

**A Comparative Study of the Motivations of Male and Female Adolescent Dancers**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare the motivations between adolescent male and female dancers' for their participation in dance. This is important because there is very little information on male dancers and there is a need for more males in the dance world. The null hypothesis for this study is that there would be no statistically significant difference in intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, social motivation, emotional motivation, physical motivation, and artistic motivation scores on a self-report questionnaire between male and female adolescent dancers. A Likert-like scale was used that had a series of statements covering the following four categories of motivation: social, physical, emotional, and artistic. Within each category, five statements focused on extrinsic motivators and five focused on intrinsic motivators. Students came from a convenience sample of students at a private dance studio (Female  $n = 10$ ; Male  $n = 8$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between male and female dancers' motivations for participating in dance in any category (i.e., Intrinsic motivation: male dancers (Mean = 32.25, SD = 9.47) and female dancers (Mean = 38.60, SD = 8.44) [ $t(16) = -1.50, p > .05$ ]; Extrinsic motivation: male dancers (Mean = 25.50, SD = 9.20) and female dancers (Mean = 29.00, SD = 10.93) [ $t(16) = -0.72, p > .05$ ]; Social motivation: male dancers (Mean = 9.00, SD = 2.78) and female dancers (Mean = 9.20, SD = 3.33) [ $t(16) = -.14, p > .05$ ]; Physical motivation: male dancers (Mean = 14.63, SD = 5.99) and the female dancers (Mean = 18.40, SD = 6.02) [ $t(16) = -1.32, p > .05$ ]; Emotional motivation: male dancers (Mean = 19.38, SD = 6.14) and female dancers (Mean = 22.40, SD = 5.89) [ $t(16) = -1.06, p > .05$ ]; Artistic motivation: male dancers (Mean = 15.00, SD = 6.46) and female dancers (Mean = 17.60, SD = 6.35) [ $t(16) = -0.86, p > .05$ ]). Implications of the findings and suggestions for future research are discussed.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Dance education has become increasingly popular in public school systems in Maryland and across America. As it becomes progressively more available in school systems, thoughts need to be turned toward some of the underlying issues in the field. Recent research has shown that there is a significantly smaller number of boys involved in dance than girls, possibly because Western European culture situates dance as a primarily female art form (O'Neill, 2011; and Risner, 2007). This gender gap is concerning as boys are an essential part of the dance world.

Blume (2003) asserts that dance heavily influences how bodies are understood by students. Historic ballets have women cast in roles that are traditionally feminine (damsel in distress) and men cast in roles that are traditionally masculine (slaying the dragon). Participants and observers of dance receive information about the body from performers supporting gender stereotypes. The very nature of dance can be part of the problem by supporting gender stereotypes.

Hanna (2010) clarifies, “[d]ance conveys meaning through the use of space, touch, proximity to another dancer or an observer, nudity, stillness, and specific body postures and movements” (p. 213). These elements are all easily observable by any person viewing or participating in dance and are frequently discussed in classrooms, yet many dance teachers try to avoid the personal side of them. Hanna even notes that some people may not even be aware of the innate sexuality of dance and many that do prefer to avoid or deny it. Ignoring the subject is not stopping boys from feeling immense social pressures to conform.

This study was initiated because of these social pressures. If boys are feeling what Blume (2003) and Hanna (2010) have discussed, then what is keeping them in the dance classroom? How does that compare to what keeps girls in the classroom? There are several aspects to dance that could contribute to boys' and girls' motivation to continue striving in the dance world—emotional, physical, artistic, and social motivators all exist to create a complex web surrounding these dancers. This study strives to untangle that web and uncover what factors are responsible for motivating boys versus girls to dance.

### **Statement of Problem**

The purpose of this study is to determine and compare the motivating factors behind boys' and girls' participation in dance.

### **Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis for this study is that there is no statistically significant difference in intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, social motivation, emotional motivation, physical motivation, and artistic motivation scores on a self-report questionnaire between male and female adolescent dancers.

