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DANCE EDUCATION: THE INFLUENCE OF TECHNIQUE,

CHOREOGRAPHY AND COMPETITION

A Chapter Style Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Emily Pearse

College of Liberal Studies
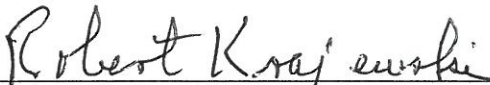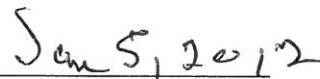School of Education

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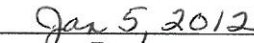
CHOREOGRAPHY AND COMPETITION

By Emily Pearse

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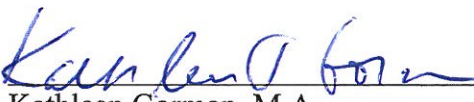
The candidate has completed the oral defense of the thesis.

Robert Krajewski   _Jan 5, 2012_
Robert Krajewski, Ph. D.   Date
Thesis Committee Chairperson
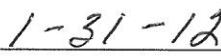
Mary Love   _Jan 5, 2012_
Mary Love, Ph. D.   Date
Thesis Committee Member

Kathleen Gorman   _1-30-12_
Kathleen Gorman, M.A.   Date
Thesis Committee Member

Gary Willhite   _1-31-12_
Gary Willhite, Ph.D.   Date
Graduate Program Director

Thesis Accepted

R. H. Hoar   _2-2-2012_
Robert H. Hoar, Ph.D.   Date
Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

ABSTRACT

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Children naturally use movement to express themselves. Dancing and movement is not only a means of self-expression, but cultural expression as well. In students of all ages, dancing can improve physical coordination, fitness, and fine motor skills. In addition to the physical benefits of dancing, the psychological benefits include increased sense of self-awareness, improved social skills, and an opportunity to exercise creativity. This research explores the various factors that influence and define dance education. The study was conducted on eight adolescent students currently enrolled in studio dance lessons. Survey questions focused on three major factors influencing dance education, and how those factors interact to create a positive or negative experience for dancers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful toward the many wonderful dance instructors I have had who helped to shape my own dance education. Special thanks to Amanda Verthein, owner of Amanda's Academy, who allowed me both to teach and study her wonderful students.

My gratitude also goes to the professors who comprised my thesis committee, Dr. Robert Krajewski, Dr. Mary Love, and Kathleen Gorman. Dr. Krajewski, you always tried to give me direction in the process, and your office door was always open to me. Dr. Love, I thank you for stepping in to help see my project through to the end. And finally to Kathy Gorman, I thank you for all the wonderful opportunities you have afforded me as a dancer. Thank you all for your time and consideration in seeing me through this process.

To my many students over the years, you may never know the full influence you have had on my education and my life. Thank you all for motivating me and changing my perceptions on teaching. You have been a source of inspiration for me both creatively and professionally. It has been an honor to work with all of you.

To my brother and sister – your support and understanding has helped me to keep working towards my goals. It is an honor to come from such a talented family, and if I can inspire my future students to have half the passion you have, then I will consider it a job well done. And to my parents – I cannot express enough gratitude for all you've given me over the years. I hope to someday give something back to you for all the support and encouragement you have shown me. To Jordan, I thank you for always showing me respect and believing in my goals. Our mutual faith in each other helps us both to succeed, and I thank you for always inspiring me to do my best. Your enthusiasm

and energy are a source of constant motivation for me, and I am proud to have you as my partner in life.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Dance has long been a part of American education. Since children "naturally use movement to express themselves," (Guigere, 2011) it seems necessary to provide quality instruction in movement and dance. As part of the physical education curriculum in schools, dance is integrated at all K-12 levels, beginning with the use of creative movement activities at the elementary level to incorporating social dancing at the secondary level. Additionally, for some students, dance education extends beyond the physical education classroom beginning at a very early age. Many parents seek out opportunities for their children to expand their skills, which is why there are over 32,000 dance studios nationwide (Risner, 2010). Dance education in the private sector offers young dancers a chance to explore the many disciplines of dance.

Lucy Smith (2008) suggests that different dance forms can be seen as the result of cultural embodiment. These cultural influences extend beyond simply national and regional influences to local cultural demands. Most dance studios offer traditional lessons in ballet, jazz, and tap as well as contemporary or lyrical dance. In addition, class offerings nationwide include such options as African tribal dance and Irish folkdance to a plethora of ballroom disciplines. Class offerings are often based on instructor ability, parent/dancer requests, local culture, and studio resources. Because each dance studio develops its own "personality" based on class offerings and strengths, dancers are able to

choose classes based on their interests. In this thesis I will examine studio-based dance culture in more detail. First, I intend to examine the nature of dance education.

Dance education can generally be characterized as two-fold: learning experiences which take place within public education programs, and learning experiences that take place at private studios, clubs, or otherwise non-school sanctioned entities. Those experiences which take place as part of a school curriculum are generally included within physical education courses, and they take many forms. As a guide, the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) has developed a set of standards that outlines benchmarks young dancers should reach; based on physical, psychological, sensory/motor, and social development. The NDEO philosophy states:

> "Education in the art of dance develops the knowledge and skills required to create, perform, and understand movement as a means of artistic communication. A comprehensive education includes improvisation, technique, choreography, performance, observation and analysis. Exposure to dance history and cultures, kinesiology and anatomy, and movement theories further enriches the dance educational experience." (National Dance Education Organization, 2011)

Based on this philosophy, dance education standards include age appropriate expectations that aim to introduce young dancers to creative movement, and build upon those relevant experiences in a sequential manner. Early introduction to dance is necessary. From birth to age 5, children learn movement patterns as readily as they learn language patterns. In young children, movement patterns are the basis for kinesthetic learning. Therefore, creative movement education early on helps children to establish kinesthetic patterns that they can then build upon to establish physical expression.

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As mentioned earlier, movement and dance are not only a cultural expression, but a means of self expression. As Dewey (1915) points out, "Action is the test of comprehension." Children learn by doing, which is the basis of kinesthetic learning. At a young age, children learn movement patterns by firsthand experience. Moreover, dance offers children a deeper understanding of communication processes – not only through verbal/written language, but through the use bodily/kinesthetic communication. It encourages young children to find meaning in their own experience, and communicate that to others through creative and expressive movement activities.

NDEO standards for children ages 5-18 build on concepts introduced at an early age. Aside from the intrinsic value of dance, standards at this age emphasize the 'byproducts' of dance education. Dance increases physical health, especially in terms of flexibility, coordination and strength; furthermore, it also increases emotional maturity. Students are encouraged to self-express, which often leads to self-acceptance and an increased sense of self-confidence. Dancing may also lead to an increased sense of social awareness. By experience varying styles of dance, young dancers are able to increase their sense of awareness of cultural similarities and differences. Moreover, group dynamics and collaboration within dance classes can help increase overall sense of belonging for many students. Based on these assertions by the NDEO, we may conclude that the physical, emotional, and social implications for dancers ages 5-18 are essential components in dance education. At this age, dance activities should focus not only on creativity, but also on group collaboration for dancers.

Pedagogically speaking, dance education addresses not only knowledge of dance discipline, but it also nurtures a dancer's creativity. Green and Gilbert (1992) outline the

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importance of teaching young dancers not only dance technique, but also giving them a foundational concept of dance as it relates to their own skills. The implication of Green and Gilbert's emphasis is that dance education must support not only technical training, but also allow young dancers a means to understand their technical training in a greater context. This emphasis is where the concept of creativity in movement becomes crucial. Because dance is a creative art form, dancers cannot simply subsist on performing actions as they have been taught. They must be given an opportunity to explore dance on a creative level – learning the process by which their body moves, discovering meaningful connections between music and movement, and learning how to communicate ideas through movement.

Smith-Autard (2002) asserts that the combination of 'open concepts' (which lead to problem solving through the use of creativity) and defined teaching methods generates this two-fold approach to dance pedagogy. Moreover, there must be an aspect of critical self-evaluation within the process. Lavender (1996) advises that students learn to observe, write, reflect, discuss, evaluate, and provide recommendations to revise features of a dance work and better develop their own aesthetic qualities in viewing, creating and performing dance works. This suggests that the process of creating and culturing dance works is fluid, leaving room for continual improvement based on dancers' reflections of their own work.

Studio dance culture offers dancers of all ages opportunities to extend their knowledge of dance while experiencing different dance-world cultural norms. Students can learn to dance in a variety of disciplines and choreography styles, many of which extend beyond movement activities and follow their own set of concrete rules based on

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the technical aspects of the style. Basic dance technique is often referred to misleadingly as ballet technique. While ballet offers students a strong foundation in the physical demands of dancing, dance technique extends beyond ballet to an entire realm of possibilities. Geraldine Morris (2008) suggests that dancers are subject to the stylistic nuances of training in each style of dance. Therefore, technique for a dancer who primarily studied ballet may indeed refer to ballet training as the basis for their dance technique. However, an Irish folk dancer's dance technique will likely reflect the nuances of Irish dance.

