very carefully calls into question the coupling of certain aesthetic values with a particular gender identity. In other words, for these women, wanting to lead in a tail suit did not make them less womanly; rather, they did not see masculinity in opposition to womanhood. Women who made these aesthetic choices, however, did share that this vision of the separation of gender from assumed characteristics was sometimes questioned or misinterpreted by their coaches, who were mostly mainstream ballroom professionals who often trained mainstream couples in

addition to coaching same-gender couples. For example, this same woman shared that a coach told her to "man-up" to look more like a dancesport lead. The women felt this demonstrated that the coach was used to relying on stereotypes to achieve certain aesthetics, rather than actually knowing what technique a dancer should employ to achieve a certain effect. It was clear that this woman understood that dancing "like a man" and dancing "as a lead" are equally constructed and taught abilities. She felt cheated by coaches who lacked the ability to teach her to lead, trying to explain dancing as simply a performance of gender rather than breaking down what are the actual actions required.

In the woman/woman partnerships that did not switch who was leading, sometimes referred to as "woman/woman non-switch" for short, there was often a debate over whether the dancers were projecting a butch/femme aesthetic, a heteronormative aesthetic, or something else entirely. I first witnessed this debate among audience members comprised of former competitors who were discussing when they disagreed with judges' marks for a competition. This question resulted in an array of answers, showing that how the dancers felt about their costume choices did not always match how audience members interpreted their costume choices. Some participants did not identify with butch/femme or hetero-aesthetic for their dancing, responding that they were just being themselves while dancing, and wanted to distance themselves from the butch/femme label, which carried cultural baggage for them. Others strongly identified as a butch/femme couple off of the floor and were happy to claim it as part of their dance identity. These women made it clear that wearing tail suits was not a kind of drag

performance, but rather an act of de- or re-gendering the clothing. For these dancesport competitors, dancing in a tail suit very much fit into their understanding of dancing as women.

In a multiplicitous community that is still forming there is never a guarantee that how the dancers see themselves and how the audience sees them align. Many women described feeling like women while dancing, and being unhappy about coaches that encourage women to dance like men. None of the women I met identified as dancing in a hetero-aesthetic manner or like men. One woman who exclusively leads chimed in at a casual dinner that her coach "doesn't like a specific couples' dancing because the female lead is trying too hard to dance masculinity." The audience members also did not find competitors' dancing hetero-aesthetic. In casual conversations many women competitors shared they were upset over women who "danced like men" doing better than "women who dance like women." When discussing this problem, members were constantly recalling past competitions, often in Europe, never making this comment about the dancers we were watching together. Rather than pointing someone out to me and stating "see, she is dancing like a man," they would recount past competitions where they disagreed with the results, describing women who unfairly won as "dancing like men." Therefore hetero-aesthetic was a present absence, or a criteria competitors were silently being judged against. In other words, in a community that has some anti-feminist aesthetics, the defending of masculine women still being perceived as women, not women trying to be men, is an attempt to expand which aesthetics are tied to womanhood.

There was also a divide reflected in both man/man and woman/woman partnerships where committed couples who were in serious relationships were less likely to trade who was leading, implying that leading and following in dance revealed roles taken in their personal lives. For example, at April Follies 2016, I met two men who were married and competed together. One man always led, in both standard and rhythm, while the other always followed. Conversely, couples who were primarily in dance partnerships were more likely to switch roles within a dance. At the same competition, two of the younger competitors present were women in their mid-twenties who both wore dresses for smooth and rhythm, and who traded who was leading about every thirty to forty seconds. When I asked them about how they became involved in same-gender ballroom one woman explained that she was really passionate about dance and that the other women, her best friend, was "nice enough to participate sometimes." This suggests that partnerships based in dance prioritized showing off the technical ability over projecting specific relationships.

Many same-gender couples tried to make it clear that they were defending the ability for two men or two women to occupy spaces seen as heteronormative both on and off the dance floor. For example, some couples showed their belief that partner dance is a stand-in for foreplay or sex though their choreographic choices. Therefore, dancers were not afraid to include sexual movement in their routines, and while some read as slow and sultry, such as subtly doing a shoulder roll while making intense eye contact, others include sexual moments that I read as humorous and cheeky. For example one man/man pro/am couple I watched at both April Follies 2016 and Floorplay 2017 included a New

Yorker sequence that ended with both dancers putting their backs to the audience and bending over so their butts were the closest thing to viewers.[33] They proceeded to shake their butts to the "cha cha cha" rhythm, before dancing away. At both competitions the audience responded with laughter and applause. I have never seen a mainstream couple do choreography that was humorous and sexual in nature (sometimes in showcases couple have humorous choreography, but not choreography that is also sexual in nature, and never in competition routines). In my observations the humor did not mitigate the sexuality of the movement between the two men, but rather helped highlight and draw attention to it.

One professional man dancer who danced as a follow with some of his students and as a lead with others changed his movement quality depending on his role. While leading he transferred his weight slightly faster, which allowed him to be a stable base that his follow could rely on while stretching away. When he followed rumba he would concave his shoulder more at the end of movements, such as fan position, creating a softer line.[34] Unlike another professional in the community who argued that movement itself does not have gender markers, this professional clearly understood the different aesthetics that follows and leads can use to distinguish themselves. Other man/man partnerships had both men portray masculine aesthetics often only seen from the lead, such as broad open chests, transferring weight quickly in steps, and less articulation in

[33] A New York is a classic ballroom step where the lead and follow create a mirror image shape. The dancers go from facing each other to facing the audience, holding inside hands with their free hand extended behind them, often in a high "V."

[34] Fan position is a pose at the end of a basic figure in both International Cha Cha and Rumba. From a bird's eye view, the couple creates a fan shape, with each dancer serving as one arm of the fan. The lead ends with a side step onto the their right foot with the hips facing the audience, and the follow ends with a back step with their left foot, their hips facing the lead.

their fingers. One such couple I observed in high level Latin at the 2015 Boston Open used arm styling seen by mainstream leads regardless of who was leading and following. For example, while in fan position both men kept their arms far away from their bodies, trying to take up as much space as possible, rather than daintily bringing their arms in towards their bodies the way mainstream follows do. Unlike for the women, I never overheard casual conversations questioning "which man was portraying the man and which man was portraying the woman?" The assumption was always that two men dancing together represented two men, and when asked, participants often relied on costumes to explain their interpretations of couples. Effectively, because women had the choice to have one partner in a dress and one partner in pants, women were exposed to being interpreted as either two women or a man and a woman. Since the man/man partnerships always consisted of two men in pants this interpretation was not presented as an option. Whereas non-ballroom dance specific language for women, such as butch/femme, was used in a dance context to describe movement aesthetics, men never used terms like "top" or "bottom" or other terms used to describe sexual preference to describe their dancing personae. For men it was clear that they were always dancing as men, but using more feminine or masculine movement to portray leading or following.

Challenging Body Expectations

Queer ballroom dance spaces not only aim to be inclusive for persons of different sexualities, but also to challenge the notion of who can be a dancer for participants and audiences alike. This kind of phenomenon has been described as queer dance's ability to become "a kind of pedagogy, teaching someone what it might look like or feel like to

refuse norms" and often highlighting the superficiality of norms to begin with (Croft 16–17). The demographics of dancers in my study changed a little depending on the competitions, but in general most dancers were in their late thirties to mid-sixties, with the majority being in their forties. Even during my short observations I saw a greater age range represented, particularly as young dancers found the community. Most dancers appear white, though dancers of Asian backgrounds are also highly represented. Many of the pro/am instructors are central and eastern European (this is also true at mainstream competitions, as ballroom dance training is seen as a vocational training in these countries). This means that most of the competitors appeared to be native-born Americans, while most of the teachers had migrated to the U.S. once their careers were established. This community also included transgender participants, though I do not know the extent as I did not ask people if they identified as trans or cis. One member of the community came out to me as trans and one member was outed to me when dancers I was sitting with told me his story of transition. At competitions I observed a range of body types competing, from petite dancers who have what is colloquially referred to as "dancer bodies," to dancers who would be described as plus-size by fashion magazines. Ballroom dance in general is more accepting of a range of body sizes as, unlike forms that required unity from a large group of dancers, such as a *corps de ballet* or the Rockettes; even in mainstream ballroom dancers only need to aesthetically match their partner, meaning the range of acceptable body types is slightly larger. The same gender ballroom community it taking the acceptance of a range of body types seen in mainstream ballroom to a more extreme interpretation.

Most couples with an extreme height difference have the taller partner lead and the shorter partner follow, in both same-gender and mainstream ballroom dance, whereas couples that switch roles are often approximately the same height. One couple at Floorplay 2016, who the announcer revealed has been together for two decades, had the shorter man consistently lead. This points out that the aesthetic desire for couples to either be the same height or have the leader be taller is also arbitrary and not connected to ability or functionality.

There was also a woman/woman partnership where the shorter woman led. In this partnership the shorter woman was also thinner. In a collegiate circuit, they would surely have been encouraged to switch roles to adhere to more traditional aesthetics, encouraging the plus size dancer to wear more covering men's attire, and the thinner dancer to wear more revealing attire. I have observed that in mainstream ballroom dance classes, there are often more women than men. Under these circumstances, thinner women are encouraged to follow, while women who are not identified as having a "dancer's body" are encouraged to lead. This suggests that if there are more women than men in a class, there becomes an unofficial ranking of who is the most "woman-like," and therefore gets to follow. Like the aforementioned men's partnership, this couple used ballroom as a space to be themselves and did not conform to societal norms around which body types should be sexualized and which ones should not be. This plus-size woman who followed a smaller woman challenged the notion that femininity is determined by body shape; they competed in the configuration that expressed them most, not the one most culturally accepted. A similar tendency is also described by dance scholar Juliet

McMains, who notes that some would call "grotesque" older women who compete in pro/am wearing revealing costumes because they are drawing sexual attention to bodies outside of normative beauty standards (J. E. McMains 43).

These aesthetic re-imaginings are not just organic, but explicitly outlined by the governing organization. While describing the responsibilities of judges, the NASSPDA's official Competition rules states,

> Size and shape of a dancer's body along with other aesthetic considerations, such as choice of costume(s), shall not be considered a judging criteria. It should be noted that the overall look of a same-gender dance couple might not adhere to mainstream standards of aesthetics. In same-gender dance competitions, it is important to allow possible new expressions, which are in alignment with NASSPDA's expressed mission to 'acknowledge and celebrate its origins in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community,' and 'encourage the inclusion of dancers from diverse backgrounds with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, age, [dis]ability, gender identity and/or expression]. (NASSPDA 15)

This quote reveals an explicit commitment to creating competitions that challenge aesthetic standards. By highlighting that judges are instructed to not make decisions based on things such as body type, NASSPDA is taking away one of the main reasons mainstream coaches give for taking dancer's body size into account.

Costumes for Women: Pants, Skirts, and In-betweens

Clothes are an important part of gender performance, both on the dance floor and off. Examining when costuming choices divert from or converge with the mainstream gendering of clothing offers insight into the ways same-gender ballroom dancers re-conceptualize gendered divisions of labor. It is important to note that competitors who are men and competitors who are women take different approaches to costuming.

As is true in mainstream fashion, women competitors have a greater range of clothing options. Some women wear clothing in line with the traditional division of labor, meaning the competitor who is leading wears clothing associated with mainstream leads, such as a tail suit, and the competitor who is following wears clothing associated with traditional followers, such a dancesport dress covered in rhinestones. Other couples choose to both wear women's ballroom dresses. Of the couples I observed, partners who alternated between the roles and of leading and following often both wore dresses. However, women competitors have a third option—costumes that combined the aesthetics of tail suits with the flow and color of dancesport dresses. A couple from New York is known for this. They are famous for wearing complimentary pant suits with jackets that have very oversized tails, thus creating the illusion of a skirt for both partners. This option, unique to same-gender dancesport, creates space for gender fluidity not often found in ballroom dance spaces known for distinct gender roles. These same competitors also switched who is leading and following while dancing, similar to the women couples who both wore dresses. Also, though I witnessed two women dancing in dresses together, and two women wearing hybrid costumes dancing together, I never witnessed two women in traditional lead attire dancing together. This does not mean women do not make this choice, but I never witnessed butch/butch women dancing together, while I did see two men in tail suits dancing together.

One common way for women to dress while leading was to wear a bra covered in rhinestones under Latin shirts or vests. Latin shirts are bodysuits or leotards that often have a very deep "V" neckline. In the case of these women leads this low neckline

created the opportunity to show-off adorned bras underneath. This allowed them to both have the traditional lead aesthetic (mostly black pants, clean top line of a vest etc.) while also displaying something associated with women—cleavage. This seemed to resist the claim that women leading in traditional men's attire were dancing like men, offering women another option between conventional understandings of masculinity and femininity. Women dancers wearing these stoned bras, who identified as both queer and straight, took turns cheering on other women wearing their own rhinestoned bras, shouting "rhinestone tits" and "shiny tits." Though I have never seen or experienced this kind of interaction at a mainstream or collegiate competition, at the same-gender competitions where I saw this take place, these interactions seemed to highlight two things. First, queer women (mostly the professional dancers who were leading their students) were evoking their ability to express their attraction to other women and to be openly desired by other women, and second, the straight women who engaged in this culture (mostly amateur students of the professionals) were using these interactions as an opportunity to express their "wokeness," or their comfort with acknowledging queer women's sexuality.

It is important to note that many of the women students participating in this culture are straight, cis, married women. These women are part of the "rebellion of the wallflower" McMains observed in Argentine tango communities, or women sick of waiting for their husbands to get on board with competing in ballroom dance. This "rhinestone tits" culture was a promotion of women outside of Western beauty standards by shape or age, claiming a right to show cleavage and be sexy, again, akin to the

grotesque pro/am dancers described by McMains at mainstream competitions. There was a noticeable kinship between women who identified as queer, and women who did not identify as queer but were marginalized by beauty standards due to age, race, or shape. One of the cis-straight women who chose to compete with a woman instructor explained that at first she was just taking lessons with an instructor she liked and trusted, and only later did she learn that competing with her was an option. Another woman explained that same-gender pro/am was both a more positive experience and more affordable.

