

Mount Saint Vincent University

Department of Child and Youth Study

Creative Movement and Dance and the Body-Mind-Spirit Connection for
Children and Youth

By

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Abstract

Emotional awareness and emotional expression are important aspects of children and youth's social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual development and well-being. This paper explores the social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual benefits of creative movement and dance for children and youth. Creative movement and dance as a means through which children and youth can self-express and embody their emotions, thereby developing emotional awareness as well as gaining the opportunity to be in tune with their spirituality, is the focus of contemplation throughout this paper. Reflection based interviews with participants who instruct creative movement and dance will provide a basis from which to discuss common themes pertaining to creative movement and dance with children and youth.

In dedication to the spirited dancer that lives within each of us and to the wonderful spirits I am blessed to call my family and friends for continuously encouraging and supporting me throughout this dance.

Many thanks to the participants I had the joy to converse with, for sharing their passion with me and dancing it with many children, youth and adults whose lives are no doubt more full of self-expression, joy and spirit thanks to their teaching.

“When you get the choice to sit it out or dance, I hope you dance” ~Lee Ann Womack

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Prelude: Intention of the Research

The underlying motivation for my research was to seek knowledge and understanding about how creative movement and dance have the power to connect people with their spirit, and create balance and communication between the body, mind and spirit. More specifically, I wanted to explore how the practice of creative movement and dance among children and youth can strengthen their mind-body-spirit connection, be a vehicle for their self-expression, emotional expression, help them develop self-confidence and, act as a medium for their spiritual, emotional, social, and cognitive development and well-being.

I believe that the development of emotional awareness, emotional regulation and empathy enhance overall well-being of body, mind and spirit. I further believe that engaging body, mind and spirit through the practice of creative movement and dance fosters these emotional literacy skills, thus strengthening overall well-being.

My intent was to explore how all children and youth, regardless of any physical, emotional or cognitive disability they might have, have the capacity to express themselves emotionally and spiritually through the practice of creative movement and dance and how such embodied emotional and spiritual expression strengthens their overall well-being.

How can we, as a society, learn to stay connected with the inner and outer freedom to self-express and move in ways we feel compelled to, such as we do when we are young children, throughout childhood, adolescence and on into adulthood? Can children keep their body-mind-spirit connection open through the practice of creative movement and dance thus maintaining this freedom to move and self-express?

What inspired me to explore creative movement and dance among children and youth stems from my own love of creative movement and dance. I have a constant need for and joy of movement in my life, I know how much it means to me and that others share this passion. My research combines several topics that I am interested in, these being emotional expression, creative movement and dance and children's healthy (emotional, social, spiritual, cognitive and physical) development and well-being.

Below I have included brief self-reflections stemming from my personal creative movement and dance experience. Part of the process of this project has been a deepening awareness of my own engagement in creative movement and dance, the effects these practices have within me, and a growing awareness of my body-mind-spirit connection.

African Dance

Seven years ago while living in South Africa for two months I had many afternoon teatime conversations with *Gogo*, my host family's grandmother, though we did not speak the same language. While I did learn a few words and sentences of Tshivenda, the local dialect, we relied mostly on bodily gestures to communicate. We also communicated and connected deeply with our hearts and spirits, spending time in each other's presence in silence.

It was in South Africa where my interest in the practice of African dance began. While wandering out to the field to play soccer one afternoon with other volunteers and some of the local village children in Manamani I heard faint drumming sounds in the distance. I was being drawn to the rhythmic drumbeats that were getting louder and louder as we got closer, and then I spotted the place

they were coming from. I saw a group of people dancing near a tree. I immediately said, "Sorry guys, I need to go over there! ", excusing myself as I chose to go check out the drumming and dancing instead of playing soccer. As I approached I saw a group of older women playing drums and singing while a group of younger girls danced around them in a circle. I was met with beaming smiles and gestures for me to come and join them in dancing.

For the next few weeks I went several times to join that dance and drumming group that met almost every weekday by the same tree surrounded by dirt ground where the grass had worn away. Most of the women spoke no English and again it was a joy to communicate without words, this time through dance, laughter, and most importantly, spirit. I imitated the movements they were doing, trying my best to follow along to the various dances they practiced. I recall feeling so carefree, happy, and engaged dancing with them.

They were practicing for an upcoming dance performance. They kindly invited me to join but unfortunately it was taking place the day I was flying back to Canada. I did however get a sneak peak of the costumes they were planning to wear the day of the performance. They proudly wore them one day to show me.

The following year after that trip to South Africa I was living in Toronto and sought out an African dance class. I attended weekly (sometimes longer gaps in between classes) classes over the course of several months. I thoroughly enjoyed the classes, and while it was much different than dancing barefoot in the dirt outside near a tree in South Africa with a group of women and live drumming, it made me feel connected to that first African dance experience. The dances that the teacher

taught us (usually a class of 8 or so women) were West African from Guinea and Mali. We danced to CD recordings of music with drumming rhythms that corresponded to each dance we were learning.

I moved to Nova Scotia three years ago (to begin the MA in Child and Youth Study program) and a couple months after moving here a friend told me about an African dance class that happened every Friday night. I went with my friend to join the class and I began attending regularly. Much to my excitement, the classes were accompanied by live drumming!

Regardless of my mood before going to class it always felt good to be there. Even the nights when I was feeling emotional and trying to hold back tears that were welling up inside of me it felt healing to be there. Those African dance classes gave me a similar feeling that I get after meditating or going to a yoga class.

The routine of the class involved: a group warm up, a demonstration by the teacher of the dance we would be learning that class, learning the dance and practicing it, across the floor dance exercises, a solo circle and a cool down. The solo circle involved everyone forming a circle and dancers could take turns doing a solo dance in the middle of the circle as the other classmates cheered on. Dancers could do any movement or dance they wanted as the drummers played. For the first year of my attending the African dance class I always felt too shy to do a solo dance in the middle of the circle. I recall the first time I did have the courage to do a solo dance it felt great. Though I continued to be somewhat shy to dance in the circle, most classes I did and I felt more confident each time. During the last few classes I

attended I barely felt any hesitation or shyness at all doing a solo dance and I had learned to be more expressive and unrestrained in my dances.

It's difficult to describe in words the sense of connection I feel towards the other dancers who came to class regularly. Although we did not talk very much or know each other very well and what we each do in our lives apart from African dancing, it was always so nice to see the same familiar faces. There are some whose names I did not even know until the last class but it's for sure that we shared joy, energy and spirit.

To this day, a few of the rhythms and songs the women played and sang in Manamani, South Africa still ring through my head and I can relive the emotions I felt being there dancing with them.

African dance brings such joy to my life, nurtures my self-confidence, allows me to strengthen my body-mind connection and nourishes me deeply on a spiritual level. Sadly, African dance classes in Halifax have come to an end, at least for now. I miss the weekly opportunity to get lost in the rhythms, connect with others through dance and express myself.

Flamenco

In the midst of reading and contemplating creative movement and dance last summer I realized I wanted to introduce more dance in my own life. I had begun to dance expressively more often, both alone and around others, and I felt that I wanted to practice a new dance form.

I decided to try flamenco dancing. My flamenco teacher described flamenco dance as powerful and strong. It is a dance in which you let your personality show, come out of your shell, and dance with confidence, focus, and intent.