Aside from the influence of basic dance technique and choreography styles, there are many other influences on dance education. Dance, in its competitive arena, offers dancers and studios a chance to set goals and showcase skills. My research study explores the various influences on dance education; including - but not limited to - technical instruction, exploration of different styles of choreography, and competitive dancing. A study by Connolly, Quin, and Redding (2011) indicates that participation in dance classes can have a positive impact on various aspects of the physiological and psychological well-being in young dancers. As an extension of Connolly's research, this current study will explore specific aspects of dance and dance classes that help to create a positive educational experience for young dancers.

Research Questions

In guiding my research, I use the following questions:

- What influence does basic dance technique and the study thereof have on the overall quality of dance education?

- How does the study of varying styles of choreography impact dance education?

- Does competitive dancing positively impact dancers?

- What other factors enhance the overall experience of dancing for young dancers (psychological benefits, peer relationships, etc.)?

CHAPTER II

KEY DEFINITIONS, KEY CHOREOGRAPHERS AND DANCERS, KEY
AUTHORS

The following chapter summarizes key definitions, key choreographers and

dancers, and key authors that represent the foundation of this research study.

Key Definitions

Ballet: A product and pastime of 17th century Europe, ballet is a dance form that

creatively expresses a full range of human emotions through physical gestures.

Ballet often tells a story through the use of conventional poses and steps, and

through music, costumes, and scenery. One of the most influential ballet

choreographers of this century is George Balanchine.

Ballroom: Stemming from pastimes of 17th century European royalty, ballroom dance

encompasses a long list of dance styles typically done in modern ballrooms or

concert halls. For purpose of this paper, ballroom dance will be used to describe

historical, Latin, and swing dance styles within the category of ballroom dance.

Historical ballroom dance styles include the waltz, tango, foxtrot, and quickstep.

Latin ballroom dance styles include the mambo, samba, rumba, merengue and

salsa. Swing dance styles include jive, lindy hop, east coast and west coast swing.

Choreography: The word "choreography" is derived from the Greek words meaning "to

dance" and "to write." In earliest definitions of the words, choreography literally

meant the writing down of steps. However, modern definitions focus more on the idea of connecting specified movements to a chosen score or piece of music. Styles of choreography, as indicated above, can be classified according to the type of music, purpose of the piece, type of movement, and costuming. It should be noted, that the parameters of each category are not exclusive.

Folkdance: For the purpose of this paper, folk dance is used to characterize the various types of dance indigenous to cultures throughout the world. Folk dance will be used to describe the various social dances of Europe, Africa, and Asia not already included in other category definitions.

Irish: Irish folk dance stems from two major disciplines – that done with soft shoes and that done with hard shoes. Soft shoe Irish dance has some root in ballet, but is stylized by most of the movement being done below the waist with the arms held at the sides. Hard shoe Irish dance is akin to tap dancing, but with stylized movements typical of Irish folk dances. Irish folk dance is also characterized by specific costuming guidelines. One of the most well known modern Irish dancers and choreographers is Michael Flatley.

High Kick: A style of competition dance based mostly in jazz, high kick dance is categorized by the majority of the choreography focusing on kicks or kick-lines. High kick style is not a studio discipline, but like pom, it is a highly competitive dance style done mostly by middle/high school dance teams. It has roots in jazz and musical theatre dance.

Hip Hop: Originating in the early 1970s with roots in Afro-American dance, hip hop dance is the direct result of a marriage of two separate movements from the

United States: the "b-boy" movement from the ghettos of New York, and the "West Coast Funk" movement from the streets of Los Angeles. Hip hop now includes several offshoot dance styles, including popping, krumping, locking, and breaking. One of the most well known hip hop dancers was Michael Jackson, whose own unique style has inspired the work of many modern choreographers such as Shane Sparks and Wade Robson.

Jazz: A dance form with roots in ballet that was first matched to the rhythms and techniques of jazz music, jazz dance encompasses a range of movement and conventional poses set to the tone of the music. Major contributors include Bob Fosse, Katherine Dunham, Jack Cole, and Gus Giordano.

Lyrical: A combination of ballet and modern dance, lyrical is often set to slow or "lyrical" music. Lyrical dance often tells a story of human emotion expressed through music. Modern lyrical choreographers include Suzi Taylor and Mia Michaels, both of whom continue to teach and choreograph.

Modern/Contemporary: a form of contemporary theatrical and concert dance developed early in the 20th century employing a special technique for developing the use of the entire body in movements expressive of abstract ideas. Major contributors to the field of modern dance are Paul Taylor, Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey.

Musical Theatre: Musical theatre dance can be rooted both in jazz and ballet, but is most simply categorized as dance done within the confines of a theatrical production. Musical theatre dance can also be defined by the major contributions of choreographers such as Bob Fosse, Michael Kidd, Agnes de Mille and Jerome Robbins.

Pointe: An extension of ballet, pointe is ballet dance done using pointe shoes or "toe shoes," in which the dancer's body is balanced on the tip of the toe.

Pom: A style of dance developed through a combination of jazz dance and cheerleading, pom dance is categorized by the use of hand held pom-pons and sharp defined movements. While not a studio based dance discipline, pom dance does have roots in basic dance technique. It is a highly competitive style that is most often showcased by middle and high school dance teams throughout America.

Tap: A step dance tapped out audibly by means of shoes to which taps have been added. Some of the most well known tap dancers include Fred Astaire, Sammy Davis Jr., Gregory Hines and Gene Kelly.

Key Choreographers and Dancers

Alvin Ailey: (1931-1989) Alvin Ailey was an African American born dancer, choreographer, and director. His style was a unique mix of classical, jazz, modern, and African American cultural dance. He began the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre in 1958. Dancers in the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre feature a diverse mix of racial and stylistic background. Ailey also choreographed works for the London Festival Ballet, the Robert Joffrey Ballet, and the American Ballet Theatre.

Fred Astaire: (1899-1987) Fred Astaire was an American born actor, dancer, and choreographer. Fred Astaire began his career as a child working in Vaudeville, then shortly after moved on to musicals. He is probably best known for his work with dance partner Ginger Rogers, which manifested in a number of successful film-musicals including "Top Hat." Astaire's dance and choreography style is a

blend of tap and ballroom dance. Special achievements include an Academy Award (1949) for his "unique artistry and contributions to the technique of musical pictures."

George Balanchine: (1904-1983) Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, George Balanchine became one of the most well known American ballet choreographers and ballet masters of the 20th century. He studied at the Imperial Ballet School, St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music and the State Academy of Opera and Ballet in Russia. His ballet style echoed the European tradition of ballet, which he brought to America through his own standard of excellence and quality of performance. Balanchine is probably best known for his choreography of "The Nutcracker," and through his work with the School of American Ballet and the New York City Ballet.

Jack Cole: (1913-1974) Jack Cole was an American born choreographer and dancer. He is best known for choreographing the Broadway musicals "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," and "Man of La Mancha." He also helped to train screen musical actors, including Rita Hayworth, Betty Grable, and Marilyn Monroe.

Sammy Davis Jr.: (1925-1990) Sammy Davis Jr.'s career began in Vaudeville, then progressed to Broadway, film, and performing in Las Vegas. He was an African American actor, singer, and dancer. He is best known for his tap dancing skills and his partnerships with performers Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Frank Sinatra. He was also well known for being a member of the "Rat Pack" and for

his performance in the film "Porgy and Bess." He received a Kennedy Center medal for career achievement.

Agnes de Mille: (1909-1993) Agnes de Mille was an American born dancer and choreographer. She is best known for her work in musical theatre dance. She choreographed many Broadway musicals in her career, most notably "Oklahoma," "Carousel," "Brigadoon," and "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes." She choreographed for the American Ballet Theatre, and formed the Heritage Dance Theatre in 1973.

Katherine Dunham: (1910-2006) Katherine Dunham was an African American born dancer and choreographer. She is most noted for her work in ballet, modern, and Afro-Cuban style dance. As a student of anthropology, Dunham used her studies in ethnography to help establish African American dancers and culture in America. She choreographed for the New York Metropolitan Opera House's production of "Aida" in 1965, and in 1966 became cultural advisor to the President and Minister of Cultural Affairs in Senegal. Her most influential works were compiled by the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre in 1987.

Michael Flatley: (b. 1958) Michael Flatley is a well-known Irish-American dancer, actor, choreographer, musician, and director. He is classically trained in Irish style dance. He is best known for choreographing and starring in the stage and screen production "Riverdance," from which several other productions ensued. He holds an honorary doctorate from University College Dublin, as well as numerous other awards for dance and choreography.

Bob Fosse: (1927-1987) Fosse was a well-known American dancer, choreographer, and producer. He was the son of vaudeville performers, and performed in Burlesque shows as a teenager. He made his Broadway debut as a dancer in 1950 and as a choreographer for "The Pajama Game" in 1953. His unique blend of jazz, musical theatre, and abstract movement is featured in many Broadway musicals, including "Sweet Charity," "Chicago," and "Cabaret." His most notable works were featured in a Broadway production in 1999 entitled "Fosse," as a tribute to the noted choreographer's influential work.