Like mainstream couples and men/men couples, women/women partnerships would often have choreography that required the follow to place their hands on the lead's chest. Instead of aiming lower, for the woman lead's stomach, or higher, or the woman lead's shoulder, the woman follow would make direct contact with the woman lead's bra and breasts. This primarily happens in pro/am couples competing in rhythm and latin where the follow was the student. As a consequence of women touching each others' breasts while performing, I observed these women also touched each others' breasts while off the floor in mostly non-sexual contexts, such as trying to soothe a dancer experiencing stage fright, trying to get someone's attention, or in a congratulatory manner. Effectively, these women would touch each others' breasts in instances where it is more common to pat or rub someone's forearm.

This practice can be read a few ways. One is as hetero-feminine, existing in a social economy that assumes touching breasts between women is not sexual. This interpretation can be seen as evidence of heteronormativity- assuming that the two women involved are not sexually attracted to each other, destigmatizing this physical

contact the same way breasts exams by physicians are not read as sexual. Another, although not mutually exclusive reading of the rhinestone tit culture, is a queering of friendships between women who are not afraid to express physical affection for each other because of the absence of a male gaze. These women, who identify across the sexuality spectrum from queer to bi-sexual to straight, were not operating under the assumption that physical contact between them was for the viewing pleasure of men present; rather, they interacted with each other in a way that was authentic to their relationships.

At one competition I competed as a follow in a dress that had a stoned bra incorporated into the top, and I knew I had been accepted by my fellow competitors when they started also touching my chest as a sign of congratulations and cheering me on with shouts of "rhinestone tits." Though this kind of attention in any other scenario might have offended me, in this environment it felt like an acknowledgment that I was not viewed as a visitor in this space, a researcher only present for a day, but rather viewed as a member of the community.

Couples who do dress in traditional ballroom costumes (such as one dancer in a tail suit and the other in a dress) are more likely to perform the gender binaries in line with their costumes through their dancing, while more ambiguous costumes, or costume choices unique to same-gender dancesport, allow for more gender fluidity in the performance itself. In this way costumes that denote masculine and feminine aesthetics become symbols of dancers who also use masculine and feminine aesthetics in their dancing. Women noted that they felt more pressure to do hair and make-up at higher

levels, which is consistent with women I have interviewed on the collegiate circuit. Men did not report feeling more pressure in the area of personal grooming as they advanced in level.

Multiple people mentioned a shift over the last five years from women dressing androgynously while leading to more masculinely. While some described this shift as sad because they felt it was due to women feeling pressured to look like men to succeed, others saw this shift as women feeling comfortable enough to wear the masculine attire they had always longed to wear and using ballroom dance competitions as a space place to do it. One woman told me she felt her best in a tux, and her wife quickly commented, "She was born to wear a tux." Many informants hypothesized about what point an alternative outfit would get marked over a tail suit, as most in the community feel tail suit wearing women are consistently favored by judges over non-tail suit wearing women. This is interesting because, all things being equal, according to NASSPDA guidelines, judges are supposed to favor couples who switch roles because it is an additional skill, and I never saw a woman wearing a tail suit follow, even just for a portion of the routine. Here informants are implying that judges, who might be former competitors from the mainstream ballroom community, have an implicit bias for couples that resemble more traditional ballroom dance.

Costumes for Men: Maintaining Masculinity in Queer Spaces

Men competitors' costuming often consists of both dancers wearing traditional lead dancesport attire, such as tail suits, matching Latin V-neck shirts, or vests. This suggests that same-gender men competitors do not want to perform or appear as drag

performers, implying they still feel confined by what society deems is socially acceptable for men to wear. Men strive to maintain their masculinity while performing tasks often assigned to women, such as following in ballroom dance. This might signify that most men in same-gender ballroom dancers, while challenging norms, are still operating under many of the social constructions derived from hetero-aesthetic dancesport, such as their masculine clothing choices.

A contingency of men ballroom dancers from the East Coast consistently played with attire more than men competitors from other parts of the country. One man sewed fringe along the waistband of his Latin pants. The rest of his outfit was in line with what men in mainstream competitions wear, but his black fringe gave him extra movement while doing the turns associated with the follow's part. Another man danced smooth as a follow while wearing an oversize, black collared men's shirt. He did not tuck in this shirt, and instead used it in sweeping motions the same way that women in smooth often use their dresses. There were also men who wore what looked like traditional men's ballroom attire but added sequins to the side seam of their pants (in mainstream ballroom dance men's Latin shirts often have rhinestones on them, but their pants are usually unadorned). A group of men also used silver glitter stickers to decorate their faces, something neither men nor women would do at mainstream competitions. Two high-level men from the East Coast competing in American Smooth wore Revolutionary War-like coats, made out of cream tapestry fabric. The coats were ill-fitting and were not made out of fabric that allowed for a lot of movement, but their design gave the men the same swishing action of a skirt while reading as hyper-masculine. Two men from California also maintained a

traditional look in standard by both wearing matching vests, adding personal flair by wearing wooden bow-ties, as opposed to fabric.

The same-gender ballroom community does not participate in drag, and the genders represented when competing align with the participants' daily expressed genders. Through casual conversations at competitions I noticed a habit of same-gender ballroom dancers distancing themselves from the drag queen community, some explicitly through reminding me that dancesport is an entirely different activity, and others implicitly through explaining the rules of competitions, such as a "transgender person should dance in the category appropriate to the gender that he or she uses to live his or her life" ("Boston Open DanceSport"). Some competitors even shared that certain competitions banned men from wearing dresses while competing. I have not been able to corroborate this claim, but multiple informants shared this, so maybe this is an old rule that is still affecting competitors choices. Regardless of whether it is a policy or a cultural norm, most competitors who are men choose to wear attire that would be acceptable to lead in at a mainstream competition. This means men in mainstream dancesport and men in same-gender dancesport have many overlapping aesthetic tastes.

One exception was a drag performance as part of the show dance competition at the Boston Open in 2016, introduced as "Men In Drag." These men competed all day in traditional lead attire, and only changed to drag for the showcase number. One of the drag performers was very loud about the fact he is straight and married (identities of the other two are unknown). This performance was very much read as drag by the audience and illuminated the difference between same-gender ballroom dance and drag performance.

The men wore oversized wigs and high heels. Their movements were smaller as they worked hard to keep their wigs on their heads during their cha cha, and in typical drag show fashion, the dancers were poking fun at overt femininity.

Shoes are often the topic of conversation, as many feel shoes worn by mainstream ballroom dance women are harder to dance in. The justification some mainstream competitions give for not allowing same-gender competitors to compete in events with mainstream competitors is the belief that it is unfair for two men to dance together because neither of them have the handicap of the heels. Many same-gender women competitors commented that they get upset when women feel "obligated" to wear heels. They would comment to me about how many women were dancing in heels compared to how many were not as every category began. Often they saw any heel, be it a performance slipper or a practice shoes, as an affront to their values, but some were only critical of women wearing performance slippers, which are often very high and strappy. Conversely, one professional more familiar with mainstream ballroom competitions said one of the things she likes about these competitions is that everyone in various ways prioritizes comfort over other things, such as wearing pants or flat shoes if that makes them more comfortable.[35] I must admit that this approach to prioritizing comfort over traditional expectations also affected how I dressed. At the first competition I competed

[35] There is a discussion that also surfaced on Facebook following Collegiate Nationals 2016 where collegiate dancers hypothesized around the reason two men in pre-championship open were disqualified while women dancing with women was allowed earlier in the day in lower-level events. A competitor who was at collegiate nationals and allegedly asked the chairman of the judges Jennifer McCalla on why the men were disqualified. He reported to a collegiate dancesport group on Facebook that, "According to her, having same sex couples (particularly male-male) on the dance floor is unfair to other couples since physical considerations give them a competitive edge." In response to his post different collegiate dancers debated the merits of the argument that men's dance shoes are easier to dance in, and therefore two men dancing together is unfair.

at, April Follies 2016, I wore traditional heels for both my smooth and rhythm events. At the second competition I competed at, Floorplay 2017, I realized that my performance rhythm/Latin shoes were in my desk drawer at work. I contemplated waking up early to retrieve them the morning of, but decided that I would rather dance in my practice shoes anyways. No one commented on this decision, and even after almost a decade of competing, this was the first time it occurred to me that I could wear my practice shoes to a competition.

The distinctions between how women and men are allowed to express gender through costuming in same-gender dancesport suggest that mainstream society still imposes constraints on this subculture, dictating what is and is not considered appropriate. Even though this community strives to offer reconceptualization's of gender roles (some members explicitly while others implicitly), participants who are men do not feel they can redefine these conceptions enough to include clothing that might be construed as mainstream women's clothing, and instead opt to add a queer twist to costuming that is still recognizably masculine. Women dancesport competitors have a range of options for portraying femininity and masculinity, but none of the competitors I observed sacrificed all visual markers of their gender, many making comments that while filling roles traditionally reserved for men they want to be recognized as a woman.

These more creative interpretations of dancesport costumes are supported by NASSPDA's competition rules, which state, "Dance couples must wear functional and festive attire" (NASSPDA 14). In addition, NASSPDA has general rules about "decency and good taste" and the expectation that clothes worn during final rounds will be worn

during the awards presentation. These rules are notably not written to be geared towards a specific gender. In contrast, USA Dance has rules geared towards regulating women's dress (*Our National Mission, USADance.Org*). For example, "Apparel must cover the intimate parts of the female dancer's body at all times (Intimate Area), i.e. hip & panty line area, buttocks and breast area" (*DanceSport Rulebook, USA Dance Edition 19* 23). There is no corresponding rule for men. Additionally, there is a rule that limits the women who can wear pants to those in the Adult (19 or older), Senior I (35 or older), Senior II (45 or older), Senior III (55 or older), Senior IV (65 or older), and Senior V (75 or older). This means women competing in the under 21 or younger categories are required to wear skirts or dresses. Chapter two of this dissertation discusses the National Dance Council of America's costuming policy.

Adjudicating:

Judging same-gender ballroom dance is different from judging mainstream dancesport. Though the judges might have participated in same-gender dancesport, there is no way to officially be a professional in same-gender dancesport. Most judges are professionals who have never done the switching versions of same-gender ballroom, so even if they instructionally know how to lead and follow, they are judging something they themselves do not know how to do. Though I was not able to speak to all judges at all of the competitions, of the ones I spoke to, many were professional ballroom dancers who do not identify as queer, but have been deemed queer-friendly, or are professional ballroom dancers who identify as queer and participate in mainstream as well as same-gender ballroom. I spoke with one judge who competed and coached in mainstream

dancesport as a follow, and identifies as straight. She shared how judging same-gender dancesport has made her change the language she uses when she teaches, from "ladies and gentlemen" to "leads and follows." Currently her focus is on teaching at risk high school students. With her updated language her teaching now is more inclusive, which she believes is not only helpful for students questioning their gender and sexuality, but also generally opens conversations about gender.

Over a dinner of pizza at Spiritus Pizza in Provincetown in 2015, this judge and women members of the same-gender dancesport community debated the merits of teaching students to lead and follow from the beginning of their training. The women participants shared that many dancers struggle enough to learn one side, and they feared that trying to have all dancers learn both sides would discourage people from sticking with it. One woman shared that it is hard to get "dykes" who have been teased for their sexuality to even come to class. Another woman shared that lesbians would drive to the class and then be too afraid to come in from the parking lot. The judge felt that learning both parts from the beginning not only produced better dancers but was more in line with her new approach to inclusive ballroom. These differences in opinion also highlight the different players' stakes, where the straight judge wanted to train people to be better dancers, and the queer participants wanted to be able to focus on the role they most identified with. The women participants pushed back against the judge's assertion that they should encourage all members in the women's only club they run in the Midwest to learn both roles from the beginning, claiming that in their experience ballroom is already hard for new members, especially women, as "gay dancer boys are faster learners and

better dancers than butch women." I asked dancers and audience members I met at competitions about these stereotypes, often in response to a comment someone would make such as "his hips are made for swaying" or "at least she has gotten less clumsy." Many explained that queer men were more likely to have done some dancing in adolescence, whereas for many of the women this was their first time trying dance because they knew they would not be forced to wear dresses, heels, and other things associated with femininity in dance.

One queer man who judged multiple competitions I attended shared during a casual conversation at Floorplay 2016 that, to him, the gender of the dancers he is judging is not top priority because "ballroom dance is not sex." He explained that he is more interested in the technique the dancers display than the story the dancers tell. For him separating ballroom dance from sex is not only important in a same-gender context, but also in mainstream youth ballroom dance. In the brief conversation we shared he repeatedly said, "Ballroom dancing is not sex, you understand?" This judge's feelings on the separation of ballroom dance from sex is in contrast to many of the dancers' feelings that ballroom dance gives them the opportunity to display a public representation of queer sex not often represented in mainstream media. Many couples compete with their significant other, one describing ballroom dance as "a date night activity" and another explaining the "joy of getting to dance with my wife in public." It seems that these members of the same-gender community are taking very different tactics. This judge is trying to justify same-gender dance by separating it from sexuality, while these dancers justify same-gender dance through its ability to mirror their same-gender relationships.

Same-Gender, Different Competitions

Same-gender ballroom dance is becoming more prevalent in queer and mainstream ballroom communities alike. The NASSPDA is only one of many ballroom dance governing organizations that operates in the U.S., and every governing organization has defined a couple separately, handling the rise in interest in same-gender ballroom dance in accordance with their own policies and procedures. Examining different competitions' rules regulating same-gender dancesport reveals how different facets of the larger dancesport community view same-gender ballroom dance. Some organizations do not view same-gender ballroom dance as even being ballroom dance, while others view it as ballroom dance but inherently different from mixed-gendered ballroom dance.

In general, outside of NASSPDA competitions there is an attempt to un-queer, or re-norm, same-gender ballroom. The NDCA does not allow it, demonstrating the view that ballroom dance does not have space for queering, while USA Dance condones same-gender dancesport as long as it is run as a separate event, demonstrating the desire for containing the queering to secondary events. Collegiate competitions often reject same-gender as being inherently queer, choosing to read it as desperate women who cannot find men partners, which maintains the hierarchy that normative partnerships are better. Even on television shows like *Dancing with the Stars* same-gender ballroom dance is seen as "brave" rather than counter-normative. This section outlines the treatment of same-gender ballroom dance across subsets of the ballroom community, demonstrating both the reach and rejection of same-gender ballroom dance.