After seven classes (class once a week for 7 consecutive weeks), I felt like I was just getting a taste of flamenco. I was debating signing up for the next session that would run for 5 weeks. At the end of the last class the teacher said that in the next session we would continue working on the choreographed dance we had been learning. There was also the opportunity to perform at an upcoming student showcase. I felt both excited and nervous at the possibility of performing. I was still getting used to flamenco and didn't feel confident with the moves we had learned. I was also excited at the chance to practice more and eager to embody the moves and feel comfortable and confident dancing in this still unfamiliar style. I knew that to feel confident enough to perform I would have to practice lots. I also felt that by practicing lots I would be able to really embody the dance moves and the dance form as a whole, and in turn embodying the dance would cultivate confidence.

At the first class of the second session, there were several new students and only myself and one other dancer from the first session were actually interested in performing so the teacher decided to teach us a new dance. I felt disappointed that there was no longer the incentive to practice and perform. Nonetheless, I was still excited to be taking lessons, learning new moves and technique and practicing at least once a week.

I now often find myself practicing Flamenco arm motions when I dance and feel that they are very expressive. I recall being unsure of how to move my arms and

hands while dancing and now feel that naturally they want to swirl around and flow, from the tips of my fingers to my shoulder blades. Then the roll continues to the rest of my body, my torso undulating and neck arching.

I feel that with choreographed dances the intention is to become so familiar with the style of dance and with the moves, embodying them so that the focus is not on the technique anymore, as while learning new moves, but the focus shifts to being able to fully express oneself through the dance and really bring the dance to life.

Contact Improvisation

Contact improvisation dance is improvised dancing involving two or more people. The dance form comes to life as the two (or more) dancers interact with one another, communicating with their bodies in motion, in contact. It's usually done without music and involves lifts and weight sharing and transfer.

I recall the first time I participated in contact improv 5 years ago I felt somewhat uncomfortable. The kind of discomfort that comes with trying something new, especially since it involved being in physical contact with others and having to rely on non-verbal communication. It's so different than dancing on my own. Though it was the type of going-out-of-my-comfort-zone situation that I like experiencing and gain growth from.

I have since engaged in contact improv on an inconsistent basis. I find the more consistently I practice, the more comfortable I feel doing it and the more I feel in my body and find I can 'think' with my body.

Chapter 1: Research Focus

Defining Spirit and Spirituality

Before going any further, the questions ‘what is spirit?’ and ‘what is spirituality?’ should be addressed because not everyone has the same understanding of what spirit and spirituality mean, there are many connotations linked with these words and their intended use in this paper must be clarified. It can also be noted that there are associations between the terms soul and spirit. Rather than differentiate between the two or cause confusion by using both terms interchangeably, for the purpose of this written document the term spirit will be used. It will not necessarily be defined according to all definitions of what spirit might mean but according to how it is to be interpreted for this paper.

While they are often associated with religion, spirit and spirituality as referred to here are not meant to be associated with any one particular religious belief. Sheridan, Wilmer and Atcheson (1994) offer a distinction between religion and spirituality by explaining that spirituality “is the human search for purpose and meaning of life experiences, which may or may not involve expressions within a formal religious institution” (p. 40). Bhagwan (2009) affirms, spirituality “moves the individual toward knowledge, love, meaning, peace, hope, transcendence, connectedness, compassion, wellness and wholeness” (p. 226).

The belief expressed here is that everyone has a spirit and spirituality can be understood as the expression of spirit. As O’Murchu (1997) explained, which Hyde (2008a) paraphrases, “spirituality is a natural human predisposition. It is something that people are born with, essentially dynamic and which continually seeks articulation and expression in human life” (p. 29). Stefanidakis (2001) claims, “Your spirit is the highest

aspect of who and what you are. Your Spirit is devoid of all elements of human personality and character. ... The Spirit is the highest expression of universal individuality". It goes beyond conceptual thought. While Stefanidakis' (2001) explanation of spirit is taken from an article written from a Christian religious perspective, if we take out any reference to God, the essence of spirit can be applied to anyone. It seems that religions and their associated beliefs all just have different ways of making sense of the spirit and universal spirituality present in every human being. Actions that come from the spirit can be thought of as instinctual and intuitive rather than driven by conceptual thought, ideas, assumptions, or expectations.

The Body-Mind-Spirit Connection

The spirit acts in unison with the body and mind. While they can be identified as three distinct aspects of an individual, the body, mind and spirit are intertwined, influence one another and, cannot be separated. What happens in the body and mind is a reflection of what is happening in the spirit, and simultaneously the state of the spirit is a reflection of what is occurring in the body and mind. This can be said for any combination of the three. Body, mind and spirit are part of a whole; hence the body-mind-spirit connection. An individual's overall well-being depends on well-being within each of these domains. The body, mind, and spirit are all engaged during creative movement and dance, explaining why they strengthen the body-mind-spirit connection.

Dance and Spirituality

The worldwide existence, timelessness and ephemerality of creative movement and dance offer insight into the spirituality it embodies. In all parts of the world dance is practiced among many cultures as a means of art, entertainment, communication,

expression, cultural identity and worship. Dance has been forbidden in parts of the world due to certain religious beliefs, for example in Judeo-Christian religious traditions dance was banned because it was believed to be a distraction from connecting with God. In contrast, some religions, such as Hinduism, see dance as a way to honour God (LeFevre, 2012). I am inspired by the belief that self-expression through creative movement and dance is a manifestation of our spirit.

Dance styles created by socially oppressed groups as a way to rebel against authority and power also highlight the spirituality that dance encompasses. Examples of such dances include capoeira, which was created by African slaves in Brazil, and flamenco, which was created by oppressed peoples in the Andalusian region of Spain (LeFevre, 2012). These dances, like any dance, were practiced as a means of personal expression and identity. The dancers' desire for freedom from physical enslavement and oppression parallels their desire for spiritual freedom. Dance was a means of being able to express and strive for spiritual freedom in spite of their oppressed circumstances.

Stewart (2013) explains, dance is spiritual in that it “is an elemental, eternal form of human expression...It awakens us to a deeper awareness of both the sacred and the profane, bringing us into synchrony with one another and with the natural rhythms of our lives” (p. 5).

Interesting to note is that Adams, Bull & Maynes (2015) point out that the Latin origin of the word spirituality is '*spirare*' which means 'to breathe' (p. 765). Sherwood (2008) explains that focus on the breath through movement allows the energy of the spirit to flow and the breath acts as the mediator of the mind-body. Based on the origin of the word spirit and Sherwood's theory about breath and movement, it can be argued that

spirit is part of everyday life and that it can be accessed and regulated via movement of the body. From this an association can be made between spirit and creative movement and dance.

Children's Spirituality and Dance

As Broadbent (2004) explains, one of the ways in which creative movement and dance enhance children's spirituality is by providing them with the opportunity to engage their senses and their emotions, allowing them to embody abstract and complex ideas and feelings. With their body, children are able to symbolically represent their ideas and feelings, interpret them, and make meaning of them. This embodiment of abstract ideas and feelings requires the unification of the body, mind and spirit. Exploring their feelings in an embodied way is a means by which children can develop understanding of "a deeper awareness of human experience" (p. 98), and express their awareness of " 'otherness' " (p. 98). Through creative movement and dance children are able to experience feelings of transcendence and their individual perceptions of the world are reflected in their movements.

