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The Use of Dance in the Promotion of Mental Health
in Girls: An Exploratory Study

by

Irene Elisabeth von Rossberg-Gempton

Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Simon Fraser University, 1993

Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Psychology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the Master of Arts degree

Wilfrid Laurier University

1994

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Canada

discovery of self
developing beliefs

taking risks
being daring

giving life to an idea
shaping movement with sound
shaping sound with movement
working in the silence of the soul

offering
sharing
giving
caring

taking risks
being daring

maintaining integrity and dignity
bringing harmony to the soul
making a difference
having faith

giving up part of the self
to others
to the movement
to the reality...

of dance

(Irene, 1994)

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This thesis provided me with the wonderful opportunity to explore and integrate two of my passions: dance and the promotion of good health. I thank the children, parents, and families of Milverton for their involvement, candour, and honesty. It was a joy for me to watch and to be a part of the children's laughter and joy as they discovered new ways of moving and relating with each other. My life has been made richer through our shared experiences.

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Abstract

This study had two purposes: (1) to understand how girls experience dance and (2) to examine the idea of using dance as a venue to promote psychological well-being and artistic growth in young children. Fifteen girls between the ages of 3 1/2 and 10 years old participated in a dance program offering dance warm ups, dance techniques, sequential dance steps, pantomime explorations, and creative dance. Methods of data collection included journal notes, video-taped observations, parental interviews, and children's self-reports, drawings, and interviews. The formative evaluation of this dance program indicated that the participants of this small rural community had happy dance experiences. Their levels of self-perception, self-concept, social skills, and motor skills remained high throughout the dance program. They smiled, laughed, and were attentive during the dance classes. The parental interviews and the journal entries indicate the girls enjoyed the dance classes. The girls' reports, drawings, and verbal responses confirm the parental and journal observations. In addition, several parents noticed an increase in the self-confidence and a decrease in the shyness of their daughters since they had taken the dance classes. Many parents also reported an increase in creativity and variety of dance movements expressed during their daughters' spontaneous dancing at home. These

responses give some insight into the girls' dance experience. Furthermore, as no overall decreases were found in psychological well-being and as increases were found in artistic growth, I can conclude that these girls experienced a sense of well-being and growth throughout their participation in this dance program. Future studies could utilize a different qualitative methodology or experimental designs to further enhance and define the understanding of how children experience dance and how dance can play a role in the promotion of good health.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I investigated how young girls in a rural Ontario setting experienced dance. I also pursued my long term interest in examining the idea of using dance as a vehicle for the promotion of psychological well-being and artistic growth in children. The specific dance program in this study was developed in response to a parental request to find a dance teacher for their rural Ontario community. The primary concern for parents was providing a happy dance experience for their children, none of whom had had previous formal dance training. As I had been a professional dance teacher prior to my university education, this parental request gave me the opportunity to integrate my previous dance knowledge and my current community psychology training.

To facilitate my understanding of how dance is experienced by girls and how dance could become a vehicle for health promotion, I reviewed literature in dance, health promotion in community psychology, the role of creative arts in the promotion of psychological well-being, and children's dance. I found that several community psychology programs and creative arts programs have successfully helped children develop and/or enhance their self-perceptions, self-concepts, motor skills, and positive affect as well as promoting social-emotional and artistic growth (Pransky, 1991; Walsh-Bowers, 1992; Nahme-Huang, Singer, Singer, &

Wheaton, 1977; North, 1990). I believe that dance, as an artistic venue, also has the potential to provide similar experiences for children. Thus, the rationale of the study evolved out of the assumption that the domains of psychological well-being, artistic growth, and creative expression could be integrated into a dance program. After formulating the rationale and purpose of the study, and reviewing the ethical considerations, I designed the dance program.

In this thesis, I document my dance experiences in the Milverton community by describing the setting, the participants, and how the participants came into contact with the dance program. After an examination of social and motor development issues, I describe the developmental readiness of the participants and the necessary characteristics for a good service provider within this program. I also describe the design of the dance program (which has evolved from 14 years of teaching dance) and the specific components of the two dance classes (which were modified according to the developmental readiness and needs of the girls participating in the program).

Next, I relate the method of data collection and analysis. The observational measures of this study included: (1) weekly journal entries, (2) video-taped observations of psychological well-being, artistic growth, and creative dance expression, (3) interviews with parents, and (4)

children's experiences as captured by interviews, drawings, and self-reports. I used a heuristic process of phenomenological analysis (Moustakas, 1990) to find patterns in the weekly journals. Descriptive statistics were used to report changes in means for video-taped behavioral observations and to report changes in self-reports. Content analysis was used to determine the dominant themes in parental interviews, children's interviews, and children's drawings.

After analyzing the data, the results of this dance program are stated. Finally, the discussion of the results and limitations of this study leads to the possible recommendations and considerations for future research with respect to studying the idea of using dance as vehicle for promoting psychological wellness.

Social Context

The dance program in this study evolved out of a parental request directed at the Milverton Mornington Economic Development Corporation (MMEDC), an incorporated, non-profit community-based agency which plays a large role in welcoming and supporting community-based economic development in the rural Ontario region of Perth County. It is the vision of MMEDC to encourage, welcome, and support economic development which offers opportunities for increased income and self-improvement and which is sensitive to the needs of the Milverton-Mornington-Ellice communities.

The purposes of MMEDC include creating employment opportunities, encouraging new business development, assisting and promoting the needs of present businesses, sharing information, facilitating training, encouraging cooperative community projects, and participating in community activities.

As a community psychology graduate student of Wilfrid Laurier University, I was hired in September, 1993 to work as a research assistant/community facilitator for the MMEDC to facilitate a working group in the area of arts and crafts. At the initial meeting of the artists and craftspeople, a vision was identified, namely, to enhance the quality of life in this rural area through the promotion of the arts. Thus, a parental inquiry about a local dance teacher to teach creative dancing to a group of 4-5 year old children in the community fit nicely into both visions offered by the MMEDC and the Arts and Crafts group.

Parents were unwilling to send their children out of the community to receive lessons; however, a search by the parents failed to turn up a local dancer to fill this position. As I had been a professional dance teacher and performer for 14 years in B.C. prior to my university studies, I offered my services as dance teacher to Milverton. I also continued to work as a facilitator of several events for the Arts and Crafts group (which were sponsored by the MMEDC). However, the focus of this paper

will be the description and discussion of the creation, launching, and evaluation of the Milverton dance program.

The dance program was funded through fees paid by the parents, a donation of hall space by the MMEDC for the initial five weeks of the program, and a donation by Wilfrid Laurier University to pay for a portion of travel expenses. Money raised through fees and donations helped pay for the balance of travel expenses, newspaper advertisement, hall fees for the second ten weeks of the program, long distance phone calls, video and audio tapes, a cassette player, coder fees, paper, crayons, and photocopying.

Through consultation with all the parents of the girls wishing to attend the dance program (no boys were registered), I discovered that the parents shared similar values to my own, namely, an enriching, happy dance experience for their daughters. I realized that this dance teaching experience could allow me to continue in my exploration of the use of dance for the promotion of well-being. I could build on past research in which I found postures can affect emotions. For example, positive affect can be experienced after assuming open postures and negative affect can be experienced after assuming closed postures (Rossberg-Gempton & Poole, 1993). Therefore, it would seem reasonable to assume there would also be connections between body movements and emotions. Furthermore, having personally experienced a sense of exhilaration and joy after dancing, I

wanted to know if dance could be considered a tool for enriching the parameters of psychological well-being. My mission was to discover whether I could integrate the language of dance into the language of community psychology with respect to the idea of the promotion of good physical and psychological health. The purposes of this study were to understand how girls experience dance and to explore methodology for examining the viability of whether dance has the potential to serve as a vehicle for the promotion of psychological well-being in children. To that end, I embarked on an extensive literature review in the areas of dance, health promotion in community psychology, and creative arts applied in health promotion.

Literature Review

Dance

Historically, dance has played several important roles in communities, including nonverbal communication of emotional experiences for the dancer or for the audience, establishing social unity, and/or offering a venue for physical and emotional release and rehabilitation (Kraus, Hilsendager, & Dixon, 1991).

The word dance comes from the root word "tan" in Sanskrit, meaning tension, or stretching, and has been defined as an expression of emotion whereby certain gestures and motions convey inner experiences of tension, relaxation, or specific emotional states (Anderson, 1974; Ellfeldt,

1976; Kraus et al., 1991). Dance has been described by these authors as a pleasurable, healthy function that promotes a sense of exhilaration and joy.

Therapeutically, dance blends physical and emotional aspects into an integrated expression (Kraus et al., 1991). The use of dance to promote health can be traced to ancient times but disappeared from historical record during the Middle Ages and does not reemerge formally until 1942 with the work of Marion Chase, the originator of Dance Therapy in the United States (Chaiklin, 1975). Chase noticed that individuals who were acutely mentally ill communicated solely by means of their bodies. She speculated that some frenetic movements, like whirling, were executed to avoid contact with the world. Acknowledging that motility, or spontaneous movement, changes and develops as a person grows and matures, it was assumed that particular fixations of movement patterns symbolized the points where growth was inhibited through trauma (Chaiklin, 1975).

Some psychoanalysts, such as Deutsch (1947), thought the mind and body, being a functional unit, could reveal an individual's personality through expressions orchestrated by the ego. He postulated that asynchronous postural behaviour (postural behaviour that seemed to be askew or was incongruent with the verbal behaviour) represented a loss of ego control, whereas uncoordinated movements were evidence of unconscious forces fighting for control. Furthermore, he

thought immobility implied an inhibition or protection from instinctual drives. The idea of a link existing between personality and posture prompted Reich (1945), Braatoy (1954), and Lowen (1958) to examine muscular tensions using a psychoanalytic approach. They felt postures expressed personality and could be useful in therapy.

Dance therapists posit the connection between gestures, movements, postures and personality expression. Siegel (1984) believed that the total being is affected by life's bodily experiences because the person lives in, with, and through the body. This holistic philosophy encapsulated and laid down the foundations of dance therapy, a part of psychotherapy dedicated to emotional healing through bodily movements and manipulation.

The role of dance therapy is to bring clients into an awareness of their specific muscular rigidities and to help them release the tensions which will release the emotional impulses that are blocked by the muscular immobility (Espenak, 1981). Dance therapists are convinced clients could gain an insight into their personal, emotional experiences if they could become aware of their sensations, motions, postures, and gestures. After cognitively acknowledging this awareness, therapists believed their clients could be taught how to control their emotions through body movement.

Similar to ancient philosophies, the idea of dance as a

psychotherapeutic, healing tool is based on the premise that body movements reflect inner emotional states. By providing persons with a cognitive awareness and control of their postural rigidities and emotions through movement, dance therapy has the potential to produce a sense of wholeness in mind, body, and spirit (Rossberg-Gempton & Poole, 1992). However, by focusing on the therapeutic benefits of dance for individuals or groups in crisis, its possible use as a device for the promotion of positive affect and psychological well-being as a preventative tool appears to have been overlooked.

During 1965, the American Dance Therapists Association in Maryland was legally incorporated (White, 1973). This same year marked the birth of United States community psychology in Swampscott, Massachusetts (Heller, Price, Reinharz, Riger, & Wandersman, 1984). Although both disciplines appear to share similar philosophies, I have found no evidence of using dance to promote good physical and mental health in clinical or community psychology. However, as community psychology focuses on a group or community-based promotion model to counteract harmful circumstances before a problem arises, I believe community psychology could be an excellent medium in which to introduce the idea of using dance in health promotion.

Health Promotion in Community Psychology

One of the major purposes of health promotion is to

foster conditions which will produce good health, resistance to disease, psychological well-being or wellness, and non-troubled behaviour (Pransky, 1991). Health promotion builds capacity and strength so people can feel good about themselves. Specifically, the essence of good health or psychological "wellness" includes "having a sense of control over one's fate, a feeling of purpose and belongingness, and a basic satisfaction with oneself and one's existence" (Cowen, 1991, p. 404). The proactive nature of health promotion encourages the formation of healthy attitudes, healthy habits, and the necessary skills to make it possible to prevent or forestall the development of maladjustment (Cowen, Hightower, Pedro-Carroll, & Work, 1990). Pransky (1991) and Cowen et al. (1990) suggest strategies for the promotion of good physical health include changing environments, promoting healthy self-perceptions (a sense of belonging, capability, and control), providing supports, and building good social, life skills (self-control, good communication, responsibility, and moral/ethical reasoning). It is particularly important to provide nurturing environments for growing, developing children so they can acquire the aforementioned healthy self-perceptions and good social, life skills which may enable them to experience "socially acceptable, non-troubled behaviour" (Pransky, 1991, p.30).

Early childhood experiences provide an opportunity for

preschoolers to develop new social, physical, and intellectual stimulation. For example, programs such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool program (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1988) and Head Start (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992) have shown that positive, stimulating preschool experiences have beneficial effects on children. Pransky (1991) believes these kinds of programs can increase children's "willingness to try new things they can display to others, improving the prognosis for overall life success" (p. 72). By enhancing life skills and shaping competency, educational experiences have the potential to foster opportunities for children to develop a sense of control over their lives. It is assumed that promoting conditions that enable people to gain self-control will reduce problems in living and enhance wellness; therefore, strengthening the qualities of individuals is a key goal for the pursuit of wellness in young children (Cowen, 1991). Furthermore, building foundations for health and wellness at an early age can help prevent costly and serious problems later in life (Cowen et al., 1990).

Strategies for the promotion of good health include providing children with skills and competencies that relate positively to adjustment and psychological wellness. For example, achievement and positive social behaviour can be enhanced by cooperative work groups (Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, & Skon, 1981), peer tutoring/studying, and social problem solving through role play and modelling

(Cowen et al., 1990).

Pransky (1991) documents research that has shown several ways to ensure healthy family, school, and community environments. For example, family support and education programs (i.e. Houston Parent-child Centre, Johnson & Breckenridge, 1982), teaching parenting skills, and having quality child care promote healthy family experiences. Establishing early childhood education programs, improving the school climate, and establishing teen peer groups (for social and life skills) help instill a safe passage through the formative school years. Stress management training and community involvement in areas such as employment, social support, and recreation can help create a positive community experience. The promotion of good health practices can be further stimulated by participation in leisure activities and the arts; these venues also provide alternate means of finding legitimate expressions of fun and excitement which can be retained throughout life.

The Role of Creative Arts in the Promotion of Psychological Well-Being

The use of creative arts therapies in the promotion of well-being is relatively new. For example, it was not until 1987 that music therapists and drama therapists were asked to consider "their potential role in community-based mental health prevention programs" (Wager, 1987, p. 135). Recent studies have shown that creative drama can be used to

promote social-emotional growth, can be a means of primary prevention in facilitating children's adaptation to school transitions, and can facilitate positive peer interaction skills of children and early adolescents (Walsh-Bowers, 1992; Walsh, Kosidoy, & Swanson, 1991). In addition, five-year olds who have participated in fantasy play show greater verbal communication and sensitivity to others, showed more positive emotional expression, were more spontaneous and creative, and had an increased attention span (Freyberg, 1973).