Youth Engagement in Same-Gender Dancesport:

Most collegiate competitions allow same-gender dancing, even if they do not encourage it. Two women dancing together is more common, and is interpreted as a last resort for women who cannot find "real" partners. When two men dance together it is often seen as a joke. For example, every year at the DC Dancesport Inferno, the collegiate competition hosted by the University of Maryland, there is a spoof Latin competition of same-gender couples. All of the years that I attended (2010, 2011, 2012), couples who correctly danced together fared more poorly than couples who mocked Latin dancing, often performing a striptease. Man/man couples also consistently did better, and woman/woman dancing together was not as funny as two men dancing together.

At the Claremont Colleges 2015 competition, the organizers ran a session where competitors could ask judges questions. I asked, "How do you judge same-gender couples differently from traditional couples?" One judge responded that they do not care about gender, but they strongly oppose couples who switch who is leading and who is following because they cannot keep track of what is happening, stating, "Just don't switch, then I don't know what is going on." Another judge commented that at low-level syllabus competitions that are comprised of mostly newcomers, like this collegiate competition, it does not matter, but that she is unsure of how she would judge higher-level same-gender dancers in comparison to mainstream couples. Both of these responses assume same-gender dancing would only ever be judged at low level, amateur competitions, implying that same-gender dancesport is not as serious as mainstream dancesport.

NASSPDA competitions have various levels of collegiate and youth participation. The 2017 Boston Open had a youth division. All of the girls danced with a man instructor in pro/am. There was only one boy and he competed with a girl in student/student. This was not an advertised category, meaning the teacher's connection to the community is what allowed the youth to participate. Families of the children competitors stayed to cheer for same-gender couples, and when asked, they told me they thought the atmosphere of this competition was more friendly than other ones they had taken their kids too. Also noteworthy was the fact that, though most of the participants at this competition read as white, the youth division was the most racially diverse. I casually talked with the family of two of the competitors, both women of color in their pre-teens, while their younger brother climbed on my lap to get a better view of their dancing. When I asked their aunt why they chose to work with this specific instructor, she described "just feeling more comfortable" with him compared to other instructors. Though never verbalized by the family, my observations of this instructor, from the very diverse students population he cultivated to his treatment of them while off the dancefloor (from giving an animated motivational speech I could not hear, to high-fiving all of the students before and after their events) was that his vision of ballroom dance as being about more than a man dancing with a woman also enabled him to envision children of different backgrounds as having space for success on the dance floor. In other words, queering ballroom dance can mean resisting the normative, whether in terms of gender or race. Many of the children social danced together in same-gender partnerships, showing that even though they competed in traditional couples, their vision of ballroom

dance was also more inclusive, and they were at least minimally trained in both roles. At the same competition, I met one collegiate couple who competes as woman/woman non-switch on the collegiate circuit. This was their first same-gender specific competition and they were excited to not be the only same-gender couple. Where they were used to their partnership being treated as a last resort, they enjoyed having their partnership as legitimate.

At Floorplay in the Desert 2017, a man professional competed with a sixteen-year-old boy of Asian descent in Latin. The boy exclusively led his teacher in choreography he could easily do with a girl his age; in other words, the coach did not modify the choreography because they were a same-gender youth pro/am couple. For example, the pro kept moments where he as a follow would place his hand on the boy's chest. Again the family of child was cheering for both their child and other couples competing.

I include these examples of youth participation for two reasons. The first is to show that the acceptability of same-gender ballroom dance is not purely generational. The students who mock same-gender ballroom dance in "fun dance" events at collegiate competitions are reinforcing the idea that same-gender ballroom dance is inherently separate from, and inherently inferior to, mainstream ballroom. This shows that it is not a given that same-gender ballroom dance is becoming more accepted in dancesport at large with youth participants. Second, I include youth's interactions with same-gender ballroom dance to counter the worn argument that society must protect children from queerness. During marriage equality debates the idea that same-gender marriage would

hurt youth was a popular argument. My observations of youth participating in same-gender ballroom is just another example of how queerness is about more than sexuality, it is about breaking normativity. Same-gender ballroom dance instructors acknowledge that a ballroom couple does not have to be constituted by a white man leading a white woman, creating space for ballroom dancers of different ethnic backgrounds.

Same-gender ballroom dancing on the Small Screen

It is worth noting that same-gender ballroom is starting to gain attention in the population at large. I contextualize my ethnographic study through viewing the presences and absences of same-gender ballroom on popular television shows. On these shows, same-gender ballroom dancers are not attributed with the innovation of same-gender ballroom, but rather mainstream dancers are seen as "brave" and "groundbreaking" for incorporating it into choreographies. This means that even as same-gender ballroom *dance* becomes more acceptable, same-gender ballroom *dancers* remain marginalized.

Israel was the first country to put two women together on *Dancing with the Stars*, back in 2010 (Reuters). Gili Shem Tov, a sports journalist and out lesbian, was partnered with professional dancer Dorit Milman, a woman who does not identify as queer. Both women are white and blond, and Shem Tov is much taller than Milman. Shem Tov stated in an interview that, "For me, it felt natural," referring to her choice to complete with a woman (Daily Mail Reporter). The assumption in the mainstream ballroom community is that straight women only follow, as that is the traditional role for women, and that queer women are more open to both roles. The height difference and the fact that Milman is straight meant either Shem Tov led or they alternated leading. Sometimes the women

wore matching dresses, for example in their first dance, the cha cha, and sometimes Shem Tov wore pants, such as when she led Milman in the quickstep. To date there have been no man/man partnerships. This might be because two women dancing together can still be justified to television networks as something men would want to watch, buying into the idea that two women touching each other is for a male gaze, but two men is not. For example, one YouTube commenter wrote on the video of their cha cha together, "That's a 5 tissue performance. Oh, sorry, I mean it's a 5 STAR performance," alluding to the connection between watching two women touch each other and masturbation (DWTS2011).

Though *Strictly Come Dancin*g (UK) has not had a same-gender partnership, there have been moments of same-gender ballroom in 2014 and 2015. In the 2014 routine to "Rock This Town" performed by the professionals partners, women were dressed as robbers and men were dressed as guards (BBC Strictly Come Dancing, pt.1:34-1:53). This piece, only two and a half minutes long, consists mostly of mainstream style jive and theatrical dancing. In the middle there are twenty seconds of same-gender quickstep, which ends with the man/man partnerships colliding and the woman/woman partnerships quick-stepping over them. In 2015, actress Kellie Bright and her professional partner Kevin Clifton performed a quickstep to "Nine To Five," in which the four men backup dancers performed eight counts in frame with each other (Clifton). The BBC has said that "it has not ruled out introducing same-sex dancing partners onto *Strictly* at some stage in the near future, but will not do so for the current series" (Sawer). This kind of response leaves the door open for the U.K. version to follow Israel's lead.

The U.S. version of *Dancing With The Stars* has also had moments of same-gender dance, but has not committed to a full partnership. In 2016, two stars, model Nyla DiMarco and actress Jodie Sweetin, and their professional partners Peta Murgatroyd and Keo Motsepe, performed an Argentine tango choreographed by judge Bruno Tonioli. The piece started and ended in traditional partnerships, but in the middle Murgatryd and Sweetin danced together in an alternative smooth hold, followed by DiMarco and Motsepe dancing together in frame, even completing a lift. These two brief moments where greeted with cheers from the studio audience, and positive comments on the YouTube video such as, "YESSSSSS FINALLY!!! Bless you Bruno I've wanted same sex dancing on this show from since i[sic] started watching" and "Same sex dancing = big yes, and a big thank you to Bruno for having the courage to do this; would love to see more of it in future" (Tonioli). The other judges also expressed their admiration, with Len Goodman stating, "I love the concept, I love Bruno's bravery in getting the two couples to switch," and Carrie Ann Inada commenting,

> Bruno! I know you, always taking risks! Ok! That was not an easy dance. No just because of the partnering and all of that- that was actually really engaging to watch and the strength that you all showed in dancing girl-on-girl, guy-on-guy is really impressive…(Tonioli)

The language Inada uses again implies that ballroom dance is a stand in for sex, whereas calling it "brave" and "risky" in 2016 is evidence that mainstream ballroom dancers are unaware of the large contingency of same-gender ballroom dancers.

Same-Gender in Mainstream Settings

Opposite role ballroom dancing has become so prevalent that the Brigham Young Ballroom Dance Company Touring Ensemble had a moment in which the women led

tango in their 2015 standard medley. First, with the men leading, all of the couples performed a very serious combination where at one point the men led the women in flicking their heads back and forth very quickly. Then the song recapitulated this phrase, the couples switched places, with the men flicking their heads back and forth quickly while the women stood with their arms in the lead's frame position. Though the women did this with extreme precision, the men were less in unison and less precise. All of these dancers are trained by the same coaches, meaning the coaches could have taught the men how to correctly flick their heads, but for comedic effect they had the men flail instead. This was met with huge laughs and applause from the audience. Men mocking the women's part is what allowed this role-reversal to happen. I do not think BYU would have ever thought to have this moment if there was not a prevalence of same-gender ballroom dancing.

Brief moments of reverse leading and following have also happened in mainstream competitions. A notable example is professional dancers Riccardo Cocchi and Yulia Zagoruychenko, who are known for performing samba roles first with Cocchi leading, and switching midway to Zagoruychenko. Cocchi and Zagoruychenko begin both facing the same direction in shadow position. At first they perform the step traditionally, with Zagoruychenko standing in front of Cocchi, but after one iteration of the step, they reverse roles and Zagoruychenko leads (Marius Mutin). This couple is not interpreted as challenging gender roles, but rather showing their prowess as professionals able to complete both parts of a challenging step. Many people outside of the same-gender ballroom dance community brought this specific example up when I asked, "have

you ever seen same-gender or reverse-role ballroom dance?," missing the fact there is an entire same-gender ballroom dance community. These examples show the prevalence of understanding the concept of reverse-role and same-gender ballroom dance, even if there is a lack of acknowledgement of the community who produces the source material.

Different Visions of Inclusion

NASSPDA is the large scale organization that sponsors the various same-gender competitions I attended for this research. Within this organization the different competitions and competition organizers still have space to promote their vision of same-gender dancesport through specific policies. Below I will describe the three visions projected by the three competitions I attended. One vision is keeping same-gender dancesport as a separate activity, with no movement towards incorporating it into the mainstream ballroom dance community. The second approach is to have same-gender dancesport inclusive of mainstream couples, but only if those couples had some connection to the queer community. The third approach is to make same-gender competitions completely open to mainstream couples. These varied approaches reveal different dancers' beliefs about how same-gender dancesport fits into dancesport as a larger activity.

Vision 1: Same-gender competitions as not inclusive of mainstream couples

April Follies is the oldest same-gender competition in the U.S ("April Follies-Same Gender Dance Competition-Oakland"). April Follies is only open to same-gender couples, as the excerpt from their website below shows:

FAQ #1: I am not gay, lesbian, bi, trans...queer- can I still dance?

> This competition is open to same-gender couples and to reverse-role couples (female leader and male follower). Everyone is welcome to compete regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and we welcome people who identify as queer and/or transgender. There is a place on the registration form to indicate each dancer's gender identity. Reverse-role couples will be judged separately from same-gender couples, and the female must lead at least 75% of the time. *Because the straight ballroom world does not allow participation of same-gender or reverse-role couples, our competition is limited to those categories of couples.* ("April Follies FAQs," emphasis mine)

From this excerpt, it is clear that the April Follies organizers are not trying to incorporate same-gender ballroom dance into mainstream dancesport, but rather want the activity to continue to run as a separate community, taking pride in the ability to create a space for participants and events excluded from mainstream ballroom dance settings. This definition has also not been updated to reflect USA Dance's inclusion of separate same-gender categories, which could mean that the website is simply out of date, that separate categories are not seen as enough incorporation, or that the small gesture of partial participation is considered too little too late.

Vision 2: Same-gender competitions as partially open

Floorplay in the Desert, annual competition that was founded in 2016, is the newest competition added to the NASSPDA circuit. The "frequently asked questions" section on eligibility and inclusion practices read:

> Is this event only open to the LGTB community?
> No, Floorplay is open to everyone, and everyone is welcome to compete regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Couples should dance either as same-sex couples or reverse-role couples (female leader and male follower). For reverse-role couples, the female must lead at least 75% of the time. There is also an open-role category in which any configuration of gender and gender expression is allowed; however, *competitors who enter in the open-role category must also register to dance at least one style of dance as a same-sex or reverse-role couple*. Couples competing in the open-role category are not eligible for NASSPDA titles. (*FAQs | Floorplay Palm Springs*, emphasis mine)

Floorplay makes it clear that mainstream couples are welcome to compete in the open category, but only if they also participate in some same-gender or reverse-role dancing. This policy encourages mainstream couples to come, but only if they are willing to try the categories unique to this community. In actuality, at Floorplay I witnessed many mainstream pro/am couples who did not participate in any of the other categories. When I asked the organizers about the choice to make space for mainstream couples, they simply replied, "We want everyone to be able to dance." Since mainstream pro/am was not advertised as an offered category, the only competitors who knew about this option were somehow connected to the queer community, either because the professional dancers were involved in the planning or because the studio at which the couple trained was informed on NASSPDA competitions.