Fisher's 4D Model of Spiritual Health and Well-Being. Fisher (2011) argues that spiritual well-being is a, if not the most, fundamental aspect of a person's overall well-being and seems to have the greatest impact on their overall health. Fisher created The Four Domains Model of Spiritual Health and Well-Being (4D), which distinguishes four domains of spiritual well-being: personal, communal, environmental and transcendental. Fisher proposed that spiritual well-being depends on the quality of relationships an individual has in each domain. Fisher posits that overall spiritual well-being requires sufficient well-being in each of these interconnected domains.

The personal domain is characterized by how one relates to oneself and derives meaning, purpose and values in life. Self-awareness and self-worth are key aspects within this domain. The communal domain refers to interpersonal relationships and is characterized by love, forgiveness, trust, hope and faith in humanity. The environmental domain entails care of the physical and social environment and beyond that, a sense of wonder and awe and connectedness with nature. The transcendental domain refers to relationship between the self and a higher being, beyond the human level. For those who are religious this could be God, while for others it could be seen as a cosmic force. It is characterized by having a sense of faith, and appreciation and adoration of the “source of the Mystery of the universe” (p. 22).

Fisher’s argument that spiritual well-being is a fundamental aspect of overall well-being is supported by Boswell et al. ‘s (2007) research that explored spirituality among adults with disabilities. Through in-depth interviews, the adult participants expressed that spirituality was an essential dimension of their lives that was interactive with their disabilities, particularly for coping with their disabilities and finding purpose and meaning in their lives.

Comparing Fisher’s 4D Model to the Social-Emotional Benefits of Creative Movement and Dance. Comparisons can be drawn between Fisher’s (2011) 4D Model of Spiritual Health and Well-Being and the social-emotional benefits of creative movement and dance found across the literature. These comparisons draw attention to the link between children and youth’s spirituality and their engagement in creative movement and dance.

The self-confidence that children and youth gain from taking part in creative movement and dance can be compared to the sense of self-worth that Fisher describes as part of the personal domain. Performance is often a part of creative movement and dance programs and creates a sense of purpose, which can be likened to derivation of meaning and purpose in life that is characteristic of the personal domain of the 4D model.

Meekums' (2008) concept of humanity esteem parallels the having faith in humanity aspect of the communal domain of the 4D model. Positive group dynamics observed among children and youth engaging in creative movement and dance are also comparable to the relationships that Fisher (2011) describes in the communal domain.

Connectedness to nature that is characteristic of the environmental domain of the 4D model is reminiscent of Kentel and Dobson's (2007) emphasis on the importance of unstructured play outdoors in natural settings and their observation that children seem to display a sense of attunement in natural outdoor settings.

When Stinson (1988) asked children what makes dance different from movement, some of them declared that dance was "magic" (p. 53). This remark of how the children feel about dance could be interpreted as an expression of their relationship to a higher being beyond the self, and an awareness of the mystery of life that surrounds them, which is characteristic of the transcendental domain in Fisher's (2011) 4D model.

As outlined above, many of the aspects that are observed when children engage in creative movement and dance are also characteristic aspects of children's spirituality according to Fisher's model.

Hay and Nye's Theory of Relational Consciousness. To identify what they consider a fundamental aspect of spirituality, Hay and Nye (2006) use the term *relational*

consciousness, which they describe as “an awareness of connections with self, others, the world and a transcendent power” (Minor & Grant, 2014, p. 214). They claim that relational consciousness “is what allows individuals of all ages to reflect on their spiritual experiences, develop identity, a feeling of worth and find meaning and purpose in life, which leads in turn to spiritual and emotional well-being” (Minor & Grant, 2014, p. 214). Nye (2009) further proposed six conditions that children can be exposed to that will help nurture relational consciousness, thus enhancing their spiritual well-being: *space, process, imagination, relationship, intimacy and trust*. Each of these conditions will be briefly described below.

Space refers to the physical and emotional space wherein a sense of value for spirituality is communicated and children build relationships with their teachers, peers and with God. The process condition places emphasis on process rather than product. Engaging children’s imagination and creativity allows their leaning to occur on a deeper level and for new learning to occur, which cultivates relational consciousness. The relationship condition highlights the impact that their relationships have on children and youth’s spiritual well-being. Intimacy is required for relational consciousness to be experienced and is described as feeling a sense of safety to take risks and delve deeply. The trust condition refers to the trust that adults, such as teachers, have for children’s spirituality and for spirituality in general. This trust is required for the acceptance of different kinds of knowing, such as embodied ways of knowing that are accessed via creative movement and dance. There are many similarities and overlap between Nye’s (2009) six conditions and Fisher’s (2011) four domains previously outlined. These theories accentuate themes that are fundamental for the development of children and

youth's spiritual well-being, which are also themes that can be drawn from children and youth's involvement in creative movement and dance.

Aspects of Children's Spirituality Associated with Creative Movement and Dance. Connectedness to others and a sense of community, which are key aspects of spiritual well-being, are qualities that creative movement and dance have been found to evoke. As Bhagwan (2009) points out, a holistic spiritual paradigm is based on the assumption that "individuals do not exist as isolated, discrete or separate entities, but as interconnected beings whose growth, well-being and transformation are shaped by dynamic and fluid relationships between friends, family, the global community and a Higher Spirit within the Universe" (p. 226).

Bhagwan argues that within these relationships practitioners working with children can find 'sacred space' (p. 226). More than just a physical space, such as a classroom, sacred space also refers to how practitioners can engage children's spirit through their interactions with them within physical spaces. Bhagwan goes on to express that "when such sacred spaces are nurtured children are allowed to 'be', to feel spiritually safe, and to share their hurts and struggles" (p. 226). From this a link between children's emotional expression and spiritual expression can be drawn.

When children emotionally express themselves, it is interconnected with their spirituality. When children's spiritual well-being is nurtured so too is their emotional well-being; when children feel spiritually safe, so too do they feel safe to express their emotions. Creative movement and dance environments have been found to create such safe spaces wherein children and youth can express their spirituality and emotionality.

Adams et al. (2015) make reference to the 'darker sides' (p. 765) of spirituality,

which can manifest as doubt and anxiety. As Fisher (2011) explains, there can be both positive and negative expressions of spirituality. While it is arguably preferable for children and youth to experience the positive expressions of spirituality, and it is on this that emphasis is placed throughout this paper, acknowledging the negative expressions is also relevant. It could be understood that both positive and negative expressions of spirituality are a necessary part of life, just as various emotions are. Perhaps spiritual well-being occurs when unpleasant emotions (such as fear and sadness) and negative expressions of spirituality manifested as doubt and anxiety are acknowledged and accepted but not clung to. Spiritual well-being is fostered when emotions are accepted rather than repressed and part of embracing spirituality is to embrace both its positive and negative expressions.

Creative movement and dance can be a means for children and youth to create awareness and acceptance toward all emotions they experience, both the ones seen as positive (such as happiness, confidence, and love) and the ones seen as negative (such as sadness, anger and fear) as well as toward positive and negative expressions of their spirituality.