Gus Giordano: (1923-2008) Gus Giordano was an American born jazz dancer who danced for stage and screen. Early on in his career, he studied with Katherine Dunham, where he learned the concept of strong floor-work – a concept he later incorporated into classes at his Chicago studio. His style incorporated the use of body isolations. He founded the Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago and the Jazz Dance World Congress.

Martha Graham: (1894-1991) Martha Graham was perhaps the most influential American modern dance choreographer of the 20th century. She is most noted for her dramatic personal style, which encouraged the freedom of expression in many of her successors. She was one of the first to introduce the idea of contraction and release in movement. She taught at Eastman School of Music in New York before founding the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance. The Martha Graham Company was founded in 1929.

Gregory Hines: (1946-2003) Gregory was an African American dancer and choreographer who focused mainly on tap and musical theatre dance. He began

his training at age three, working under tap masters such as Henry Le Tang, Honi Coles, and the Nicholas Brothers. He spent many years working on Broadway, and eventually moved to films. He received Tony Nominations for his performances in "Sophisticated Ladies," "Comin' Uptown," and "Eubie!"

Michael Jackson: (1958-2009) Michael Jackson was an African American born singer, song-writer, dancer, choreographer, and entertainer. His early career began as part of his family's singing group, and later progressed to a solo entertaining career that spanned the length of almost 4 decades. He is well known for his intricate staged productions as part of his concert tours and music videos. His unique blend of hip hop, popping, and locking has earned him a place as one of the most influential hip hop dancers of our time.

Gene Kelly: (1912-1996) Gene Kelly was an American born dancer, actor, and choreographer. Kelly is known for his adapted film choreography style which provided for camera set-up and editing sequences. His work in musical theatre and tap dance included films like "Pal Joey," "For Me and My Gal," and the iconic "Singin' in the Rain."

Michael Kidd: (1919-2007) Michael Kidd was an American born dancer and choreographer. He is best known for his work in stage and screen musicals. His film credits include "Guys and Dolls," "Can-Can," "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers," and "Hello Dolly!"

Mia Michaels: (b. 1966) Mia Michaels is a classically trained American dancer and choreographer. Since she began at Miami Conservatory, she has formed several dance companies including the Miami Movement dance company and Reality at

Work (RAW). She is well known for her modern and lyrical choreography. Michaels has also choreographed for the touring and stage shows of Prince, Ricky Martin, Gloria Estefan, Jimmy Ray, Madonna, and Celine Dion.

Jerome Robbins: (1918-1998) Jerome Robbins is a classically trained dancer, choreographer, and director. In his earlier career, he collaborated with George Balanchine and worked with the American Ballet Theatre and the New York City Ballet. His Broadway career includes such choreographing and directing credits as "West Side Story," "The King and I," and "Fiddler on the Roof." He is best known for bringing the influence of classical training to all dance styles he worked with, especially musical theatre.

Wade Robson: (b. 1982) Wade Robson is an Australian born dancer choreographer, and director. He is well known for his contributions to hip hop style dance. Robson has danced and choreographed for such modern music icons as Michael Jackson, Britney Spears, and NSYNC. His innovative style has earned him a place as a regular choreographer for the popular television series "So You Think You Can Dance."

Shane Sparks: (b. 1969) Shane Sparks is an African American born hip hop choreographer best known for his work on the popular television show "So You Think You Can Dance." He received an Outstanding Choreography Emmy for his work on season three of the series.

Paul Taylor: (b. 1930) Paul Taylor is an American born dancer and choreographer whose early study included work with Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and George Balanchine. He is one of the most influential modern dance

choreographers of the 20th century. His long list of works includes work with the Royal Danish Ballet, The American Ballet Theatre, The Joffrey Ballet, The Paris Opera Ballet, and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

Suzi Taylor: (b. unknown) Suzi Taylor is an American born lyrical dance specialist who currently teaches in New York. She first began her training in California, and then moved to New York City. There she studies with Alvin Ailey, the School of Ballet and Theatre Dance, and with Robert Blankshine and Finis Jung. She has done work with dance companies all over the world.

Key Authors

Sandra Cerny Minton: Sandra Cerny Minton, Ph.D., was the coordinator of the dance program at the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley. She is a member of the Colorado Dance Alliance; the National Dance Association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; and the National Dance Education Organization. She was a 2001 Fulbright Scholar and honored as the National Dance Association Scholar/Artist in 1999. She earned her master's degree in dance education from UCLA, and earned her PhD in dance and related arts from the Texas Woman's University.

Mary Clarke: Mary Clarke was the Editor of "The Dancing Times" in London, and is a former London Editor of "Dance News" in New York. She is the author of standard histories of the Sadler's Wells Ballet and Ballet Rambert. She was Associate Editor for many years on "The Ballet Annual." She was the Executive Director of "Ballroom Dancing Times," and a Dance Critic for "The Guardian."

Clement Crisp: Clement Crisp was a Dance Critic for the London "Financial Times," and was the London Correspondent of "Les Saisons de la danse." He was also a lecturer and librarian for the Royal Academy of Dance in London.

Agnes de Mille: Agnes de Mille was an American born dancer and choreographer. She is best known for her work in musical theatre dance. She choreographed many Broadway musicals in her career, most notably "Oklahoma," "Carousel," "Brigadoon," and "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes." She choreographed for the American Ballet Theatre, and formed the Heritage Dance Theatre in 1973.

Liz Gallego: D. Elizabeth Gallego holds a Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts degree in Dance. She is a certified dance, English, English as a second language, and physical education instructor. She owns the Liz Gallego School of Dance, the students of which have won numerous high point awards and dance competitions around the country. She is a member of the Texas Association for Health Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, the Dallas Dance Council, and the National Association for Folkloric Dance.

David Vaughan: David Vaughan was the Associate Editor of "Ballet Review" in New York, and Secretary of the Cunningham Dance Foundation. He studied at the School of American Ballet with Merce Cunningham, Antony Tudor, and Richard Thomas. He was co-founder with James Waring of Dance Associates (1951), and has danced in the companies of many notable choreographers.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to present a literature review relevant to dance education in America, the history of dance as an art form, the influence of dance technique, choreography, competitive dancing, and other influences to dance education. In short, this chapter reviews the following:

- History of Dance

- Dance Technique

- Choreography

- Competitive Dance

- Other Influences

History of Dance

In order to fully understand the scope of dance education in America, we must first look at the history of dance. Despite the inherent evolution of dancing, the overall purpose of dance has changed very little. "Great art outlasts life, fashions, conditions, inventions, and all changing circumstances of the world... Time and altered circumstance make absolutely no difference" (de Mille, 1961). In short, the art form of dance may have changed in execution, but the reasons that people and cultures choose to express themselves through dancing have not changed. According to Agnes de Mille (1961), human beings dance for any number of the following reasons: health and destruction,

fertility, war and hunting, death and rebirth, peace, play, courtship, or entertainment and theatre.

According to Mary Clarke and Clement Crisp (1981), dance history can be broken down into several categories: primitive and ancient dance, religious dance, European folk dance, eastern dance, social dance, ballet, modern dance, and stage and screen. These categories emerged largely due to changing cultural influences and the introduction of various theatrical conventions. In each category there exist several sub-categories, many of which will be explored more fully later.

Primitive and Ancient Dance

Primitive dancing may well be defined in terms of cultural expression. "Dance evolved as an expression of emotion, of joy or grief, of terror or wonder, in the face of the incomprehensible and the sublime" (Clarke and Crisp, 1981). The function of dance in different cultures is as varied as the specified movements themselves. Primitive cultures could perceive deities through means of dance. Tribal ceremonies were often performed through means of dancing. Mating rituals were signified through dance expression. Dancing serves many purposes for different cultures. Although specific steps are often simplistic, they must not be dismissed as childish. According to de Mille (1961), "the ritualistic nature of primitive dancing is not done to make an effect on an audience; there is no applause." For the purpose of ancient or primitive dancing, we will briefly explore several sub-categories: African dance, primitive Aboriginal and Maori dance, American Indian dance, and Mexican and South America dance.

African dance exists in the village communities of most of the continent of rural Africa. In short, this style of dance is seen as an outward expression of the inner spirit.

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Dances are both planned (specific to calendar dates or times of year, such as harvest) or spontaneous. Music and dance are often interdependent (Clarke and Crisp, 1981). The use of drums and other hand-made instruments are integral to African dance. Costumes and masks also help to inspire movement, with certain personalities or character roles assigned to corresponding costumes. Dancing permeates through every aspect of tribal life. From ceremonial rites to festivals, movement is as much a part of tribal life as hunting and gathering.

Dance is of great importance to the primitive Aboriginal culture of Australia. It is most often associated with a ceremonial dance called the "corroboree," which is a dance celebration that takes place at night around a huge fire. Much like African tribal dance, Aboriginal dance includes the use of costumes and choreographed movements to represent either telling a story or expressing emotion. Most notable of Aboriginal dance is that it is influenced by the ground it is performed upon, depending on the region of Australia a tribe inhabits. There are also gender specific dances, such as those dances that relate specifically to child-bearing. Also of note are dances done by the Maori people who inhabit New Zealand. It reflects the journey of their heritage from southern India towards New Zealand through expressive story-telling in movement. (Clarke and Crisp, 1981).