### **Operational Definitions**

In this study, the definition of dancer is defined as a person participating in codified dance forms, i.e. ballet, modern, jazz, tap, and/or ballroom dance as a student within a private dance studio. On this questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they felt a series of statements applied to them (Appendix B). These statements are categorized in six ways: intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, social motivation, physical motivation, emotional motivation, and artistic motivation. Intrinsic motivation can be defined as motivation driven by an internal interest in or enjoyment of the activity while external motivation can be defined as motivation

driven by a desire for a reward or some other external gain. These two categories of motivation are overarching and come into play within the other four categories. Social motivation can be defined as motivation driven by a need or desire for social interaction and acceptance. Emotional motivation can be defined as motivation driven by a need or desire for emotional expression or fulfillment, such as the need to express grief. Physical motivation can be defined as motivation driven by a need or desire to attain physical fitness and health, as well as fulfill a desire to appear attractive to others. Finally, artistic motivation can be defined as motivation driven by an enjoyment of the arts and a desire to appreciate and be appreciated for one's artistic talents. Each of these categories was measured by the motivation score on the self-report questionnaire.



## CHAPTER II

### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review seeks to explore the impact of social pressures on boys' motivation to dance. Section one provides an overview of the current status of boys in dance. Section two explores social views on male dancers. Section three discusses adolescence and the importance of social status in that phase of life. Section four explores the motivation behind boys dancing and in section five, possible solutions are explored.

#### Current Status of Dance Education

##### *The Importance of Effective Dance Education*

There are a vast variety of dance programs in America. Even within the realm of public school dance, every school has a different concept of what an effective program includes. Most commonly, programs focus primarily on technique and performance with a side of choreography and leave out the surrounding aspects of the art. However, "every instance in which we fail to articulate the significance of teaching, pedagogy, community awareness and engagement, technology, and research that is made possible through dance education contributes to the marginalization of the field" (Risner, 2012, p. 125). Truly effective dance education covers every aspect of the field.

Risner (2010) goes on to state that a comprehensive dance program should include living dance, dance notation, anatomy and kinesiology, choreography, philosophy of dance, dance ethnology, and music for dance. Covering every aspect of the field in the education of those entering the field is an emerging goal in dance programs. Outside of existing dance programs is the crucial issue of advocating for effective dance education in general.

In a world that is moving steadily towards a sedentary lifestyle, the health benefits of regular physical activity are touted and widely recognized because of it. According to O'Neill (2011), the health benefits of dance specifically are just as valuable but less widely known. "Dancing is associated with increased cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular strength/endurance, flexibility, and bone mineral density, as well as reduced percentage of body fat and not detrimental effects on growth or development" (p. 1).

A recent study done by O'Neill shows that dancing is a common activity among adolescents, with a prevalence of 20.9% for all adolescents in the study. He ranked it in the top third of most favored activities for girls. His study focused on dance as a part of youth physical activity, but it yielded useful results. O'Neill discovered the importance of dance as a type of regular physical activity for adolescents, especially girls, and found that it contributed to overall moderate-vigorous physical activity more than walking, jogging, and running, making it a favored activity. Since helping adolescents attain a healthy level of physical activity is a key public health objective for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, dance could have the potential to play a critical role in reaching that goal.

Dance education is also important on a larger scale than attaining physical activity goals. According to Sanderson (2008), the nature of the knowledge gained from participation in the arts is different than that gained from language and mathematics. She warns readers of producing unevenly educated individuals by failing to provide opportunities for artistic learning (p. 486). She goes on to add that involvement in the arts educates the feelings, supplying an emotional and creative education through its alternative way of thinking. Blume (2003) supports this assertion and adds that dance training encourages students to combine social interaction skills with perceptual-motor skills.

Sanderson (2008) stresses the importance of developing dance curricula that relates to the world in which the students live, while also extending that world through new experiences. She especially supports inclusion of the codified dance forms (e.g. ballet, modern, jazz) no matter the social class of the students in order to avoid producing thoughts that codified dance is too elite for them. This being said, there are many issues in and around the dance world concerning the perceptions of society.

### **Social Stigma and Gender Roles**

#### *Current Status of Boys in Dance*

Currently, there is a significantly smaller number of boys in the dance world than girls. In his descriptive study of dance participation in adolescents, O'Neill (2011) discovered that the prevalence of dance participation was 35% in girls and 8% in boys. For girls, dance is empowering. It builds strength of the body and mind and encourages self-confidence and self-expression (Warburton, 2009). For boys, dance presents a dilemma—the ability to physically express oneself versus the pressure to conform to a more accepted male role. Dance has been viewed as a feminine activity in Western cultures since the 1700s when ballerinas became celebrities (Risner, 2007). This initial surge of femininity in ballet has cost male dancers since.