A key aspect of children's spirituality in relation to creative movement and dance is their self-reflection of such embodied experiences. Self-reflection of their creative movement and dance experiences allows children's spiritual awareness to grow by weaving their experiences into their spirituality (Bhagwan, 2009). Similarly, across the literature self-reflection was found to be a means for children and youth to bring awareness to their emotional experiences, weaving them into their lives, and deepening their emotional awareness and emotional regulation skills. Reflection can take place in

verbal or written forms, such as group discussions or journal writing in which children are asked to reflect upon how a creative movement/ dance activity made them feel.

Drawing can also be a means for children to reflect upon their experiences.

Giesenberg (2007) claims, “young children express their spirituality in everything they do, say and are” (p. 261). Adams et al. (2015) argue that Giesenberg’s (2007) view on children’s spirituality is all-encompassing which might downplay spirituality, taking away from its meaningfulness. However, perhaps Giesenberg’s theory is an implication of the body-mind-spirit connection. What children do with their body, what they say which stems from their mind, and what they are in spirit is all interconnected. The ‘here and now’ experiences and complete awareness of the present moment that many young children exhibit are an expression of their spirituality and further demonstrate how their spirituality is evident in their everyday actions and way of being (Adams et al., 2015). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) uses the term ‘flow’ to describe the sense of ‘here and now’, feeling liberated and in complete concentration on the task at hand.

Oftentimes, as children get older their actions, speech and sense of being strays from being an authentic expression of their spirituality, clouded by social expectations, social pressures, and the demands of school curricula. Hay and Nye (2006) argue that relational consciousness, and therefore spirituality, is often repressed. Hyde (2008b) goes further by claiming that consumerist culture also inhibits children’s expression of their spirituality. When a child represses their feelings, effects occur on an emotional, spiritual and physical level. Their physical body constricts and its ability to feel and move is reduced (Sherwood, 2008) in that instance and can remain as such if feelings continue to be repressed. Creative movement and dance encourage children to keep their body-mind-

spirit connection open and their spiritual and emotional expression continual.

Spirituality and Education

School systems are a reflection of the way society is structured and simultaneously can have an impact on society. Consequently, changes that happen in school systems will have an effect on the greater society apart from the education system. Therefore, it is vital for educational settings to be more supportive of children's emotional and spiritual well-being especially since this is where most children spend a large portion of their time and where much of their social interaction takes place. Curricula need to take emotional development into more consideration. When creative movement and dance are part of a school environment, children and youth's social, emotional and spiritual well-being have the opportunity to flourish. Furthermore, creative movement and dance can be utilized as tools for teaching academic concepts to children and youth, and are methods that allow for deeper learning that is comprehended on an emotional and embodied level as well as on a cognitive level.

Though many schools include ensuring students' spiritual well-being as part of their mandates, the lack of a clear definition of what 'spiritual well-being' is in their mandates is problematic and many educators are unsure as to how to incorporate spiritual well-being into their teaching practice (Adams et al. 2015). It is one thing to include students' spiritual well-being as part of a mandate but to also put it into practice in meaningful ways is another. It is not sufficient for schools to include spiritual-well being in their mandates but fail to effectively nurture children's spiritual well-being. As Adams et al. (2015) discuss, there are factors in education that could be considered the

“antithesis”(p. 762) of students’ spirituality, which include performance-based curricula and teachers’ emphasis on measuring progress and meeting targets.

As Sullivan (1997) asserts:

The danger in a narrow and prescriptive approach to learning and the curriculum is that we will yet again miss out on the opportunities to gain insight from what children bring to our schools and classrooms. They will remain persuaded that the thoughts, feelings, ideas and excitement of their inner lives and world are not for sharing with others—particularly adults. (p.169-170)

Perhaps the factors that Adams et al. (2015) consider the antithesis of spirituality are more likely to yield the darker sides of spirituality discussed in the previous section. With an overemphasis on meeting targets and measuring progress, schools often neglect the importance of creating an environment that fosters children’s emotional well-being, where they feel safe to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas. With pressure and competition to perform well, there is risk of children and youth left feeling anxious and doubtful of their capabilities.

On the other hand, schools can create an environment where children’s spirituality is nurtured through connection to others and being part of a community that values spiritual well-being. Within such an environment emphasis is placed on the learning process rather than product, as mentioned earlier as one of Nye’s (2009) conditions that nurtures relational consciousness and therefore spiritual well-being. As an example, Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, who pioneered Montessori and Waldorf education respectively, held the belief that spirituality is innate (Adams et al., 2015), and this belief

continues to be integrated into the methods and practices of Montessori and Waldorf education.

As with other forms of children's development, their spiritual development and well-being are largely influenced by their environment and the people they interact with. Bhagwan (2009) highlights the importance for practitioners working closely with children to be in tune with their own spirituality and spiritual well-being in order to be able to guide children in their spiritual journey. Recalling from Nye's (2009) theory of the six conditions that foster relational consciousness the trust condition emphasizes the importance for adults working with children to have trust in the children and in spirituality in general.

Barriers that Inhibit Spiritual Expression Through Creative Movement and Dance

Part of my inquiry of creative movement and dance involves contemplating why some people don't dance and don't feel comfortable moving in their bodies. What are some of the reasons people choose not to dance? What are some reasons why people cannot dance and how can these barriers potentially be overcome? What social and personal barriers in relation to creative movement and dance exist and how can they be broken down? Do creative movement and dance have the power to break down existing social and personal barriers?

Social and personal barriers can have a negative effect on the well-being of the body, mind and spirit. Just as body, mind and spirit are interconnected, so too are social and personal barriers in the sense that personal barriers often stem from social barriers, and societal norms and expectations. Social and personal barriers pose as challenges

against the spirit and authentic spiritual expression. Some of these barriers, pertaining to body image, gender stereotypes and physical disabilities, will be discussed below.

Body Image

Body image refers to how individuals perceive their physical body and the value with which they view their body. Positive body image entails having a generally positive attitude towards one's own body and is associated with self-esteem and a sense of feeling comfortable in one's own body. Adversely, negative body image is associated with feelings of shame and self-consciousness regarding one's own body. While, as Wood-Barcalow, Tylka & Augustus-Horvath (2010) point out, body image is a fluid construct that can fluctuate within an individual over time and be dependent on contextual factors, people tend to have a consistent overall body image that is either generally positive or negative.

Insecurities related to negative body image are barriers that often impede individuals from feeling comfortable enough to self-express through creative movement and dance. If children and youth are taught and nurtured from a young age to feel confident and comfortable in their bodies this would instil positive body image and decrease their likelihood of developing body based insecurities associated with negative body image. Practices, such as creative movement and dance, that engage the body, cultivate body awareness, foster awareness of the body-mind connection, and encourage self-expression, are an effective way to help develop positive body image. The practice of creative movement and dance can plant the seeds of positive body image and self-confidence in children and youth. As Duggan (1978) explains, the development of body

image is one of the primary goals of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and influences emotional, physical and cognitive development.

Gender Stereotypes in Dance

Gender stereotypes that are associated with creative movement and dance act as a social barrier that can impede the practice of creative movement and dance, particularly among boys. Dance has been practiced both by women and men across history and across cultures, yet in Canada and the United States (and other Westernized countries such as Australia) it is still predominately seen as a feminine activity meant for women and girls to engage in. From a young age, boys are often socialized and expected to take part in sports and body based activities that are more masculine, competitive and aggressive. These social norms are reflected in educational systems. As Chapman (1974) said, “the ideas of self-discovery, exploration, self-expression and creativity were not generally as acceptable to men or in sports programs which valued the product of playing and winning the game rather than the process of creative movement experience” (p. 136).