Imaginative play through dance has been acknowledged as an effective vehicle to enhance the social development of emotionally disturbed young children (Nahme-Huang et al., 1977). Specifically, movement and dance therapy, which emphasizes perceptual-motor skills, cooperative interactions (through mirror games and follow the leader), and nonverbal communication skills, increases the children's cooperativeness, as well as their "spontaneous imaginativeness", liveliness, and positive affect (Nahme-Huang et al., 1977, p. 246).

Although no known studies address this issue, it seems likely that dance, as a creative art, also has the potential to play a role in programs for the promotion and maintenance of mental health in children. Specifically, I believe dance can promote the same values as creative drama, namely, the opportunity to develop imagination, independent thinking and

planning (of a dance routine or mime-dance), group exploration and cooperation, the opportunity to release emotions in a healthy way, and the opportunity to gain an awareness and understanding of others (McCaslin, 1984).

Children's Dance

Dance for children can be explored in many ways: as dance therapy, dance for fun, dance for performance, dance for socialization (i.e. school dances), dance for ethnic or cultural expression, and dance for self-expression. The idea of using basic motor activities and perceptual-motor activities to remediate and prevent reading activities in children was proposed by Flinchum (1975). However, I have been unable to find additional research which indicates that dance movements have been used by school teachers for either remedial or preventative purposes. Dance education in elementary schools tends to emphasize folk dance or social dancing. Elementary schools which happen to have a resident trained dancer may emphasize several additional areas of exploration. These include: (1) experiencing an awareness of changes in body shape and its relationship with time, space, and force; (2) exploring movement with and without synchronization to music; (3) experiencing basic locomotor and non-locomotor action; and (4) responding creatively to musical, story, and pantomime stimulation (Ellfeldt, 1976; Kraus et al, 1991; North, 1990; Wall & Murray, 1990).

According to Flinchum (1975), movement experiences

found in dance can be used as educational tools because children readily and happily participate in movement, need physical activity for growth and development, and "gain confidence through movement" (p.86). The joy and success experienced from acquiring the physical skills of dance movement can bring body awareness and positive reinforcement of self-image as well as enhance self-concept (Boorman, 1973; Flinchum, 1975; Gallahue, 1976). However, due to their limited abilities to express themselves verbally (Payne & Isaacs, 1991), it is difficult to "evaluate developmental changes evidenced in children's feelings about their body and their total self-concept" (Cratty, 1979, p. 133). Young children often tend to "express physically what an adult says in words" (McCaslin, 1934; p. 46). However, words are not always necessary as it can be "redundant to say with words what has already been said in movement - the 'work' has already been done" (Delaney, 1973; p. 7). These ideas would influence the manner in which I collected the data about the young girls' dance experience.

Harter (1988) found that, by the age of 8, children began to state how they felt about themselves. With an increase in vocabulary, respondents can verbally communicate their understanding of how movement can enhance self-concept. For example, Gruber (1985) found that the sense of accomplishment in movement or the participation in physical activity enhanced the participants' self-worth and

positively affected self-concept.

Flinchum (1975) argued that dance could develop self-concept, self-realization, and confidence through movement experiences which:

- (a) allow self-expression and exploration,
- (b) incorporate psychomotor components of gross and fine motor responses,
- (c) are appropriate to the child's learning level,
- (d) follow a natural progression in skill acquisition,
- (e) offer a (not too difficult) physical challenge,
- (f) develop confidence in handling the body in various spatial relationships, and
- (g) allow natural movements to become more refined through self-discovery.

In my past role as a dance teacher, I have taught in the manner described by Flinchum (1975). I emphasized a mixture of structured and unstructured movement explorations. I trained children to become aware of how their bodies move, to expand their movement vocabulary by learning certain dance techniques (e.g., leaps and spins), to increase their flexibility through stretching, to increase their social skills by cooperating and interacting with each other in class, and to enhance their imaginations by creating their own dances or stories enacted through dance. Although their dance experiences were shared with an audience at the end of each year, the emphasis of the dance

program was not the technical perfection of the performance. Instead, the emphasis lay in the promotion of expressing a "feeling" for dance, namely, the sheer joy of life experienced through movement.

Reflecting back over these experiences as a dance teacher and children's performer (who advocated children's participation in classes and performances), I realized that the elements in my dance program would enable me to examine my two objectives: (1) how the girls in this study experience dance and (2) whether it might be feasible to examine the idea of using dance for the promotion of psychological well-being. However, as the girls in my study were between the ages of 3 1/2 and 10 years, one of the challenges of this study was to find ways of documenting how the girls felt and experienced the dance program.

Rationale of this Study

Several community psychology programs have successfully guided children in experiencing healthy self-perceptions, healthy self-concepts, increased social skills, increased motor skills, and positive affect (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1988; Cowen et al., 1990). Creative arts such as creative drama classes in school have used the principles of community psychology to promote social-emotional growth and facilitate positive peer relations (Walsh-Bowers, 1992; Walsh et al., 1991). Dance therapy has been shown to increase motor skills, nonverbal skills,

cooperativeness, and positive affect in preschool children (Nahme-Huang et al., 1977). Dance classes in school have helped children gain coordination as well as experience creativity, self-expression, and spontaneity through movement explorations (North, 1990; Moore & Yamamoto, 1988). Based on these findings and on my previous dance experiences as a dance teacher and performer, I believe the activities of the dance program offer the opportunity to observe the connection between dance and the domains of psychological well-being and creative expression.

While it is important to remember that positive changes may occur in children as a result of the group play qualities in a dance class, I believe that dance adds extra dimensions not necessarily afforded by a more generic group play experience. For example, Hanna (1988) suggests dance can give an individual "self-mastery through being in charge of the body" (p.19) and that this self-mastery can contribute to "positive self-perception, body image, and esteem" (p.19). Building on the principles of dance therapy that one must understand and experience a feeling of self before reaching out to others (Chaiklin, 1975), and that a dysfunction in one area of the body can affect psycho-social development (Bernstein, 1981), I believe it is also possible to create positive affect through dance explorations in non-troubled children. Furthermore, by providing children with the opportunity to explore self-mastery and the values of

creative expression through body movement, I believe conditions are created which could enhance psychological wellness.

Purpose of this study

The purposes of this study are to investigate how girls experience dance and to examine the viability of studying dance as a vehicle for the promotion of psychological well-being in children. The challenge was developing ways of documenting the girls' dance experiences and using these documentations to analyze the potential for further study.

1. Finding ways to understand how the girls in this dance program experienced dance. As I was unable to find specific research about children's psychological well-being expressed through dance, it was necessary for me to design new measures to document the girls' dance experiences. I had to consider how these experiences and changes could be observed. For example, if children experienced emotions as they progressed through the dance class, would these experiences be manifested through their body movements or facial expressions? Would these changes be evident through their dialogue? Through video observations, my weekly journals, parental interviews, and girls' interviews, drawing, and self-reports, I hoped to understand the girls' dance experience.

2. Finding out whether dance could be considered as a viable tool for promoting health and human development.

To help clarify this purpose, three questions were asked. Can this dance program for girls in rural Ontario be useful in observing general well-being? Can dance observably help promote psychological well-being? Can dance demonstrably help promote artistic growth?

2a. Can this dance program for girls in rural Ontario be useful in observing general well-being?

Observations of the girls' participation and responses to the dance program, girls' self-reports and drawings, and parental interviews would help give insight to children's general development, growth, and well-being with respect to their dance experiences.

2b. Can dance observably help promote psychological well-being? To answer this question, I needed to integrate the concepts of psychological well-being with the dance program. According to Pransky (1991) and Cowen et al. (1990), psychological well-being is composed of several domains. I made use of these domains to design a few observable dance measures to test the idea of using dance as a tool for psychological well-being. I attempted to synthesize existing systems and theories and the intuitions from 14 years of teaching and observing children's responses and interactions in dance classes. The psychological domains and my chosen dance observations are listed below.

Psychological Domains:

My Dance Observations:

(1) healthy self-perceptions:

- (a) an awareness of self-image, as shown by dancing without bumping into others,
 - (b) a sense of control, as shown by dancing the steps accurately,
 - (c) an experience of belonging, as shown by participating in class;
- (2) healthy self-concept:
- (a) self-assessment, as shown by an increased willingness to try difficult steps, or, a hesitation and/or refusal to try difficult steps,
 - (b) self-control, as shown by an ability to dance without loss of balance;
- (3) social life skills:
- (a) communication, as shown by following directions, responding to the music and watching peers,
 - (b) cooperation, as shown by interacting with the teacher or peers;
- (4) motor skills, as shown by an increased ability to do new dance

(5) positive affect, steps; and as shown by happy facial expressions - smiles - or laughter.

These domains were observed and recorded in four video-taped dance sessions.

2c. Can dance demonstrably help promote artistic growth?

Artistic growth was measured by creative responses to musical, story, and pantomime stimulation. Creative responses would be shown by self-expressiveness, creativity, and spontaneity of movement, experimenting with different body rhythms, and explorations of flow, space, time, and weight. The domains of artistic growth were observed and recorded in four video-taped dance sessions.

In summation, by consulting parental interviews, children's interviews, self-reports, and drawings, video-taped observations, and my weekly journal, I hoped to understand the children's experiences of dance. I also wanted to determine whether dance experiences could be measured and documented so that further studies could examine the viability of dance as a tool for promoting psychological well-being and artistic growth.

Methodology

Description of the setting

Parents were unable to find a suitable place to hold the classes. The places were either too expensive or did not

have a suitable wooden or linoleum dance floor. However, we received permission to hold the classes at the MMEDC office. The glass door entrance is between two large store front windows. The walls have shelves filled with information and booklets about training, business, marketing, and various service organizations. The floor is covered with linoleum. Each week I collapsed the tables and stacked the chairs behind the two large desks that are situated at the end of the room so that we would have enough room to dance and stretch.

Procedure

The nature of the dance classes/research was discussed with all registered participants both verbally and in a letter. The written consent form allowing the girls to participate in the study was reviewed and signed by each parent (see Appendix 1). Verbal consent was given by the girls in the presence of their parents (see Appendix 2). Following initial consent to participate in the study, an additional form was filled out to allow me to video tape the girls' dance class a few times in order to aide my observations (see Appendix 3). The girls' interviews were held occasionally and informally in the presence of their parents before, during, or at the end of dance class. During the last two weeks of the dance program, a date and place for parental interviews were arranged.

After signing the consent forms (Appendix 1 and 3), the

parents were asked a few general questions concerning the ages and previous dance experience of their daughters (Appendix 4. Part 1). After the girls consented verbally (Appendix 2), they were also asked how they felt about dance (Appendix 4. Part 3).

Most of the girls participated in the dance program for 15 weeks. The girls identified how they felt about dance by answering questions (during week 1 and week 14), drawing pictures (during weeks 1 to 5) or pointing to the happy/sad faces scale in weeks 6 and 14 (Appendix 5). I took journal notes of each class and I also arranged to have four sessions video taped (during weeks 3, 6, 9, and 12). The girls viewed these tapes and we briefly discussed or identified their experiences or progress during that particular dance class.

Parents often stayed and watched their girls participate in the dance classes. At the end of the program (week 14), the parents and their daughters were interviewed to gain an understanding of the girls' dance experiences. (See Appendix 4, Part 2 and Part 4). As there were so few students in each class, every girl was observed and every parent was interviewed (even the ones who dropped out). The data was collected, coded, and summarized. On the last dance day, a dance demonstration was held at the Senior Centre in order to share the girls' experiences of dance with other members of the community. At this time, the

parents and their daughters received written feedback about the evaluation results. (See Appendix 6.) All participants were thanked for their involvement in the research project.

Description of the participants

Twelve Caucasian girls registered the first evening. It is unknown why no boys were registered in the dance program. As the room was too crowded and the age ranges were too broad (3 1/2 to 10 years), the class was split into two groups. The numbers of participants varied from week to week. At the beginning of the program, eight girls were registered in the "little ones" class and four girls were registered in the "juniors" class. After Christmas, five girls were registered in the "little ones" class and six girls were registered in the "juniors" class. Girls joined from the community at large and were assigned to the groups according to their age. In any given week, at least one or two girls were absent due to illness. During the video-taped sessions, there were between three and six girls in each class. The dance program was held for a total of 15 weeks. All the participants lived in or close to the village of Milverton.

Developmental readiness of the participants

When designing the dance program, I considered the social readiness and motor development of the participants. The literature review supported my intuitive assessment as a teacher.

Social Readiness. According to Gallahue (1982) and Pransky (1991), acceptance, respect, concern, and the provision for independence (within defined limits) assist in the development of healthy self-perceptions, self-concepts, and life skills. Without positive reinforcements from home, school, peers, and community environments, the person may develop social incompetence or display inappropriate behaviours (Michelson, Sugai, Wood, & Kazdin, 1983). I believe a nurturing family and positive early infant experiences are paramount in shaping the initial formation of healthy self-perceptions and social skills. Early childhood education programs such as the North Carolina Abecedarian Project have shown that social curricula can help preschoolers become aware of themselves and their needs; they can be taught skills in sharing, self-help, and positive peer interactions (Ramey & Campbell, 1984). Shure and Spivak (1988) found that interpersonal cognitive problem skills could be taught to four and five year olds. Positive teacher relationships and healthy school climates also provide building blocks for successful social interactions in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (Pransky, 1991).

I felt confident that, as children can learn socialization skills at a young age and in many environments, the dance program automatically presented an opportunity for all the girls to share, grow, learn, and develop positive social skills. Furthermore, dance

stimulates the kinaesthetic sense which can "open the door to awareness of self in a social and objective environment" (Laban, 1948, p. 112).

Motor development. Currently, the domain of motor development is primarily studied by kinesiologists and persons interested in physical education (Smoll, 1982). The major focus of motor development pertains to developmental steps within specific fundamental movements such as walking, running, jumping, hopping, galloping, sliding, throwing, catching, striking, and kicking (Gabbard, 1992; Gallahue, 1982; Gallahue, 1989; Haywood, 1986; Payne & Isaacs, 1991; Robertson & Halverson, 1984; Wickstrom, 1983). No differences are reported between boys and girls before the age of five years old. However, around the age of five, differences begin to appear in gross motor activities. For example, boys appear to be more proficient in jumping and throwing; girls appear to be more proficient in hopping, skipping, and galloping (Gutteridge, 1939; Corbin, 1980).

As galloping and skipping would be included in my dance program, it was interesting to note the results of two studies. Gutteridge (1939) had found that although rudimentary signs of galloping have been accomplished by a few four year old children, galloping skills were not generally achieved until the age of 6 1/2 years. Similarly, Cratty (1979) found that skipping was not mastered until children were approximately six - seven years old. Polk

(1976), a movement therapist and dance professor, felt it was particularly important to study skipping because the coordination of the movement and the pride in achievement strengthens self-esteem and helps to develop self-control.

According to Flinchum (1975), the optimal time of learning by movement is between the ages of two and four years, which coincides and extends beyond Piaget's (1951) sensorimotor developmental stage (which goes to the age of two). Andress (1991) agreed and added that expressive movement is developmentally appropriate for preschool children because of its element of "free choice". Spontaneous movement within the disciplined framework of dance can teach children to experience dynamic changes (such as fast/slow) as well as the limitations of time and space which can give them the strength to pursue other disciplines (Dorian, 1978).