Despite the pressure to conform, a small amount of young men do join. Warburton (2009) sums up the lure for boys by pointing out that dance adjusts masculinity to a condition that allows one to express a wide range of emotion and creativity. He goes on to state that it is the most important privilege afforded to male dancers because it allows them to embrace a caring and expressive masculinity. This lure is clearly a great one, since many young men who begin dancing continue dancing into adulthood. The boys who do dance describe dancing with words like “passion,” “freedom,” and “falling in love with dance” (Gard, 2003, p. 114).

Male dancers actually benefit greatly from their minority status. The irony of the matter is that boys who dance are idolized by their teachers, given more attention and cultivation in their classes and have grossly higher chances of receiving scholarships than girls (Risner, 2007). Boys offer a way of moving that women can never achieve—teachers recognize this. Despite the disproportionate amount of attention they receive, Risner cites a study on psychosocial issues in male dancers that shows participants feeling social isolation and having unmet needs. The support from inside the classroom does not outweigh the overwhelming pressure met in the outside world.

### *Social Views on Male Dancers*

The true reason behind the lack of participation by boys in dance could lie in society's perceptions of what a male should be. Starting as early as three years of age, each person develops a gender belief system—a set of beliefs and opinions about men and women and the concepts of masculinity and femininity (Blume, 2003). In Western culture, this gender belief system generally links femininity with intuition, nature, and the body and masculinity with intellect, culture, and the mind (Risner, 2007). These stereotypes are deep-seated and often unnoticed as people develop their own system.

Born out of this system is a set of laws specifically for men, which Risner has labeled the “boy code”. The “boy code” is a solid set of characteristics that define what a male should and should not be; these include individualism, independence, emotional detachment, and bravado. The “boy code” is an unspoken construct that dictates what all males do, Risner theorizes, and is enforced by all people.

This theory is supported by Gard's interview with Ralph, a male dancer who expressed knowledge of the "boy code" without being told anything about it. "I understood that if I went, ... 'I do ballet', that I would be called a poof ..." he says, "Whether or not you are, there is no way you want to be labeled" (p. 111). This fear of labeling is not only present in Ralph's experiences. Gard says that a number of researchers have argued that playing sports is one major way young men can "prove" their manliness and avoid being labeled "gay. Sports are a way for boys to move that is consistent with the Western world's view of how men should move.

Ralph also related worries that he would have been bullied if he had not continued surfing and playing rugby along with taking ballet at a facility outside of the school (Gard, 2003). These justifications for dance are not limited to the dancer but to the people surrounding him. Risner (2007) discusses the need for male viewers and family members to "profess an absolute repulsion for homosexual desire or attraction" in order to allow themselves lend support (p. 142).

In addition to the "boy code," society also has a stereotype for the male dancer. Western culture has created the "boy code" and dancing does not fit. America views dancing as a feminine activity and so boys who dance are constantly in danger of being labeled effeminate (Risner 2007). Also, since the dance world has been receptive to males who are homosexual, the Western world has assumed that male dancers are gay (Hanna, 2010). In fact, about fifty percent of male dancers in the United States are gay or bisexual, according to Risner (2007). "Ballet was associated with women, and male dancers represented corruption of the male code of self-presentation" (p. 223). This leads to the question of how many male dancers become gay or bisexual simply because society demands it of them?

### *Adolescents and Social Status*

During adolescence, people begin to focus heavily on social development and identity. Adolescents begin spending just as much time with their peers as they do with their parents—more in some cases. It stands to reason that these peers’ opinions would weigh heavily on youth, even be all-consuming (Warburton, 2009). The same applies to gender identity. As children develop their own gender identities, their gender schemas are made more complex as well (*Sex Role Socialization*, 2007, p. 2).

Peer friendships can be a safe place for adolescents to explore their identity, but peer influence and pressure can also lead to unhealthy and unsafe behavior. Failure to develop close relationships with peers often results in a variety of problems from substance abuse to psychological disorders (Warburton, 2009).