Much like African and Aboriginal dance, the dance of American Indian tribes centers around ceremonial rites. Dancing is used for everything from ritual worship of the sun (which is a central idea in most primitive dancing) to war dances. What sets American Indian dance apart is the general scope of the purpose for dancing; which is as varied as the number of tribes identified in America. Of note is the concept of animal

dances, or those that embody typical animal movements. Often, these animal dances are a tribute to animals of special veneration to a certain tribe, such as the bull dance in the Mandan Indians society (Clarke and Crisp, 1981). Also of note to American Indian dance is the influence of white European culture. In 1904, the United States Government Regulations of the Indian Office forbade tribal dancing, probably in response to the tribal war dances (Clarke and Crisp, 1981). This prohibition of tribal dancing was eventually repealed in 1934.

Much like tribal dancing of Africa, Australia, and America, Mexican tribal dancing corresponds with religious and ceremonial rites. Most notable in Mexican and South American dance is the influence of invading cultures. Catholic missionaries, Moorish culture, and the Conquistadors had the most notable effect on the varied tribes of Mexico and South America (Clarke and Crisp, 1981). Each culture that permeated the continent brought with it its own concept of dance, which forever changed South American dance culture. Many new dances were created which are still performed in both religious and secular ceremonies today throughout Central and Southern America.

Although primitive and ancient dancing is specific to each culture, some overlying factors remain the same. First, dancing is seen as a means of cultural expression. Different tribes have different choreographic styles that set them apart from other tribes. Second, dancing is used as a part of ceremonial rites, such as wedding dances, war dances, or dances to worship deities. Lastly, dancing is a means of self-expression. Men, women, and children of different cultures all dance for different purposes. However, what unites many cultures is the use of movement as a means to express inward feelings outwardly. This concept has dominated the dance world for

centuries. This is perhaps why many of these ancient dances are performed in the same manner as they were 2,000 years ago at their inception (de Mille, 1961).

Religious Dance

Religious dance, as the name suggests, relates to movement and dancing done in the course of a religious ceremony or rite. The purpose of a ceremony or rite is specific to the deity and traditions of the religion. Religious dancing can be broken down into several sub-categories: Ancient Egypt, Greece, The Etruscans, Rome, Jewish dance, Christian dance, and the Dervishes (Clarke and Crisp, 1981). Each culture carries with it the trademarks of its country's heritage, but the unifying factors remain the same. No matter the deity, religious dancing is fundamental in the ritual of worship, and in social and personal life. Movement glorifies deities, unites societies, and underscores social traditions.

In a contemporary context, liturgical dance is often disputed. An article by Robert VerEecke (2009) outlines how biblical passages are often misconstrued to make dancing seem overly seductive and lascivious. However, he continues to explain that while dancing may have those overtones in other contexts, there are alternative forms of worship that include dancing. For example, a congregation of worshipers may be led in simple gestures set to music as a means of showing praise. There is a surprising connection between the human spirit and the need to express that spirit through movement. VerEecke believes "... dance can communicate the deepest longing of the human spirit and the ecstasy of divine love" (2009). Whether choreographed or spontaneous, religious dancing can help humans express their love and respect for their deities.

European Folk Dance

The folk dances of Europe can be divided into two categories: those that contain memories and references to religious or magical dances, and those which are purely social in nature (Clarke and Crisp, 1981). The first category references those folk dances which were first done as part of religious or magical ceremonies of very early people (the religious tenements of which are now lost). The second category references dances that are done as part of a celebration. With many European cultures, the circle dance (or round dance) is still a powerful influence; dancing in a circle or ring can be found in the folk dances of several countries.

Clarke and Vaughan (1977) indicate that folk dances are spontaneously created by the people of a culture to express the characteristics of their temperament and environment. Especially in rural cultures, these folk dances (which are as eclectic in nature as the countries in which they are performed) are a way of community life. In recent years, many modern choreographers have taken typical folk dances and turned them into theatrical spectacle. For example, the ballet "Coppelia" incorporates Hungarian national dances. The "Nutcracker" also incorporates Russian folk dance. As indicated by Clarke and Vaughan, in translating these folk dances to the stage, authenticity suffers (1977). However, the influence of folk dancing in other styles of choreography is evident, both in theatrical productions and in structure.

Each folk dance style is specific to the country in which it is performed, and specific guidelines for choreography are also varied. However, folk dances of Europe do share some characteristics. European folk dances tend to cover a lot of space, and often use interweaving floor patterns (de Mille, 1961). In general, men and women of all ages

are freely permitted to dance folk dances. In contrast with Eastern dancing, European folk dance is open to some individual interpretation, and facial expression is ignored or left only to natural feeling.

Of special note to this study is the influence on Irish folk dancing, which is often included in private studio class offerings today. Irish dancing permits little to no upper body movement (aside from the occasional linking of hands during circle dances). Whether dances are done in soft shoes (such as a reel) or in hard shoes (clogging), Irish folk dance is well known for its distinct rhythmic patterns. Perhaps one of the reasons Irish dancing is so well known is because of touring Irish dance companies that perform in concert halls and at festivals around the world.

Eastern Dance

Eastern Dance refers to traditional folk dances done in Asia, specifically Japan, China, and India. Every social caste and level valued dancing, and every form of human need and emotion was expressed through dancing (de Mille, 1963). The hallmarks of Eastern dancing are deeply rooted in the theatre of the corresponding cultures (Clarke and Crisp, 1981). According to Clarke and Vaughan (1977), the dances of Asia can be divided into two types: the classical forms and the community or folk dances. The purpose of Eastern dancing can be identified as seasonal, martial, sacrificial, talismanic, instructional, or celebratory. When taken as a whole body of work, there are stark differences between Eastern dancing and European style dancing. For example, whereas European dances utilize a large area, Eastern dance is often performed stationary or seated. Natural facial expression is also avoided – every expression is choreographed, down to the direction of the eyes (de Mille, 1961). The movement of the hands is

intricate, with the subtlest gestures of the fingers suggesting specific changes in emotion or expression. Another feature of Eastern dance is that it is often site-specific, with certain dances being reserved for temples, etc. (Lopez y Royo, 2010). This is not to be misunderstood to believe that all Eastern dance is specifically religious in nature. Lopez y Royo argues that Indian classical dance no longer has the religious or sacred overtones it had in centuries past. In a modern setting, dancing represents a more spiritual presence.

Social Dance

According to Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980), social dance included all forms of dancing done primarily for recreation or pleasure. Social dancing has its roots in 14th century Europe with the "dances of the peasants" (p. 4). As seen in many of the current folk dances of the world, the round/circle dance was the root of social dancing in medieval Europe, with dancers holding hands either in a closed circle or open line. During the Renaissance, social dancing moved towards the ballrooms and court of royalty, where many of the dances still done today began. One particularly notable ballroom dance is the waltz, from which many other offshoots of ballroom dance were born. According to Clarke and Crisp (1981), waltz means "to turn," which is evident in the turning motion of the waltz as coupled dancers move across a dance floor. Waltzes first began in Germany, and eventually swept through other European ballrooms.

The regal beginnings of ballroom dance have evolved from the royal courts of Europe to the dance halls of America. According to Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980), the industrial revolution brought about major social changes that were reflected in the social dances. Up until the 20th century, stately dances such as the waltz, the mazurka, and even the energetic polka dominated social dance floors. The immigration boom in America is

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perhaps to blame for the inevitable fusing of many different styles, including Eastern, European folk dance, and the statelier ballroom dance styles. From earlier styles, we find the emergence of ragtime dance and jazz influenced styles; also swing dance and its many sub-styles (Stephenson and Iaccarino, 1980).

With the exception of Latin American based dance styles, the fusion of world social dance styles has given us the ballroom dance styles still done today. According the Stephenson and Iaccarino (1980), the most dominant social dance styles done today are: the American Waltz, the Fox-trot, the Lindy (Swing, Jitterbug, and Jive), the American Rumba, the Cha-Cha, the Mambo, the Tango, the Samba, the Bossa-Nova, the Merengue, the Ballroom Polka, and the Hustle. These dances are typically done in social dance halls or at competitions around the world.

Ballet

According to Craine and Mackrell (2000), "ballet began (in Italy) with the Renaissance spectacles …and quickly moved to France where the foundations of classical ballet as we know it today were laid at the royal court… By the early 19th century, ballet technique had been codified" (p. 40).Beginning in the 19th century, ballet spread beyond France. Following the coding of ballet technique and the inevitable spread of the art form, several different "schools" (or methods) of ballet emerged. According to Eliza Gaynor Minden (2005), there are six major methods of ballet study: the French School, Bouronville (Denmark), Cecchetti (Italy), Royal Academy of Dance (England), Vaganova (Soviet Russia), and Balnchine. Each of the preceding methods follows basic guidelines for ballet technique, such as posture and the turning out of the feet. The contrast often lies in performance and interpretation. For example, the French school

values delicacy of movement, whereas Vaganova method values athleticism and energy in dancing ballet.