Although young children in the sensorimotor stage tend to respond imitatively and older children tend to display more interactive movements (Andress, 1991), motivating children to move independently and creatively, rather than through imitation, can encourage self-discovery and cognitive processes in children of all ages (Rakusin, 1990). Repeating certain activities can enhance group identity and support the continuity of a program (Mason-Luckey & Sandel, 1985). Activities like mirroring and stretching with partners can encourage "inventiveness, concentration,

cooperation" (McCaslin, 1984; p. 82). Finally, engaging in creative movement can help children integrate physical, social, and emotional experiences (Laban, 1948).

Although technical skills were included in the dance program, my intention was to create two classes which placed emphasis on the experience of enjoyment, creativity, and mastery of one's body through dance. Therefore, the dance program I designed and taught involved basic locomotor exercises, non-locomotor exercises, creative dance, and pantomime. As the girls were not required to engage in a level of dexterity that children cannot cope with and as the program emphasized physical activity requiring body movement that youngsters are capable of doing and enjoying, I believe that all girls who registered in the classes were developmentally ready to participate in the dance program.

Description of the service provider

To ensure that the girls would participate in a positive learning environment, it was necessary to be attentive to several attributes and skills. Specifically, I needed to:

- (a) utilize my knowledge, experience, and training to create, plan, and teach creative dance to children;
- (b) work independently (as I was a single dance teacher in an isolated community);
- (c) create a good climate by keeping the class size small, being enthusiastic, and accepting children from

all social, economic and educational backgrounds;

(d) provide positive attention equally to all the children;

(e) provide opportunities to improve social skills;

(f) encourage children to be active, involved learners;

(g) utilize the teaching strategies of modelling, role playing, praising, cuing, and coaching (Spence, 1983); and

(h) ensure that the content of the dance classes are appropriate to the children's capabilities.

To ensure success in the research component of the study, I needed to:

(a) create and conduct interview questions;

(b) design measurements for the various components of psychological well-being through dance;

(c) research creative movement analysis coding designs and be able to code movement;

(d) observe, take field notes, and document changes objectively; and

(e) do content and descriptive analyses, evaluate, summarize, and report findings to program participants

How participants came into contact with the dance program.

Local advertisement, "word-of-mouth", telephone calls, and the school newsletter were ways in which participants found out about this dance program. Parents called up friends; I advertised in the paper and school newsletter.

The parents phoned or came into the MMEDC building and registered their daughters in the dance classes.

Description of the Dance Program

Following a procedure similar to one by Nahme-Huang et al. (1977), there were five introductory lessons, five middle (building, enhancing) lessons, and five concluding (wrap up, review) lessons.

I used a wide variety of music in the dance classes. The selection was based on my prior experiences as a dance teacher: certain music inspires me to dance creatively or choreograph specific combinations of dance steps. After several years of collecting tapes, I have accumulated a large library of music that is appropriate for various components of my dance classes. For example, I used music with a steady beat for the exercise portion of the class; I used classical music that offers a variety in tempo, rhythm, harmony, and melody when I asked children to explore creative movement.

The dance program in Milverton emphasized similar areas of dance training advocated by elementary school dance programs, namely, that students have the opportunity to experience:

- (a) an awareness of changes in body rhythm and its relationship with flow, space, time, and weight;
- (b) explorations and improvisations in movement with and without synchronization to music;

- (c) basic locomotor and non-locomotor actions; and
- (d) creative responses to musical, story, and pantomime stimulation (Ellfeldt, 1976; Kraus et al., 1991).

The two dance classes offered in Milverton were structured to accommodate the different developmental needs of the two groups. For example, the class was only forty-five minutes for the 3 1/2 to 5 year old students, whereas the class length for the 6 to 10 year old students was one hour long. These class lengths are considered optimal times for accommodating the varying attention spans of the two age groups (Weissberg, Caplan, & Sivo, 1989).

Typically, preschool children are ready to explore movements with the whole body or with both arms and both legs together (North, 1990; Laban, 1948; Papalia & Olds, 1979). Therefore, gross motor movements were emphasized in the "little ones" class. As there is a danger of losing spontaneity and gaining self-consciousness by an adults's overcorrections, precision of certain aspects of dance training was not accentuated. On the other hand, older children benefit more from more systematic dance training, observing and repeating movements in a sequential manner, and creating a finished dance product (Laban, 1948). Therefore, there was less precision and correction with the younger class, whereas a more sequential, specific set of dance steps was taught to the older class. In addition, all the students experienced dance warm-ups, were encouraged to

explore dance creatively (following me, dancing in groups, or dancing in pairs), and experienced pantomime exercises.

Unlike many traditional dance teachers, I am a strong advocate of self-expression, improvisation, and creative explorations through dance. This does not mean that I permit children to release energy in an undisciplined chaotic manner. My goal as a teacher is to encourage an ebb and flow of movement which animates and guides the body to experience the "aesthetic pleasure" of dance. Furthermore, I believe that students should be given the opportunity to share and create their learning goals with the teacher. Therefore, to enhance learning, there was a collaboration with the students about the program (by working together to create a dance or a pantomime) and an attempt to foster a caring dance community (by students sharing stories and welcoming newcomers). In addition, the dance program utilized video taping as a teaching tool. Four times during the dance program, classes were taped so the students could see themselves dance and could learn to assess their progress. The older girls were shown their strengths and weaknesses and were guided in finding ways to improve their dancing abilities. All the girls were praised for their participation and willingness to try new dance experiences. Finally, I encouraged students to take a responsible role in the community by participating in community service (by performing at a benefit or for the senior citizens).

Description of the Dance Classes

A. "Juniors" dance class

A typical dance class for the 6-10 year old girls included:

- (1) jazz warm up exercises (a series of torso and upper body movements, leg kicks and swings, a coordination of upper and lower body movements in a preset sequence set by the teacher and reviewed by the students during each class),
- (2) floor exercises (involving leg stretches while sitting or lying down, sit ups, torso twists and sequenced stretches of the upper body while the person sits with legs stretched straight out in front or out to the side),
- (3) isolation exercises (as explained in the dance class for four to five year olds),
- (4) technical skills (spins, leaps, sequential dance steps),
- (5) dance creatively by dancing as they wish in pairs and groups, or, by using movement explorations such as mirroring (copying your partner as though you are a mirror reflection), shadowing (moving as though you are a shadow attached to your partner), flocking (as though you are a flock of geese moving together), or experimenting with movement opposites (moving as though you are very heavy - like a huge boulder or elephant,

then moving as though you are extremely light - like a bubble);

(6) pantomiming without music, and

(7) working on a dance routine together.

B. "Little ones" dance class

A typical class outline for the 3 1/2 - 5 year old girls included:

(1) ballet exercises (arm movements, knee bends, spins),

(2) floor exercises (various leg stretch exercises while sitting or while lying down, sit ups, arm stretches, torso twists, etc.),

(3) isolation exercises (moving only one part of the body at a time),

(4) locomotor exercises (skip, run, gallop, leap, walk) and non-locomotor exercises (twist, bend),

(5) creative dance (dancing as they wish or with verbal guidance from the teacher to the music),

(6) pantomiming to music with the teacher,

(7) dancing creatively (taking turns giving ideas with or without music, listening to music, and expressing movement ideas, and

(8) doing a simple group dance.

Data collection

I used several methods to understand how the girls experienced the dance program and to explore whether it is

observations	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	qualitative
videotaping		x		x		x							qualitative quantitative
interview with parents		x											qualitative x
interview with girls			x										qualitative x
face's rating scale						x							quantitative x
drawings		x	x	x	x								qualitative

The interviews were a particularly important aspect to the naturalistic portion of the study because I was trying to understand the girls' dance experiences. Therefore, it was necessary to ask the girls to share their opinions, ideas, and feelings about dance. However, young children sometimes have difficulty expressing themselves verbally, so I needed to find alternative ways for them to communicate their feelings to me. The happy/sad faces scale and the girls' drawing provided this alternative means of communication. Interviewing the parents helped clarify whether the program met the parents' expectations (of their daughters having a happy dance experience). Parents' opinions helped me be more "sensitive to the differing perspectives of various stakeholders" (Patton, 1990, p.118). The parental interviews also helped me understand how the classes impacted the girls outside the dance class environment. Finally, my weekly field notes supplemented

the video-taped observations as only four dance sessions were video-taped.

The use of a multi-method, triangulation approach allows for cross-data validity checks and "increases both the validity and the reliability of evaluation data" (Patton, 1990, p. 245). The measurement procedure of using the behaviour expected to be affected by the program "contributes to an evaluation of high credibility" (Posavac & Carey, 1992, p. 79). Furthermore, as this program is helping in the "search for promising variables related to success in the program" (Posavac & Carey, 1992, p. 155), the use of a single-group evaluation is appropriate.

Description of measures

1. Weekly Journal Entries

My weekly field notes contain a description of what was observed in each class, who was present, the interactions among the girls, the activities that took place, and the occasional unusual observation. I also included my own feelings, reactions, reflections, and field-generated insights and interpretations.

2. Four Video-taped Dance Sessions

The tools of measurement utilized by the program to identify psychological well-being (and movement creativity) helped indicate the outcome, namely, the types and degrees of changes observed in the girls during the dance classes. Coding of the 4 video-taped dance classes helped measure

these changes in psychological well-being (as well as documenting the students' creative responses to musical, story, and pantomime stimulation). As I have designed the measures used in this study to test psychological well-being through dance, neither reliability nor validity data are available at this time. Nonetheless, the changes in the girls are recorded through the following domains and measures:

A. Psychological Well-being

Having decided to link complex psychology domains and observable manifestations in dance, I decided to reinforce the clarity of the observation by using easily measurable scales.

DOMAIN (1): a healthy self-perception.

This domain is measured on a series of three scales that assesses self-perception:

Scale 1. The girl's awareness of **self-image** (self-control) is measured on a three-point rating scale, whereby it is observed whether she bumps into others while dancing: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

Scale 2. The girl's **sense of control** is measured by one semantic differential scale, whereby it is observed whether her body coordination is very uncontrolled (5), uncontrolled (4), neutral (3), controlled (2), or very controlled (1).

Scale 3. The girl's **experience of belonging** is measured on a three-point rating scale, whereby it is observed

whether she participates with the group: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

DOMAIN (2): self-concept.

This domain is measured on general observations and one scale that assesses self-concept:

Observation 1. The girl's ability to do **self-assessment** is observed by noting whether she increasingly participates in every dance exercise or hesitates (or refuses) to participate in some aspect of the dance class.

Scale 1. The girl's level of **self-control** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she is balanced: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

DOMAIN (3): social skills.

This domain is measured on two variables: communication (which has three scales) and cooperation (which has two scales) that assesses social skills.

Communication Scale 1. The girl's ability to **listen to directions** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she listens to directions: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

Communication Scale 2. The girl's ability to **listen to music** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she listens to the music: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

Communication Scale 3. The girl's **awareness of her peers** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is

observed whether she watches her peers: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

Cooperation Scale 1. The girl's ability to **interact with her peers** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she interacts: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

Cooperation Scale 2. The girl's ability to **interact with her teacher** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she interacts: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

DOMAIN (4): motor skills.

This goal is measured on two scales and one observation that assesses motor skills.

Scale 1. The girl's **ability to do basic dance steps** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she can do all of the dance sequence (3), some of the dance sequence (2) or none of the dance sequence (1).

Scale 2. The girl's ability to correctly **add on new steps** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she can do all of the new steps (3), some of the new steps (2), or none of the new steps (1).

Scale 3. The girl's **sense of motor movement** is measured by one semantic differential scale, whereby it is observed whether her dominant movement quality is very rigid (1), rigid (2), neutral (3), smooth (4), or very smooth (5).

Observation 1. The girl's **ability to do specific**

locomotor or non-locomotor actions is observed. The coder circles each of the following actions the girl is able to do: walk, run, skip, hop, leap, gallop, bend, twist.

DOMAIN (5): positive affect in the dance class.

This goal is measured on one observation to assess positive affect.

Observation 1. The girl's **affective nonverbal facial and bodily response** is observed. The coder circles the dominant emotion expressed by the child. To remain consistent with my previous research (Rossberg-Gempton & Poole, 1993), the same emotion terms were selected to observe emotions that might be demonstrated by the girls as they participated in the dance program. Specifically, the emotion checklist included the terms: "happy", "agreeable", "interested", "surprised", "disgusted", "afraid", or "angry".

B. Artistic Growth

DOMAIN (1): creative dance responses.

This domain is measured on three scales to assess creative response.

Scale 1. The girl's **expressiveness** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she is self-expressive: all the time (3), sometimes (2), never (1).

Scale 2. The girl's **spontaneity** is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she is spontaneous: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

Scale 3. The girl's creativity is measured on a three-point scale, whereby it is observed whether she is creative: all the time (3), sometimes (2), or never (1).

The technical portion of the dance class (the dance steps, spinning, leaping, and dance sequences) was observed to measure the domains within the parameters of psychological well-being. The pantomime portion of the dance class was observed to measure the goal of creative responses to musical, story, and pantomime stimulation. (See Appendix 7 for coding sheet 1.)

Table 2
Video Observations

Activities	Dimension of Human Development	Behavioural manifestations through dance	Objectives of classes
A. Psychological Well-being			
	(1) Self-perception		
dance steps	a. self-image	-bumping into others	decrease
	b. sense of control	-do dance steps	increase
overall dance class	c. sense of belonging	-participate in dance class	increase
	(2) Self-concept		
spins	a. self-control	-loss of balance	decrease
	(3) Social Skills		
pantomime	a. cooperation	-interact with peers and teacher	increase
		-peer observation	increase
listens to directions and music	b. communication	-responds to directions and music	increase
	(4) Motor Skills		
technical dance		-follows dance steps	increase

instruction	-add on new steps	increase
	-fluid movements	increase
	(5) positive affect	
overall	-feeling happy	increase
dance class		

B. Artistic Growth

creative	a. self-expression	As expressed by a
	b. spontaneity	combination of flow,
	c. creativity	rhythm, use of space,
		weight, and timing.

C. Creative Dance Expression

Creative dance was coded separately. To aid in this analysis, a coding sheet was constructed from measures developed by Laban (1948), one of the originators of movement analysis. These measures are widely used by movement analysts and coders as diagnostic, teaching tools rather than research or evaluation tools, therefore, the validity and reliability of these measures are unknown. However, it is hoped that using these adapted "Labanotation" scales in a research manner will provide insight into the girls' creative dance experience and artistic growth. The following five-point semantic differential scales were used to analyze the children's dance movements:

1. bound flow to free flow (scale 1 to 5),
2. direct space to indirect space (scale 1 to 5),
3. slow to quick movements (scale 1 to 5),
4. heavy to light weight (scale 1 to 5),
5. dissynchronous to synchronous rhythm (scale 1 to 5),

6. unresponsive to responsive relating with other girls (scale 1 to 5),

7. not initiating to initiating relationships with girls (scale 1 to 5).

In addition, I was interested to see whether the movement was rigid, fluid, or a mixture of both; whether the girls made use of space (forwards, sideways, backwards, low, middle, high); and whether most movement occurred in the arms, hands, fingers, feet, legs, head, or trunk.

By coding creative dance I hoped to discover whether there were changes in self-expressiveness, creativity, and spontaneity; and whether the student had changed her body rhythm or explorations with respect to flow, space, time, and weight. (See Appendix 8 for coding sheet 2.)