Mayeux (2011) performed a study on young adolescents looking at the effects of popularity and gender on peers’ perceptions of behavior. He discovered that the criteria for being a popular individual are complex, different depending on gender, and at times, contradictory. “Popular youths may be popular because their combination of prosocial and antisocial behaviors enables them to garner social power effectively or their negative characteristics may be overlooked in the face of their more desirable attributes, such as humor, style, and attractiveness” (p. 350).

Mayeux also found that boys identified popularity with athleticism, funniness, and risky behavior. This coincides with Blume (2003) who found that boys frequently construct a conditional self-worth based on their success at sports. With these findings in mind, the social pressures placed on males who dance by their peers are easier to comprehend. No matter how

physically gifted a male dancer is, he is seen as a contradiction to the social norms of the average adolescent (Blume, 2003).

## **Possible Solutions**

### *Motivating Boys to Dance*

There have been several methods already used to encourage boys to enter the dance classroom. The most noteworthy of which is an effort to make dance seem more acceptable by relating it to sports. These “Dance for the Athlete” programs tout that ballet will help boys become better at sports but according to Gard (2003), this only worsens the problem. By connecting dance and sports, it only reinforces the belief that many young male dancers harbor that dancing is only acceptable when accompanied by other “masculine” activities. It undermines the value of dance, shrinking it into a side hobby that is a little strange but acceptable because it aids the main purpose of a man’s physical life—sports.

There is little doubt that the physical aspect of dance is as equally demanding as football or soccer, but enabling people to justify dancing with that truth is not solving the problem. Sanderson (2008) calls for an increase on scholarly materials about dance education and its social issues. Instructing the populace about the realities of dance education can be a way to abolish the stigma that surrounds male dancers. Blume (2003), Risner (2007), and Warburton (2009) all agree that breaking down the stigma that surrounds males in dance is the only way to increase participation. The question remains, how do teachers accomplish this?

### *Making A Safe Space*

Many dance educators are concerned with making the dance classroom a safe space for everyone, not just male dancers. Leijen, Lam, Wildscut, and Simons (2009) express the importance of safety and trust in the classroom, “especially for dealing with delicate matters related to individuality and other areas of the self” (p.324). The very nature of dance requires the dancer to reveal him/herself on a personal level every time he/she moves into the studio. Dance educators are aware of this and successfully make their spaces safe.

It is true that many male dancers view the studio as a place for escape. However, just as many view it as a battle ground. Risner (2003) says that the escape of the dance studio “may also create a space for deception and shame” (p. 68). Even though males receive an excessive amount of attention, that attention is not always positive. Risner (2007) discusses how even in the dance world, men are asked to dance a certain way, “like a man”. Warburton (2012) supports this, recalling banter that he has witnessed in the dance classroom where non-threatening banter hits deeper than intended.

These sometimes unconscious statements made by teachers can have a real impact on dancers. Teachers should have a look inward at their own beliefs concerning the “boy code” and their treatment of young males in the dance classroom (Risner, 2003). Equalization of treatment can be a strategy in keeping boys in the dance classroom. *Sex Role Socialization* (2007) explains that teachers provide an environment where students’ actions and interactions are structured, thus careful planning can be done to avoid promoting behaviors and attitudes that are gender stereotypic.

Blume (2003) believes that in order to deconstruct the issues surrounding gender in dance, teachers must go beyond the established curriculum. She instructs teachers to provide



students with structured opportunities for reflection on the meaning of the body, on moving as gendered communication, and on the cultural significance of dance. Warburton adds that a focus on peer-to-peer influences and interactions between boys and girls may be a way to combat stereotypes, strengthen relations between dancers, and build healthy dance communities. In these ways, students can begin to have a dialogue about gender and dance and the issues existing in front of them. She encourages a change in viewpoint of the dancer's body—instead of an “instrument” the body is an “expression of the wider culture” (p. 100). This allows students to break down their gender belief systems on what people can and cannot do.