Vision 3: Same-gender competitions encourage and allow all forms of ballroom dance

Boston Open Dancesport is the broad term for an organization and set of competitions started in Boston in 2013 that moved to Provincetown in 2015. These events are described as "not only competitions, but also a public declaration of the need for equality at all levels of our lives" ("Boston Open DanceSport"). Unlike April Follies, which is explicitly closed to mainstream couples, or Floorplay in the Desert, which is only open to mainstream couples that have some connection to the queer community or are open to competing is some non-mainstream events, the Boston Open declares on their website that their competitions are "open to everybody, both mainstream and the LGBTQ

communities" ("Boston Open DanceSport"). Their website elaborates in the rules section, stating:

> The Provincetown Dance Trophy is a ballroom dance competition, open to everybody and has no restrictions. It welcomes same-sex couples, mainstream and reverse role couples (as Open Gender couples) and Teacher-Student couples, known as Pro-Am couples, where all those groups will be judged separately. Couples, consisting of two women or two men dancing together (regardless of sexual orientation) are considered Same-Sex couple. A couple where a male is leading a female known as Mainstream couples and a couple, where female is leading and a male, known as Reverse Role couple are considered a Open Gender couple [sic]. A transgender person should dance in the category appropriate to the gender that he or she uses to live his or her life and should dance with a partner of the appropriate sex for the chosen category;
> The choice of the role of leader and/or follower in same-sex couples is not predetermined [sic]. It can be the same in all dances or vary from dance to dance or change within a dance any number of times. ("Boston Open DanceSport")

Out of the NASSPDA competitions, the Boston Open is a middle aged competition, more established than Floorplay, but with a shorter track record than April Follies. When I attended in October 2015, the competition mostly consisted of same-gender couples, but in October 2017, there was equal participation of mainstream and same-gender couples. I commented on this demographic change to an informant at the event, who replied, "I guess they couldn't find enough same-sex couples. It's ok, we don't discriminate."

Ally-ship:

Though queer members of the community discussed frustration over straight participants who come to one competition, win awards, and never return, they often cited examples of very dedicated straight allies who have even served as leaders and organizers for same-gender events. At the Boston Open 2015, one cis, straight woman was brought up as the "ideal" ally multiple times, with one informant commenting, "She has been so committed to the community that no one questions her participation." Other straight

participants include women who feel more comfortable dancing with a woman instructor. Some even commented on enjoying the "all girls" that the atmosphere of one woman instructor dancing with multiple women students created.

During my research I came across three kinds of straight men who participated in NASSDPA competitions. One was high level amateurs or professional ballroom dancers who had coached women so much over their careers they wanted as opportunity to really hone their following skills and perform in a new role, or practice switching between the lead and follow roles to become better coaches to same-gender couples. The second kind was married men who would compete with women professionals at same-gender competitions, their wives competing with the same professionals. Their cited reasons for going to NASSPDA competitions include friendly atmosphere, cheaper registration fees, their coaches are affiliated with NASSPDA, and their wives really wanted to compete with a women professional and these were the only competitions that allowed that. The last kind of straight men at NASSPDA competitions were ones who wanted to make sure everyone knew they were straight. At one competition a man approached me because he saw me typing. I introduced myself and gave him a business card. He informed me that he is a minority at the competition because he is straight. I subsequently learned he completes in pro-am with a man teacher. He explained that it has made him a better leader and now "doesn't want to dance with women" because he likes trading the lead back and forth. He is very dedicated and flies all over the country to compete with his coach, and I saw him at competitions on both coasts. He learned about same-gender through his coach, who is active in the NASSPDA circuit. He shared he has experience

with anti-Semitism and connects this to why he is accepting of queer culture. A queer woman overheard our conversation, and afterwards told me she was "upset that he could take advantage of the community he has found in same-gender dancesport while being concerned that someone would mistake him for gay." To her, his need to make sure people know he is straight means he considers being mistaken for queer is an insult.

It is evident that different members of the same-gender community have different, but overlapping, visions for how mainstream and same-gender dancesport should interact. While April Follies is not open to mainstream couples, Floorplay allows them if they also do a reserve-role dance, but functionally "want everyone to dance," which results in only mainstream couples participating that have a connection to the queer community. The Boston Open is truly *open* to everyone. Members' visions for non-queer allies seemed less controversial, with the main takeaways being that allies need to consistently participate and give back to the community, and not take advantage of the community's friendliness while distancing oneself from the community's values.

Community Service over Capital Gains

Many of these competitions also include a community service aspect to their events. In 2015, the Boston Open helped fund-raise to have an AIDS memorial built next to the Provincetown Hall. Provincetown was a sanctuary in the 1980s during AIDS crisis, but did not have a memorial commemorating those lost there or other members of the queer community who went to Provincetown to act as caregivers (Edwards). The event director, Kalin Mitov, organized a Provincetown "Dancing With the Stars" presentation where four couples competed. Afterwards the audience voted for their favorite dancer

with money donations that went towards the fund to build the memorial. In May 2017, it was reported that a memorial design had been selected, full funding had been secured, and its installation is moving forward (Edwards). April Follies has an annual award for "an individual who has significantly contributed to greater inclusion of people of color in the queer partner dance community" ("April Follies Awards"). The Dr. Aimée Tabor award is in memory of a same-gender competitive dancer who served on the April Follies Organizing Committee for six years.[36] The presence of this award acknowledges a lack of racial diversity in the community, and seeks to ameliorate the problem.

Dissonance in Community

My research has revealed that even though the same-gender community is described or seen as homogeneous from an outside perspective, men and women experience and participate in the community in vastly different ways. This contrast was most apparent to me through economics. Gay couples, or two men, have two higher incomes, versus lesbian couples, who often have two lower incomes. In this way the gender wage gap is heightened in queer communities and is expressed in dancesport competitions by men couples having noticeably higher quality costumes, more participants (dancesport in general is an expensive activity), and the means to travel and

[36] Dr. Aimée Tabor passed away in 2015 from cardiac arrest. She was a dedicated dancer who competed in same-gender competitions for eleven years, winning titles in the U.S. and abroad. At the time of her death she was training to be a scrutineer, the person who tabulates judges scores at competitions. She was also a skilled sewer, designing and making her own costumes. Off of the dance floor she earned her Ed.D. at the University of Pennsylvania in Higher Education Administration and worked to increase women and minorities access in the STEM fields. I never had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Tabor. http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/eastbaytimes/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=176886732

compete at more competitions annually.[37] Competitors who are women made this point to me at every competition when I asked, "what do think it's important for me to know?" or "anything else I should know?" When asked about the enlarged gender pay gap, an influential man in the community I will refer to as Seth simply stated that there was once a very wealthy woman in the community who funded a lot of same-gender dancesport, stating, "there you go, an example that contradicts the gender pay gap argument." [38] His response is just one example of men in the same-gender community avoiding or denouncing the problem caused by the disproportionate gender pay gap.

Men's and women's different experiences off of the dance floor also contribute to their different experiences with same-gender ballroom dance. Gender studies scholar Maxine Leeds Craig writes that, "Since at least the beginning of the twentieth century professional dance has been associated with homosexuality in the United States" (Craig 8).[39] This stereotype of men who dance as gay and men who don't as straight can also be seen in same-gender ballroom dance, as graceful men are seen as successfully gay and successful dancers, and clumsy women are seen as successfully butch, but not successful dancers. One informant explained that in the beginning of same-gender specific competitions, women mostly did standard and men mostly did Latin. She feels this is in line with lesbian and gay culture at large. Dance scholar Juliet McMains also notes that "Gay men constitute nearly half of the population of [mainstream] male ballroom

[37] Lesbian women in general earn more than heterosexual women or equal education, but still earn less than gay or heterosexual men, according to M.V. Lee Badgett and Alyssa Schneebaum.
[38] Pseudonym.
[39] The intersection of dance and sexuality is also explored in Jane Desmond's *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities on and off the Stage,* Marlon Bailey's *Butch Queens up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit,* and Clare Croft's *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings.*

dancers, most drawn to the Latin division, where physical melodrama is the essence of the sport" (McMains 27). According to my informant, lesbians wanted a more structured dance that did not require sexual hip action, and gay men, who this woman described as "dancer boys," wanted the opportunity to use their bodies in ways often limited in society at large (swaying their hips, doing embellishments with their hands). She says that currently, the American smooth category is growing, especially in the men's division.[40] Smooth is a category that combines the grace of the standard dances, such as the waltz, this the artistic expression of the Latin dances, such as the rumba, allowing dancers to go into and out of frame and is especially known for providing the opportunity for dancers to create large stretching poses using each other's body weight.

Though the same-gender community portrays an air of cohesion, dissonance and exclusion still exist. As dance scholar Clare Croft has argued, "Dancing queerly challenges dance communities of all kinds to overcome unimaginative categorizations that conceptualize gender difference as an essentialized, physical difference" (Croft 6). The debate over whether men have an advantage over women in the dancing itself exists in same-gender ballroom dance spaces as much as it does in mainstream ballroom dance. In mainstream dancesport men are seen as more impressive and desirable. This stems from an overall deficit of men, and therefore leads. There is also a cultural expectation that women are graceful, and therefore men who can dance are more impressive than women who can dance. These stereotypes, which still rely on an understanding of distinct

[40] It is worth noting smooth's popularity has increased across the board, and was added to Blackpool's competition in 2017.

gender difference, contribute to weaknesses in the structure of inclusivity that same-gender ballroom dance strives for.

Missteps and Misogyny

Informants gave a few reasons for the different approaches to deciding if partners will alternate between roles or maintain a distinct separation of labor by man/man couples versus woman/woman couples. Some cited the fact that leading is seen as more prestigious, meaning for one woman in a partnership to get to lead was a step up in status, and men were more likely to switch who was leading because no one wanted to fully give up the more prestigious role. Put another way, performing the follow role makes gay men contend with femininity, and the homophobia and misogyny that comes with it, in a way that leading does not. At the same time, butch queer women gain status by associating themselves with masculinity while leading. I observed a fear of "too much" femininity in this community, as gay men wanted to be seen as feminine, but still men, and many queer women used ballroom dance as an opportunity to be masculine. There is also a prevalent stereotype around gay men being better dancers, which gives the expectation that they should be able to master both roles, whereas queer women are seen as less inclined to dance and as only being able to master one role.

It is more common for people who identify as "follows" to also learn and try leading than for people who identify as "leads" to learn and try following. I asked why participants thought follows were more likely to learn to lead than leads to learn to follow, and they explained that there is often an imbalance between leads and follows, with there being too many follows. Culturally, there is also a desire to be described as a

"leader" rather than a "follower," resulting in more leaders not being willing to follow. Even the title of my chapter shows the emphasis put on "leading," as no one "takes the follow. "

I had the opportunity to ask Seth, the influential man, about the choices women make to be seen as butch/femme or hetero-aesthetic. Seth vehemently dislikes hetero-aesthetic dancing, which he defined as women trying to pass as men.[41] Seth also dislikes butch/femme dancing, which he defined as one women taking on masculine aesthetics while leading, but acknowledged that this is a "necessary" option for women. These views stem from Seth's overall opinion that dancing and movement are "never inherently gendered," attributing questions over gender aesthetics to only referencing costumes. He also made it clear that he saw masculine movement by men as gender-neutral, suggesting that to him men are seen as neutral, and therefore women are always seen as the agents that gender movement. Seth went on to say, "men [competitors] are more aware of the political implications of costume choices, the women don't care," describing how, to Seth, women's choice to model a heterosexual couple is detrimental to the vision of the queer ballroom community he is trying to propagate of everything being gender neutral. Again, Seth is defining gender neutral as men dancing in traditional men's clothes, since he sees men as neutral. Though Seth acknowledged that women's decision to look masculine is a personal choice, he believes it leads to political repercussions. In his opinion, both men and women should dress "androgynously," informing me that women

[41] This community is quite small, therefore I am not comfortable sharing more about this informant, other than to say he is an influential member of the international same-gender dancesport community whose insight often revealed dissonance within the larger community.

used to dress more androgynously, then one woman from San Francisco began leading in a tail suit and started a trend of many women dancing in attire thought of as traditionally for men. I prompted him to share what androgynous clothing he envisioned, and for men competitors, he still found tail suits appropriate. He also explained that men often change outfits for final rounds (such as changing their shirt) but women do not. I pointed out that for many women this would involve having a second full dress, which is more expensive than an extra shirt. He responded that women could also have outfits designated for finals but they "aren't creative enough." Though this man's opinions might be an outlier in the community, he is a trusted and integral part of the same-gender dancesport community, meaning his views have real implications for other members. It is interesting to note that while Seth felt women were not being creative in costuming, I observed that women were much more likely to experiment with finding things between "men's clothes" and "women's clothes," while men were more likely to wear noticeably men's clothing with a small twist.

Exclusions and Failures of Inclusivity

Though the same-gender ballroom community strives to be inclusive, exclusions still happen. In particular, the same-gender community is still based on the genders of men and women, a concept not inclusive to genderqueer individuals. In other words, same-gender ballroom dance is still predicated on a distinct understanding of the difference between men and women, as most of the competition is competed in man/man or woman/woman categories.

My partnership with Roxx Anna illuminates the importance of language in conversations surrounding inclusivity in queer dancesport. Roxx Anna identifies as a man and uses he/him pronouns, but wears exclusively women's clothes on and off of the dancefloor. Because Roxx Anna is often read as a woman, he competed in woman/woman events at Floorplay with his pro/am students, and registered in woman/woman events with me at April Follies and Floorplay. At most competitions the offered categories are woman/woman, man/man, and open, a category where "any configuration of gender and gender expression is allowed"(NASSPDA 7). This category is also supposed to cater to genderfluid and non-gender conforming identities, but is mostly used by women leading men. Different combinations of these categories are offered for different dance events. Roxx Anna and I registered in all of the woman/woman events we qualified for, and there was only one event that we qualified for that had the "open" category option. Roxx Anna wanted to register for this category, as to him this designation fit our partnership best. A competition volunteer who was helping us register was confused by this registration request, as we had already registered in woman/woman events. Below is an excerpt from my field notes of this conversation:

> Roxx Anna wanted to dance in the "open graded event" instead of female-female graded event:
> April Follies volunteer: we are all about letting people register how they want, but "open" is usually for partnerships where women lead men, "or something like that." There are other competitors registered in the graded women's event, so if you want to see how you compare to other dancers you should register for that event. There aren't other dancers in the graded open event. I don't want to pressure you, and I am sorry if this comes off as pushy, but if you're interested in how you compare to other dancers you should compete in woman/woman.
> Roxx Anna: in response, "I mean I look like a woman" –his attempt to tell the volunteer that open is a more appropriate category for us.

> Then Roxx Anna asks me what I think, and I say we can do what he wants. Eventually he asks me again and I recommend doing the woman/woman category since we have already registered in other woman/woman events. Roxx Anna's face falls, and I know I have said the wrong thing. It is too late to correct my mistake. In the end we ended up competing only in woman/woman events throughout the day.