3. Interviews with Parents

Parents were interviewed two times: at the beginning and at the end of the dance program. At the beginning, they were asked the age of their daughters, their expectations of this program, and whether any previous classes were taken. If the girls had experienced previous dance classes, I would then ask what type of classes they were and what the girls had experienced in these classes. At the end of the program, the parents were asked whether they had seen any changes in their daughters. Then I probed for specific information, i.e. whether they had noticed any specific changes in their daughters with respect to coordination, confidence, facing

physical challenges, facing new experiences, and in the way their daughters act(s) with family members and friends. The parents were also asked whether they had noticed their daughters dance spontaneously at home and, if so, whether they noticed any changes in this spontaneous dancing. The parents of the "little ones" class were also asked whether (and how) the dance was better, the same, worse, or different to a play group.

4. Interviews, drawings, and self-reports of the girls. The girls were also interviewed at the beginning and at the end of the dance program. They were asked to explain what dance was to them, how they felt when they danced, and to name three things they liked and three things they disliked in the dance classes. As the girls appeared reluctant to say anything during the first class, I asked them to draw how they felt. The younger group liked this activity and it became a regular feature at the end of each dance class for the first five weeks. During the 6th and 14th weeks, I asked the girls to indicate how they felt by pointing to a face on the 5-point happy/sad faces rating scale (See Appendix 6).

Analysis of data

As this study uses both quantitative and qualitative data, the analysis and interpretation will reflect both approaches. Due to ethical considerations, I did not use the case study approach to examine or document the results

of this thesis. As the community is small, if I described each girl's experiences and development, there is a strong likelihood that the identity of the child would be known, which would violate my promise of confidentiality.

I had recorded my journal entries after dance classes each week. To try to remain as objective as possible, I did not analyze these notes in any way until the dance program was completed. In order to organize and clarify emerging patterns of observations in my field notes, I used the heuristic process of phenomenological analysis (Moustakas, 1990). Specifically, I hoped that through the recommended process of immersion, incubation (contemplation), illumination (expanding awareness), explication (focusing and reflection), and creative synthesis (bringing together pieces to show patterns), I would find a meaningful way to report my experience as participant observer and teacher of the dance classes.

I also used my personal method thinking about the questions I wished to address as I was going to sleep. Usually, by the following morning, I would have found answers to my queries. I feel this personal method of "problem solving" coupled with the phenomenological approach described by Moustakas (1990) were useful mechanisms to help me organize and synthesize the information in my journal notes.

Descriptive statistics were used to report the means of

the various quantitative changes observed in each of the video-taped sessions relative to one another. Videos 1 and 2 had the same lessons; videos 3 and 4 had the same lesson but videos 1 and 2 were not the same as videos 3 and 4.

Three general comparisons were made:

(1) the average scores on video 3 were compared to the average scores on video 4 (nine girls were compared),

(2) the average scores on videos 1, 2, 3, and 4 were compared (three out of the aforementioned five girls were compared), and

(3) the means of the combined psychological domains (i.e. self-perception, self-concept, social skills, and motor skills) on videos 1, 2, 3, and 4 were compared.

In addition, I also compared the two self-report faces scale results recorded from each girl attending dance classes during the second 10-week session.

Inferential statistics could not be used in this study as there were too few children participating in each dance class that was video-taped. Specifically, there were three "junior" girls and seven "little ones" in video-tape 1; there were three "junior" girls and four "little ones" in video-tape 2; there were five "junior" girls and five "little ones" in video-tape 3; there were five "junior" girls and four "little ones" in video-tape 4.

I used content analysis in the parent's interviews to help me find the themes of their responses. The evaluation

questions helped guide the search for patterns and meaningful connections among the different items.

The girls' drawings were analyzed to determine whether there were any dominant themes, patterns, and/or colours. Interviews were content-analyzed through "the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns of the data" (Patton, 1990, p. 381). Through this procedure, I intended to identify the patterns of change in the girls' responses to their dance experience. In addition to reporting their responses, I compared their verbal responses given at the beginning of the program to their verbal responses given at the end of the program.

By using a combination of observations, interviewing, and field notes, I could validate and cross-check my findings. As suggested by Patton (1990), "observations provide a check on what is reported in interviews; interviews, on the other hand, permit the observer to go beyond external behaviour to explore the internal states of persons who have been observed" (p. 245). Finally, I looked for the patterns and relationships among the various types of qualitative data (interviews, drawings, and field notes) after the initial coding and reporting of themes and categories had been completed.

Ethical Considerations

Estimates of risks and benefits:

Some of the benefits of the study were as follows:

a. Unlike the traditional model of dance, whereby children are expected to follow directions from the teacher without input, the participatory nature of the research gave all participants an opportunity to voice how they experienced dance. Sharing this experience facilitated an awareness of how the girls, parents, and the participant-observer perceive the dance experiences of the girls as well as giving participants an opportunity to shape and control their experiences.

b. The results of the verbal input allowed the participant observer to change the program to accommodate to its needs.

c. The observations by the participant observer ensured that adjustments were made within a class to accommodate the girls' dance abilities, so that the experience continued to be a positive, enriching one for all participants.

d. An increased awareness of their body parts and placement enhanced the girls' sense of mastery over their dance movements.

e. Self-expression and creativity through the use of space, time, weight, flow, and rhythm increased positive affective states for the girls in the dance class.

f. Learning to concentrate by listening and responding to music and by watching others helped the girls to concentrate, enhanced their social, cooperative skills, and allowed them to have some fun with their peers.

g. By watching for signs of relaxation and tension, the participant-observer changed the nature of the class to ensure the dance experience (i.e. interactions) remained a positive one for the children.

h. The experience of the dance enhanced the girls' locomotor and non-locomotor skills.

A number of risks might have emerged. They were as follows:

a. Given that this is a small community, there was a risk that anonymity might not have been preserved. In order to preserve anonymity and not disclose personal information to the group at large, no case studies were reported and a summary of the qualitative analysis results was given at the end of the study. Furthermore, verbal discussions did not disclose specific information which might have identified individual participants.

b. As the participants were very young, they might have felt they had to answer questions when they might not have wished to do so. The interviewer assured them that they did not have to answer questions if they did not wish to do so. Occasionally, some girls chose not to answer some of the questions.

c. A possible risk would be leaving the community with no one to follow-up on my dance program. However, I taught a creative dance workshop for the teachers at the Milverton Elementary School in March, 1994. Sharing my dance ideas

with the teachers can ensure that some portions of my dance program will live on in the community through the local physical education program.

Plan for obtaining informed consent

Prior to the interview, the interviewer reviewed the consent form (see Appendix 1) with the parents of the girls and asked them to sign it. Parents were asked to consent to their own participation, the participation of their daughters, and to the use of this information for professional publications and/or presentations of professional nature. The girls were also asked to consent to their participation (see Appendix 2).

Procedures to ensure confidentiality

a. Observations and interviews were anonymous. The identity of the interviewees and persons observed was known only to the participant-observer/interviewer.

b. Contents of the observations and interviews were kept at the principal researcher's home. Notes were not photocopied.

c. The participant observer/interviewer did not provide or discuss any information that may possibly identify the respondents or participants of the dance class.

Nature of feedback to participants

The results of this study were presented in written form by the investigator on the day of the dance concert: March 31, 1994. The document was distributed to all the

participants' parents (Appendix 6).

Results

Two purposes had been formulated for this research: (1) finding ways to understand and document how the girls experienced dance and (2) finding out whether dance could be considered as a viable tool for promoting and maintaining mental health and human development. The results will now be examined.

1. Finding ways to understand how the girls in this dance program experienced dance. Unable to find tools to help me understand how girls experience dance and how dance might promote health in children, I faced the challenge of having to create appropriate methods of inquiry for each goal.

1a. Methods of inquiry to understand the girls' dance experience.

Through weekly observations and four video-taped dance sessions, I could document the girls' changing responses to various dance, pantomime, and musical stimuli in the dance classes. Observations indicated that the girls expressed how they experienced dance through their body movements and facial expressions.

I tried to determine the girls' feelings and experiences by asking them to answer questions, identify their feelings on the happy/sad faces scale, and show me how they felt by drawing me a picture. Although no pattern of changes were evident, their responses gave me the

opportunity to understand how they felt and experienced dance. Parental interviews gave me additional insights into changes experienced by the girls in the dance class and changes experienced by the girls away from the actual dance class environment.

Searching through the weekly journal notes, parental interviews, and the girls' interviews, self-reports, and drawings, several themes appeared which gave insight to the girls' dance experiences. The themes included:

1. increased creativity,
2. decreased shyness,
3. happy participants, and
4. individual growth.

Each theme will be examined in more detail.

Increased creativity. All the students followed my suggestions with respect to creative movement and self-expression through pantomime. The first week, all the girls showed unique ways of pantomiming a growing seed, flowering, getting old, and dropping seed back into the ground. From the very first class, all the "junior" students danced smoothly and creatively during the creative dance portion of the dance program. My journal notes reveal some individual differences, of course. For instance, one girl was very fluid and intuitively let her body follow the rhythm of the music. Another girl was more rigid and would concentrate on perfect movement execution. She kept saying she was running

out of movement ideas. This rigid movement pattern continued for the next few weeks. By the seventh week, her movements were more fluid and she had abundant ideas that she was willing to share with others.

The members of "little ones" class were a little more reluctant to dance creatively without my leadership during the first few weeks. They loved to copy my movements and would stop dancing whenever I stopped dancing. By the seventh week, the girls still tended to focus on technique, so I decided to introduce more creative dance. It did not take long to expand their movement repertoire. We danced as raindrops falling, clouds swirling, horses galloping, bees buzzing; we pretended to be scared, brave, excited.

By the ninth week, the "juniors" class members were doing their own pantomimes and the "little ones" class members were doing their own creative dance without my participation. By the tenth week, the "juniors" dancers were creating their own dance combinations; the "little ones" dancers were beginning to make up one or two of their own dance steps to add into the group routine.

Changes in the girls' spontaneous dance explorations were noted by the parents and documented in the interviews.

"They practice routines; they clap and swing around...They dance non stop. They used to sway, rock, and bounce. The dancing is more smooth and flowing now. They respond to the type of music that is playing. "

"She does more dancing around the house. A lot of leaping."

"She is more creative now."

"She moves more like a ballerina or a skater now. More than hip-hopping around."

"She shows more feeling."

"She shows what she has learned and tries to do it better."

"She seems more coordinated."

"She is always fluttering around. She did not dance much before the dance classes but does more now. It is more like the dances you taught her."

"She really listens to the music and dances the same as in the dance class with the positions of her arms and feet."

"She is more graceful and does more leaps."

"The dancing is looser, not just stand and wiggle. She cuts loose."

"She does more plies, twirling, and puts more effort into her dancing. She is more coordinated now."

Decreased shyness. In the first class, one girl was very shy and refused to participate until her mother danced with her for awhile. By the second class, this girl no longer wanted her mother to join her. She found a place in the circle, kept up with the rest of the students, and seemed quite happy in the class. By the sixth week, she was comfortable. She chatted with me about Christmas, remembered her dance steps and shared ideas in the pantomime portion of the class.

The little girls periodically gave their parents hugs and kisses between the dance segments when I was changing the music cassettes on the tape recorder. As the weeks progressed, the girls became more relaxed around me and all

traces of shyness seemed to disappear.

Two parents stated their daughters were generally less shy since taking dance classes.

"She is more confident with new situations...She is more friendly and more outgoing."

"She is not as shy. She practices at home...She talks a lot more now."

Happy participants. During the first few weeks, I asked the girls how they felt about dancing. All the girls were reluctant to comment but the "little ones" class enjoyed responding through their drawings. The patterns found in their art work are listed below.

Week 1. Some drawings were full of movement; others were very still; all were bold and strong. Swirls, flowers, smiling people, and hearts were dominant themes. Red, blue, orange and green were the dominant colours.

Week 2. All the drawings were full of movement. Most drawings had people or figures on them. It looked as though the people were ready to leap off the page; the arms were either overhead or out to the side; all the faces had smiles. Red, purple, brown, green, grey were the dominant colours.

Week 3. There was a "hopping" theme this week because all the pictures had little rounded "m" shapes on them somewhere: across the page, sprouting out in a hair style, popping out of a "bubble". The dominant colours were orange, brown, green, and purple.

Week 4. All the pictures were figures standing in poses. A couple of drawings showed movement but most had a posed look, almost "frozen". All the faces were smiling. The dominant colours were green, red, and brown.

Week 5. Only two girls drew pictures today. One picture showed two girls dancing together and one picture showed one girl dancing. The girls were happy and the dominant colours were grey, brown, and red.

The "junior" girls were chatty and excited about having their own class. During the sixth week, they were particularly giggly and excited. They tended to exaggerate movements and sometimes clowned for the T.V. camera.

In general, the "little ones" dancers were more quiet participants. However, after a few weeks, they began to giggle and really have fun, especially in the dance routine, creative dance, and pantomime portions of the dance class. During the seventh week, the girls laughed as we explored rigid, jerky movements by pretending to be string puppets. During the fourteenth week, the girls did their favourite camping mime amidst squeals of delight and lots of story telling on their part.

Parents noted that their daughters "really liked" coming to dance class and that the girls hoped the dance program would continue next year.

When asked directly, the girls consistently showed their happiness by pointing to the happy face on the

happy/sad faces scale. One girl pointed to the sad face at the end of the dance class. She explained she was feeling sad because the dance class was over. As stated previously, the "little ones" dancers shared their passion and joy for dance through the bold strokes, bright colours, and happy faces they drew in their art work. During the second last class, the girls verbally told me they felt happy when they danced.

Individual Growth

On completion of the dance program, all parents were interviewed, even the parents of the children who dropped out of the classes. Their responses brought insight into the girls' dance experiences. Two themes were noted. These included: (1) observations of general changes in the girls since taking dance classes, and (2) changes in the girls with respect to family and friends.

General changes in the girls since taking dance classes.

When asked whether they had noticed any changes in their daughters since taking the dance classes, the responses were varied.

Five parents reported there were no changes in their daughters. Four parents reported that their daughters were more self-confident. Two parents stated their daughters were more creative and less shy.

"She is more self-confident. She has more of a dainty attitude."

"It (dance) has helped in her confidence."

One parent stated that her daughter had a different outlook; she is taking more responsibility, gets along better with other children, and is doing better in school. Changes in the girls with respect to family and friends. Responding to ways their daughters have changed in reacting with family and friends, several noted that their daughters were eager to share their dance experiences with family members, especially brothers and grandmothers.

"Every Thursday, she tells us, 'we did this today'."

"She is shy at school but dances at home for the family and Grandma. She talks to Grandma and shows her the new steps and movements because Grandma can't come to the class and watch."

"There is more tendency to show them (the family and the brother) what was learned. They have something of their own. They will wrestle but then switch to dainty ballerina moves...They talk about dance. When their friend comes over, they teach her the routines. They tell their dad what they did. They tell anyone they are taking dance. They tell their Grandma about dance and about the upcoming concert. They will be excited about the dance performance."

"She is teaching her friends and younger sister at home."

"My daughter tells people she goes to dance and has fun there. She shows them that this is a "V" (when feet are placed in first position). She shows people what she is learning and shares her learning with the family."

Two mothers reported that their daughters were teaching their younger brothers at home. One parent could not determine whether her daughter had changed in the way she acted with family and friends.