According to Leijen, et. al. (2009), increasing the amount of reflection in the dance classroom will better develop students' awareness about identity, as well as their creativity and thinking skills. They used a five part approach based on the Kantian notion of reflection where students are encouraged to reflect on the following in regards to dance: how they apply concepts and principles related to dance disciplines, how they develop and use self-awareness, what new concepts and principles they have acquired, what new concepts and principles related to themselves they have developed, and their development over time along with goal planning.

The results of this method were effective in pointing out the areas in which teachers can improve their methods of teaching reflection. There were four main categories of difficulty the researchers encountered when eliciting in-depth reflections from students: difficulty describing experiences, difficulty evaluating experience, difficulty relating to multiple perspectives, and finally, general difficulty discussing personal matters. These difficulties can be addressed through an education in how to reflect.

Altogether, it seems that a need to refine instruction to include the emotional side of dance is in order. Incorporating reflection, on the part of the student and the teacher, can open

doors for communication about these issues. The physicality of dance brings up issues in gender identity and social status—instead of ignoring these topics, teachers should facilitate discussion on the matter. An increase in research about the emotional side of dance and about social stigma in the dance classroom could support this endeavor.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS**

#### **Design**

This study had a causal-comparative design conducted using a convenience sample. The independent variable in this study is gender, in this case the gender of adolescents who dance. The dependent variable is the scores derived from the rating scale on the self-report questionnaire. This study used a convenience sample because the number of available adolescent male dancers is generally limited and the participants were existing students of the researcher. The students were chosen based on their gender and their current age. All students were given the same self-report questionnaire. There was no pre-test or post-test.

#### **Participants**

Participants of this study were students of a local ballet studio in a suburban area in a Mid Atlantic state. The studio has a population of approximately 150 students. The sample is made up of a total of 18 adolescents, of which eight are male and 10 are female. All of these participants were taking ballet classes regularly. Of the males, two were also taking modern. Of the females, three were also taking jazz and one was also taking tap. The mean current age for males was 14.74 (SD = 2.38) and for females was 14.30 (SD = 1.77). There was a significant difference between the mean number of years in dance score of the male dancers (Mean = 5.75, SD = 2.92) and the female dancers (Mean = 9.20, SD = 2.25) [ $t(16) = -.14, p > .05$ ] with the female dancers being more experienced. 10 participants categorized themselves as White/Caucasian, four participants categorized themselves as Black/African American, and three as Asian/Pacific Islander participants. None of the participants categorized themselves as

Hispanic or Native American Indian. Participants who considered themselves to be an equal combination of two ethnicities were instructed to mark “Other”. Only one participant did so.

### **Instrument**

This study used a Likert-type scale to measure the outcomes of the self-report questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based off of the researcher’s understanding of the literature and experience in the field of dance and in conjunction with a licensed psychologist. Participants had four choices: “Not At All,” “A Little Bit,” “Well,” and “Very Well.” Forty statements were created—10 each for the four motivational categories of Social, Physical, Emotional, and Artistic. Within those categories, five questions were intrinsic motivators and five were extrinsic. Consequently there were twenty intrinsic items and twenty extrinsic items. Participants were not informed of the categories of motivators to preserve validity. Since the instrument was devised by the researcher for use in this study only, there is no validity or reliability data.

### **Procedure**

Prior to approaching any potential participants, permission to proceed was granted from the director of the dance studio. Participants were approached during rehearsal time at the dance studio. Before the self-report questionnaire was distributed, participants were given a brief explanation of the study and asked to have their parent/guardian sign a permission slip (Appendix A). All permission slips and questionnaires were completed and returned. Once the slip was signed and returned, participants were prepped with a longer explanation of the purpose that matched the explanation on the permission slip. Participants were told that, in order to complete requirements for a Masters degree, the researcher was required to complete an Action Research Project. In order to do so, the researcher was looking at the many factors that motivate adolescents to participate in dance.

Participants were then given verbal instructions to mark the column that coincides with the response that best represents the accuracy of the statement. Any questions were answered with a clarification of these instructions but no more information provided. Participants were left to complete the questionnaire on their own, though some of the participants had a parent fill out the demographic information. The questionnaire itself was filled out independently and returned immediately after completion. The questionnaire took approximately ten minutes to complete.