Through conversations with Roxx Anna it is revealed that even while this community is desperately trying to be inclusive and create spaces for all participants, the language of "woman/woman" versus "man/man" is still exclusionary. Some competitors try to acknowledge cis-privilege through purposefully using the language of same–gender as opposed to same–sex, but many official publications still use language around sex. As stated in chapter one, language like "sex," implies innateness, and is exclusionary to genderfluid, gender non-conforming, and trans participants, versus gender, which implies a level of recognized constructedeness. The community's attempt to switch language is a slow transition. These issues around language help reveal the difficulty in creating a fully inclusive space for genderqueer individuals. Some may argue that the solution is to only have one category, but many women expressed to me that they feel unsafe when they share the dance floor with men. Conversely, men participants I spoke with blamed the exclusion of genderqueer individuals on women, stating that women wanted their own category because they are less successful dancers, and if women were better dancers no one would question having one category. When I asked Seth about a space for genderfluid participants, he also blamed lesbians for the problem, citing that before lesbians complained there was just one category. However he also acknowledges that this question is hard to answer in the same-gender ballroom context.

Conclusion

Dance scholar Clare Croft describes dance's "potential to have a particular power within queer work because dance emphasizes how public, physical action can be a force of social change" (Croft 2). In this vein, same-gender ballroom dance can be read as performance art—the ability of same-gender couples to perform one custom traditionally limited to heterosexual couples became a symbol that they could perform other activities seen as designed for heterosexual couples. One couple I interviewed shared that before the Supreme Court ruled the bans on same-gender marriage unconstitutional, they were invited to perform at rallies in support of marriage equality. In another example of dance as activism, two married women I met were in a ballroom dance performance group asked to dance for free at wedding. As the performance approached the team was informed that the bride and groom did not want a same-gender couple performing at their big day. The women proudly recounted that the team decided not to perform, even though the rest of the couples were mixed gendered.

The very act of participating in same-gender dancesport challenges traditional gender roles by pointing out that relegating women to following and men to leading is based on tradition and not naturally possessed abilities. When maintaining a division of labor associated with heterosexual couples, queer couples highlight the similarities in their relationality to those of mixed-gender partnerships, as Butler has argued. When queer couples switch who is leading and who is following they are suggesting a new form of relationality, where labor is evenly divided between partners, in line with Buckland's vision of queer dance as a site for new structures of power, suggesting different

constructions of queer sociality. Both of these constructions create space for innovative gender and sexuality expressions.

While, in the LDS community, women dancers might see empowerment in moments where men saw docile partners, same-gender ballroom dance is predicated on the notion that the same actions and appearances have different meanings for different participants and audience members. Just as dancing is supported in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because of a specific historical context, and to support specific goals, in the queer community dance symbolizes different things for men and women. The overlapping communities that make up NASSPDA are continuing to grow and re-evaluate in a constant attempt to create inclusive spaces. Only time will tell if eventually same-gender ballroom dance will include space for gender queer individuals, or if, just as a understanding of separate genders is crucial to BYU and UVU's understanding of ballroom, so too are the designations of man and woman central to same-gender ballroom dance.

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Everyone is Beautiful in the Ballroom

Dance as an academic discipline is hierarchal. When explaining this to people in other fields I provide this analogy: if universities had "Science" departments that biology, chemistry, geology, etc., all were housed under, faculty members would fight for resources for their specific discipline, would consider the introductory courses to their discipline to be necessary, and would contend that other subjects should be electives. This is the case for most dance departments, as ballet, modern dance, ballroom dance, and others, are all grouped into one discipline—Dance. The required courses for dance majors reveals the hierarchy, for ballet and modern movement classes are often required, while tap, jazz, hip hop, ballroom dance, and "Ethnic" dance are electives. Even at Utah Valley University (UVU), where separate ballet, modern, ballroom dance, and dance education degrees are offered, ballet and modern dance are required for all dance majors, while ballroom dance is treated as an elective (Larson). In part, ballroom dance is marginalized in dance in higher education due to its middlebrow status and its reputation as perpetuating normative gender roles.

This chapter will argue that ballroom dance's histories of appropriation and commercialization contribute to its placement in the middlebrow. Ballroom dance's middlebrow status will be explored through an in depth look at the third largest collegiate ballroom dance program in the country, The Claremont Colleges Ballroom Dance Company (CCBDC). Ethnographic examples collected while I was first a researcher and later as the director will be presented to explore how ballroom dance's middlebrow status enables participants to engage with gender politics in middle spaces, those located

between the poles of a strict division of labor based on gender, such as what the Church of Jesus Chris of Latter-day Saints affiliated communities strive to portray, and an egalitarian interpretation of ballroom dance, such as what some members of the LGBTQIA and Queer affiliated communities explore. Pomona College is influenced by both segments of the larger ballroom dance community; meaning different students are drawn to different gendered interpretations of ballroom dance. Ballroom dance's ability to both enforce and upend gender allows it to serve many people in different ways. This means that in a form not bonded by other affinities, such as religion or sexual identities, students with different approaches to gender must grapple with definitions of ballroom dance, partnership, and beauty on one floor. This chapter will conclude with future research questions.

The Case for the Middlebrow

> *"... [L]oving the middlebrow is an unforgivable crime against taste. Loving something terrible makes you interesting—in some ways the lowbrow is actually higher-brow than highbrow...Because you know who likes the middlebrow? The unacceptable. Boring people. The easily manipulated...People tend to hate the middlebrow because of its embarrassingly earnest desire to be liked, its scientific and successful approach to hitting people's pleasure buttons. It points out the obvious fact that you're not as much an individual as you'd like to think…"*
> *Devin Friedman, "Middlebrow: The Taste That Dare Not Speak Its Name" (Friedman)*

As columnist Devin Friedman has noted above, the middlebrow is recognized for its likeability, and in the case of ballroom dance I would argue legibility. At the 2017 inaugural Dance Studies Association conference hosted at the Ohio State University, performance studies scholar Judith Hamera presented a keynote address titled, "Rehearsal Problems: Gus Giordano's *The Rehearsal*, Canonicity, and the Place of the Local in

Dance Studies." She explored dance studies' propensity to sideline work created by Midwestern artists, highlighting the ways in which an artist like Giordano seem to be punished in academia for creating accessible, commercial dance works that drew non-elite audience members. Dance critics and scholars similarly penalize ballroom dance for presenting both movement and thematic content that is accessible: dances that were originally designed to be completed in social settings and depict accessible themes. In her keynote, Hamera went on to explain, "the word middlebrow is magnetic, mildly taboo, it's a little judgy" (Hamera). Hamera, like Friedman, is pointing to the connotations of the word: middlebrow culture cannot be viewed outside of the hierarchy implied by the terms. The understanding that some things are middlebrow is so common there is a millennial insult based off of this concept- the "basic bitch." This pejorative is used to taunt young, middle class, white, women who enjoy popular phenomenon, like pumpkin spice lattes, and is meant to embarrass people who enjoy common, easily accessible things.

The terms highbrow, lowbrow, and middlebrow have histories rooted in the racist practice of phrenology, or the study of scull shapes as a means of determining intelligence and character traits (Encyclopedia Britannica). As American historian Lawrence Levine points out,

> From the time of their formulation, such cultural categories as highbrow and lowbrow were hardly meant to be neutral descriptive terms; they were openly associated with and designed to preserve, nurture, cultural history and values of a particular group specific historical context. (Levine 233)

Levine is explaining that the terms highbrow and lowbrow were not innocent categories used to easily group similar things; rather, they are terms designed to elevate and lessen

different cultures depending on their racial legacies. In this racialized context, ballroom dance is read as between white and highbrow, and dark and lowbrow. Ballroom aesthetics are placed in the middle space between the two extremes.

Middlebrow-ness is not synonymous with the middle class, but is highly associated with people who have *access* to cultural capital, but do not *have* cultural capital themselves. Ballroom dance has historically been a dance about upward mobility and dominance. Dance scholar Joanna Bosse warns against essentializing ballroom dancers as middle-class people attempting to exert dominance over lower classes, finding that participation is more likely to stem from middle class Americans struggling to gain approval from the upper classes. In other words, middlebrow ballroom dancers are not commenting on lowbrow dance, they are reaching for the prestige associated with highbrow aficionados.

Middlebrow art is seen as art, as opposed to lowbrow which is not acknowledged as art, but is not seen as quality art, like the highbrow. As historian of publishing Beth Driscoll observes,

> The word middlebrow touches a nerve. It seems to activate contradictory impulses: both resistance and attraction, both a denial of cultural hierarchy and a claim for position within that hierarchy. (Driscoll)

Driscoll is addressing the inclination to deny that some art is treated as more valuable than other art, clarifying that the concept of middlebrow explains the phenomenon of experiencing obvious appeal to something while simultaneously desiring to have discriminating tastes. While highbrow is associated with elite tastes, and lowbrow is

associated with poor tastes, middlebrow is not always seen as a middle ground between these views, but is rather sometimes presented as representing boring, uninspired taste.

Multiple factors contribute to ballroom dance's middlebrow status, including its histories of commercialization and appropriation. While ballroom dance is often touted as being "classy" and expensive, it is accessible through commercialization, marking it as less valuable compared to highbrow forms like modern dance and ballet. Ballroom dance's appropriated nature, which includes a miscegenation of various aesthetics, some with highbrow associations and others with lowbrow associations, also contributes to its middlebrow status. The combination of highbrow aesthetics and lowbrow aesthetics epitomizes middlebrow-ness. Throughout her canon of work, dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild has revealed the ways European and Western cultures have purposefully ignored naming African aesthetics in dance forms while traces of them remain. In "The Diaspora DanceBoom," Gottschild writes:

> Five centuries ago Europeans began to bring Africans to the Americas. Little did they know that, with Africans, they were getting Africanisms—trends, traits, and motifs that have their roots in African culture and pervade our daily lives from basketball to ballet, and everything in between. As much [as] it has been ignored (or *invisibilized*), this stamp has left its imprint on nearly every creative aspect of European-American society. (1 original emphasis)

Dance scholars, including Juliet McMains, have applied these arguments to dancesport practices and have argued that African aesthetics are both invisibilized and purposefully whitened in ballroom dances, such as incorporating a lifted torso in jive, a dance that grew out of black vernacular dance (McMains 153). Influences from the African diaspora, even when invisibilized, remain identifiable as strands inherent in American culture, including in ballroom dance. Many ballroom dances, from the jive to the

quickstep, have histories that originated in or greatly benefited from African diasporic cultures. This is not the first time that the appropriation of Africanist aesthetics led to white movement being read as middlebrow versus highbrow.

Dance scholar Anthea Kraut has argued that part of what led to commercial Broadway dancing being categorized as middlebrow was the combination of jazz, tap, and balletic content (Kraut, chap.4). Through exploring what social capital leads certain choreographers to be able to copyright their choreography, and others not to, Kraut reveals that certain movements were coded as lowbrow, and thus not granted the status as art. For example, Faith Dane unsuccessfully sought a copyright for her contribution to the choreography of *Gypsy* because the judge in the trial, Justice Aurelio, ruled that "Bumps, grinds, pelvic contractions…are not so unique, novel and artistic as might be developed to the status of a property right" (Kraut 215). Furthermore, part of what the judge in the Dane case is arguing is that African Aesthetics are natural and not trained. In addition to propagating the myth that certain movement qualities are natural for certain people, his ruling implies that any and all movement based in non-protégé ability, such as social dance, is inherently *less* artistic than other movement. Under Aurelio's verdict the design of ballroom dance to be doable movement by the masses would inherently make it "not so unique, novel and artistic as might be developed to the status of a property right" (Kraut 215). Many ballroom dances, particularly those in the Latin and Rhythm categories, also contain movement qualities associated with Africanist aesthetics, and combined with the juxtaposition of a lifted torso, these movement qualities are read as middlebrow.

Just as the commercial appeal of Broadway dancing de-elevated the form compared to ballet and modern, ballroom dance's commercial success is also interpreted as a strike against its status. Ballroom dance is entertaining. Shows like *Dancing with the Stars* demonstrate both its wide appeal and readability. Ballroom dance as a form speaks to a wide audience through its aesthetics, and having aesthetics that are appreciated by a large group of people contributes to ballroom's middlebrow status. Whereas highbrow is seen as intellectual and elite, middlebrow is accessible through its reliance on commerce. Theatre scholar David Savran identified "the most salient characteristics of middlebrow to be the unstable, unpredictable, and anxious relationship between art and commerce" (17). Savran is showing that art is seen as highbrow because it is limited, and hard to access, whereas middlebrow art is seen as replicable. It is the difference between getting a steak prepared by a chef at an exclusive restaurant and getting a steak at a chain restaurant. One is a unique experience that can only happen in a specific locale and the other is a mass-produced product. Ballroom dance is a practice that has a long history of "borrowing" and appropriating from other cultures, meaning that questions of cultural "belonging" are less relevant than they are in practices that are still evaluated based on their relationship to "the authentic." In other words, you can participate through buying entry into classes, socials, and competitions.

While dance scholars such as Susan Foster and Juliet McMains have discussed possible pitfalls of economically driven forms like ballroom dance, there are advantages to having a form that has developed a self-supporting economic model. For example, the popular ballroom category pro/am is creating many jobs for ballroom dance teachers not

replicated in other dance forms. In pro/am, an amateur pays a professional to compete, or in some cases social dance, with them, similar to how on *Dancing with the Stars* a celebrity performs with a professional ballroom dancer. While other forms can have a one to thirty or more ratio between instructor and participants, pro/am creates a one to one ratio, which means more ballroom instructors are necessary to satisfy the same number of students. While pro/am can create awkward, even dangerous situations where students feel entitled to instructors and their time, like the ones McMains outlines, it also creates an environment where professional dancers' time is treated as monetarily valuable (McMains, chap.1). The pro/am circuit is a resourceful way for an industry to fund more artists. The dancesport industry is not reliant on artists *donating* their time until they reach a certain level of esteem or working part-time, like other forms, rather they have built a system where professionals can work as dancers as their main, and often only, source of income from early in their careers. This financial system, however, contributes to ballroom dance's middlebrow status. While you could argue that the cost of ballroom dance makes it inaccessible to some, the flip side is that anyone can buy their way into participation.