1b. Methods of inquiry for psychological well-being and artistic growth.

By reflecting on the dance program that I had created for the Milverton dance students, I identified certain dance activities that could be instrumental in translating the domains of psychological well-being into observational dance measures. For example, technical dance steps could indicate the girls' development in motor skills, sense of control and self-image. Specifically, by being able to do the dance steps and dance routines correctly without losing their balance, children were demonstrating self-mastery over their bodies; by not bumping into others, children were demonstrating they had attained spatial awareness of themselves in relation to others. Pantomime and listening to music and directions gave the children opportunities to demonstrate the social skills of cooperation (through interacting with me and each other) and communication (through responding to music and directions). I believed that all the dance activities would enhance (or maintain) a sense of belonging and overall affect which could be observed by the girls' participation and facial/body expressions throughout the dance class. The results of these psychological scales are discussed in detail in part 2b of the results section.

Artistic growth is a component of human development as well as the art form of dance. Once again, there were no

established methods for observation of this complex human experience. This time, I drew on the work of dance teachers and theorists and adapted their system and theories to my understanding of community psychology. I combined various aspects of dance notes and scales developed by Laban (1948), Moore and Yamamota (1988), and North (1990), and translated them into the present scales found in this study.

Furthermore, rather than use these adapted scales for diagnosis, I used them as observational tools to help me understand the girls' creative dance experiences. The results of these observations are reported in detail in part 2c of the results section.

2. Finding out whether dance could be considered as a viable tool for promoting health and human development.

Three questions were asked to determine the second goal. Can this dance program for girls in rural Ontario be useful in observing general well-being? Can dance observably help promote psychological development? Can dance demonstrably help promote artistic growth? Each question will be examined in detail.

2a. Can this dance program for girls in rural Ontario be useful in observing general well-being?

2a(i). Themes of general well-being

Examination of the weekly journal notes, parent's interviews, and girls' interviews, self-reports, and drawings indicated that this dance program was a useful

venue to observe and document a general sense of well-being in the girls. The documents revealed several themes. These included:

1. a positive dance class climate,
2. an increased ability to follow directions,
3. increased motor skills,
4. an increase in verbal responses about dance, and
5. group cohesion and development.

Each theme will be examined in more detail.

A positive dance class climate. My weekly journal entries reveal that the atmosphere of each dance class was favourable. In the first class, all the girls were very excited but remained attentive and followed directions throughout the lesson. The youngest girl experienced some difficulty keeping up with the others near the end of the evening but displayed no disruptive behaviour. The next twelve dance sessions (which were split into two separate dance classes to accommodate the different ages and movement abilities) maintained the spirit of camaraderie and attentiveness. Even during the last two classes, when the girls rehearsed and performed their dance "recital", they remained calm, focused, and well behaved. They seemed to have a "thirst" to experience dance and never lost their enthusiasm and eagerness to learn. I really enjoyed sharing my dancing experiences with these girls in each class throughout the 15 weeks.

An increased ability to follow directions. During the first class, the youngest girls had difficulty "freezing" their movements. They continued dancing after everyone had frozen. Eventually, they noticed that the other girls had stopped dancing and then they would stop, too. From the beginning, the members of the "little ones" dance class had no difficulty following large movements such as strutting along, riding a horse, being a kangaroo, and closing doors. The slightly smaller moves such as peeking through windows, eating, and making a campfire (and putting it out with water) were more challenging for the girls. However, with passing weeks, they were able to execute more detailed, finer movement qualities.

In the first couple of weeks, I occasionally moved the creative dance and pantomimes along too quickly. One or two girls would simply stop dancing for a moment or they would be noticeably behind the others in their actions. Once I made the appropriate correction and slowed down my teaching, no further problems in keeping up or in following directions were noted in any dance activities during the ensuing weeks.

Increased motor skills. Motor skills tended to improve steadily throughout the duration of the program. For example, during the first week, the "little ones" dancers had difficulty lying on their sides to do leg lifts but by the second week, these difficulties had disappeared. In the "juniors" class, the exercises requiring fine motor

movements with wrists and fingers were difficult for all the girls. By the end of the classes, most girls were still unable to do these finer movements. Nevertheless, two of the five girls had mastered these fine motor skills.

Changing legs during the leaps was difficult for all the girls, but, after I put boots on the floor for them to leap over, all the girls could leap without coordination problems. By the fifth week, the leaps were done so well that I added arm positions. However, this created confusion. No one could coordinate their arms and legs together. We switched back to leaping without adding arm positions. By the tenth week, the girls were landing hard on their leaps. Therefore, I had them practice soft, quiet landings and gave praise after each successful attempt. All the girls got very good at landing softly and developed a good-natured game of seeing who could land without making a sound.

Initially, mirroring (where one person is the dancer and another person is the mirror reflecting back the movement) was difficult for all the girls. They tended to work in opposite diagonals instead of reflections but, with practice, they soon mastered the correct duplication of movements.

At first, ballet warm-up exercises were very challenging for some of the "little ones" dancers. They did not understand how to put their feet into first position.

After shaping my own feet into a "V" and tracing this letter "V" with my fingers, the girls copied my movements and, eventually, all of them formed the correct foot position. Next, they tried to do a plie (bending the knees). A lot of "little bums" stuck out. I demonstrated what not to do as well as how to correct it. The girls tried to do the corrected version. However, when they corrected their bottoms, their feet lost the "V". One student's feet formed a backwards "V", her toes instead of her heels touching. We corrected the feet and bottoms and then the legs lost the correct diamond shaped placement. When I showed them the corrected bent legs position, they lost the correct bottoms position. To ease any potential frustration, I switched to arm movements as this was something all the girls could do well. During the third and fourth weeks, the girls were still experiencing difficulty coordinating their feet, knees, and bottoms during the plies. However, by the fifth week, all the dancers could do skips and gallops correctly and their arm movements were done smoothly. My journal notes that:

"I am really impressed by these talented youngsters. Not only do they learn the steps and routines very quickly, they are also able to correct themselves technically."

During the last weeks, all the girls concentrated on perfecting the movements they had learned throughout the previous dance classes.

An increase in verbal responses about the dance experience.

On the first day, the children were asked to describe dance. Only one child (a little boy who was watching) piped up with the reply: "Twirling". The rest of the children did not say anything but smiled and stared intently at me. However, they willingly shared their experiences through the medium of drawing.

By the second week, the "juniors" dancers said they enjoyed leaps, spins, and everything in the class but especially the leaps and spins. When asked what they did not like, they paused, thought for a moment, shook their heads and said they could not think of anything they did not like. When the "little ones" dancers were asked what they liked about dance, a chorus of "leaps" and "hops" echoed around the room. When asked what they did not like, no one offered a comment.

By the fourteenth week, the girls increased their verbal responses with respect to how they experienced dance. Their answers are recorded in four themes.

a. What dance meant to the girls.

Some of the girls could tell what dance meant to them. The answers were short and to the point:

"It's fun. It's radical. It's cool.

"It's fun."

"It's awesome. It's exciting."

"It looks nice when we all do it."

Two girls did not know. Four girls shrugged their

shoulders. One wanted to think about it some more.

b. Things the girls liked about dance.

When asked to list three things they liked about dance, all the girls responded.

"Twirling, leaping, everything, pantomime."

"Everything."

"Jumps, spins, jump rope."

"Games."

"Cartwheel, pencil turn."

Five girls answered: "Ballet".

c. Things the girls did not like about dance.

When asked to tell me three things they did not like about dance, the responses included one shoulder shrug and 6 "nothing".

Two girls said, "March break."

One girl said, "Rocking horse."

One girl said, "Times I don't come."

d. How the girls felt when they danced.

Answers varied:

"Incredible".

"Excited."

"Cool."

"O.K."

"Radical."

Six girls said, "happy".

Group cohesion and development. Since the beginning of the

dance classes, both groups were cohesive and cooperative. All group members showed positive affect throughout the 15 weeks. A few occasions are worth noting. For example, my journal indicates that there was a sharing of ideas through several pantomimes. In the "little ones" class, the girls brushed their hair, brushed their teeth, and caught and ate a fish. I asked them if they had any more ideas. My journal entry tells the story:

"Eat a cake," someone said. "Birthday cake?" Head nods of approval. Everyone blew out the candles. Someone said, "They (the candles) came on again." We blew again. We ate the cake. One girl gave me a piece of her cake; everyone gave me a piece of cake. The same girl threw some cake in my face. Soon everyone was throwing cake everywhere. We did a bathtub mime to "clean" ourselves up. The girls were very spontaneous and giggly throughout the cake scene where they all piled their pretend cakes all over me. They enjoyed the spontaneous play of the mime."

By the third week, the "juniors" dancers displayed the ability and willingness to cooperate, to visualize spatially, to respond to other people's movement and to respond rhythmically to the other dancers through a special "machine" exploration. The machine exercise required someone to begin a repetitive movement. Others would join one-by-one, until everyone moved together in one large "machine". Not only were the girls able to do this exercise, they also had fun, encouraged one another, and helped each other think of ideas.

During the seventh week, the girls made up a special rope jumping pantomime that required group cooperation to

turn the rope together and take turns jumping. This mime was extremely well done as I could actually "see" the rope. It was great!

All the girls were cooperative and extremely well behaved during the rehearsal and performance at Knollcrest Senior Centre. The "juniors" class and "little ones" class took turns with warm ups, their own dance routines, creative dance, and pantomimes. They quietly went from one practice number to the next. One group would sit down and watch the others until it was their turn to dance. In all my years of teaching, I have never experienced such a quiet, polite group of dancers. It really was a smooth rehearsal!

With respect to group development, I was impressed by the girls' willingness to accept new members even though they had formed such a close knit group. For example, on the eighth week, three new girls had joined the "junior" class. Two of the girls were unknown to any girls in the class. My journal shows that all the new girls were welcomed:

"There was a little adjustment to make as everyone seemed a little shy at first but it was not long before they were laughing and giggling together. I taught a new set of warm up exercises so that all the girls would be on equal footing. Everyone learned the new steps very quickly and were eager to participate. The girls who had been there before clamoured to help the newcomers by demonstrating and correcting the steps in the exercises and the dance routine, and by encouraging the girls. During the mirroring exercise, all the girls willingly took turns dancing with each other."

During the last two weeks, the two separate dance

classes joined together for rehearsals and for the performance. Their behaviour was exemplary. They all got along well, worked quietly, took turns, watched each other, and cheered each other on. Although excited, they remained focused on their tasks and encouraged each other.

Not only did the group of girls support each other, they also developed a closeness and a bond by sharing a common experience: performing for their community at Knollcrest Senior Centre. The audience reciprocated their efforts by applauding loudly and embracing their children's performance with pride. This pride was extended to me as I was publically thanked by the parents for teaching their daughters. Each parent either shook my hand or gave me a hug. Some of the older girls said they would miss me. One of the girls gave me a hug. The "little ones" dancers thanked me, had their pictures taken with me, and said good-bye. It was a nice way to leave the community.

2a(ii). Program Evaluation

During the interviews, the parents also commented on the dance program, specifically, (1) how the dance program compared to a play group, and (2) why some girls stopped coming to dance.

Comparison between the dance program and a play group. Three parents reported that the dance program was better than a play group.

"It is better than a play group because in the dance, you have the creativity. There is more incorporated in

the dance. She has her friends in the dance class but still follows you (the dance teacher). It's additive every week instead of a scheduled play group. I am not dragging her there. I say. "It's dance class," and her face just lights up, "alright!" It must be because you are such a good teacher. The kids really love you."

"It is better in the way she has the best of both things. She learns things in dance but it's still like play."

"It is better than a play group. She is intimidated with a play group. In a new situation, she sits on my (Mom's) lap. She withdraws and watches. She thinks she has to give me some attention and gives her hugs. Here, she does not do this to the same extent. She will give me hugs but loves to participate in dance. In a play group, she does not venture out."

Two parents stated the dance class was different than a play group.

"They interact with the kids. It's more structured. They come with something being taught to them. They dance the whole time. They recite what you showed them. They are more conscious of how they dance. The structure in the dance is different in that they have to listen, there are more memory and physical skills involved, they have more creative things in their minds. They have to imagine more. They do a lot of pretend but it is more copying like doing a scene off of T.V., washing dishes. Dance is more creative. You tell them to be the wind. They have to visualize the wind themselves. They have to visually be the wind so they need to have their own personal opinion of the wind and have to dig in their own minds for what the wind is."

"It is different because of the different structure. Dance is more structured; there is a direct focus and discipline. You learn at dance and develop on what you learn. It requires talent and skill. The children cooperate and share. A play group is really different as the children are free to move from play centre to play centre. There is a play structure to the play centre."

One parent suggested the dance and play group were similar.

"It is similar to play group but there are different things expected. At the toy library, there is play (15

minutes) and circle time (where they have to pay attention). It is similar as my daughter has expectations she puts on herself. She preconceives what is going to happen and disciplines herself to act that way. She does what she thinks is expected and no more. She conforms to what the expectation is. The discipline is not much different."

One parent could not answer the question as her daughter had not attended a play group.

Why some of the girls stopped coming to dance classes.

Several reasons were reported for children dropping out of the dance classes.

"She was tired. She gets dressed for school recess and Brownies. It is cold weather and she just wants to stay at home. In spring, she may want to come then; she still loves to do it and talks to people about going."

"She wants more structure in the dance group. She is going for the technical aspect and did not have enough of that for herself. I want to find a piano teacher so she can learn to play the piano."

"I cannot afford to send her this time. (Mom was taking other college courses at this time.) But, I want her to go again next time there is dance."

2b. Can dance observably help promote psychological well-being?

This question was answered by coding the video-tapes. The second coder coded 27% of the total video-taped material. As stated earlier, reliability was calculated by subtracting the disagreements from the total observations, dividing by the total observations, and multiplying by 100. In this study, the reliability score was 91%. When there were disagreements, the video-tape was viewed again by both coders and the reasons for disagreement were discussed. Upon

reviewing and reflecting, the two coders reached agreement on all previous disagreements.

Three sets of human development observations were performed to increase the amount of comparisons that could be done for all four videos. Only three girls were present for all four videos, whereas five girls were present for three videos and nine girls were present for two videos. By comparing the averages in all three sets of human development, it was hoped to increase the understanding about the girls' experiences of well-being and artistic growth throughout the dance classes.

In general, there was a lowering of average scores in each domain of psychological well-being in video 2 and 3 and a rising of average scores in video 4 for each of the three separate observations of human development. (See Figures 1 and 2). Similarly, the means of the combined psychological domains (i.e. self-perception, self-concept, social skills and motor skills) showed an increase in video 4 (see figure 3).