A stereotype in Western cultures is that boys display less emotion compared to girls and therefore boys are often socialized to adhere to this stereotype. This notion along with the fact that dance is linked with self-expression is likely a reason why dance is seen as an activity better suited for girls.

The opportunity to change these social gender norms and stereotypes lies in part within how we educate children. Crawford (1994) suggests that:

Early exposure to dance in structured curricula can expand boys’ and men’s behavioural options and help dispel rigid sex-role stereotyping...Rather than teaching boys that aggression is their only movement option, educators can teach

all students to assert their bodies through movement in time and space and a confident expression of ideas through dance. (p. 43)

Dance and Physical Disabilities

Creative movement and dance among children and youth who have physical disabilities is important to consider. Aside from the physical barriers that children and youth are faced with, they also often encounter social and emotional challenges that stem from having physical disabilities. The term *ableism* is used to explain the difficulty some people have in accepting wheelchair dance as a true form of dance. The tendency to compare individuals with disabilities against societal norms is an example of ableism. It entails viewing those with disabilities as lacking, needing remediation, dependent, and needing psychological support which internalizes in them the role of disabled and doesn't include the possibility of other roles such as dancer (Goodwin, 2004).

Alternative ways of self-expressing through creative movement and dance can be explored and I am intrigued to discover how individuals can develop the self-confidence to be able to express themselves through creative movement and dance in any way that their physical bodies allow them to. Goodwin (2004) offers an inspiring story about a “dream come true” (p.3) for a group of children who use wheelchairs who are part of a dance troupe. Goodwin's research captures the lived experiences of these children and demonstrates that instead of a barrier, their wheelchair can be a means with which to express themselves, their emotions and tell stories. Children can self-express and develop self-confidence dancing in their wheelchairs just as children who dance using their legs and feet do.

Methodology

To further explore the connection between children and youth's creative movement and dance practices and their emotionality and spirituality I wanted to engage people in conversation on this topic. The intention was to interview six participants, chosen because they teach creative movement and dance with children and/or youth, and ask them questions outlined in the interview template (refer to pages 26 and 27). The purpose of the interviews was to engage participants in self-reflective conversation and story sharing about their experiences and feelings about creative movement and dance as well as of their experience guiding children and youth in creative movement and dance. Participants were asked to reflect on what they find inspiring about creative movement and dance and, what they find inspiring about teaching. Discussion about the spiritual nature of creative movement and dance was incited by asking participants to reflect upon whether they believe there is a connection between creative movement and dance and spirituality for children and youth. Some themes that were expected to potentially arise include emotional regulation, self-expression, spiritual connection/expression, self-confidence, gender stereotypes and intrinsic motivation. The literature review and interviews are based on creative movement and dance programs/classes for children and youth done in a group setting.

Four participants from the original proposed list of participants responded promptly and these interviews occurred within the span of three weeks. It helped that I have personal relationships with two of the participants and trusted that they were committed to participating as they had expressed. I chose not to contact one participant from the original list due to having a personal connection to them and no longer felt

comfortable contacting them for an interview. There was another potential participant lined up but in the end they were not able to commit to doing an interview. I sent out e-mails to recruit more participants but I did not receive responses. These e-mails were sent to one high school teacher and secretaries from elementary schools in the hopes of recruiting teachers to participate to hear their perspectives on incorporating creative movement and dance within the school curriculum.

After four interviews were complete and analysis of that data began, themes emerged from participant responses and connections and comparisons could be made between their responses and information gathered from the literature review. Due to this reasoning and the lack of more potential participants, the decision was made to base analysis and discussion on the responses from the four participants.

Three of the participants are female and one is male. Written and verbal consent was obtained from each interviewee before the interviews commenced. Interviewees were notified that if at any point they want to withdraw from the research they could do so without any consequences. For the sake of confidentiality participants' names are not included in this paper and when they are quoted and being referred to pseudonyms are used to distinguish between participants.

Each interview was expected to last approximately one hour and interviewees were informed to plan for a one-hour time frame within which the interview would take place. However, all of them were under an hour in duration, two of them lasting approximately 30 minutes and two of them lasting approximately 50 minutes. This is due to the varying responses from participants and the time it took them to answer questions. The interviews took place in various locations, as was mutually decided upon by both

myself (the researcher) and the participant, including at the home of one of the participants, at my home, in a café, and one interview was done over the phone.

Although the intention was to take notes during the interviews as well as audio record them, this was only done during the first interview. Taking notes while simultaneously attempting to listen to the participant proved to be distracting and took my focus away from what the interviewee was saying and interfered with my ability to respond to their comments or ask more questions in an efficient manner. As such, the other three interviews were audio recorded and no notes were taken during these interviews. I engaged in interpretive analysis while I re-listened to the interviews and manually transcribed them. I decided not to use a transcribing program because I felt that re-listening to the interviews and manually transcribing them would allow me to become more familiar with the material, make connections and, interpret participant responses as I was transcribing.

Interview Questions Template

The following questions were a guiding template to the semi-structured interviews:

Background Questions: “I’d like to begin by asking you a couple of questions about your experience with creative movement/dance.”

1. Can you tell me how long you have been involved in creative movement/dance?
2. How long have you been an instructor of creative movement/dance with children and/or youth?

Reflection Questions: “I would now like to ask you questions about your thoughts about engaging in creative movement/dance including instruction with children/youth.”

3. Could you tell me how you define creative movement/dance?

4. Can you describe what you find inspiring about engaging in creative movement/dance?

5. What do you find inspiring about instructing children/youth in creative movement/dance?

6. Could you describe for me any connection you consider there to be between creative movement/dance and spirituality?

* ai. If there is a connection:

o Could you describe any connection you consider there to be, between children's spirituality and creative movement/dance? (Probe: request illustrative stories)

* bi. Supplemental questions:

o How do children/youth express their spirituality through creative movement/dance? (Probe: request illustrative stories)

o How does your creative movement/dance instruction with children/youth support their expression of spirituality? (Probe: request illustrative stories)

* Aii. If there is no connection identified:

o Could you explain the importance of engaging children/youth in creative movement/dance? (Probe: request illustrative stories)

o How does your creative movement/dance instruction with children/youth support their overall needs? (Probe: request illustrative stories)

7. I am wondering if there is anything else you would like to share with me about your creative movement/dance instruction with children/youth?

Chapter 2: The Social, Emotional and Cognitive Learning Benefits of Creative Movement and Dance in the Lives of Children and Youth

Introduction

The body and mind are integrated functions (Thompson, 1988) and in accordance with this body-mind connection, creative movement and dance are a means by which children and youth can simultaneously engage their bodies and minds, cultivating social, emotional, physical and cognitive well-being (Berrol, 1992). Holistic approaches to development emphasize the importance of nurturing each of these aspects of their development for the maintenance of children and youth's well-being (Berrol, 1992).

From the time they are born, children are constantly exploring their world through movement and it is a means by which they learn about the world around them and their physical, social, emotional and cognitive selves. As Linda Bunker (1991) explains, children have a natural instinct to move and "They move to learn and they learn to move" (p. 467). It is also primarily through movement that children communicate and express themselves, especially before they are able to vocalize and verbally communicate. Even if/when verbal language does become a tool for communication, movement continues to be a valuable medium for expression and communication.