The perception that ballroom dance upholds conservative gender norms contributes to its marginality in dance in academia, preventing it from being treated as an art form, like modern dance, in colleges and universities. Modern dance, led by women committed to overturning patriarchal norms, carved out a space for dance in the academy. Compared to modern dance, ballroom dance can seem regressive in terms of gender representations. According to Kraus and Chapman, "Ballroom dancing is truly

international in scope; the same dances tend to be done in discotheques, night clubs, adult resorts, and as part of social recreation in similar settings around the world" (Kraus, *History of the Dance in Art and Education* 252). All of these examples highlight ballroom dance's association with leisure in general, and courtship specifically. The associated heteronormativity of ballroom dance is complicated, and while yes, ballroom dance can support stereotypical gender norms, it can also create spaces to challenge gender norms. In the late twentieth century and early twentieth-first century, different participants, for very different reasons, have been drawn to this form, making it their own.

It is worth noting that ballroom dance is a marginalized genre amidst a marginalized field. UVU and Brigham Young University (BYU) programs are outliers in dance academia, as it is more common for ballroom dance to either only exist on college campuses in an extracurricular capacity or as an elective in the physical education department. In these spaces, there is less attention placed on the history and context of ballroom dance, meaning students are left to construct their own understanding of gender in the space, often resulting in conflicting definitions of gender and partnership existing together depending on participants. Ballroom dance is not simply missing from the core of dance history classes and programs because of a lack of research. Rather, ballroom dance is marginalized because of it remains in Physical Education Departments and its placement in middlebrow culture in dance landscape. This middlebrow status along with stereotypes that ballroom is heteronormative contributes to ballroom dance's marginalization in dance in higher education. A better understanding of how gender is

negotiated by contemporary ballroom dancers provides important insights into the ways we conceive of and enact gender and partnership more globally. A brief look at the history of modern dance in higher education provides insight into ballroom dance's fraught entrance into colleges and universities.

Dance* versus *dance

In the early 1900s, the head of women's athletics at the University of Wisconsin, Blanche Trilling, instructed recent graduate and basketball coach Margaret H'Doubler to go to New York and find a form of dance that could be taught on university campuses. Dubious of her assignment, in 1916 H'Doubler wrote Trilling an apology, stating,

> Sorry, it's no use. There's nothing you'd have, or I'd teach. The dance world is all pride and petty rivalry, the techniques mostly defy the human structure and function and the presentation is anti-educational in every way. (UW Archives)

H'Doubler found the need for the prodigy-like skills of ballet to be a deterrent to teaching dance to college students. Shortly after declaring that dance was not suited for higher education, H'Doubler found inspiration in a music class. She decided the best way was to study "movement as movement," not necessarily as dance (H'Doubler). In 1917, she began teaching dance classes in the women's athletics department, emphasizing movement based on anatomy and individual creativity.

In 1926, H'Doubler established the first dance major in the U.S. The University of Wisconsin-Madison proudly states on their website that "H'Doubler helped free dance from the rigidity of ballet" and that H'Doubler's "innovative approach received international acclaim, and has gradually become the standard method for teaching dance" (1). This legacy remains present at most dance programs in academia, including

University of California, Riverside and Barnard College, which center modern dance in required choreography sequences.

Political science professor Richard Kraus and dance professor Sarah Chapman explain that many other schools followed the University of Wisconsin's model, incorporating dance into their curriculum through the physical education department. According to Kraus, "During the 1930s, three streams of dance activity were evident: folk and social dance; tap, clog, and character dance; and, *most important*, the new modern dance" (Kraus 132 emphasis mine). Modern dance was billed as "natural" movement that embraced subverting gender norms, compared to other forms that required specific technique and enforced gender norms.

According to dance education scholar Wendy Oliver, in the 1950s and 60s, dance educators discussed and debated the placement of dance in higher education. Many dance programs desired to be separate from Physical Education, but were afraid this would be impractical in terms of resources. The rationale for wanting a separate program for dance was that the placement of dance in physical education would prevent dance from being treated as an art. Kraus explains that

> ...those who are dissatisfied with the place of dance in physical education point out accurately that in most physical education departments dance is treated primarily as a form of exercise, rather than as a creative or artistic experience. (Kraus, *History of the Dance in Art and Education* 356)

The physical education approach to dance highlights the benefits of instructed, repeated motion to create body awareness and strength, but downplays the less physical, more creative aspects of the form.

While the first departments that saw the value of dance in academic institutions were the physical education departments, the second group of educators who welcomed dance into their curriculum were in theater departments. Kraus explains,

> In those colleges which [sic] have strong liberal arts traditions, placing major emphasis on the arts and humanities, there will be an increasing tendency to promote dance as a theater art, independent of physical education. In such institutions, some dance may continue to be offered on a 'service' basis for all students by the physical education department, but the advanced sequences in modern dance and ballet, as well as choreography, production, and other specialized courses, will be offered by the separate dance department. (Kraus, *History of the Dance in Art and Education* 358)

Kraus's use of the word "service" reveals that middlebrow forms of dance are acknowledged as having some value for the average college student, which is why they continued to be offered on college campuses. What is strange about dance departments' reliance on modern and ballet technique is that the very nature of the forms being highbrow indicates they are common within academic dance departments but not a part of popular media. Kraus points out,

> In the field of modern dance --which represents the core of most college performing arts dance majors--there is almost *no* full-time employment for dancers as members of companies performing professionally. (Kraus, *History of the Dance in Art and Education* 360)

The prestige of highbrow art over low and middlebrow leads dance departments to focus on less commercially successful forms. There is a relationship between the status a dance form has and its place in the commercial marketplace. Though judging the economic profitability of dance is not, and should not be, the measure by which dance is included in higher education, other academic disciplines use the promise of career prospects to

bolster their contributions for students. The focus on highbrow art forms diminishes this claim in dance departments.

The placement of dance on university campuses determines what forms are categorized as *Dance as art* and what forms are *dance as entertainment*. As dance education scholar Wendy Oliver states,

> Since the early eighties, ballroom, folk, and tap dance have continued to thrive, and jazz dance has zoomed to popularity; however, modern dance and ballet have continued to form the core of dance programs. (3)

This positions ballet and modern as intellectual forms and necessary foundations for both technical and intellectual careers, whereas popular forms are too commercial and thus are dismissed as lowbrow. Virginia Moomaw, described as the artistic mother of a generation of dancers at University of North Carolina, Greensboro (Dillard), wrote,

> A student [dance major] should gain an understanding of *what dance is as an art* form and how it differs as such from dance as entertainment, social exercise, religious ritual or therapy...He should have an opportunity to study choreography, to learn to recognize good choreography, and to be intolerant of poor choreography. (Haberman and Meisel 59)

The emphasis Moomaw puts on choreography at the core of dance education dismisses forms that do not center choreography or creative genius, such as ballroom dance, folk dance, and other low and middlebrow forms. Moomaw specifies that Dance that is art is not the same as dance that is entertainment, and an appreciation and understanding of Dance as art must be gained through academically supported education, while dance as social or cultural can be enjoyed without academically supported education. Additionally, Moomaw assumes dance students will be men, making men the arbiters of taste. In 1981, Richard Kraus explained in his book, *History of the dance in art and education*, that,

> A second type of arrangement which is likely to grow involves two dance majors; one in dance educations (to prepare teachers) in departments of physical education, and the second in dance as a performing art, either independent or in another arts-oriented department [likely to occur in large state schools]." (Kraus, *History of the Dance in Art and Education* 358)

Utah Valley University's program is an example of an institution that has multiple dance degrees to serve different purposes. At UVU students can receive Bachelors of Fine Arts in ballet and modern dance, but Bachelors of Science in ballroom dance and dance education. BFA's are designed to train elite performers while BS's are touted as preparing students for careers as teachers.

It is worth noting the difference between first and second editions of *History of the Dance in Art and Education* by Kraus and Chapman, published in 1969 and 1981 respectively. The second edition includes a chapter titled "Ethnic, Folk, Ballroom, and Jazz Dance," absent in the first edition, which shows an acknowledgement of the growing prevalence and importance of ballroom dance in university settings. Despite the addition of this topic, this chapter is one of the shortest in the book, just over eleven pages long, with only one page dedicated to ballroom dance.

Ballroom dance is billed as standardized, which comes out of its history of being commercialized, which makes it convenient as an activity, but distances it from Dance as art that values uniqueness. Despite Kraus and Chapman's limited attention, the authors admit that "Overall, social dancing is certainly the most popular dance form in terms of public awareness and direct participation," revealing that there is an inverse correlation between how elite something is and how widely practiced it is outside the university (Kraus, *History of the Dance in Art and Education* 253).

All dance classes were first brought to university campus via physical education classes. While BYU has a dedicated and revered ballroom program within the dance department, it is much more common for ballroom dance to exist in higher education as an extracurricular activity. Many of the colleges and universities that do offer ballroom dance classes for credit, including The University of Vermont, Cornell, Portland State University, MIT, Utah State University, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Lewis and Clark, and Brandeis, do so through the Physical Education departments. The college I work at, Pomona College, also has ballroom dance in the Physical Education department. This allows the dance departments to center ballet and modern in their technique classes and only explore other movement forms in the theoretical sphere, while students still have access to ballroom dance on campus. The implicit claim this placement makes is that ballroom dance is not a form of art, like modern dance, or the basis of all movement practices, like ballet, or a cultural form, like hip hop or "Ethnic" dance. The fact that other Dance forms have since been moved to Dance departments while ballroom dance has stayed in P.E., or is only offered as an extracurricular activity, highlights the assumption that ballroom dance is inherently less artistic. It is clear that some forms of dance are *Dance* and others are *dance*.

Basic Ballroom Bitch

A pivotal chain of events in my life started with an assignment in an introduction to ethnographic methods class taught by anthropologist Christina Schwenkel. We were instructed to conduct ethnographic research at an off-campus site in various capacities over the course of a quarter, participating, observing, and recording in-depth interviews.

This led to my ethnographic project at Pomona College in the fall of 2014. After observing more classes, performances, and social events than I was supposed to do for the assignment, I was invited to continue my relationship with the Claremont Colleges Ballroom Dance Company (CCBDC) as an artist in residence. I choreographed for the CCBDC in the spring of 2015, fall of 2015, and spring of 2016. By that point the organization had undergone multiple changes, losing their longest serving director and having an interim director who could only serve for one semester. Pomona College held a search for a new, permanent director and, due in part to my history with the program, I was selected as the fifth director of the program and the first woman to hold the position.

Instantly I went from a curious graduate student to a leader in the community. People who were informants became students in my classes—classes I had previously observed. When students would try to get away with things, telling me how things were done in the past, I could refer to my field notes to verify what actually happened. I also suddenly had a platform of over a hundred students looking to me to define what ballroom dance would mean to them. I realize this predicament is common for tenured professors, who are both experts in their field and teachers in their classrooms, but it was definitely an adjustment for me.

This also changed my relationship to my other field sites. The CCBDC was founded by a BYU alum, Wes Acker, meaning that when I conducted my ethnographic projects at BYU I was not entering the space as a random graduate student, but as the person entrusted with upholding the legacy of a program indebted to BYU. The second director of the CCBDC, Chris Witt, was also a BYU alum, is currently a professor and

director of the UVU ballroom dance program, and wrote the only history of the BYU ballroom dance program as his master's thesis. These connections meant that my conversations with Curt Holman and Chris Witt would often float between interviews and mentoring sessions. They were both my informants and my new, wiser colleagues.

This shift in perspective had pros and cons. The imposter syndrome that I felt as a graduate student was only amplified when faced with my new role. At the same time, I became deeply embedded in the communities I was working with, in a way I could have never achieved as only a graduate student. I became an agent in the community I was observing and understood the context of my informants' answers in a way I could only by virtue of being with them every day for years.

Aside from my relationship with Pomona College, I still actively compete in amateur ballroom dance. There have been times when this has made me feel defensive about my research, such as when someone's experience in the community did not match my own, but this strong connection to the community also gave me a sense of purpose. I was not just completing this research for a degree, I was completing this research because these vibrant communities were missing from the archives, and from syllabi for dance history and dance studies classes. Therefore, my extreme insider status proved to be a catch-22: my extreme insider status is what granted me access, but also precluded me from being an objective in research.

In many ways, my initial attraction to ballroom dance is the same as the informants' described in ethnomusicologist and dance ethnographer Joanna Bosse's book *Becoming Beautiful: Ballroom Dance in the American Heartland.* Bosse explores the

"narrative of becoming beautiful and its relationship to the experience that inspires it" through observations and interviews with white American dancers in rural Illinois (3). She focuses on amateur dancers, many whom are married couples looking to reconnect, or singles looking for significant others, who primarily dance ballroom in social settings.

Bosse ends every interview by asking participants to finish the sentence, "When I am dancing I feel…" (92). Many participants offer answers such as: like a princess, like a gentleman, or other things that equally invoke affluent, gendered, stereotypes that reinforce heterosexuality. Therefore, Bosses finds that, for her informants, "Becoming beautiful through ballroom dance is, to a significant degree, about *becoming gendered*" (Bosse 95 emphasis mine). Bosse's informants use words like classy, elegant, and floating to describe how they feel dancing the waltz, a dance associated with the European bourgeoisie, whereas they characterize dances like rumba as an opportunity to explore and embody sexuality they associated with South America. These responses reveal the intersection of class, race, and gender, as well as their conflation. For example, otherness is conflated with sexiness, just as elegance is conflated with whiteness, while also highlighting the differentiation of gender as crucial to ballroom dance as an experience.

While I always seemed to be too much *something* for other dance forms—too fat for ballet, too unimaginative for modern, too white for hip hop—I instantly felt welcomed in ballroom dance. I could be good at ballroom, dare I say even beautiful, while doing it. Ballroom was more than a dance I could hope to participate in; it was a community I knew I could be in. Bosse explains that ballroom dancers do not simply *feel*

beautiful, or gendered, etc., but they *actually change* through ballroom dance. She explains,

> ...dancers do not only feel transformed by the experience, they are transformed, if only for the duration of a song. Then one song leads to a next, one night of dancing leads to another, and individuals slowly integrate new habits of being . . . experiencing moments of heightened focus and moving in unity with others without the internal critical voice that suggests change is not possible or that they are anything less than beautiful. This is the power of artistic practice, and perhaps the reason it exists at all. (134)

Bosse's argument is that transformation does not have to be permanent or sudden to make a difference. Much like other forms of gender inscription, it is the constant doing that transforms participants through dance. The continuous doing of ballroom inspires small but real forms of mobility. Ballroom dancers practice leading and following, body coordination, and styling outfits to wear at competitions and social dances. The repeated practice of these skills steeps into the dancers' bodies, affecting the way they feel on the dance floor, and in some cases, how they feel off the floor. Idealized versions of genders are created, explored, and challenged, whether it is through embodying the idealized version of a man leading a woman, or exploring what it feels like to embody a relationship that practices an equality of roles. Where dance forms like modern are billed as enabling participants to experience progressive expressions of gender, ballroom dance is seen as propagating a regressive form of gender, and concepts of ballroom outside of traditional gender roles have not made it to all college campuses yet.