Psychological Well-being

1. Self-perceptions

With respect to the domain of self-perceptions, the average scores for self-image showed that the girls sometimes bumped into each other in videos 1, 2, and 3 but did not bump into each other in video 4. The average scores for a sense of control showed that their body coordination

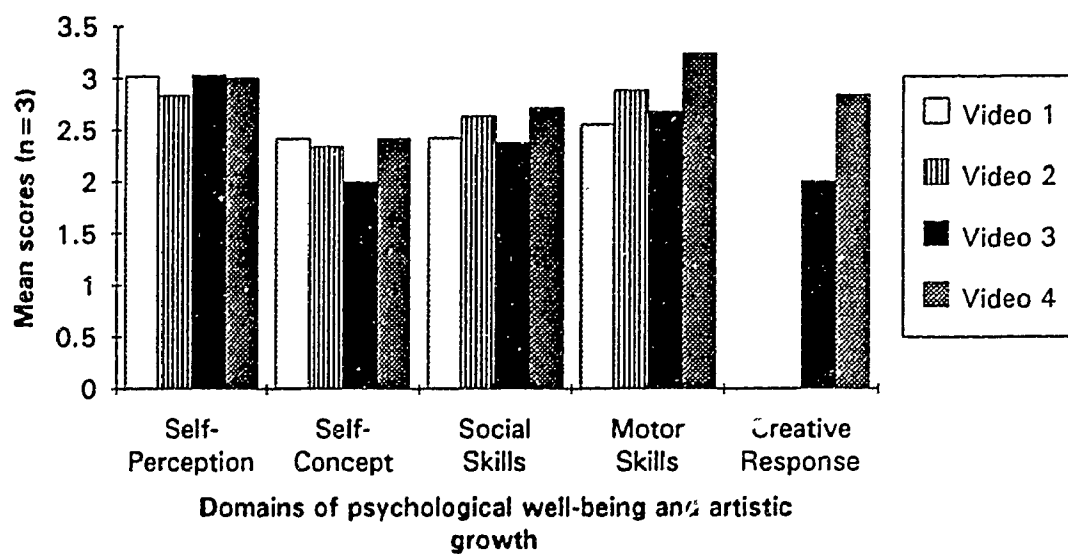


Figure 1. Observations of human development
(weeks 3, 6, 9, 12)

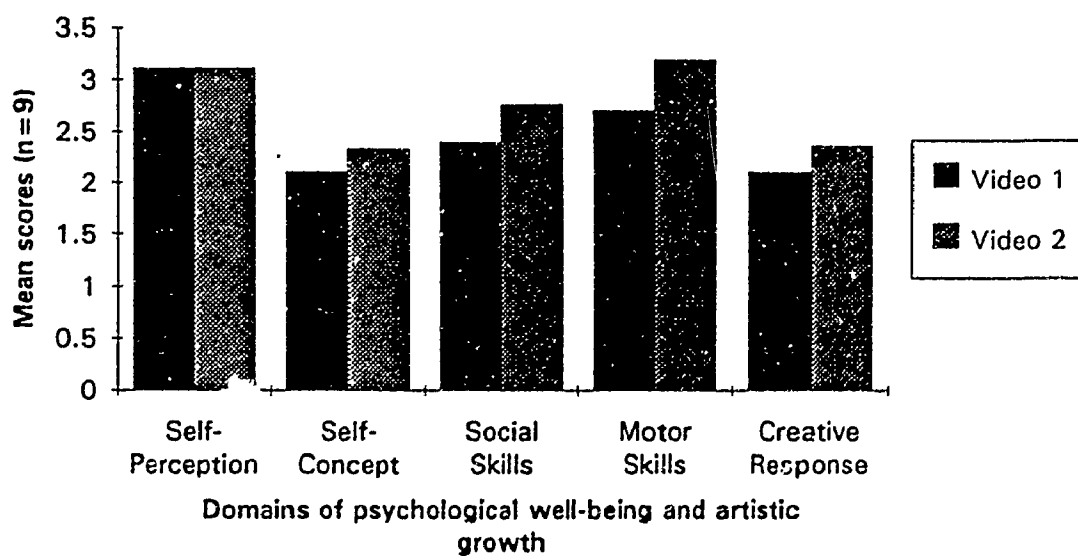


Figure 2. Observations of human development
(weeks 9 and 12)

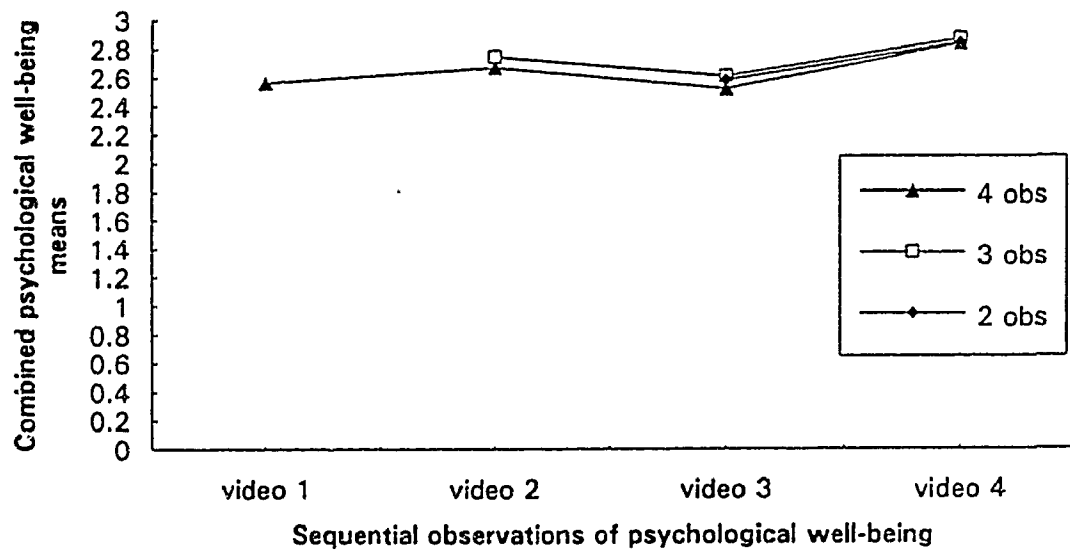


Figure 3. Combined observations of human development

was fairly neutral, neither controlled nor uncontrolled. The average scores for participation showed that the girls participated all the time in videos 1 and 2 and participated sometimes in videos 3 and 4.

2. Self-concept

The girls demonstrated their self-concept by showing little loss of balance and by their ability to participate in self-assessment. The girls did not hesitate or refuse to participate in any of the video-taped segments.

3. Social Skills

The cooperation and communication subscales of social skills revealed that the girls listened to directions most of the time, listened to music some of the time, watched their peers some of the time, interacted with their peers some of the time, and interacted with their teacher most of the time.

4. Motor Skills

Motor skills subscales indicated that the children increased their ability to follow steps and to add on new steps in videos 2 and 4. While not a large increase, their rising average scores indicated that the quality of movement became steadily more fluid in each video. By the first two videos, each child had learned how to do the locomotor and non-locomotor movements of walk, run, skip, hop, leap, gallop, bend, and twist.

5. Emotions

In general, the girls tended to show more interest in videos 1 and 3 and more happiness in videos 2 and 4.

2c. Can dance demonstrably help promote artistic growth?

Artistic growth shows creative responses were not applicable in videos 1 and 2, but an increase is shown in the average scores for creative responses in videos 3 and 4.

Creative dance coding revealed that, on average, the movements tended to be free flowing, neither direct nor indirect, quick, and light. The movements were a little less free flowing, but a little more indirect, quick and light in video 4 than in video 3. The girls tended to maintain a particular movement pattern in both videos. However, one of the girls in the "little ones" class deliberately explored two opposite patterns: slow and quick movements, and heavy and light movements.

The rhythm was synchronous for all the students. They all moved spontaneously and creatively. They were very responsive to each other and often initiated new movements. There was little difference between the two videos but there tended to be an increase in synchronous rhythm and responsiveness in video 4; there tended to be a decrease in spontaneity and in initiating new moves in video 4. There was no change in expressiveness.

Most girls danced in a forward motion and explored the low, middle, and high spaces in both videos. No one explored the backwards or sideways motions. Most movement

occurred in the arms, legs, and the trunk in video 3. Some girls added on head and fingers movements in video 4. One girl in the "little ones" class was very creative and kept finding interesting and unusual ways of moving. She did not copy others and was not influenced by them in any way. One of the "juniors" girls danced very creatively and explored different ways of using her arms, hands, fingers, feet, legs, trunk and head. She was fascinating to watch. Some girls let the movement carry them through space. Although only recorded twice, all but two of the new children became less inhibited in their creative dancing with each passing week.

Synopsis

I noticed some very interesting patterns when I compared the content of each weeks dance classes with the drawings. Clearly, the drawings were an effective way to illustrate the girls' dance experiences. For example, during week 1, the girls learned how to dance like a flower and move boldly through the room in our creative dance. The dominant pictures were either a flower or bold strokes across the page. During the second week, the girls learned star jumps with their arms up in a "V". The dominant theme in the drawings was a smiling person with arms in the air. The pictures had the quality of movement: it seemed as if the person was leaping off the page. In addition, when asked what they liked in dance class that day, the girls

verbally stated that they liked leaps and hops. In week 3, the drawings had wavy lines, like large "m's" joined together. The video tape revealed that the girls were learning hops and gallops (which have a rocking type of quality similar to their drawings). During week 4, the girls drew figures with smiling faces and "frozen" postures. One of the major things we had concentrated on during the dance class had been port de bras (arm movements). During week 5, only two of the children drew pictures. They drew themselves dancing with a friend.

Overall, the girls' responses were overwhelmingly positive with respect to how they felt about dance. Cross-validating the various means of data collection confirms this positive affect. The girls consistently expressed happiness through their drawings, the faces scale, and happy verbal comments in the class. The parents confirmed that their girls were happy in dance by stating that the girls enjoyed dance and wanted the dance classes to continue. My journal entries note the girls' happiness, too. Lastly, the video recordings captured the girls' giggles and grins, especially in videos 2 and 4. Taking all these measures together, it seems difficult to refute that the girls, indeed, were enjoying happy dance experiences in the dance program.

Discussion

In order to understand how the girls experienced dance,

it was necessary to utilize several methods of data collection. Before investigating the viability of dance as a potential tool to promote psychological well-being, a method of integrating the domains of psychological well-being into dance pedagogy had to be found. Then observational dance measures had to be designed. Measures also had to be found and adapted to document whether the girls used dance as a vehicle for artistic growth through self-expression, spontaneity, and creativity. Therefore, a primary challenge for this study was finding, creating, or adapting appropriate methods of data collection and observational dance measures.

1. Finding ways to understand how the girls in this dance community experienced dance.

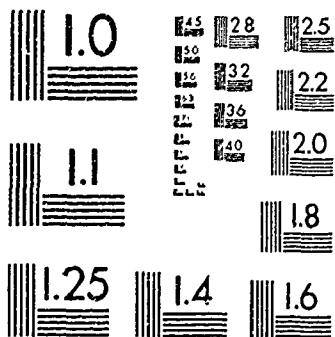
Methods of inquiry.

Upon reflection, I believe all the methods of data collection and measures were useful in observing, documenting, and measuring changes (or stability) experienced by the girls in the dance classes. The girls expressed emotions through their body movements and facial expressions. Although more subtle, they also expressed their feelings and experiences through their drawings and dialogue. Observations by parents clarified and confirmed some of the observable behaviours shown by the girls.

Although all the methods of data collection were useful in documenting changes experienced by the girls, closer

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examination reveals that, individually, some of the methods posed problems. For example, the happy/sad faces scale was the least useful as no discrimination of feelings were identified. The girls consistently pointed to the happy faces for aspects of their dance experience. Asking the girls directly how they felt after they danced also did not work well. They did not respond in the first week and the verbal responses in the following weeks were quite sparse. The girls' drawings were useful as the girls expressed themselves very boldly and graphically through their art. However, as the drawings required rather subjective interpretations, they are subject to the criticism of not meeting more stringent objective standards offered by other evaluation measures. In addition, the drawings were only done throughout the first five weeks so I cannot compare the changes that may have taken place through the drawings between the first and last class. (The girls had been eager to draw every week but then lost interest after the fifth week.)

In my opinion, the video-taped segments of laughter and smiles in the dance sessions captured the girls' feelings in a very graphic, indisputable way. Overall, the video-taped observations were more discriminatory than my classroom observations and journal notes because the movements and interactions of the girls could be coded with great detail. In this study, I had to be particularly alert to the problem

of researcher bias because not only were the journal notes subjective, I also played the dual role of researcher and teacher. (Discussion of specific measures are documented under the section discussing the domains of psychological well-being.) However, as there were only four tapes and not everyone was in attendance during those four sessions, it was necessary to review the weekly journal notes to supplement the documentation of changes throughout the weeks. In addition, the girls reacted to the presence of the camera in unpredictable ways. For example, in the first session they were excited at first and then seemed to ignore it. The second time the "junior" girls clowned around for the camera. The last two sessions the girls appeared indifferent to the taping.

Using the artistic coding scales adapted from Laban's (1948) work was very time-consuming. Initially, it was very difficult to obtain inter-rater reliability because the interpretation of movements can be very subjective. With practise, reliability improved and the scales became a useful way to observe artistic trends in the girls.

I believe that the parental interviews were a necessary component to documenting changes in the girls. The parents offered additional insights of the girls' experiences and activities outside of the dance class that I was unable to observe.

Despite the problems found in each separate method of

data collection, this study was strengthened through the use of triangulation because the weaknesses of one approach could be compensated by the strengths of another approach (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). As suggested by Patton (1990), the multiple methods of data collection and the different types of data provided cross-data validity checks and enhanced the credibility of findings. I believe a varied approach was very useful in this exploratory study because each method contributed to the overall understanding of how the girls experienced the dance program. Furthermore, each method offered some insight with respect to the idea of using dance as a tool for the promotion of human development and growth.

Understanding the girls' dance experiences.

Although problems existed for each method of data collection, when all the methods were examined together, the results indicated that the girls were happy in this dance program. They concentrated hard through the technical portions of the class; they laughed and giggled during the creative movement explorations.

Positive social behaviour and self-mastery, which are considered to be building blocks for good health (Johnson et al., 1981), were expressed by the girls in the dance program. Healthy attitudes were demonstrated by their consistent positive behaviours in class: demonstrating a willingness to participate and try new challenges,

cooperating with others, listening to directions, having fun moving their bodies, and sharing a positive experience with other class members. In addition, the girls showed positive social behaviour by cooperating and working collaboratively to create their dances and pantomime stories. For example, a high degree of cooperation was necessary in order for the skipping rope pantomime to work.

Adapted measures from Laban's (1948) work were helpful in detecting a trend for the shy girls. The coding revealed that they gradually became more self-expressive in their movement repertoire and became more responsive to other girls in the class through creative dance. In addition, the parents of some of the shy girls reported that their daughters were less shy and more confident since they had participated in the dance classes.

As suggested by Hanna (1988), I believe the girls were beginning to achieve mastery over their bodies through dance training and that this achievement may have contributed to their sense of self-control, self-confidence and positive self-esteem. Comments by the parents about their daughters increasing their dance ability, eagerly sharing their experiences with family and friends, and showing signs of increased self-confidence helps to confirm the idea that the girls were beginning to gain self-mastery through the dance program.

2. Finding out whether dance could be considered as a viable

tool for promoting health and human development. This research goal posed another challenge, as I had to formulate ways to examine an artistic experience in a methodic manner. Formulating the following three questions helped focus the results of the research goal in a more concrete manner: (a) Can this dance program for girls in rural Ontario be useful in observing general well-being? (b) Can dance observably promote psychological well-being? (c) Can dance demonstrably help promote artistic growth? The results for each question will be discussed separately.