While the interpretation of ballet in performance and spectacle is varied, there are defining factors. Ballet requires strength, flexibility, body control, and coordination. Perhaps most identifiable about ballet is the guidelines for body placement. As Gaynor-Minden points out (2005), the orientation of the body in ballet is done to create long, flowing lines of movement. Feet are generally turned out, with the tips of the toes pointing outward from the sides of the body. Arms and fingers are generally extended, or curved into a slightly ovular shape (or any combination of the two positions). Head and chest are lifted, and posture through the torso remains lifted. Female ballerinas often choose to do ballet "en pointe," wearing special shoes that allow them to fully extend the line of their feet and dance on the very tips of their toes.

Modern Dance

Craine and Mackrell (2005) define modern dance as "a term widely used in America and Britain to denote theatrical dance which is not based on the academic school of classical ballet. Through early 20th century practitioners … modern dance developed in opposition to classical ballet, rejecting the latter's structural formality and sometimes thematic frivolity" (p. 328). Clarke and Vaughan (1977) indicate that modern dance, while rejecting the formal nature of ballet, was essentially concerned with an important subject matter as an overlying theme. This is perhaps why many modern dance pieces were concerned with the dominating social and political issues of the day. Modern dance does not generally follow strict guidelines for movement. Choreography and body orientation are often choreographer-specific, meaning that each modern choreographer

often develops his or her own system of accepted movement. Modern dance pieces often involve very specific costumes, lighting, and set pieces, all of which are intended unify the thematic implications of the piece.

Musical Theatre Dance

With the emergence of both staged musicals and movie-musicals, a new style of dance emerged. With staged musicals, dancing was brought to the stage in productions such as "West Side Story," "A Chorus Line," and many others. As Clarke and Vaughan (1977) point out, "the musical throughout history has provided a not inexact image of the importance of dance and of its identity in society throughout the twentieth century. It has been fed by the social dances of the time; it has in its turn fed the social dances" (p. 238). This implies the reciprocal relationship that dancing has to theatre. Clarke and Vaughan suggest that because of musical theatre productions, dance has brought the social dances of the time to the stage. Consequently, social dancing has evolved as a direct result of being brought to the forefront of American culture, namely the Broadway stage.

Clarke and Vaughan also suggest that the emergence of film has allowed the world to forever document dances visually. Up until that point in history, dancing was only documented through oral passing on of tradition, or in some cases where a system of choreographic notation was developed. Aside from this aspect of musical theatre dance, a whole world of possibility was opened in terms of dance spectacle. As Berkson (1990) points out, the role of choreographer in staged or screen productions is "defining and supplying the specialized movement needs of the entire project" (p. 6). When dancers have the luxury of multiple "takes" in order to produce a satisfactory finished product, there are possibilities for specialized movement not available in live productions. Film

also allows for the suspension of time and incorporation of visual effects in producing dance numbers. Over the years, a number of ballets and musicals have been transcribed into movie musicals, from those of the classical Hollywood era (such as Fred Astaire in "The Gay Divorcee" and "Top Hat") to Golden Age American musicals (such as "Gypsy" and "Oklahoma") to modern musical spectacles (such as "Grease" and "Chicago").

Dance Technique

It could be argued that dance technique exists only as a part of physical awareness. However, great dancers are not merely physical beings. Sandra Cerny Minton (2003) suggests a multi-pronged approach to overall dance technique. She suggests that a combination of spatial awareness, an understanding of time and energy, and ability to express outwardly that which is felt inwardly helps to create good dance technique. Imogen Walker, Sanna M. Nordin-Bates, and Emma Redding (2010) point out that the physical factors of dancing go beyond flexibility. They argue that physical and technical ability is due to stable factors (such as body types, hyper mobility, and range of motion) combined with unstable factors (such as strength, flexibility, and other trainable factors). The general attitude concerning dance technique is that all dancers should have some foundation in ballet. Because so many dance forms have evolved from ballet or as an antithesis to ballet, it is important for young dancers to understand the guidelines for body orientation and movement – ballet provides that basis. Gaynor-Minden (2005) suggests that ballet provides structure and focus. She also suggests that ballet at an early age can teach dancers self-discipline. This is perhaps because strict attention to detail and an attitude towards constant improvement is taught. Liz Gallego also stresses the

importance of ballet as a foundation for movement. She suggests that regular study of ballet technique will increase a dancer's all around abilities (1999).

Despite the general emphasis on ballet technique, this is not to say that dancers will only succeed with ballet training. Well rounded dancers expose themselves to other forms of dance. Gaynor-Minden (2005) suggests that study of jazz technique may increase a dancer's ability to perform isolated movement. It may also increase balance and suspension: moving through a position rather than stopping there to balance. She also suggests that attention to tap technique can increase a dancer's overall rhythmic awareness. She further points out that the study of ballroom dance has real-world applications, as it is often the type of dance done at social gatherings.

In general, most dance instructors recommend a strong basis in ballet as a foundation for dance technique. However, from there each individual dancer should be free to study other disciplines, and specialize in the style of choreography they are most interested in dancing. Because of this, dance technique does not merely refer to a dancer's ability to perform ballet. Dance technique refers to a dancer's ability to hold proper physical alignment for the style they dance, and their ability to express their inward feelings outwardly through movement.

Choreography

As noted in the definitions, there are many different styles of choreography. Within each category (ballet, tap, jazz, pointe, modern/contemporary, hip hop, lyrical, pom, high kick, musical theatre, ballroom, Irish/folkdance), there are specific guidelines for intent and performance value of each discipline. However, Sandra Cerny Minton (1986) suggests that the overall process by which dances are choreographed follows one

of several different patterns. She suggests that each dance begin with intent, or a motivating factor. The second step usually involves gathering resources – everything from music, costumes, interviews or academic research. The third step entails the process of discovering creative movement. Within each of the aforementioned styles of choreography, this choreographic process can be used to create dance pieces. Liz Gallego (1999) suggests that choreographed pieces aim to demonstrate a dancer's ability, create a mood, and develop a theme or idea fully. Lucy Smith (2008) asserts that choreographers, "as well as using their formal dance training, will assimilate other cultural influences, which help to create unique identities" (p. 81). Arguably, then dancers become a product of the dance cultures that they study. If this theory is correct, the dancer, as a complete individual, inevitably becomes a product of the fusion of the many "dance cultures" that he or she studies.

Competitive Dancing

Liz Gallego (1999) suggests that competitive dancing offers dancers a chance to improve their dance ability. She suggests that there are several major benefits to competitive dance. First, dancers can learn to measure their own success. Competing gives dancers an opportunity to see how they rank against other dancers of comparable age. Second, competing gives dancers an opportunity to use those direct comparisons to gain insight. Third, competing for its own sake offers dancers a chance to build team spirit and to cultivate poise under pressure. Fourth, because competition is continuous in nature, dancers learn to value criticism and grow with the challenges of competing. As an end result, dancers learn to love their work, which increases their sense of self - actualization.

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Michael Gard (2006) points out competing can increase the overall value of a dancer's attitude toward dance. He asserts that "when dance is only concerned with skilled movement, it emerges largely as a mechanical exercise." If his theory is correct, then competitive dancing gives dancers a chance to go beyond purely reproducing dance tradition. It gives them a chance to work toward a personal goal through competing, and by achieving that goal, further their own sense of who they are as a dancer.

Other Influences

Walker, Nordin-Bates, and Redding (2010) suggest that there are several other factors which influence dance education. As mentioned previously, physical factors, including stable and unstable factors, affect dancer ability in terms of talent identification and overall ability to perform. Other factors include a dancer's expressive ability, or their ability to call upon past experiences to communicate emotional responses. Psychological factors include a student's level of perfectionism and motivation, as well as their passion, feelings about the self, and their psychological skills (such as goal setting). Taken together, these factors can all be essential in maintaining levels of practice, surviving in a competing profession, and coping with setbacks. All of these internal factors that affect dance education can help to shape a dancer's abilities, level of maturity, and their ability to communicate both verbally and physically.

Walker, Nordin-Bates, and Redding (2010) continue to explain that there are outward factors that affect dance education. Interpersonal factors include the structure of rehearsals and practice techniques. Social factors include parental support, socio-economic status, peers, leadership, and motivational climate. These outward factors also tend to influence dancers. Dancers that are nurtured in positive, friendly environments

with stable parental support and access financial means may have an advantage over dancers who don't have access to the aforementioned support systems. Both the internal and external factors help to shape the type of dancer that a young girl or boy will be, as well as the influence of the aforementioned dance technique and styles of choreography.

Chapter Summary

The main purpose of this review of literature is to provide the reader with an understanding of how dance has evolved as an art form, as well as how studying different aspects of dance can help to enhance a dancer's educational experiences. In order to discover how some of these factors interact to help shape perceptions, we must have a deeper understanding of what dancing entails, as well as varying factors that help dancers communicate their inward experiences outwardly.