I like the qualities that make ballroom dance middlebrow, and know that by liking those qualities I am hurting my status as a dance expert. In my own dancing, I wear long fake nails covered in rhinestones, dresses with cleavage and cutouts, and strap heels to

my feet. I like feeling pretty and feminine. I like the legibility of ballroom dance. My dancing journey has come a long way from when I felt masculine while leading the foxtrot in my first year of instruction. When I started ballroom dancing I constantly felt unattractive and heavy. I liked leading because, to me, leaders did not need to be beautiful to be successful as ballroom dancers. Through repeated practice of these skills I now *always* feel feminine while dancing, whether I am leading or following. My perception of myself, my beauty, and my ability to do gender transformed on and off the dance floor. My current idealized version of gender, that I seek and project on the dance floor, is not about seeing myself as masculine, but seeing positive traits often associated with masculinity, such as strength, as inherently feminine. I feel allowed to feel beautiful in ballroom in a way I did not feel allowed to feel beautiful in other dance forms, or in daily life.

In the LDS communities I studied, becoming gendered meant becoming normatively masculine or feminine, and expressing an appropriate level of heterosexuality. For the LGBTQIA communities, becoming gendered was being allowed to openly explore counter-normative genders, from masculine women and feminine men, to presenting non-normative beauty standards and egalitarian partnerships. Ballroom dance is used by a wide variety of people: youth participants who act out couple-like relationships at a young age, college students exploring physical contact, older women reclaiming, or finding for the first time, their sexiness.

Pomona College: A Site Between BYU and NASSPDA

Southern California is home to the third largest collegiate program after BYU and UVU. Ballroom dance at the Claremont Colleges exists in two separate but co-dependent forms: physical education classes and a student-run club. Pomona College offers between five and nine ballroom dance classes a semester, which can count towards the physical education graduation requirement, but not toward a Dance major or minor. These classes range from beginning levels for students with no experience, to advanced classes for students who dedicate up to ten hours a week to ballroom dance. In addition, Pomona houses a student organization, the Claremont Colleges' Ballroom Dance Company (CCBDC), classified as a performance club. Funded through the student governments of the various Claremont Colleges, this club has between sixty and a 120 students a semester. Though the CCBDC is located at Pomona College, it is comprised of undergraduates from the five Claremont Colleges: Pomona, Pitzer, Scripps, Claremont McKenna, and Harvey Mudd, as well as graduate students from Claremont Graduate University. My observations of this program began in fall of 2013 and continued through the writing of my dissertation.

The club portion of the ballroom dance program is broken down into four teams of different levels. The top two teams are the Tour Team and the Campus+ Team, comprised of advanced students and intermediate students respectively. Students on these two teams are coached by the director and off campus choreographers who are usually alums of the programs, and local amateur and professional dancers. Students from these two teams coach the students on the lower two teams, Campus and Beginners. The largest

team is Campus, which contains both students with some experience and students who have a lower commitment to ballroom dance, often described as advanced beginners. The lowest level team is the Beginners Team, a group for students with no prior ballroom dance experience, and who often have no dance experience. The four teams have around 120 participants, with approximately thirty-five men, eighty-five women, and upwards of three genderqueer individuals. Scripps College, the historically women's institution, is the college with the highest participation, followed by Pomona College. The physical education classes offered at Pomona College are mostly comprised of students also involved in the CCBDC, but between fifty and eighty students not involved in the club participate in the classes every semester.

Wes Acker, an alum of BYU's ballroom program and a former professional smooth ballroom dancer, originally founded the CCBDC. The second director of the company was Chris Witt, another BYU alum, who is currently a professor of ballroom dance at UVU. Under their direction the CCBDC closely followed BYU's structure and goals. For example, even though other clubs at Pomona had official events with alcohol, the CCBDC was set up as a substance-free organization, and continues to be one today. Both Acker and Witt brought a strong history of formation dancing to the CCDBC, coaching teams to collegiate National titles. Witt retired from Pomona College in spring of 2007, and a recent graduate, Paul Roach, became the director that fall. Roach was the longest serving CCBDC director and also continued the legacy of formation dancing. Roach retired in fall of 2015 and was followed by his former student Jacob Barrera, who served as an interim director for one semester.

During the nine years that the company was under the direction of Roach and Barrera, the CCBDC underwent many changes. As campus politics became more progressive, the students' approach to ballroom dance also changed. In response to this, Roach and Barrera actively created spaces for same-gender dancing, such as requiring all beginners to learn both the lead and the follow roles, and only allowing dancers to specialize in a role after reaching an intermediate status. In addition to changes to the CCBDC, during the 2000s, same-gender dancesport became common at most collegiate events. Same-gender dancesport at collegiate competitions was explained by many ballroom professionals as a result of an imbalance in the gender of participants, often a lack of men.[42] Though this was, and is, certainly true for some participants, I argue that the belief that same-gender dancing is only caused by a lack of men is rooted in a belief, indicative of a heteronormative assumption, that when given the choice all dancers would choose to dance in mixed-gender partnerships, which, as this dissertation has shown, is not true. In fall of 2016, I became the fifth director of the CCBDC, and the first woman to hold this position. Though I did not start the history of same gender dancing at the Claremont Colleges, I have continued to encourage students to explore ways for ballroom dance to be a form that serves students with various backgrounds. 2018 is the twentieth anniversary of the CCBDC as a club.

Ballroom dance is treated as valuable at Pomona College, shown through its resources, but has never been elevated to an academic pursuit. In 2012, Pomona's ninth

[42] As part of my own undergraduate experience the professionals I worked with were often confused as to why I was interested in learning to lead. One even offered to help me lose weight so that I was more attractive and more likely to attract a man dance partner.

president David Oxtoby wrote, "As leaders in higher education, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to communicate the centrality of active creativity to our learning goals." Despite this strong statement and article that is clearly pro-arts not only on campuses, but also in curriculums, the article never mentions ballroom dance on Pomona's campus. It describes the value in having the Martha Graham Dance Company serve a residency, the place for orchestra, theater, and visual arts on Pomona's campus, but fails to mention the award-winning, third-largest-in-the-country ballroom program. Having met President Oxtoby before his retirement, I know he valued the ballroom program, but when writing an article to convince other higher education leaders that arts were not only important, but central to a liberal arts education, he choose to not use ballroom dance as an example of one of the ways art manifests at Pomona College. This shows that ballroom at Pomona is marginalized as being less-art than other art. Oxtoby also wrote that "the line between the curricular and the extracurricular is not always sharp" (Oxtoby). Since my time as a graduate student researcher, my experience with the CCBDC has been one where students and Student Affairs professionals see arts programs on college campuses as *co*-curricular, while faculty and administration see arts programs as *extra*curricular. As the 2008 "Report of the Task Force on the Arts" from Harvard states, "The arts may be everywhere on campus, but they are also conspicuously marginal" (3). This reveals that though many colleges have arts available on campuses, they are viewed and treated as peripheral to academics, not integrated into academics.

Gender between Poles

Ballroom dance in a secular college setting shows how the debate around the definition of a couple is not clear-cut. Gender is not black and white—rather as discussed earlier in this dissertation, gender presentation can take many forms. In order to examine how ballroom dance is being used by communities that are experiencing influences from both the LDS community and other mainstream ballroom dance communities, as well as from LGBTQIA and queer affiliated communities, I will turn to an examination of the collegiate ballroom dancers in the CCBDC. This ethnographic study grapples with the intersection of the middle of gender poles and middle of the artistic hierarchy, arguing that participants in this space are not simply presenting a third approach to gender in ballroom dance. Rather, communities in between these poles contain divergent approaches to gender, meaning the more extreme approaches coexist and contend with each other daily in this middle space.

Examining the way dancers in this community, who have different understandings of gender, interact and negotiate gender both on and off of the dancefloor helps reveal how gender is felt, expressed, and created. The Claremont Colleges Ballroom Dance Company is distinguished from other collegiate ballroom programs because of its location in Student Affairs, a division of the Pomona College dedicated to holistic learning outside the classroom.

At Pomona College, ballroom dance participants must balance defending their own interpretation of gender while being asked to participate with other students who might have vastly different understandings of gender. Two of the most recent previous

directors encouraged all students to learn both the lead and the follow footwork in the beginning ballroom dance classes, giving students the opportunity to observe that the assignment of certain steps and roles to different genders is arbitrary. Basic steps were taught as inverses of themselves and students were encouraged to rotate throughout the class. In my observations, this often resulted in two women dancing together or a man dancing with a woman, regardless of who was leading. In one beginning quickstep class one man went out of his way to dance with other men, and though his fellow students never objected, he consistently had to be the one to initiate dancing in man/man partnerships. When I asked him to dance during the class he obliged, and visibly brightened when I offered to lead. My interaction with him leads me to believe that his desire to dance with men was less about his sexual identity, and more about his desire to follow. When paired with a woman the assumption was that he, as a man, would lead.

In the intermediate Latin dance classes at Pomona College I participated in as a researcher, I consistently led because many more of the students wanted to follow. Most of the time I was the only woman leading, but a couple of times there were one or two other women who would also lead. Consistently there was one woman student who avoided partnering with me. I later shared the observation that she did not want to dance with me with the instructor, and he assured me that it was about her being shy, not about my gender. Though I was never able to ask her myself, and therefore do not know her rationale, my impression from the way she danced with the men in the class is that to her, partner dancing was meant to represent her conception of her gender, cis-woman, and her sexuality, heterosexual. Not only did she avoid partnering with me, she also avoided

partnering with men who were physically smaller than her or not classically attractive. Her image of ballroom was one where she represented femininity, and dancing with a man larger than her was necessary to present that form of normative femininity. At the time, the program made no explicit claims to providing spaces that accept all students across the gender spectrum, only verbally telling students that they could perform either role.

Students who adhered to normative roles rose to the advanced teams more quickly, which encouraged students to perform the dance role that matched their gender. Auditions are judged by a panel of volunteers, most of who prefer the mainstream ballroom dance aesthetic. However unintentionally, this penalizes students who do not dance the role that matches their perceived gender, and students who do not have "dancers' bodies." For example, one man student expressed a keen interest in leading and following, performing in both roles during his first year on the team. However, when he auditioned for Campus+, the intermediate team, he only auditioned as a lead and did not make the team. After his first summer, it was clear that he had taken lessons while off campus. He successfully auditioned for the Tour team, the advanced team, on his first try. Though he occasionally follows in classes, it is clear that he has chosen to focus on one role, leading, and specializing has enabled him to improve faster in that one role than trying to improve in both roles at the same time. On the spectrum of BYU to NASSPDA, it is clear that to this student, the BYU end of the pole is for more serious dancers, while the NASSPDA end, which encourages learning more parts, is seen as the less competitive, but more politically progressive end. Another student found a lot of success

as a woman who was willing to lead and follow. She auditioned for the follow part, but volunteered when another lead was needed. Unlike the aforementioned student, since leads are always in short supply, her willingness and ability to switch between roles has made her stand out as a follow who would otherwise be considered in the middle of the pack based on her dance skills. While specializing in leading helped her peers who are men progress faster, for her, leading and following made her more competitive in the larger field of follows.

Also, the team required people to audition as either leads or follows, meaning that while students were encouraged to try both roles in classes, they had to commit to one role to perform for the team. Historically, the team accepted equal numbers of leads and follows, and often twice as many women/follows would audition. This meant that women who lead were not perceived as choosing to lead to match their gender or sexual identify, but rather because they were not talented enough to be accepted as follows. With over twice as many women as men involved in the CCBDC, following was naturally more competitive. Students often made the assumption that all women prefer to follow, so talented women will make the more prestigious teams as a follow, and less talented women will have to choose between following on a less prestigious team or being on a higher team as a lead. For example, during the spring 2018 semester the intermediate team was short two leads after auditions. I offered the spots to the first two women who did not make the team as follows. One woman jumped at the opportunity to make the intermediate team, even if it meant leading. The other women said she much rather follow, and would rather spend another semester on the advanced beginners team. The

difference between the choices of these two women also reflects where they are in their studies. The woman who decided to lead was in her last semester and was excited to make one of the more advanced teams in any capacity. The woman who declined to lead is only in her second year of college and did not want to get pigeonholed by her peers as a lead.

Many women describe wanting to follow because follows have the more exciting costumes. Once it is explained that they can wear those costumes whether they lead or follow, some of the women decide they do not have a preference for following, they just don't want to be forced to wear men's clothes. Other women still prefer to follow. Dance as art, as explained in the previous chapters, is often assumed to be for women. This means that in general women do not feel their sexuality or gender disputed when they join ballroom dance, whereas the only men who follow in performances either openly identify as queer or have enough social capital in the group as to not have their masculinity challenged, and treat following more as a joke than as an identity affirming activity.

In addition to women who were perceived as being less skilled as dancers being relegated to the leading role, women outside normative beauty standards were also historically encouraged to lead in the CCBDC. The excuses for pressuring larger women to lead ranged from "leads should be bigger than follows for aesthetic reasons," so larger women should lead, to the team mostly has dresses in smaller sizes making it more convenient for taller women to lead and wear pants. Men in the ballroom community also implicitly encouraged this, favoring smaller, classically attractive partners, often resulting

in larger and less attractive women being partner-less. One tall woman fought for her right to follow in performances, telling me, "from the beginning I was very clear that I wasn't just going to lead because I was tall." Slowly, other women who initially said they were "ok" with leading when necessary to help balance a class or a routine began expressing an active interest to both lead and follow. Students who had previous experience with ballroom dance, and thus pre-conceived notions about who should lead and follow, where more likely to strongly prefer to dance in the role traditionally portrayed by their gender. Students with no previous ballroom experience were more likely to choose a role based on other factors, such as preferring to lead because turns made them uncomfortable or preferring to follow because they had trouble remembering choreography. While some students attached a linear thought process to roles, such as "I am a woman and therefore I follow," students without these preconceived notions attached more personal rationales to deciding roles, such as "I am talented at counting music so I should lead my friend who has less music experience."