2a. Can this dance program for girls in rural Ontario be useful in observing general well-being?

The various methods of data collection indicated that the girls experienced no apparent negative effects from the dance program. Their motor skills increased. They concentrated hard and were attentive through the technical parts of the dance class.

In general, this dance program produced similar experiences for the girls as those reported by some creative arts studies. For example, like the study conducted by Walsh et al. (1991), the girls in this dance program experienced positive peer interactions. Like the Freyberg (1973) study, there was an increase in the girls' verbal communication with respect to their responses of how they felt about dance. Similar to the study by Nahme-Huang et al. (1977), cooperative games like "mirroring" and

"machines" promoted cooperative actions, nonverbal communication skills, and positive affect.

As a creative art, this dance program also produced similar values as those reported for drama by McCaslin (1984). Specifically, the girls developed imagination, independent thinking, planning, cooperation, and group exploration through creating their own steps for the dance routine and by producing their own pantomimes. In addition to expressing a consistently happy affect, the girls became more aware of each other's dance movements throughout the ensuing weeks.

Altogether, these results show that this dance program, by providing girls with an opportunity to explore the values of creative expression through body movement, created observable conditions which maintained psychological well-being and promoted artistic growth.

2b. Can dance observably help promote psychological development?

With respect to examining the domains of psychological well-being, a few problems must be noted. Apart from motor skills, little difference was seen in the average scores for self-perceptions, self-concept, social skills, and emotions. However, all scores were quite high at each session. It is possible that the girls may have been excited and highly motivated each time they came, which may have reflected their repeatedly high scores. Or, perhaps these high scores

may have been due to the timing of the taped sessions. Using a video on the first day would have offered a better pretest condition. However, the idea of taping on the first day posed a dilemma for me as it was very important that the girls felt comfortable and enjoyed their experience in the dance class. To provide a positive learning atmosphere, I needed to build trust. By having a camera record them on the first day, they may have been too uncomfortable and intimidated to enjoy themselves and this experience may have jeopardized the program in the following weeks. Conversely, by not recording them on the first day, I do not have a clear preprogram measure. For instance, the scores may have been a lot lower on the first day. An increase in subsequent tapes would have provided evidence that the dance program had a direct impact on increasing psychological well-being. However, the girls had two dance classes before they were taped so they had two opportunities to experience an increase in positive psychological well-being through dance before they could be coded by the measures designed for the video-taped observations. On the other hand, the timing for the taping of artistic growth was appropriate as it took several weeks before the girls acquired the familiarity with dance movement to provide them the impetus for creative explorations.

The cause of the high scores remains unclear. However, the consistentl. high scores for the domains of

psychological well-being warrant a closer look to try to understand and interpret these results.

First, although the scores are still high, there is a shift in pattern in video-tape 3 whereby mean scores show a decrease in self-concept, social skills, and motor skills. These decreases may have been due to an increased difficulty of dance exercises that were introduced during week 9. Three weeks later, video-tape 4 shows that the girls had mastered the dance exercises introduced in the ninth week; their scores for self-concepts, social skills, and motor skills all showed an increase. The pattern of results suggests the dance classes may have had an influence on the girls with respect to self-concept, social skills, and motor skills as measured by the observable dance scales.

Second, with respect to the domain of self-perceptions, the average scores for self-image, sense of control, and participation showed that the girls had formed healthy self-perceptions. Specifically, the rise in scores on videos 3 and 4 indicated that the girls made gains in self-perceptions near the end of the dance program.

Third, with respect to the domain of self-concept, the combined average scores for control and sense of belonging indicated that the girls fluctuated between being a little uncontrolled and controlled throughout most of their technical dance experiences and they did not fully participate during video 3. Based on these observations,

their sense of control and belonging still needs more work. Although these results may have been due to an increased difficulty in the dance movements, a reviewing of the tapes reveals that the mean score was affected by one girl stepping out to tie her shoes!

Fourth, the measure of self-control in the domain of self-concept showed the girls had healthy self-concepts, but the self-assessment measure in the domain of self-concept was problematic. Self-assessment was measured by observing whether the girl participated or hesitated (or refused) to participate in some aspect of the dance class. However, the self-assessment observation is based on the assumption that girls would refuse or hesitate to participate during movements that they would judge as being too difficult. While this interpretation may be true, this assumption is hard to assess without asking for confirmation from the student. This was not done because these observations were coded after the dance class was over. Furthermore, one girl hesitated to participate from time to time but still continued to dance at a distance from the rest of the group. It is possible that she may just have been shy or felt more comfortable with more empty space around herself. As it is unclear how to interpret the meaning of children hesitating or refusing to dance, I believe this particular measure needs to be revised or scrapped.

Fifth, as the girls listened to directions and

interacted with the teacher, their communication and cooperative skills were good. Listening to music and watching peers was encouraged in videos 3 and 4. These latter skills need more work. With additional classes, I believe these scores would have increased as the girls would have had more opportunities to practise these skills.

Sixth, motor skills were quite good throughout every video. Tape 1 and 3 have the lowest scores for dance steps and this makes sense because these tapes provided the girls with the first exposure to the specific skills they were learning. These steps were practised in weeks 4 and 5. By week 6 (tape 2), the scores indicated that the girls had improved. A similar pattern occurred for Tapes 3 and 4. The steady increase in scores from video 1 to 4 indicated that the quality of movement became progressively more fluid (or smooth) throughout the nine weeks.

According to movement development studies, most five year old girls tend to skip, hop, and gallop in a rudimentary fashion (Corbin, 1980; Gutteridge, 1939). The young girls in the "little ones" dance class learned to skip, hop, and gallop very quickly. Furthermore, they progressively increased their skill level over the 15 week dance program. This steady improvement suggests that the dance classes may have been instrumental in developing these motor skills beyond the rudimentary level. However, it is also possible that these particular girls were already

developmentally mature with respect to these motor tasks.

Finally, as indicated by the observations of their faces, the girls were generally interested and happy during their dance classes.

2c. Can dance demonstrably help promote artistic growth?

The average scores for artistic growth in technical skills was quite good. However, it was not measured until video 3 and 4 as the girls needed time to learn specific skills before they could be ready to show self-expression, spontaneity, and creativity through dance.

The artistic coding scales developed from Laban's (1948) work were helpful in discovering creative movement patterns. For example, creative dance scores revealed a tendency for all the girls to stay within their personal dominant movement qualities. Only one girl experimented with changes in time and weight. Two girls explored a wide variety of movements using their fingers, hands, arms, feet, legs, trunk, and head. The other girls did not use their fingers at all. Without having more students to observe, it is difficult to claim that age (or developmental maturity) was a factor in the use or omission of finger movements.

The new group members who did not know or had established previous relationships with the rest of the group were more inhibited in their creative dance explorations. They may have hesitated due to their recent membership in this dance group.

In general, I believe that with more exposure to creative movement, it is possible that all the girls would have experienced a wider range of movement qualities. For example, dance programs that have a longer duration, or have a greater emphasis on specifically identifying and exploring different movement qualities, might encourage children to explore a wider variety of movement qualities and thereby enhance their creative dance expression.

General Observations

The success of the dance program may have been due to a nurturing environment. As a teacher, I tried to guide and shape the students' journey through dance in a nurturing way by finding and praising a special strength in each girl. Everyone was encouraged in their attempts to participate in appropriate ways. I enjoyed and shared the girls' zest for life, their laughter, and their attempts to master the various dance skills. Simply put, I looked forward to spending time with them each week; I let them know how much I enjoyed their company and how much I liked to teach them dancing. The parents demonstrated their approval of their daughters' experiences by their smiles and hugs given to their girls and then to me at the end of the program. The "junior" girls enjoyed demonstrating steps and offering words of encouragement to the newcomers in their class (and to the "little ones" whenever they were together); the dancers in the "little ones" class willingly tried new dance

explorations and displayed their experiences to family and friends (at home and at the concert). As stated by Pranksy (1991), a nurturing environment improves the prognosis for overall life success. The aforementioned examples are evidence that there was a nurturing environment in the dance program; therefore, the prognosis for dance being an observable venue to enhance or maintain psychological wellness looks promising.

The successful outcomes of this dance program may have been due to other factors as well. For example, it is likely that the group dynamics and group growth were positive because the girls knew each other, liked each other, and received a lot of positive reinforcement from their parents and me. The girls were already excited as they came to class. Positively channelling their energies through movement explorations may have maintained the girls' existing high psychological scores. Finally, unlike traditional dance teachers who emphasize dance technique, I was not primarily interested in developing technically proficient dancers. Although I taught some dance technique, my main teaching goal was to promote the simple love and joy of self-expression through creative movement. I also encouraged a sharing of goals, collaboration (in creating dances and pantomimes), and citizenship (by performing for the community seniors). These values were in line with the parental wishes of creating a happy dance experience for

their daughters.

Limitations and Future Research

Although credibility of the results was enhanced by measuring observable behaviour, there were limitations to this study, namely, the numbers of participants was low, only girls participated, and the participants in the study were self-selected. Furthermore, the duration of the program was brief, there was only one instructor, and there was a possibility my dual teacher/researcher role might create problems in this study. However, the field notes, parental observations, and sharing of experiences by the girls provided a rich source of information which indicated that, even within these limitations, this dance program was able to provide these girls the opportunity to enhance their psychological well-being and grow artistically. To better understand the confines and the potential of the program, it is important to examine each of the previously mentioned limitations in detail.

First, the fact that there were few program participants made it impossible to do inferential statistics on the data; therefore, I cannot make generalizations about the viability of dance to promote good health and artistic expression. However, as the dance program gave the girls the opportunity to form healthy attitudes and build good social life skills, I can say this program fostered some of Cowen's (1991) criteria for psychological wellness, namely,

the girls experienced a sense of satisfaction, self-control, and belongingness.

Second, only girls participated in the dance program so I cannot generalize my findings with respect to group dynamics, socialization, and motor development to include both genders. For instance, it would have been interesting to compare the motor development between boys and girls because some of the literature (Corbin, 1980; Gutteridge, 1939) suggests young girls are more proficient than young boys in performing some of the basic dance movement skills, namely, the skip, hop, and gallop. However, as there were no boys in the dance program, no comparisons can be made.

Third, the participants in this study were self-selected. They had an interest in dance and chose to participate in the dance program. This limitation notwithstanding, the formative evaluation approach which studied the program effects and documented the experiences of the children was appropriate and useful.

Fourth, the duration of the program was brief, which limited the degree of change observed in the girls. It takes many years to acquire all the motor skills required for proficient dancing. However, as this program focused on the enjoyment of movement explorations instead of strictly technical training, fifteen weeks was sufficient time for the girls to experience well-being and artistic growth through dance. Of course, as mentioned earlier, it is

possible that more changes in creative expression would have developed over time as they would have had increased opportunities to explore more movement qualities.

Fifth, there was only one dance teacher in this program. Having only one teacher limited the type of exposure the girls had to dance as I shared the specific elements of dance that I felt were important to psychological well-being and artistic growth. I believe additional teachers would probably record similar observations as found in this study, provided they shared these pedagogical goals.

Finally, another problem in my study was my dual teacher/researcher role. The small community was fairly isolated and could not find a local dance teacher, so I offered to teach the girls. Budget limitations prevented the community (and me) from hiring an additional researcher for this project. Therefore, I ended up in the unique position of "wearing two hats": being both the teacher and the researcher in this project. This dual role may have encouraged parents to answer interview questions in a socially desirable way. They may have perceived a need to avoid possible confrontations or difficulties for their children in the dance class (from me as a dance teacher) if they had given me (as a researcher) any negative answers. However, most parents watched the classes throughout the dance program so they were aware of all aspects of the dance

classes, including my gentle, positive interactions with their daughters.

Being both teacher and researcher presented me with another problem in this study: being biased. To minimize bias and maximize credibility with respect to the problem of juggling a dual role, I used several methods of data collection (interviews, observations, drawings, and self-reports) and cross-validated and triangulated the various kinds of data I collected.

Although not a limitation, the study took place in a rural area. The environment was unique because these girls came from a quiet, slower-paced lifestyle and did not have previous exposure to dance. The population of Milverton is quite small and the location is quite isolated, so the girls all knew each other fairly well. Although they were shy with me at first, they were not shy with each other and willingly participated together throughout each of the dance classes. Despite their lack of dance exposure, their keen desire, the support of their parents, and my teaching style ensured a positive learning environment which enriched the girls' experiences within this dance program. Had this study taken place in a city, the dynamics of the class, in all likelihood, would have been different. For example, city life, by its very nature, has a faster pace. Children would have had more opportunities to be exposed to other dance experiences. The children may not know each other and

thus be more reluctant to participate as willingly or as quickly. However, given time and the appropriate guidance, I believe that children attending the same dance classes would form their own "dance community" and cooperate well with each other, too.

It could be argued that the social, playful atmosphere provided by the teacher, students, and observing parents, contributed to the success of the program. However, the parents stated that the dance program was different than play experiences because the dance classes provided opportunities for their daughters to develop dance and social skills (i.e. increasing movement vocabulary, increasing self-confidence, and reducing shyness). As motor control, self-confidence, social skills, healthy self-perceptions, and positive affect are important elements of psychological wellness for all people and as this dance program was beneficial to the girls in Milverton, I believe the dance program has the potential to benefit boys as well as girls.

As I did not use a traditional dance approach, it is worth mentioning the elements of the dance program and my own unique combination of characteristics which may have influenced the outcome of this study. In the dance program the girls were encouraged to participate in the planning of the dance program. For example, after experiencing an array of activities, the girls were given choices of which

elements they would like to include in the following lessons. They were also encouraged to explore their own range of movements and to make up their own dance sequences. I used a wide variety of music styles in the dance classes. I showed affection; I gave generous amounts of praise and smiles. I respected the girls and listened to them. I did not push the girls to participate and I applauded their efforts when they tried new dance explorations. I provided a physically and emotionally safe learning environment. Physical safety was ensured by providing adequate warm-ups and holding the class in a warm, clean uncluttered room that had a well-sprung floor. A safe emotional environment was created by allowing the parents to watch, by providing positive reinforcement for the girls, and by taking a genuine interest in the girls' well-being.

Although non-traditional when compared to many dance schools, I believe the dance style and dance program are not unique; both can be taught to other teachers. Dynamics change in every group; however, I believe this program can be transferred to and taught by other teachers who have similar values and training.

Upon reflection, it can be seen that this study raises some interesting issues. For example, the adapted Laban scales indicated there is a connection between movement and shyness. However, interacting factors in the environment (i.e. a positive classroom atmosphere, supportive,

encouraging parents and teacher) make it difficult to pinpoint a particular reason for the observed decrease in shyness and increase in movement explorations. I am left wondering what the connection is between movement and character traits like shyness. Is it possible for dance to affect emotions or character traits? If so, why does the effect occur and how long would the effects last? I believe the adapted Laban measures offer promise for future explorations with respect to clarifying some of the connections between dance and behavioural manifestations, such as those associated with shyness.