There are many factors that have shaped the field of dance today. The evolution of dance stems from the primitive dance cultures of Africa and Australia, to the folk dances of Europe and Asia, the emergence of and response to ballet, and the eventual staging of musicals and movie musicals that incorporate dance. For young modern dancers, there are a number of factors that shape dance education. First of all, a dancer's basic dance technique depends on his or her access to ballet classes and the study of other styles of dance choreography. Each style of choreography develops its own set of rules for movement and performance value, which helps to determine the type of physical emphasis a dancer will experience, as well as the psychological benefits a dancer experiences from a given style. The influence of competitive dancing helps to shape not only a dancer's personal work ethic, but may also contribute to a dancer's self-actualization in goal setting. Finally, there are a number of internal and external factors

that help to shape dance education, including physical, emotional, psychological, and social factors. The interaction of all the aforementioned traits helps to shape the feelings and perceptions that dancers have regarding their dance education.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the feelings and perceptions of high school age dance students at Amanda's Academy of Dance in La Crosse, Wisconsin. This chapter describes the participants, the instrument of study that was used, and the data collection and analysis procedures selected.

Research Design

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), "qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experiences of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover, rather than test variables" (p. 12). In order to discover the feelings that participants have regarding their dance education, a qualitative research study is both appropriate and necessary. A qualitative method can provide the researcher with deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, their needs, and the reasons for their perceptions as they engage in their educational journey more than a quantitative study can provide (Bodgan and Biklen, 1992). According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2005), "any social phenomenon does not have an independent existence apart from its participants; rather it has different meanings for each different participant" (p. 305). The goal of qualitative research is to discover these meanings and draw conclusions based on recurring themes or patterns therein.

Participants

The total population participating in this study is comprised of 8 high school aged dance students at Amanda's Academy of Dance in La Crosse, Wisconsin. These students were enrolled in dance classes at the studio that meet several days per week. All the participants were females who have been enrolled in classes for several years and have also been members of the studio's competing performance company.

Instrument of the Study

The main instrument of this study is a multi-page survey. Through a review of literature and with committee consultation, a survey was developed that included questions regarding dance technique, study of varied choreography styles, and experiences in competing (see Appendix B). When coding the surveys, the researcher assigned a letter, A through H, to each of the participants.

Survey Data Collection Procedure

After careful review of relevant literature and discussions with UW-L faculty and committee members, the researcher applied for and received permission from the UW-L Institutional Review Board to begin study in the spring of 2011 (see Appendix A).

The researcher then received permission to conduct study at Amanda's Academy of Dance through studio owner, Amanda Verthein. Mrs. Verthein was asked to provide names and class meeting times of the studio's competing performance company members in order to select eligible students for study. Those students who were eligible were first given an informational letter regarding the study. Assent forms were given to students, and informational letters and consent forms were sent home to parents.

Participants who returned signed consent and assent forms were then given the survey. Surveys were administered at the dance studio during a normal dance class time when all the students were available. Surveys took 30-40 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis Procedure

As noted earlier, the survey instrument consisted of three main sections of study, each of which held a number of open-ended questions. In order to discover which features of dance education are salient, it was necessary to ask each participant questions that would allow dancers to articulate their own perceptions, thus allowing the researcher to formulate constructs from the findings. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2005), a construct is a concept that is inferred from commonalities among observed phenomena and that is assumed to underlie those phenomena (p. 307).

Each survey was carefully reviewed using the constant comparison method of data analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Constant comparison allows the researcher to compare responses regardless of whether data is similar or different. This method was selected because it would give the researcher a more flexible means of interpreting data and discovering what themes exist within each category. After reviewing each survey, the researcher then listed themes that appeared within each category of the survey, related to the perceptions and feelings that the dancers had regarding their dance education. Each response was considered in direct comparison to the other survey takers.

Confidentiality

In order to ensure confidentiality in reporting findings, the names and ages of each participant are not provided in this study. Completed surveys and IRB paperwork

were kept in a locked drawer in the researcher's home. Once surveys were interpreted and converted to a narrative text file, surveys were shredded.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative research study was designed to discover what major factors are thematic in high school age dancers' education. Surveys were administered to those dance students at Amanda's Academy of dance who are currently enrolled in dance classes and the competing performance company during spring of 2011. Surveys detailed three major areas of study, many of which were drawn from the review of literature. Data was analyzed using constant comparison method of data analysis, and major themes were established. The results of this analysis are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

This chapter details insight on dancers' feelings and perceptions of their dance education, specifically relating to their 1) basic dance technique, 2) study of various choreography styles and 3) competition experience. Answers in section one were based on dancers rating their own technical skills on three levels of technique: basic dance technique, intermediate dance technique, and advanced dance technique. In section two, dancers were also asked to give a brief history of their experience in 12 different styles of choreography, and their personal feelings on their ability therein. Dancers were also asked to rate each of the 12 styles based on their personal perception of the importance of the style to dance education. Section three details dancers' experience and reactions to competing as well as their perceptions of what was gained through that experience. Space was provided in each section for additional clarifying comments regarding their dance education that were not outlined previously. These are the themes that evolved from the interview data.

Technical Skills

Study participants were asked to answer questions regarding their perception of their own dance technique. Dancers scored themselves on a scale from zero to five on skills requiring flexibility, turning, leaping, and jumping at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. Scores were converted to an average number out of five for the overall

category. A zero score represented no ability, whereas a five score meant excellent ability.

Average Scores for Dance Technique

Average scores for the category of basic dance technique ranged from 3.0 to 5.0, with a group average of 4.2 This implies that dancers involved in this study believe they have overall very good ability in basic dance technique. Average scores for intermediate dance technique ranged from 3.2 to 5.0 with an overall group average of 3.9. Dancers involved in this study generally have very good intermediate dance technique. Average scores for advanced dance technique ranged from 1.7 to 4.8 with a group average of 3.2. Overall group average implies that dancers believe they have average ability in advanced dance technique.

Years of Study vs. Styles of Choreography

All dancers indicated that they have been involved in dance for a minimum of six years, and all have studied a minimum of six different choreography styles. Dancers rating themselves lower in terms of technique generally had studied fewer styles of choreography than those dancers who rated themselves as having excellent ability in terms of dance technique. In theory, it can be implied that a varied dance education course of study may help improve overall dance technique. This topic is further examined in the choreography section.

Choreography

Years of Study

In this section, dancers were asked to indicate the number of years they have studied each of the following choreography styles: ballet, tap, jazz, pointe,

modern/contemporary, hip hop, lyrical, pom, high kick, musical theatre, ballroom, and Irish/folkdance. They were then asked to rate their perceived ability in each choreography style from zero to five (five being excellent ability and zero being no ability). Dancers' responses in this category indicated that the number of years of study does not always indicate perceived mastery of the style. For example, Dancer H noted over ten years of ballet experience, but only average ability. Dancer B noted the same amount of ballet experience and excellent ability. Moreover, Dancer H also indicated less than one year of experience in modern/contemporary but very good ability. Dancer B indicated no experience in modern/contemporary, but a perceived average ability in the style. It could be that Dancer B believes that despite the lack of formal training in modern or contemporary, they possess other skills to help ensure success in the style.

Of the twelve styles surveyed, dancers had indicated study of between six and ten different choreography styles. The two most popular choreography styles studied were ballet and jazz, with almost every dancer indicating more than ten years of experience in both styles, and one dancer having six to nine years of experience in both styles. Least popular styles indicated were pom, high kick, and folkdance, with less than half the study participants indicating study of the aforementioned styles. None of the dancers indicated study in ballroom.

Impact of Choreography Styles

Short answer questions asked dancers to indicate which of the previously mentioned choreography styles has had the greatest impact on their overall dance education. Three dancers indicated ballet, two dancers indicated lyrical, one indicated both modern and ballet, one dancer indicated both lyrical and ballet, and one student

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indicated musical theatre dance. Over half of the survey participants mentioned ballet as having a great impact on their dance education. The next most popular choreography style mentioned as having an impact was lyrical, as three dancers indicated it as having an impact on their dance education.

Personal Preferences, Struggles, and Strengths

When asked which of the styles surveyed was their favorite to perform, dancers indicated varied responses. Favorite styles included lyrical, musical theatre, modern, hip hop, pointe, and tap. The most popular style cited was musical theatre, with over half of the participants mentioning it in their short answer response. Short answer response asked dancers to indicate which style of dance they struggled with the most. Answers included tap, modern, hip hop, ballet, musical theatre, and pointe. Dancers were asked to indicate which style they felt they excelled at the most. Answers again were varied: tap, ballet, lyrical, musical theatre, hip hop, and modern.

Perceived Importance of Each Style

Dancers were asked to rank each of the twelve choreography styles based on their perception of how important each style is to dance education, regardless of their own ability in each style. The two top responses for most important styles of choreography were ballet and jazz. Every dancer indicated ballet as being the most important, and almost all dancers indicated jazz as being the second most important style of study. The two styles which appeared in the bottom most consistently were ballroom dance and folk dance.

Competitive Dance

In this section, dancers were asked to detail their competitive dancing experience. All dancers indicated experience competing in group numbers. None of the dancers had competed with a small group ensemble (two to three dancers). Only one dancer had ever competed with a solo dance. Dancers indicated an average of five years of experience competing.