The results of the questionnaire were scored as follows: “Not At All”=0, “A Little Bit”=1, “Well”=2, and “Very Well”=3. Scores were generated for each of the motivational categories. The range possible for the Social, Physical, Emotional, and Artistic scales was 0-30 and the range possible for the Intrinsic and Extrinsic scales was 0-60. The male and female scores on the questionnaire scales were compared by independent sample t-tests.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to compare the motivations of adolescent male dancers to the motivations of adolescent female dancers. The scores of self-report questionnaires were analyzed based on ratings of six types of motivation: social, physical, emotional, artistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic. The null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference in intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, social motivation, emotional motivation, physical motivation, and artistic motivation scores on a self-report questionnaire between male and female adolescent dancers failed to be rejected. There was no significant difference between the mean social motivation score of the male dancers (Mean = 9.00, SD = 2.78) and the female dancers (Mean = 9.20, SD = 3.33) [ $t(16) = -0.14, p > .05$ ]. There was no significant difference between the mean physical motivation score of the male dancers (Mean = 14.63, SD = 5.99) and the female dancers (Mean = 18.40, SD = 6.02) [ $t(16) = -1.32, p > .05$ ]. There was no significant difference between the mean emotional motivation score of the male dancers (Mean = 19.38, SD = 6.14) and the female dancers (Mean = 22.40, SD = 5.89) [ $t(16) = -1.06, p > .05$ ]. There was no significant difference between the mean artistic motivation score of the male dancers (Mean = 15.00, SD = 6.46) and the female dancers (Mean = 17.60, SD = 6.35) [ $t(16) = -0.86, p > .05$ ]. There was also no significant difference between the mean intrinsic motivation score of the male dancers (Mean = 32.25, SD = 9.47) and the female dancers (Mean = 38.60, SD = 8.44) [ $t(16) = -1.50, p > .05$ ] or the mean extrinsic motivation score of the male dancers (Mean = 25.50, SD = 9.20) and the female dancers (Mean = 29.00, SD = 10.93) [ $t(16) = -0.72, p > .05$ ].

The only statistically significant finding regarded the number of years subjects had been dancing. The mean number of years in dance score of the male dancers (Mean = 5.75, SD =

2.92) was much lower than that of the female dancers (Mean = 9.20, SD = 2.25) [ $t(16) = -2.84$ ,  $p < .05$ ] which made the female dancers more experienced.

**Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and T-Test Results for Demographic Data and Motivation Scores by Gender**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>Age</b>	Male	14.75	2.38	0.46	NS*
	Female	14.30	1.77		
<b>Age Began Dancing</b>	Male	8.25	4.17	2.06	NS
	Female	5.00	2.49		
<b>Number of Years in Dance</b>	Male	5.75	2.38	-2.84	0.01
	Female	9.20	2.25		
<b>Social</b>	Male	9.00	2.78	-0.14	NS
	Female	9.20	3.33		
<b>Physical</b>	Male	14.63	6.00	-1.32	NS
	Female	18.40	6.02		
<b>Emotional</b>	Male	19.38	6.14	-1.06	NS
	Female	22.40	5.89		
<b>Artistic</b>	Male	15.00	6.46	-0.86	NS
	Female	17.60	6.35		
<b>Intrinsic</b>	Male	32.25	9.47	-1.50	NS
	Female	38.60	8.44		
<b>Extrinsic</b>	Male	25.50	9.20	-0.72	NS

Female	29.00	10.93
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Male n = 8, Female n = 10  
\*NS-non-significant at  $p \leq .05$



## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The results of the study failed to reject the null hypothesis that there would be no statistically significant difference in intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, social motivation, emotional motivation, physical motivation, and artistic motivation scores on a self-report questionnaire between male and female adolescent dancers.

#### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS**

The inclusion of young males in codified dance has been a long standing issue in the dance world. As dance becomes more prevalent in studios as well as public schools in America, this issue needs to be addressed. Possibly a result of Western European culture situating dance as a primarily female art form, there is a vast difference in the number of young girls participating in dance versus young boys (O'Neill, 2011; Risner, 2007). By looking at the motivations of adolescent girl and boy dancers, it was hoped that by identifying differences between the genders, the results could reveal some of the underlying factors that keep boys in dance and possibly some of those that chase them away. Since the results did not reveal differences in male and female motivators, this research did not have implications in terms of increasing particular motivating factors so that dance would be appealing to males. On a positive note, the fact that the males did not differ from females in their extrinsic motivation suggests that male dancers may not be particularly affected by the negative feedback or lack of positive feedback in and out of class.