To expand the understanding of how children experience dance, additional qualitative data collection on a larger sample size which includes boys would be necessary. For example, it is likely that similar research with older children would yield rich qualitative data with respect to the experience of dance, as older children are more articulate about their inner life. Older children could be interviewed and could keep a journal of their dance experiences. Younger children could keep a "journal" of drawings as their ability to express themselves verbally is limited and their drawings offer a rich alternate means of self-expression. To reduce the problem of teacher/researcher bias, future work should also have different people in the roles of teacher and researcher. Building on the overall results of this exploratory dance program, future studies

could also examine the validity and reliability of the scales for psychological well-being that were developed in this study. Furthermore, conducting a study which compares the effects of dance in a more explicit way, such as through a randomized selection comparison group, pre-post design or through a time-series, single-group, repeated-measures design, may help clarify the specific effects of dance on human development.

In conclusion, this study showed that each girl improved in motor skills, showed healthy self-perceptions and healthy self-concepts, demonstrated social skills and positive affect, and gave evidence of self-expression, spontaneity, and creativity through dance. These results indicate that it is worthwhile to expand, clarify, and challenge the idea of using dance as a vehicle to promote psychological wellness and artistic growth in children.

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Appendix 1
Consent Form 1

Dear member of the creative dance community of Milverton:

My name is Irene Rossberg-Gempton and I am a community psychology graduate student at Wilfrid Laurier University. My supervisor is Dr. Isaac Prilleltensky. Together with your input, we are trying to understand how children experience dance.

Specifically, the children will learn jazz ballet warm ups, improvised dance (following the teacher, dancing in groups or in pairs), and pantomiming to music. The children will learn about body movement and body placement. They will explore how to express feelings through movement and will learn to move spontaneously and creatively to music.

By participating in the dance program, it is believed that the children will show an imaginative liveliness through dance, that they will feel happy and be more aware of how their bodies move, that they will become better coordinated and will have a chance to cooperate creatively with their classmates, and that they will find more ways to express themselves through listening to music and responding through creative dance.

To attain our goals, we need your help. We would be highly appreciative if you and your child would allow the teacher to make observations of your child during the dance classes and if you and your child would answer the questions presented by the interviewer. The information you and your child provide will remain anonymous and confidential. You and your child's name will not appear in any document. You have the right to ask the teacher not to include her observations of your child or to terminate the interview at any point and you can omit any questions you choose.

The results of the study will help identify what dance means to children and what dance can contribute to children who participate in a creative dance program.

If you wish to contribute to the investigation, we would ask you to express your consent by signing the form on the next page. Also, if you permit your child/ren to participate in the study, please indicate it on the form on the next page.

Appendix 1
Consent Form 1 (continued)

Parent/Guardian

Name: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Names of child/ren authorized to participate in the
research:

Name of
child/ren: _____

At the end of the dance program, the children will demonstrate what they have learned throughout the weeks. We will also provide you with the results of the study. If you are unable to attend and wish to have a copy of the results, please put your name and address on the bottom of this page so that we can mail the results to you.

Name _____

Address _____

Thank-you.

Thank-you for your collaboration. If you have any questions please contact Dr. Isaac Prilleltensky, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Wilfrid University at: 884-1970, ext. 6989.

Appendix 2
Verbal Consent of Children

I would like to ask you some questions about dance class. I would like you to draw some pictures, too. Your answers and your drawings will help me understand dance better.

If you do not know the answer to a question, or if you do not want to answer a question or draw a picture, that is fine. You do not have to answer any questions or draw a picture if you do not want to.

Also, you can ask me questions if you do not understand something. So, would you answer some questions (or draw a picture) for me now? Thank-you.

Appendix 3
Consent Form 2

Dear member of the creative dance community of Milverton:

I really enjoy teaching your child/ren. They are very attentive and eager to participate and learn. When I taught in B.C., I often videotaped parts of the class so that the children could see how they danced. It is especially useful when children begin to do the dance pantomime (dance stories to music without speaking). They can really see how they move and what it looks like. I feel the videotaping is very helpful and it is lots of fun for the children, too. The video tapes will also help me to see the experience and progress of each child as well as enable me to make better observations for my university study (thesis) because this class is a little bigger than I thought it would be. Any observations I make from the videotapes will remain confidential and will not identify any child in particular. The tapes will simply be an aid to observing, understanding, and writing down what the children are experiencing in the dance classes which will help me prepare future classes for the children as well as help me write my thesis.

Would it be alright to tape a few of the classes and the "performance" that we will do in February or March? As these classes are a part of my university experience, I will need parental consent in order to videotape the classes. If all parents agree to have their child/ren videotaped, you are welcome to get copies (if you bring a blank tape) or you can view the classes at any time. I will only distribute the video tapes to those parents who would like a copy (provided all parents have agreed it is alright to videotape their child/ren and allow others to have a copy). If any parent does not wish to have their child/ren videotaped, then that child/ren will not be recorded, the videotapes will not be made available for any parent, and the videotapes will be erased after the study has been completed.

If you agree to let your child/ren be taped or wish a copy of the tape(s), please let me know in the lines below:

Would it be alright to video tape your child/ren participating in some of the dance classes?

CHECK ONE Yes _____ No _____

Would it be alright to make copies of the tape(s) so the families that would like a copy can have one?

CHECK ONE Yes _____ No _____

Parent/Guardian

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of

child/ren: _____

Again, thank-you for allowing me to share this dance experience with your children. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Isaac Prilleltensky, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Wilfrid University: 884-1970, ext. 6989 or me at 725-3387.

Appendix 4
Interview Guide

Part 1. Questions for Parents at Initiation of Dance Program

1. Age of child
2. Has your child ever taken dance classes before? Yes No
(If no, go to part 2. If yes, go to question 3 and 4.)
3. What type of dance did your child participate in?
4. What was your child's experience with this type of dance?
5. What are your expectations for your child in this dance program?

Part 2. Questions for Parents on Completion of Dance Program

1. Have you noticed any changes in your child since taking the dance classes?
2. Have you noticed any changes in your child in: coordination, confidence, facing physical challenges, facing new experiences, and/or in the way she acts with her family and friends? (Ask each component separately.)
3. Has your child done any spontaneous dancing? (If so, has this dancing changed since taking dance classes?)
4. [Question for the parents of the little ones class]: In your opinion, is this dance is better, the same, worse, or different to a play group. (If the response was different, ask the parent to explain how it was different.)

Part 3. Questions for Children at initiation of Dance Program

1. Can you tell me what dance is? Yes No
(If yes, go to question 2. If no, go to question 3.)
2. What is dance to you?
3. Would you draw a picture about the dancing (about how you felt)?

Part 4. Questions for Children on completion of Dance Program

1. Can you tell me what dance is? Yes No
(If yes, go to question 2. If no, go to question 3.)
2. What is dance to you?
3. Tell me three things you liked about dance.
4. Tell me three things you did not like about dance.
5. What did you feel like inside when we danced?

Appendix 5

Happy/Sad Faces Rating Scale



Appendix 6

Dear parents and children in the Milverton Dance Program:

I wish to thank-you all for participating in this program. It has truly been a pleasure to teach dance to all your children. I have enjoyed watching, sharing, and guiding your children's growth and development. They have made many changes since I first met them. At the beginning, some children were very shy, but over time, they have slowly opened their hearts and smiles. Throughout the weeks, the technical ability to dance has improved in each child. I am particularly delighted in the great strides all the dancers have made in their creative, spontaneous dance responses to music.

Background information to the dance program

As you all know, the dance program evolved out of a parental request directed at the Milverton Mornington Economic Development Corporation (MMEDC) to find a local dance teacher. Although I am presently a community psychology graduate student of Wilfrid Laurier University hired to work as a research assistant, community facilitator for the MMEDC, I had been a professional dance teacher and performer for 14 years in B.C. prior to my university studies. Therefore, I offered my services as dance teacher to Milverton.

After asking everyone their expectations of the dance program, I discovered all wanted their daughters to have an enriching, happy dance experience. I also wanted the children to feel happy. In addition, I wanted to see if I could translate the language of dance into the language of community psychology with respect to the idea of using dance to help promote psychological well-being. To help me observe and document the childrens' experiences, I watched them in class, took 4 videos throughout the weeks, asked the children how they felt about dance through drawings, using a faces' scale, and direct questioning. I also asked parents to share their insights.

To help me document the changes, I defined psychological well-being in the following way:

- 1.) **happiness** in the dance class
- 2.) **increased motor skills** (measured by the student being able to do the dance steps),
- 3.) **healthy self-perception**
 - a. feeling capable and in control (measured by rigid/fluid and controlled/not controlled movement qualities)
 - b. awareness of self-image (measured by the student not bumping into others)
 - c. a sense of belonging (measured by the student participating with the rest of the group)
- 4.) **social skills**
 - a. self-control (measured by body balance)

- b. communication (measured by listening to directions, listening to music, and watching peers)
- c. interaction/cooperation (measured by interacting with peers and teacher)

I also wanted to know whether children would be self-expressive, spontaneous, and creative during the dance classes.

As there were too many children to participate in one class in the small MMEDC room, I divided the children into two separate classes. One class was for children aged 6 to 12 years old; the second class was for children younger than 6 years old.

There was less precision and correction with the younger class as I did not want the children to lose their spontaneity or become self-conscious by overcorrections. A more specific set of dance steps were taught to the older class as they were old enough to benefit from creating a finished dance product. All students learned some ballet and jazz warm ups and were encouraged to explore dance creatively (following me, dancing in groups, or dancing in pairs) and experienced pantomime.

Results

I examined psychological well being through the ballet exercises, jazz warm ups, leaps, and a choreographed dance.

A. Ballet, Jazz, Leaps, Choreographed Dance:

1. Happiness: The dancers concentrated very hard through the lessons and looked interested or agreeable throughout the lessons. They all expressed happiness doing the leaps.

2. Motor Skills: Throughout the weeks, all the dancers improved in their ability to follow the dance exercises and learn the new steps.

3. Healthy self-perception: In general, the dancers were a little more rigid and not as controlled when they first began their classes. However, in time, they gained more control over their body movements and began to dance in a more fluid, smooth manner. They also gained a better sense of balance with the spins and leaps. All the children felt a sense of belonging as they all participated throughout the class. A few children may have been a little shy from time to time as they hesitated or stayed a little on the edge of the group of children. For the most part, however, the children seemed eager, happy participants in all parts of the dance program. Occasionally, a few children bumped into each other, indicating that they were not aware of their self-image (body placement) at that particular time.

4. Social Skills: Most of the children had a good body balance which indicated they had self-control. However, one leg balances and some leaps were challenging for many children. Good communication skills were demonstrated because

most children listened to directions. However, students were not as aware of the music or each other. They mainly interacted with me (not each other) during this part of class.

B. Creative Dance and Pantomime

I examined creativity, spontaneity, self-expression, and dance style through creative dance and pantomime.

1. pantomime:

a.) mirroring (One person looks in the "mirror" and the other person is the mirror). The older children tried mirroring and all showed rhythm, spontaneity, and quite a bit of expressiveness and responsiveness. Everyone willingly made up movements for their partners to follow.

b.) group mime The skipping rope and roller coaster became the favourite group mimes in the older group. They had to concentrate hard and cooperate with each other to make these mimes believable. All interacted well together.

c.) story telling without words The younger children did a lot of pantomiming with and without music. I began by telling them a story that we all acted out through body actions. As the weeks went by, I encouraged the children to make up parts of the story. At first, they were reluctant to give ideas, but eventually, their ideas streamed out. Although a few children were very quiet, eventually, all of them shared their ideas. The all time favourite idea was going camping and meeting a bear. This was acted out with squeals of delight, "surprise", and giggles. The children were very expressive and responsive throughout each pantomime.

2. creative dance All students showed creativity and spontaneity. At first, I had to dance creatively with them; later, all students felt less shy and more comfortable dancing without my lead or directions. All students seemed to enjoy freezing and unfreezing their movements. During the last weeks, the youngest students could dance creatively by themselves and the juniors began to choreograph their own short dances.

During the creative dance, I observed the children's style of movement. At first, they moved in a more restricted, direct manner. They had to be encouraged to explore different ways of moving and, in time, began to dance in the middle, low, and high spaces. Although all used spinning in their dances, no one did sideways or backwards movements. As they expanded their movement vocabulary, they began to move freely and explored heaviness, lightness, quickness, and indirectness. Only a few students became aware of their fingers, hands, and head and used these expressively while dancing. Although a few students really watched each other's movements, I saw no evidence of shyness. All students participated willingly. As the weeks went by, they found their own rhythms in the music and tried to find new ways to express

the sounds through movement.

C. Interviews

Everyone responded in a very positive way. Parents felt their children's coordination had improved, that they were less shy, that they danced more freely and with greater variety and seemed to enjoy coming each week. The children drew happy pictures, pointed to happy faces, and used words like, "awesome", "cool", "exciting", "radical", and "happy" to describe dance and how they felt. All young students liked ballet; the older ones liked jumps, spins, and "everything". No dislikes (except the rocking horse exercise and March break) were mentioned.

Summary

Overall, there was an improvement in motor skills, social skills, healthy self-perception, and happiness in the dance classes. The girls expressed themselves creatively, spontaneously through dance. Thus, I believe dance can be a positive experience which can enhance psychological well-being in children.

Once again, let me thank-you all for sharing this time of exploration. This experience has been very enjoyable for me. I wish you all good health and many more years of happy dancing.

Appendix 7

Observational Data Sheet for Video Taped Sessions

Dancer# _____ Observer: Video: 1 2 3 4 Exercise#

[circle the appropriate answer for each question]

1. Self-PerceptionsA. Awareness of self-image (self-control)

bumps into others: all the time sometimes never

B. Body Coordination

Dominant quality: uncontrolled.....controlled

C. Sense of Belonging

participates with the group: always sometimes never

2. Self-conceptA.) self-control body is balanced: always sometimes never3. Social skillsA. Communication

1.) listens to directions: all the time sometimes never

2.) listens to music: all the time sometimes never N/A

3.) watches peers: all the time sometimes never N/A

B. Cooperation

1.) interacts with peers: always sometimes never N/A

2.) interacts with adult: always sometimes never N/A

4. Motor Skills

a.) Able to follow the sequence: All Some None

b.) Able to correctly add on new steps:
all of them some of them none of them N/A

c.) Dominant movement quality: rigid.....smooth

d.) Able to: walk skip hop leap gallop bend twist

5. Emotion expressed by child:happy agreeable interested surprised disgusted afraid
angryThe child uses dance to show:

a.) self-expression: all the time sometimes never N/A

b.) spontaneity: all the time sometimes never N/A

c.) creativity: all the time sometimes never N/A

6. Comments:

Appendix 8

Creative Movement Coding Sheet for the Video Taped Sessions

Dancer # _____ Observer: _____ Video Observation 1 2 3 4
 [Circle appropriate answers]

Use of Energy: rigid fluid a mixture of both

Use of Space: forwards sideways backwards low middle high
 child's preference(s):

Flow:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 bound (restrained) N free (flowing)

Space:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 direct (focused) N indirect (meander)

Time:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 slow (sustained) N quick (sudden)

Weight:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 heavy (firm) N light (delicate)

(N=neutral)

Rhythm (synchrony of body parts):

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 dissynchronous synchronous

Frequency of spontaneity:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 not at all very frequent

Amount of expressiveness (of feelings through movement):

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 not at all very expressive

Relating to other children in dance:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 unresponsive responsive

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 does not initiate initiates

Most movement occurs:

arms hands fingers feet legs head trunk

(adapted from Moore & Yamamoto, 1988; North, 1990)