The focus of the following discussion will be placed on the social, emotional and cognitive learning benefits that children and youth foster from engaging in creative movement and dance and a review of pertinent literature regarding research that has explored the social, emotional and cognitive impacts of creative movement and dance for children and youth.

To begin with, a distinction between creative movement and dance will be described and both terms will be defined in regards to their meaning for the purpose of this paper. Following this, a section discussing the social and emotional benefits of creative movement and dance for children and youth is included and will be succeeded by a literature review of research on such social and emotional benefits. This literature review will be followed by a discussion of limitations to the research and generalizations that can be made.

The subsequent section will discuss the benefits of kinaesthetic learning through creative movement and dance and will be followed by a literature review on this topic that will include a section outlining limitations and a general discussion of the research presented.

The last section of this paper will be a brief summarizing discussion of the social, emotional and cognitive learning benefits of creative movement and dance in the lives of children and youth as was discussed throughout the paper.

The Distinction Between Creative Movement and Dance

Both the terms creative movement and dance are utilized within this discussion. As such, definitions of and similarities between these terms should be should be briefly outlined.

Author and children's dance educator, Dow (2010) points out that the terms movement and dance are interchangeable when she refers to 'creative movement', which she describes as "An art form whose medium is the human body in motion" (p. 30). Similarly, Stinson defines creative movement as "an art form that is based on natural movement" (p. 52).

Though difficult to describe in words, LeFevre (2012) defined dance as “the impulse to move” (p. 12). Dance is the movement of the body for self-expression, cultural identity, spirituality and a means of social interaction and communication. Creative movement and dance are both expressive art forms based on the human body in motion. To reiterate what Dow (2010) argues, for the purpose of this paper, creative movement and dance are interchangeable terms but both will be included to be consistent with the varying use of the terms across the literature.

Stinson (1988) differentiates between movement and dance by explaining that movement becomes dance when movements are intentional and kinaesthetic awareness is placed on the movement of the body. Another distinguishing feature of dance is that it involves not only the body and mind but also the spirit, another dimension of the self.

Steiner and Pierrakos (Steiner, 1994) labelled the spiritual energy of the body the etheric, the same energy force referred to as Chi in China and the pranic body in India. This energetic life force is a reflection of, and in turn reflects, the well-being of our physical and emotional bodies, remaining strong when the physical and emotional bodies are well rested, nourished and exposed to nature, and becoming depleted by sedentariness and, physical and emotional stress. Focus on the breath through movement allows this etheric energy to flow (Sherwood, 2008). Creative movement and dance tap into this spiritual life force, allowing it to flow, nourishing physical and emotional well-being.

Laban Movement Analysis is a theoretical framework that offers observations, descriptions and interpretations of human movement. It makes the distinction between functional movements, carried out purposefully in every day life, and expressive movements, such as those seen in dance, which communicate ideas and feelings (Konie,

2011). Laban's Effort-Shape Theory explores movement according to the qualities of weight, space, time and flow in order to describe movements as being heavy or light, expansive or restrained, fast or slow, rigid or fluid for example. It is said that the expressiveness of the Effort qualities can be a strong indicator of the mental/emotional state of the mover (Anderson, 2015). Just as Stinson (1988) differentiates between movement and dance, Laban would argue that movement becomes dance when movements transition from being functional to expressive. Expressive movements to which Laban Movement Analysis refer are also comparable to what Dow (2010) and Stinson (1988) label creative movement. These distinctions between movement and dance are the reason why the term creative movement is used in this paper rather than the term movement. It was necessary to distinguish between the functionality and expressiveness of movement and the term creative movement aims to capture this expressiveness.

When referring to dance as a tool for learning and holistic development, a distinction should be made between dance that involves specific choreography and dance that is improvised and more likely to also be labeled creative movement. For the purpose of this paper the term dance shall mostly refer to improvised dance that invokes self-expression and self-knowledge through the child/youth's bodily exploration of time, space and energy rather than choreographed dances in which precise body movement techniques are to be learned (Koff, 2000). While choreographed dance also offers many benefits for children and youth and some research that involved choreographed dance is discussed, emphasis will be placed on non-choreographed improvised dance.

Throughout this paper, emphasis will be placed on the expressiveness of creative movement and dance, to which Dow (2010), Stinson (1988) and Laban Movement Analysis elude to and be comprehensive of individuals ages 16 and under when referring to children and youth.

Social Emotional Benefits of Movement and Dance for Children and Youth

Interactionist models of emotion assert that the body and mind are inseparable (Thompson, 1988). The social and emotional growth that occurs through creative movement and dance will be discussed from this psychobiological perspective of the body and mind as integrated functions, constantly communicating with and influencing one another.

Bodily Awareness, Emotional Regulation, Emotional Expression and Empathy

Through creative movement and dance, children and youth gain a sense of body awareness and control, learning how to be in tune with how their body can move, how it feels and what it needs. In turn, these attributes of body awareness help to establish emotional regulation (Betty, 2013).

A sense of emotional competency is developed through creative movement and dance, what Meekums (2008) refers to as *emotional literacy*, or more commonly known as ‘emotional intelligence’, in which a student has the “capacity to know what it is they feel; to express those feelings in an appropriate fashion and empathize with the feelings of others” (p. 96). Expressing oneself physically enables emotional awareness and the ability to regulate emotions.

Theoretical concepts of embodied emotion affirm that emotions are experienced and also stored within the physical body as body based emotions (Arkin, 1994;

Hannaford, 1995; Stauffer, 2010). One concrete example is the way individuals hold tension in their chest when they experience grief. The body exhibits different physical responses for varying emotions. It is in part because of this concept that through creative movement and dance, children and youth can gain a deepened awareness and understanding of their emotions as they are experienced and expressed via the body.

The concepts of embodied empathy and empathic communication have been linked to creative movement and dance in regards to mirror neurons in the brain that unconsciously fire when an individual perceives the motion of another person's body, that is within their movement repertoire (Meekums, 2008). The ability to empathically communicate through mirroring can be present in infancy such as when babies move to their mother's voice. Secure attachments are formed in infancy when the infant's primary caregiver empathically mirrors the child's emotional state and uses touch to soothe the child. These secure attachments, based on empathic soothing touch, help the child develop self-esteem, humanity esteem (viewing others positively) and emotional literacy (Meekums, 2008). It has been shown that empathic mirroring can be learned in Dance Movement Therapy (Meekums, 1991).

Bodily movement and awareness are necessary to help bring repressed emotional trauma into conscious awareness in order for emotional healing to happen (Sherwood, 2008). Replenishing spiritual energy, through the breath via creative movement and dance, helps to foster emotional resiliency (Sherwood, 2008). Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is a therapeutic practice which aims to mediate the body and mind (on an emotional, spiritual, physical and cognitive level) via dance and movement (Berrol, 1992). More details about DMT will be discussed later within this paper.

Communication

Dance is a 'universal' language (Purcell, 1994) that communicates emotions, stories and ideas (Hanna, 2001). As Hanna (2001) explains, "movement is our mother tongue and primordial thought"(p. 40). There are many cultures in which dance is an ancient practice and a key component of daily life, such as African cultures in which dance is a fundamental aspect of rituals such as birth, death, marriage and rites of passage (Franklin, 2013). Berrol (1992) notes that children in Nepal learn to dance from a young age, at the same time as they are learning to walk, because within their culture there is a belief that dance is the embodiment of life.