Despite the lack of significant findings, some insight into the young male and female psyche was provided. According to the results, there was no statistically significant difference between adolescent males and females in any of the motivational categories (social, physical,

emotional, and artistic) or intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. However, in every category the mean score of adolescent girls was higher than that of adolescent boys. It is possible that the girls simply felt more strongly about what motivated them than the boys. This conviction could be the dividing factor between remaining in dance classes and moving on to other things.

### **THREATS TO VALIDITY**

There were several factors in this study that could have compromised the validity of the results. First, the scale items for the questionnaire were assigned by judgment rather than statistical tests and factor analysis. While this judgment was based off of a strong familiarity with the dance world and a degree in Dance, this still threatens the weight of the results. Also, the sample size for this study was extremely small—18 participants in total, eight of which were male and 10 of which were female. Because of the small sample size, the differences in the results of each gender would have to be great in order to be statistically significant. Also in regards to the sample, it was one of convenience. All of the students were selected based on their availability to the researcher and their age. All of the subjects also had some commitment to dance, or else they would not belong to the studio. Consequently, this study does not look at the motivations of people who might have had some interest in dance at one time but then dropped out.

Finally, a threat to internal validity would be the accuracy of the participants' answers. Since the researcher is a teacher at the studio where all of the participants dance, they could have felt pressured to answer in a particular way due to embarrassment at the truth or a whole host of other reasons. Also, some of the participants may have not taken the questionnaire seriously and not put the same amount of thought into their answers as some of the other participants.

### **CONNECTIONS TO PREVIOUS STUDIES/EXISTING LITERATURE**

Very little research has been conducted on the specific issue of males' motivations to dance so there is little research to which to compare the current findings. O'Neill (2011) performed a descriptive study of dance participation in adolescents, discovering that the prevalence of dance participation was 35% in girls and only 8% in boys. The O'Neill study only points out the difference in the number of boys and girls participating in dance, vaguely identifying an issue. Although differences in prevalence were not the focus of the current study, the current study did find that the female students had been dancing longer than the male students.

Mayeux (2011) got a little closer to the heart of the problem in his study on young adolescents and the effects of popularity and gender on peers' perceptions of behavior. Mayeux found that adolescents' definition of popularity is complicated and often contradictory. Boys connect popularity with athleticism, funniness, and risky behavior. However, a boy could exhibit all of these factors and still remain unpopular. Mayeux's contribution to better understanding the motivations of male adolescents, particularly dancers, is that boys look for what they consider masculine traits in each other, particularly athleticism. In this study, the results indicated that physical motivators do not significantly motivate boys more than girls which would not be expected based on Mayeux's theory.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

While studies have touched on motivation and have provided some surrounding knowledge about adolescent male dancers, they have not focused on the heart of the problem. Boys are not participating in dance as much as girls—boys are an endangered species in the dance studio. The question that remains to be answered is why? Ideally, several studies on adolescents and adolescent males could be performed, ones with larger sample sizes and

statistically sound questions on the questionnaire. These questionnaires would assess motivation not only of committed dancers but also the opinions of non-dancing adolescents and the reasons behind those opinions. This could hopefully provide a way to bring more male dancers into the classroom.

A more powerful study would be conducted with a larger sample size, preferably comprised of students from schools and studios from all over a broad geographic region instead of the one small dance studio. This would also achieve a greater number of participants from each year of age instead of the uneven spread of ages in this study. Another important factor to add to a more powerful study is questionnaire administration by adults unfamiliar to the participants. This would cut down on the threat to internal validity that familiar questionnaire administrators pose.

### **CONCLUSIONS/SUMMARY**

Motivation will always play a role in keeping students in the dance classroom. While this study failed to reject the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference in intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, social motivation, emotional motivation, physical motivation, and artistic motivation scores on a self-report questionnaire between male and female adolescent dancers, there were many factors that threatened the validity of this study. As an addition to a small selection of studies on adolescent male dancers, this study contributes to addressing the overarching issue of too few males in dance, but more work needs to be done to address the paucity of male dancers. More research needs to be done to discover more about the motivations and opinions of adolescents and how they relate to dance involvement.