High Points of Competing

Dancers were asked to indicate what they enjoyed most about competing. Dancers overwhelmingly indicated a sense of pride in their own work as a high point of competing. Dancer G stated, "I like showcasing my talents." Dancer C enjoyed "the feeling of performing, the rush, and having pride and confidence afterwards." Dancer D indicated the thrill of "being onstage and showing what we have worked very hard on; also hearing critique on what we can work on as a whole group (is a high point of competing)."

Also indicated was an appreciation for seeing other competitors work. As Dancer E stated, "I like mostly seeing other group dancers and seeing the competition." Dancer F stated, "I enjoy observing other dancers … and learning from world class instructors." Dancer G indicated both and appreciation for her own work, but also an appreciation for watching and learning from other groups. "I got to expand my dancing by seeing all the different types of dances other studios brought."

Challenges of Competing

Many of the dancers indicated some insecurity about aspects of competing.

- Dancer E said that it's difficult "seeing all of the dancers and getting scared before you go onstage."

- Dancer F stated that it was a challenge "opening up and not caring what other people think (of me) when it comes to dancing."

- Dancer B also indicated insecurity about dancing with dancers from other studios. "It's difficult to be compared to dancers who are better than me."

- Dancer G stated that it was difficult to keep a positive attitude and "going in to the competition confidently."

As denoted in the previous section, dancers seem to have respect for the work of their colleagues, as they indicated their enjoyment at watching other dancers compete. However, the sense of intimidation often makes competition difficult for dancers to focus.

Value of Competition

Dancers were asked to discuss the value of competing as dancers. Almost all indicated a positive response to competing, seeing some kind of intrinsic value in competition. Dancer G stated that "competing is a valuable experience because it allows us to take our skills to the next level… we get to show everyone our talents." Dancer A said that it "lets you get a taste of the different ways people teach; it shows dancers how others move and can inspire them." Dancer F indicated that it helped to teach her self-confidence. Dancers D and E stated that competing is important to see what it is like on stage, and to get scored by real judges. Dancer D stated "it is important to see what people outside (our own studio) think and what the judges think you can work on as a whole."

Only one dancer reported negative feelings toward competitive dancing. Dancer B stated "I think people should dance because they like it, or for exercise. I do not think it should be competitive because competition causes tension, drama, and makes people not like each other." Although the response to the value of competition was negative, it speaks to the overall theme of pressure on dancers to perform well. Dancers indicated that they appreciate competition and overall they enjoy it; but they recognize the whole experience as being a great personal challenge in terms of confidence and ability.

Future Dance Plans

When asked whether they planned to continue dancing after high school graduation, each dancer indicated intent to dance post high school.

- Dancer G indicated that she plans to continue taking classes. She does not plan to make dancing a career, but hopes to "continue dancing my whole life."

- Dancer F would like to continue dancing "to grow both technically and emotionally."

- Dancer D also stated that she would like to make dance "something I always want to do… something that will always stick with me throughout all of my life. I don't expect to be a Broadway dancer or anything professional… just something I love to do."

Responses in this category indicated an overwhelming sense of appreciation for life-long dancing. Dancers seem to appreciate not just the technical aspects of dancing, but also the emotional growth that dancing promotes.

- One dancer indicated that despite battling depression, dancing helps her to feel less upset or worried. "Dance is better therapy than actual therapy," she states,

"I am a dancer even when I'm done with dance classes. I will always be a dancer. Dance has helped me in every aspect of my life."

- Another dancer indicated that dance "opens the world up to you in so many different ways."

- Another response stated "dance has really allowed me to open up a side of me that people don't really see. If it weren't for dance, I definitely don't think I would be as confident and outgoing as I am."

- One dancer stated, "I live to dance. I literally have no idea what I would do it I couldn't dance."

Limitations of the Study

The following were limitations of the study:

- Participants were limited to 14 – 17 year old female dance students enrolled in classes at Amanda's Academy of Dance in spring 2011.

- Participants' rating of their own ability was limited to pre-selected technical skills, and therefore may not provide an accurate representation of perceived abilities.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

This study reports findings related to the feelings and perceptions of 8 female dance students currently enrolled in dance classes. In addition to a summary of findings, this chapter includes recommendations based on the research results. This chapter also includes implications for future research based upon the study findings.

Technique-Related Conclusions

Based on dancers' responses regarding technique, it can be concluded that dancers relate their ability more to the study of many dance styles than to the number of years of experience. However, that is not to say that either aspect is more important than the other. Dancers who rated themselves as having the highest ability in each technique level were also the dancers who studied the most different dance styles. The reverse is also true, with dancers who rated themselves relatively low also being the dancers who have not studied as many dance styles. If perceived level of ability is any sort of indicator of actual talent, then it can be concluded that a well-rounded study of differing dance styles helps to produce the most able dancers.

Choreography-Related Conclusions

Most dancers indicated that ballet and jazz were the styles they studied most in depth. Moreover, dancers also mentioned ballet as being the most valuable style studied in the course of their dance education. Consequently, pom, high kick, folk dance, and

ballroom dance were mentioned as being the least important of the styles surveyed. This is not to say that there is any less merit in these styles compared to some of the more popular styles (indicated by survey participants).

Perhaps the preferences of the survey participants can be attributed to other factors as available class offerings, local culture, background, or studio culture. For example, if the studio was situated in a more urban area where ballroom dance competitions are held, survey participants might rate ballroom dance as more important. Similarly, folk dance and ballroom dance may have lost some of their appeal in the younger dance culture due to the emergence of newer styles, such as lyrical and hip hop style dance. One might argue that lyrical style dance and hip hop are the "new" folk dance of urban America. However, it cannot be denied that survey participants value certain styles over others. Further study on choreography offerings may offer more insight into why some styles of choreography become more popular than others, depending on cultural influences.

Competition-Related Conclusions

It is evident through participant responses that dancers see the inherent value of competition for competition's sake. Positive responses cited a general appreciation for the opportunity to see other dancers' work, and to be able to learn from other dancers and other studios. Responses also indicated enjoying the "thrill" of being onstage and being able to show what their own hard work has produced. There seems to be an overall sense of pride in taking a choreographed work from the beginning of the process to performance in front of judges. Most often cited was personal pleasure at being able to build up confidence through competing.

Despite enjoying dance competitions, dancers hint at an underlying theme of pressure to perform well. While most participants indicated enjoying watching other dancers compete, some also felt it was intimidating. When dancers judge other dancers to be more capable than them, it becomes difficult to perform up to their own perceived abilities due to personal insecurity. It can be concluded that although competing helps dancers to build up their own self-confidence, it also forces dancers outside of their comfort zones. In doing so, dancers are able to put their talents on display for judges who then offer constructive criticism. This criticism helps dancers to alter their work and make corrections in order to make their work better, in turn becoming better dancers.

Recommendations for Further Study

Further study may be needed to more fully explore dance education. The results of this study are limited to the participants studied, and therefore may not provide an accurate representation of the greater dancing community.

As most dancers indicated feeling a lot of pressure to perform well, it may be concluded that the effects of this pressure extend beyond dancing at competitions. Further study into the psychological and physiological effects of competitive dance may be needed.

Moreover, further research could also focus on the psychological benefits or struggles associated with dancing. Dancers in this study indicated that the benefits of their own dancing extend far beyond strictly physical; future research could explore more fully how dancing affects young dancers.

Participants in this study rated their own abilities, but this provides a subjective view of perceived ability. In order to more accurately rate dancer ability, further study

could include a component of dance instructors rating their students. This may help to provide a more accurate picture of dance ability that is not subject to participants own opinion.

Further research might use a larger participant pool, either from the same studio or from different studios. Many dance studios will specialize in certain styles, so in order to attain unbiased results, several studios could be studied.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY *of* WISCONSIN
LA CROSSE

To: Emily Pearse

From: Bart Van Voorhis, Coordinator

Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the

Protection of Human Subjects

Date: March 24, 2011

Re: **RESEARCH PROTOCOL SUBMITTED TO IRB**

The IRB Committee has reviewed your proposed research project entitled: *"Dance Education: The Influence of Dance Technique, Choreography, and Competition."*

The Committee has determined that your research protocol will not place human subjects at risk. **The attached protocol has been approved and is exempt from further review per 45CFR46, 46.101(b)(2).**

However, it is strongly suggested that Informed Consent always be used. Remember to provide participants a copy of the consent form and to keep a copy for your records. Consent documentation and IRB records should be retained for at least 3 years after completion of the project.

Since you are not seeking federal funding for this research, the review process is complete and you may proceed with your project.

Good luck with your project.

Burt A. [signature]

cc: IRB File

        Robert Krajewski, Faculty Advisor

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Technique, Choreography, and Competition
Questionnaire - March 2011

Please answer the following questions honestly, rating only your own ability or feelings. Do not compare yourself to anyone else. Be sure to read instructions carefully. All answers will be kept confidential, and used solely for the purpose of this study.