Movement and dance enable children and youth to communicate their emotions and ideas non-verbally. As American dancer Isadora Duncan is quoted as having said, "If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing" (Acarón, 2011; Hanna, 2001). Such non-verbal outlets for emotional expression are particularly helpful for children and youth who have difficulty communicating their emotions verbally (Dow, 2010) and the physical expression of emotions through creative movement and dance renders them more accessible for verbal expression (Homann, 2010; Koff, 2000).

Self-Confidence, Self-expression and Self-Identity

Creative movement and dance are a means by which all children and youth, regardless of their physical and cognitive capabilities, ethnic background, gender or social class, can engage in, and have the opportunity to flourish socially and emotionally. The practice of creative movement and dance crosses language and cultural barriers (Hannaford, 1995; Ward, 2008) and emotional bonds made

through creative movement and dance help children and youth develop self-esteem and humanity esteem, viewing both themselves and others positively (Meekums, 2008).

It has been found that when children make achievements through movement oriented tasks they develop self-confidence that is carried over into other areas of their lives (Gehris, Gooze, & Whitaker, 2015). Garrett (1993) conducted a study in which pre- and post-test comparisons between female dance education students and female physical education students were made and found a significant increase in self-esteem among dance students compared to the physical education students. Through qualitative analysis, the self-expressive factors of dance were found to be associated with increased self-esteem.

There exists an interdependence between self-confidence and self-expression whereby increased self-confidence leads to increased self-expression. It takes self-confidence to be able to self-express via creative movement and dance and in turn, the practice of self-expression in this way further cultivates self-confidence. This interdependence between self-confidence and self-expression during creative movement and dance allows spirit to energetically flow as it is manifested in the body.

Creative movement and dance allow children and youth to create a sense of identity and gain a better understanding of themselves as individuals and as social beings. Through the practice of creative movement and dance, children and youth can express their creative individuality while learning how to be socially conscious, developing empathy, compassion and self-confidence (Dow, 2010; Lorenzo-Lasa, Ideishi, & Ideishi, 2007).

Literature Review

The following literature review outlines recent qualitative research that has been gathered regarding children and youth, ages 3 to 16 years (with a focus on children ages 3 to 10) with respect to the social and emotional benefits of their involvement in creative movement and dance. The research has been separated into categories based on its style, methodology and focus, yielding three categories into which it has been organized, namely *Dance and DMT for Targeted Groups of Children and Youth*, *Creative Movement in the Classroom for Young Children* and *DMT Frameworks with Adult Participants*.

The main goals, methodology and significant findings of each research investigation will be summarized. Articles will be compared to one another and potential limitations of each will be considered. Concluding thoughts as to how the literature relates to children and youth's social and emotional development and overall themes that arose will be discussed. Such themes include self-confidence, communication skills, empathy, intrinsic motivation and emotional awareness, regulation and expression.

Dance and DMT for Targeted Groups of Children and Youth

Dance movement therapy. Dance Movement Therapy (abbreviated as DMT) has been defined in Britain as “the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance through which a person can engage creatively in a process to further their emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration” (Meekums, 2008). Other similar descriptions were found across the literature, explaining DMT as a holistic practice that engages and integrates body and mind and, enables the processing of emotions and experiences (Ylönen & Cantell, 2009).

Casson and Meekums' (2007) interpretation of John Lowin Roscio's *Brief Conclusions of Dancers and Dancing* written in 1609 in Early Modern English, sheds light on what is believed to possibly be some of the earliest documentation on the implementation of dance and movement as a form of therapy. As Casson and Meekums (2007) explain, Roscio's writings hint at dance therapy as a form of treatment for ailments such as melancholia:

We note that the writer is recognising the importance of matching the type of dance to the ailment to be treated and insisting that each person is different. Despite the emphasis in this text on the advantages of dance for physical health, there is a small reference in the phrase '... such persons, as doe perceive their own Braines to be weake ...' that dance might also be used to promote mental health. (p. 17)

DMT is used as an effective practice with children, youth and adults with varying needs and capabilities. It can be practiced one on one between movement therapist and patient or in a group setting and can involve appealing and playful props such as colourful silk scarves.

The existence and implementation of a therapeutic practice that restores and nurtures physical, emotional, social and cognitive well-being through movement and dance, supports the claim that physical creative movement and dance are an important and necessary aspect in children's lives.

Related Research. The following section will discuss research that involves a dance program, group DMT sessions and individual DMT sessions that were implemented for specific groups of children and youth. The dance program and DMT

sessions were intended to deal with specific issues the targeted groups were facing which include behavioural/emotional issues, socioeconomic disadvantages and learning disorders.

Meekums (2008) gathered data, via teacher focus groups, therapist's notes and a 22-item child behavioural scoring sheet while conducting individual DMT sessions with six children ages 4 to 7 in a primary school in the north of England over the course of a year (between 2003 and 2004). The children exhibited a range of behavioural and emotional issues and were referred by their teachers to take part in the DMT sessions. Referral times were staggered and as such, the children received varying numbers of DMT sessions. The intervention was intended as part of a crime prevention program within the school.

Meekums is a dance therapist who led the DMT sessions, taking notes throughout the process. Feedback from teacher focus groups and the 22-item behavioural scoring sheet filled out by the teachers before and after therapy also provided data to measure effectiveness of the DMT sessions.

Based on the collective data, an increase in the children's 'emotional literacy', with increased emotional awareness, emotional regulation, self-esteem and general social functioning were evident. Children's increased awareness of emotions was found to precede their ability to express emotions, which supports Homann (2010) and Koff's (2000) argument that bodily expression of emotions enhances the capability for subsequent verbal expression of emotions.

Meekums (2008) recognized limitations of validity in the research, which include her dual role as both researcher and therapist and, the absence of randomized controlled

design, indicating that outcomes cannot necessarily be attributed to the DMT intervention. The 22-item child behavioural scoring sheet was not tested for sensitivity to change or test-retest reliability, which also limits overall reliability. In addition to these limitations that Meekums acknowledges, it should also be noted that the 22-item sheet might not measure all aspects of a child's behaviour in relation to their emotional literacy, posing limitations in validity. Observed and measured behavioural changes could potentially be attributed to the one on one attention and support received and not necessarily due to the children receiving DMT sessions. Lastly, the infrequency in the number of DMT sessions that each child received could have affected reliability.

With many similarities to Meekums' DMT sessions, Ylönen and Cantell (2009) created an early intervention creative movement program designed to help young immigrant children with the challenges they are often faced with being new to a foreign country, such as verbal expression. A group of six 5 to 7 year olds, who had recently immigrated to Finland, partook in weekly 45-minute DMT sessions over the course of one year. The children were referred to engage in these sessions by their parents for numerous issues such as low self-esteem, anxiety, aggression and poor Finnish language skills. The sessions were led by Ylönen (who is a dance therapist) and by a teacher, and involved creative movement, games and the use of materials such as colourful scarves and finished with a relaxation period. Throughout the sessions, children were given the opportunity for self-expression through verbal and symbolic sharing of their stories and feelings.