**APPENDIX A**

May 3, 2013

Dear Parents and Students,

I am currently a student in Goucher College’s Masters of Education program. Part of this program is to complete an Action Research Project— a three semester long process in which I complete research on a topic of my choice. My research looks at the many factors that motivate adolescents to participate in dance. I would like to use the dancers at Mid Atlantic Youth Ballet to complete my research. This entails the completion of a questionnaire that asks your student to indicate the how accurately a series of statements applies to him/her. If willing, please fill out the permission slip below and return it with the completed questionnaire.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns by email at [sarah.soule@mail.goucher.edu](mailto:sarah.soule@mail.goucher.edu) or by cell phone at 443-827-0874.

Thank you,

Sarah Soule

.....  
Cut Here

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby grant permission for my  
Print Parent/Guardian Name

child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the “Motivations for Dance  
Print Child’s Name

Questionnaire” to aid in the completion of Sarah Soule’s Action Research Project.

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

.....

**APPENDIX B**

**Motivations for Dance Questionnaire**

**Ethnicity (circle one):**

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American Indian
- White/Caucasian
- Other

**Gender (circle one):** Male/Female

**Current Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age at which you began dance:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of years in dance:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mark the column that corresponds to the response that describes you the most accurately.**

*For example:*

	Not At All	A Little Bit	Well	Very Well
1. I go to dance class because I think dancing is fun.				X
2. I go to dance class because I enjoy accomplishing my goals in dance.		X		

	Not At All	A Little Bit	Well	Very Well
1. I am motivated to dance because someone else in family danced or currently dances and it makes me feel connected to them.				
2. I go to dance class because I have friends there and enjoy spending time with them.				
3. I go to dance class because I enjoy receiving attention from the teacher.				
4. I go to dance class because I enjoy receiving attention from my peers.				
5. I go to dance class because I want my future career to involve dancing				
6. I go to dance class because my family wants me to do so.				
7. I go to dance class because my friends also take/took dance class.				
8. I go to dance because I think it will make me more popular with my peers.				
9. I go to dance because a sports coach encourages me				

to do so.				
10. I go to dance class because I want to earn a scholarship for college through dance.				
11. I go to dance class because I want to become/remain physically fit.				
12. I go to dance class because I want to become better at sports.				
13. I go to dance class because I enjoy learning dance technique.				
14. I go to dance class because I feel attractive when I dance.				
15. I go to dance class because I like how my body feels after I work out.				
16. I go to dance class because I want to become more flexible.				
17. I go to dance class because I want to become more muscular.				
18. I go to dance class because I am naturally good at dancing.				
19. I go to dance class because I like wearing the costumes.				
20. I go to dance class because I like it when other people find me attractive as I dance.				
21. I go to dance class because I think dancing is fun.				
22. I go to dance class because I enjoy accomplishing my goals in dance.				
23. I go to dance class because I feel in control of my goals in dance.				
24. I go to dance class because I enjoy the challenge.				
25. I go to dance class because I feel confident when I dance.				
26. I go to dance class because it makes me feel valuable.				
27. I go to dance class because I like to share my emotions through dance.				
28. I go to dance class because the music makes me feel good.				
29. I go to dance class because it makes me feel free of my problems.				
30. I go to dance class because it makes me feel accomplished and successful.				
31. I go to dance class because I want to become better at another art form such as musical theatre.				

<b>32. I go to dance class because I can share my spiritual beliefs through dance.</b>				
<b>33. I go to dance class because I enjoy receiving attention from the audience about my dancing when I perform.</b>				
<b>34. I go to dance class because I enjoy receiving feedback from the audience about my choreography.</b>				
<b>35. I go to dance class because I enjoy telling stories through dance</b>				
<b>36. I go to dance class because it allows me to express my emotions.</b>				
<b>37. I go to dance class because it allows me to express my ideas through choreography.</b>				
<b>38. I go to dance class in order to become a better choreographer.</b>				
<b>39. I go to dance class because I enjoy learning choreography.</b>				
<b>40. I go to dance class because I enjoy performing.</b>				



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