SECTION ONE: TECHNICAL SKILLS

Circle your answers using the following scale:

	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Excellent Ability	Very Good Ability	Average Ability	Some Ability	Very Little Ability	No Ability

Basic Dance Technique:

	5	4	3	2	1	0
1. High Kicks:	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Single Pirouettes:	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Right Splits:	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Left Splits:	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Grand Jeté:	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Double Tuck Jump:	5	4	3	2	1	0

Circle your answers using the following scale:

	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Excellent	Very Good	Average	Some	Very Little	No
	Ability	Ability	Ability	Ability	Ability	Ability

Intermediate Dance Technique

1. Double Pirouettes:	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Chainé Turns:	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Piqué Turns:	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Scorpion*:	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Toe Touch/Russian:	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. C Jumps:	5	4	3	2	1	0

(* Scorpion is also known as jump with back leg in attitude)

Advanced Dance Technique

1. Illusion Kick:	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Triple Pirouettes:	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Side Leap:	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Calypso*:	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Switch Leap:	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Fouettées:	5	4	3	2	1	0

(*Calypso is also known as turning grand jete with back leg in attitude)

SECTION TWO: CHOREOGRAPHY

There are short answer questions at the end of this section. Please answer honestly, and do not compare yourself to anyone else.

Rate your EXPERIENCE in the following dance styles using the following scale:

Circle your answers using the following scale:

Experience	**5** 10+ Years	**4** 6-9 Years	**3** 3-5 Years	**2** 1-2 Years	**1** Less Than 1 Year	**0** No
1. Ballet	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Tap	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Jazz	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Pointe	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Modern/Contemporary	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Hip Hop	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. Lyrical	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. Pom	5	4	3	2 ·	1	0
9. High Kick	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. Musical Theatre	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. Ballroom	5	4	3	2	1	0
12. Irish/Folkdance	5	4	3	2	1	0

Use the following scale to rate your ABILITY in each style:

Circle your answers using the following scale:

	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Excellent Ability	Very Good Ability	Average Ability	Some Ability	Very Little Ability	No Ability
1. Ballet	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Tap	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Jazz	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Pointe	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Modern/Contemporary	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Hip Hop	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. Lyrical	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. Pom	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. High Kick	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. Musical Theatre	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. Ballroom	5	4	3	2	1	0
12. Irish/Folkdance	5	4	3	2	1	0

The following page requires short answers based on your experience in choreography.

Answer the following questions based on your own opinions:

1. Of the styles indicated above, which style of choreography has had the greatest impact on your overall dance education:

_____

2. Of the styles indicated above, which style of choreography is your favorite to perform?

_____

3. Of the styles above, which have you struggled the most with? (Please indicate a style only if you have had experience with it, not a style you have never tried.)

_____

4. Of the styles above, which have you most excelled at?

_____

5. Using the numbers 1 – 12, please rank the styles of choreography based on how important you believe them to be to a dancer's education; #1 being the most important, #12 being the least important:

_____ Lyrical   _____ Pom

_____Tap   _____ Ballet

_____ High Kick   _____ Jazz

_____Pointe   _____ Musical Theatre

_____Modern/Contemporary   _____ Hip Hop

_____ Ballroom   _____ Irish/Folkdance

SECTION THREE: COMPETITIVE DANCE

Circle your answer:

1. Have you ever been a part of a team/large group competition?   YES
   NO

2. Have you ever competed with a duet or trio?   YES
   NO

3. Have you ever competed in a solo competition?   YES
   NO

4. How many years have you been competing?

   0 Years   1-2 Years   3-5 Years   6-9 Years   10+ Years

Short Answer – Please answer the following questions (If you have not competed, you may leave these blank):

1. What did you most enjoy about competing?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What did you find most difficult about competing?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Do you believe that competing is a valuable experience for dancers? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. By the time you graduate from high school, what do you wish to accomplish with your dance education? (I.E. What are your long term goals?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. If you have any additional comments regarding your dance education, please feel free to state them here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and consideration. All responses given on this questionnaire will be kept confidential, and will be used solely for the purpose of this study. When completed, please return this questionnaire to the envelope provided.

APPENDIX C

INFORMATIONAL LETTER

Dear Parents/Students:

I am currently in the process of attaining my Masters in Education-Professional Development (ME-PD) degree from the University of Wisconsin La Crosse. In accordance with the classes that I am taking, I will be conducting an action research project at Amanda's Academy of Dance. If you have any questions regarding the consent or assent form, procedures, or information presented here, please feel free to ask. The following are some special areas I would like to highlight:

Why have you been asked to take part in this research?

Your child has been asked to take part in an educational research study that will examine how technique, choreography, and competition influence dance education. Your child was selected due to his/her current enrollment in studio dance classes.

How many people will be in this study, and how long will it last?

About 25 students at Amanda's Academy of Dance may be involved in this research study. Data collection will begin sometime in late February 2011, and will conclude in April 2011.

What will happen if you agree to take part in this study?

I will administer questionnaires to students in Amanda's Academy of Dance as they participate in my research study. The methods of assessment will include rubric assessments and short answer paragraphs. It can be assured that the identity of all participants will be kept confidential throughout the study, and collective group data will be used to report findings. Results of the findings will in no way influence future decisions made regarding placement or advancement in dance technique classes.

How will you benefit by being part of the study?

It is anticipated that participants will experience increased understanding of their own abilities. It is also expected that students will benefit from assessing their own knowledge and skills, while assessing their feelings about their dance education. Also, knowledge gained from this research will benefit the educational community at large. Results of this study will be published in accordance with requirements of the ME-PD program at UW-L.

What if you do not want to take part in the study?

All students will participate in various dance classes at Amanda's Academy of Dance.   However, data will not be collected from those who choose not to participate in the study, and findings related to those students will not be reported. In addition, if students and their parents/guardians choose to participate now but then later change their minds, they can withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.

Additional questions?

Please contact Ms. Emily Pearse, the principal investigator of this study at: 608-386-6288 or at pearse.emil@uwlax.edu . The faculty advisor is Robert Krajewski, 608-785-8125 or krajewsk.robe@uwlax.edu; Questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 608-785-8124 or irb@uwlax.edu. .

Sincerely,

Emily Pearse

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

Protocol Title:	Dance Education: The Influence of Dance Technique, Choreography, and Competition
Principal Investigator:	Emily Pearse 815 South 17th Street La Crosse, WI 54601 (608) 386-6288
Emergency Contact:	Emily Pearse (608)386-6288

Purpose and Procedure:

- The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of dance technique, choreography, and competition on dance education in high school aged dance students.
- My child's participation will involve completing a questionnaire that details questions based on his/her perspective of the aforementioned areas (technique, choreography, and competition).
- The time requirement will be approximately 30-40 minutes, depending on the time needed to complete the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire will be paper-delivered and will be administered at Amanda's Academy of Dance during March 2011.

Potential Risks:

- My child may feel inconvenienced.
- The risk of responding to paper delivered survey is near zero.

Rights and Confidentiality

- My child's participation is voluntary. My child can withdraw or refuse to answer any question without consequences at any time.
- My child can withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without penalty.
- The results of this study may be published in educational literature or presented at a professional meeting or conference.
- All information will be kept confidential and data will not be linked with any personally identifiable information.

Possible Benefits

- I understand my child may not benefit directly from participating in this study.
- Participants may experience increased understanding of their own abilities.

Questions regarding study procedures may be directed to Emily Pearse (608-386-6288), the principal investigator, or to the study advisor Robert Krajewski, Department of Educational Studies, UW-L (608-785-8125). Questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the UW-L Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (608-785-8124 or irb@uwlax.edu).

Parent/Guardian _____ Date_____

Researcher _____ Date_____

APPENDIX E

ASSENT FORM

Protocol Title:	Dance Education: The Influence of Dance Technique, Choreography, and Competition
Principal Investigator:	Emily Pearse 815 South 17th Street La Crosse, WI 54601 (608) 386-6288
Emergency Contact:	Emily Pearse (608)386-6288

Purpose and Procedure:
- The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of dance technique, choreography, and competition on dance education in high school aged dance students.
- My participation will involve completing a questionnaire that details how I feel about my dance technique, choreography I have experienced, and how participating in competitions makes me feel.
- The time requirement will be approximately 30-40 minutes, depending on the time needed to complete the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire will be a paper-delivered, and will be administered at Amanda's Academy of Dance.

Potential Risks:
- I may feel inconvenienced.
- The risk of responding to paper delivered survey is near zero.

Rights and Confidentiality
- My participation is voluntary. I can withdraw or refuse to answer any question without consequences at any time.
- I can withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without penalty.
- The results of this study may be published in educational literature or presented at a professional meeting or conference.
- All information will be kept confidential and data will not be linked with any personally identifiable information.

Possible Benefits
- I understand I may not benefit directly from participating in this study.
- I may experience increased understanding of my own dance abilities.

Questions regarding study procedures may be directed to Emily Pearse (608-386-6288), the principal investigator, or to the study advisor Robert Krajewski, Department of Educational Studies, UW-L (608-785-8125). Questions regarding the protection of human subjects may be addressed to the UW-L Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (608-785-8124 or irb@uwlax.edu).

Participant_____ Date_____

Researcher_____ Date_____