Some of these women leaders have physical limitations and find that the lead role is more doable. For example, in international Latin there is often less turning for the lead's role, as underarm turns are reserved for follows, and less flexibility is required to lead standard as aesthetically, the follow poises (leans back) further than the lead. Other women choose to lead out of fear of rejection by the men in the class or on the team, expressing that they *wanted* to follow but consistently fail to sign up to perform as follows. Still other women leaders identify as queer and expressed that they are more interested in interacting with women. Because of the wide range of reasons for choosing

to lead, the stigma that women who lead are queer or bad dancers has decreased over time, and the increase in women leading has also led to an increase in men trying the follow's part, though very few go as far as performing in the follow role. One man who has consistently performed as a follow in his fourth year on the team is a cis, white, heterosexual individual. He is confident in both his sexuality and his reputation. For him, following is not about exploring a femininity not available to him outside of ballroom dance, but rather verifies his masculinity—he is enough of a man to follow and not have his gender or sexual orientation questioned.

A group of heterosexual, cis, men, mostly white but two of color, took ballroom dance as a class together in fall 2017. I learned that these men were all roommates and close friends, and they often opted to only dance with each other, taking turns performing the different roles. For these men dancing together was not about enjoying a safe space for queer interaction, or about proving their masculinity through following; rather, they had no prior exposure to ballroom dance and it never occurred to them that it was traditionally done between a man and a woman. Their ignorance about the gender politics of ballroom dance and subsequent decisions to dance in almost exclusively same-gender partnerships affirms the division of dance roles as socially constructed. These men also serve as a control group, their lack of contact with ballroom dance meant they participated in ballroom dance as movement, unaware of the gendered connotations of their actions.

Though the CCBDC does not take statistics on the gender or sexual identities of its members, I would estimate based on conversations with my students that between ten

percent and twenty percent of the students involved in the CCBDC identify as queer. I think it is also important to note that the number of queer students who are involved in the Physical Education classes are higher; I estimate between twenty and thirty percent of the students in the physical education class identify as queer. I think the discrepancies in numbers are due to a few factors. One, ballroom dance is not the first thing that comes to mind when people think of queer-friendly spaces. As such, I expect the number of queer students to rise on the team as queer students in the class discover that there is a space for them. Two, performing in a part that suggests a queer identity, such as a man following, is much more public than taking a class where all students are leading and following. As such, queer students might enjoy having the opportunity to perform the role or with partners that align with their sexual or gender identity, but not want to display that relationship for an audience. Different genderings apply to instructional sites versus performance sites, showing that, though as chapter one has suggested, the general consciousness about gender and sexual identity are progressing, queer students are still code-switching, or decisively changing their mannerisms based on context, often as a safety mechanism.

Ballroom dance on liberal arts colleges is itself a middle space that adheres to the traditional division of gender roles while also creating space for agency. The CCBDC previously had tank tops made that read "real men lift women," with a picture of a man lifting a woman over his head. This shirt implies that certain qualities, like physical strength, are necessary to be a real man, and implicitly shows that real women are small and light. This shirt is an attempt at defeminizing dance, therefore creating a space for

masculine, cis, heterosexual men in an activity associated with queerness (Craig). It preempts the insult of being called queer for participating in dance through highlighting not only the manly, physical quality of strength necessary for participation, but also the way participating in ballroom dance creates access to women, and specifically women's bodies. In contrast, more resent shirts designed for the CCBDC advertise themes of the annual concert, and make insider ballroom jokes about the timing of dances.

Pomona's program also attracts many men who are on the smaller side, often smaller in stature than their women peers. A few of these men have expressed concerns over choreography not making them look masculine, asking things like, "does this pose look powerful?" and "is there something *more manly* I can do with my arm?" These men seek for ballroom dance to confirm and project their idealized version of themselves as men, and men as masculine.

Ballroom dance programs have the opportunity to teach consent in an embodied manner that requires student to engage with, not simply hear or read, what receiving consent means. Due to current events, such as the firing of Harvey Weinstein, some cis-men on the team have admitted that they do not know how to interact with women and are afraid that whatever they do will be seen as predatory. Similar to BYU, many cis-men in the program have expressed a desire for ballroom dance to facilitate interacting with women. Since before my time as director, students in the CCBDC have learned how to ask someone to dance, how to say yes and no to being asked to dance, and how to respond to being told yes and no when asking someone else for a dance. They learn that if

someone says yes it doesn't mean that person will always say yes, and that if they do not meet the expectations of their dance partner the dance can stop at any time.

These straightforward consent practices on dance floors translate into some students using ballroom dance metaphors to extrapolate how consent functions in other settings. For example, in most ballroom dance spaces, dancers are taught that if they are asked to dance and say no they are expected to sit out that song even if someone they want to dance with asks them. The students of the CCBDC often include in their opening remarks for events that "you are always able to say no to a dance," and saying no does not mean you have to sit that dance out if you find a more desirable partner. The students also reiterate that consent is mandatory both on and off of the dance floor.

That said, other students do not internalize these principles of consent and instead use the guise of the necessity of contact in partner dance to create opportunities for physical contact—both with and without consent. For example, one man kept holding hands with his partner after a combination finished until she pulled her hand back. Another time, I observed a genderqueer individual jump onto a man, wrapping their legs around his waist. The man did not hug the genderqueer individual back. It was clear that he was uncomfortable, and he quietly asked his peer to get off of him.

While students at UVU, mostly women, seemed to be trained to be resigned to tolerate or ignore unwanted physical contact, such as ignoring a man peer who unnecessarily placed his hand on their lower backs, students at the Claremont Colleges commonly report suspicious interactions to the administration or to each other as an internal warning system. Students have reported accidental physical contact to me with

the expectation that it be treated the same as assault. This is particularly similar to the environment at UVU, where students were often scolded by both faculty and their peers for cuddling in the hallway outside of the classroom. Ballroom dance then, and its adjacent activities, become a place where it is seen as acceptable to police the physical boundaries of others. While many individuals use ballroom dance to gain access to physical contact, the physical contact is often under constant scrutiny from both outside the community and internally.

Some attempts at progressiveness and inclusivity in secular collegiate ballroom dance are revealed to be superficial in nature. Before I began serving as director, the students were already trained to refer to the two parts and lead and follow, not men and women. However, the students would often use the terms interchangeably, such as describing "follows' bathrooms" as opposed to "women's bathrooms." Another case of using lead and follow to simply replace man and woman came when an advanced student was teaching brand new team members about acceptable rehearsal attire. He rehearsed his speech for me saying, "I'm going to tell them I recommend follows wear skirts or leggings, and leads wear pants, maybe with a button-down shirt." I reminded him that many of the leads in his group were women, and that anyone can wear skirts to dance, just as anyone can dance in pants, regardless of role. He then asked, "so what do I tell them?" I suggested that he could say the appropriate rehearsal attire included skirts, leggings, *and* pants. This interaction highlighted to me that though the students in the CCBDC were trying to create an inclusive environment, gender binaries are sticky and entrenched. Institutional changes in terminology do not necessarily lead to changes in the

perceptions of how gender, sexuality, and dance roles intersect, and occasionally only give the appearance of evolution.

My current competition dance partner is an international graduate student from Taiwan named Jason. Though ballroom in Taiwan is more mainstream, Jason was very open to changing his language to match the CCBDC inclusiveness expectations. In one piece the team performs, a few of the follows dance with props, meaning for the end of the routine I partnered dancers who normally lead with each other. After one practice, Jason told me, "I know you are aggressive, I mean progressive, about the gender stuff, and I am too, but to be honest when I am following I feel a little uncomfortable. I didn't know that. Now I know myself better." These examples show that while participants who choose to do mainstream ballroom dance try to be inclusive, changing gender norms sometimes makes them uncomfortable, or challenges them to reevaluate more than their language.

The ability to "do" gender is a really important reason that ballroom dance can appeal to such seemingly divergent communities, including genderqueer individuals, leaders in on campus religious communities, first generation college students, indigenous students, undocumented students, and non-traditional students. For example, one student who identifies as genderqueer proudly proclaimed to me once that "I am the first person in the CCBDC to perform in drag" after completing a routine as a follow in a dress and heels. I reminded this student that previously it was compulsory for women who led to perform in drag. The idea that requiring women to wear pants to perform as leads is also a form of drag had not occurred to this student, or to other students in the organization.

Once women were given the option of leading in dresses many women preferred this option (though not all women), and many women expressed a desire in leading for the first time. I discovered that many women were deterred from leading because they did not want to give up wearing feminine costumes. Once costumes were separated from roles, more students explored performing different roles.

The students work hard to show that they are open minded when it comes to couples off of the dance floor, but still have reservations over couples on the dance floor. For example, many men who openly identify as queer still choose to compete with women. For these students, creating the image of a heterosexual couple associated with success in ballroom is prioritized over portraying a couple that represents their sexuality. This means that while same-gender dancing is becoming socially acceptable, it is still associated with performing progressive ideals, rather than being associated with high-level dancing. In other words, though same-gender dance is welcomed and institutionally supported, the influences of off-campus interpretations of ballroom dance affects what roles student choose to perform. This is especially true for students who compete, as the competitions happen off campus and are attended by students of other neighboring schools. Students feel more comfortable challenging gender roles in performances on campus, where same-gender dance is prevalent, than at other locations.

Ballroom dance as it is practiced between the poles of the LDS interpretation of ballroom and same-gender ballroom communities contains divergent approaches to gender as both poles coexist and contend with one another in the middle space. Pomona College serves as an example of how the people drawn to ballroom have a range of

desires and motives. Students have expressed to me the desire to confirm to others their own perception of gender, from wanting to be seen as sexy women to wanting to be acknowledged as genderqueer. These varied approaches to ballroom dance reveal how college students are drawn to ballroom dance for many reasons that both reinforce and subvert gender norms.

Final Bows and Future Performances

The title of this chapter, "Everyone is Beautiful in the Ballroom," is an allusion to the song "At the Ballet" from the musical *A Chorus Line.* In the song, three of the ensemble characters, Sheila, Bebe, and Maggie, sing about ballet classes serving as a respite from hard childhoods, as "Everyone is beautiful at the ballet" (Edward Kleban). Just as these characters find beauty in the ballet, Bosse's informants and I find beauty in ballroom dance. Ballroom dance is a social form and not a high art concert form, which invites mass participation and is therefore more accessible to more people than ballet. Like ballet, ballroom dance both supports and allows for resistance to rigid gender norms.

Ballroom dance has been used as a means of teaching ideas about gender, aesthetic and otherwise, for its entire history. While currently more communities, such as LGBTQIA and LDS affiliations organizations, are using ballroom dance, it is not necessarily being used in more ways. As an inherently social form, it gives people a space to practice an ideal way of being, whether acting out a heterosexual relationship or a counter-normative relationship, opening possibilities for experience off of dance floors.

The perception that ballroom dance predominantly ascribes to rigid gender norms through its heterosexual partnering also contributes to its marginality status with respect

to college dance departments. As this dissertation has shown, there is a range of approaches to gender among participants, and it is precisely the capacity to explore gender in ways that reinforce and challenge gender binaries and hierarchies that is part of what makes ballroom dance so popular for collegiate populations who are exploring representations of gender at large.

Amateur dancesport communities are complex. While LDS sponsored organizations try to use ballroom to re-inscribe gender role division, youth participants use it to find space for small resistances. BYU and UVU envision the dance floor as a space for their youth to practice being couples off the dance floor. Students learn communication, separate roles, even expected forms of sexuality under supervision. Dancers also get to experience physical contact with members of the opposite sex and wear flashy costumes that draw attention in a community that values uniformity. This mainstream conception of ballroom dance, which includes but is not limited to the LDS affiliated communities, both celebrates ballroom dance's history while trapping some of its values in time. At the same time, LGBTQIA communities find a space to be intimate in public and to redefine what a couple can look like. While this community admirably strives to be inclusive, the use of binary language that categorizes dancers as either men or women continues to marginalize gender non-conforming and transgender individuals. Both sites are complicated, upholding some conservative values while simultaneously encouraging some transgressive behavior.

Ballroom dance is accessible and therefore appealing to a wide range of participants. As a result, it also occupies a funny middle position within a cultural

hierarchy of dance. What is perhaps most interesting is that despite ballroom dance's embarrassing middlebrow-ness, it is valuable to two very different communities, and the spectrum of communities between these extremes that feel both poles' influence. The fact that both the LGBTQIA and LDS affiliated communities appreciate ballroom dance demonstrates both how accessible it is and how extensive its influence is felt. While its accessibility marginalizes it in dance programs, ballroom dance as a form is consistently preserved through the participation of dancers. Ballroom dance is constantly being adapted to serve communities' changing needs, maintaining its middlebrow status.

Like all research, I am left with more questions than answers: What is it about the structure of ballroom dance that makes it particularly appealing and feasible to adults? While this dissertation focused on two poles of the amateur dancesport community, LDS affiliated ballroom programs and LGBTQIA ballroom programs, in the future these questions will guide me in further exploring ballroom dance as a collegiate and post-collegiate activity in the U.S.

Margaret H'Doubler, the professor credited with creating the first dance major, wrote, "Our real purpose is to teach boys and girls and men and women by the means of dance; to teach them a philosophy of life that finds its practical application in the dance" (H'Doubler 8). While dance scholars had to fight in the twentieth century for Dance as art to be acknowledged as a field worth studying, I hope that in the twenty first century middlebrow dance, including ballroom dance, will find a place in academia. How communities define couples in dance matters because dance not only provides a safe space to explore ways of being and ways of presenting oneself to others, but it visibilizes

changing understandings of relationality felt in daily life. Ballroom dance is a valuable site for understanding the ways gender is enacted on the dance floor, and it is important to consider ballroom dance in current debates around gender and the formation of a couple.

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