The dance therapist and teacher engaged in collaborative reflection after each weekly session. Children's drawings and verbal expression of their bodily experiences of

the DMT were also woven into the reflective data. Moreover, parents were invited to two of these feedback sessions.

The reflective data indicated that as the DMT sessions progressed, children started to communicate with adults and with each other more and group dynamics started change positively. There was an improvement in children's verbal communication skills and they also used movement to communicate and interact including the expression of their fears and feelings.

Ylönen and Cantell recognized that there is no evidence to determine whether these social, emotional and behavioural results can be maintained long term. A reliability limitation is that results cannot necessarily be generalized as to whether they would be effective with another group or in another context.

One criticism of Ylönen and Cantell's research is that children's Finnish language verbal communication skills could have improved simply due to having lived in Finland over the course of the year, and the improvements were a natural progression rather than causal in relation to the DMT sessions. It is possible that taking part in any group activity, apart from creative movement may have resulted in similar findings, in particular the existence of group dynamics.

Nonetheless, Ylönen and Cantell provide supporting evidence for the implementation of DMT with children coming from various cultures outside of North America, and how it can be beneficial for children's social and emotional well-being.

In contrast to the in-school DMT sessions that Meekums (2008) and Ylönen and Cantell (2009) organized, Beaulac, Kristjansson and Calhoun (2011) engaged youth in an after-school dance program. Beaulac et al. wanted to explore whether offering

community based physical activity programs could build resiliency among disadvantaged youth and promote their psychological, social and physical well-being. For this particular study, 67 youth ages 11 to 16 years were chosen to take part in a hip-hop dance after school program, consisting of weekly 75 minute sessions for 13 consecutive weeks. Participant selection was based on a needs assessment and health survey that was utilized to determine that the area was a multicultural, socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhood; recruitment took place over two months.

The dance program was held in a community recreation centre and was led by two community dance instructors, one white female and one black male. Two options were available, a girls only group and a co-ed group, which highlights the acknowledgement that varying interest in the program or responses to the program based on mixed gender socializing might be expected.

The program culminated in a performance that families of the youth and the general public were invited to attend. Findings and effectiveness of the program were gathered via interviews with some of the participants, student self-reports, a 9-item survey that the program staff completed, and three focus groups to obtain parents' and program leaders' feedback of the program.

The 30-minute interviews with 14 of the students occurred within two weeks after the end of the program and posed non-leading questions to gain participant perspectives about the program. These results, along with data from the focus groups, student self-reports and the 9-item survey were transcribed into the same codebook and 80% interrater reliability was achieved during a practice round of coding.

Overall, results of Beaulac et al.'s study suggest that a dance oriented community based intervention is a viable way to promote youth's social, psychological and physical well-being. The youth reported gaining a sense of respect for others and respect for diversity. Increased self-confidence was a prominent theme that was exhibited as was increased positive mood. These findings align with Meekums' (2008) research that suggests that there is a link between physical expression and self-confidence. Along with these social and emotional benefits, the youth also experienced improved hip-hop dance skills, an increase in their engagement in physical activity in general, and some achieved improved school performance.

Beaulac et al. (2011) indicate that though successful in terms of results yielded, their research has limitations of reliability and validity. One main acknowledgement is that the hip-hop dance program should have run for a longer period in order to track social and emotional changes over time more comprehensively. Similarly, there was no consideration as to whether results were long lasting after the program had ended. Furthermore, because the study was qualitative and non-experimental, findings cannot necessarily be attributed to causality nor can they be generalized to other populations of youth.

Another potential limitation that Beaulac et al. mention is that selection of the youth participants for the study based on their socioeconomic status may not have been entirely accurate due to inconsistency in terms of accuracy on the needs assessment and health survey. For example, youth tended to overestimate their family level of affluence and in some instances did not know their parents' level of education.

Further limitations not mentioned include issues of reliability in that there were two individuals who reviewed the data, one of whom was also the interviewer, which could lead to biased results. Student reports as a way to measure behavioural changes pose potential reliability and validity issues since these reports might not capture what it is they are aimed to capture and sometimes students might answer based on what they assume is the desired response.

With many resemblances to Ylönen and Cantell's (2009) in school DMT research, is Anderson's (2015) report of a DMT intervention designed to address social-emotional issues of grade 7 students. Specifically, the aim was to determine if integrating DMT into a mathematics class could improve the students' math skills and social-emotional skills. The research was motivated by the body-mind connection and the belief that physical activity is correlated with mental alertness. The study was designed based on prior research that demonstrates enhanced learning and engagement when dance/movement is integrated with academics.

The participants were grade 7 students from an urban charter school. Nine out of the fourteen participants had learning and emotional behavioural disorders, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactive disorder) and/or were at risk of 'school failure' (p. 230), as documented in their Individualized Education Program's (IEPs). All of the participants were two years below grade level in mathematics skills, experienced social-emotional difficulties that interfered with their participation in class and with their peer relationships, and exhibited impulsive, inattentive behaviour. Recorded in their IEPs was that the students all had goals to improve their mathematics and social-emotional skills.

The DMT intervention consisted of daily 1-hour sessions for four weeks. The school counsellor, who is a registered dance/movement therapist, created the movement sequences for the DMT sessions and was also responsible for delivering these sequences to students during the sessions. The school counsellor worked collaboratively with 2 classroom teachers to integrate academic mathematical concepts with dance/movement.

For the first two weeks, students were introduced to a 3-step movement sequence based on Laban's Effort Qualities, that they performed on yoga mats over the first 15 minutes of the math class. This 3-step sequence was paired with corresponding DMT vocabulary to provide students with verbal connections to the non-verbal activity. During weeks 3 and 4, students were shown another 3 step sequence designed to help them focus on body awareness and self-regulation during the math class. In addition to these 3 step sequences, kinaesthetic learning activities became a part of the intervention during the math lesson.

The research team was comprised of the school counsellor, the 2 classroom teachers and a partnering university professor. Data was collected from videotaped observations, interviews, student worksheets (about the movement efforts they used during the school day, and about their thoughts/feelings on the influence of dance/movement), language sampling (to measure the students' understanding of DMT objectives), rubric scores, and teacher and student self-reports. The students' mathematics learning, dance movement skills, and social-emotional skills were assessed before, during and after the DMT intervention via teacher rubrics (that monitored IEP progress), student worksheets, and student and teacher interviews. Dance movement skills were also assessed via movement analysis based on observations. Student and teacher interviews

took place after each week of the intervention. The interviews were analyzed in comparison to rubric scores, self-reports and student worksheets, and videotapes were compared with teachers' rubrics. These comparisons were used to help ensure reliability of data analysis. Furthermore, two teachers who were unaware of the purpose of the study scored rubrics based on videotaped observations of a random sample of five students. The interrater agreement between these rubrics and teacher rubrics for the entire class was 92.3%.

Students exhibited increased participation, engagement, focus, self-regulation, and a decrease in impulsive behaviour over the course of the intervention. As early as week two of the intervention they began to take on leadership roles, such as wanting to lead movement sequences they were familiarized with. On a physical level, students reported experiencing reduced tension and increased body awareness. Student and teacher self-reports marked overall improvements in students' mathematics, social-emotional and dance skills and students displayed pro social behaviour toward their peers.

Anderson affirms that the short duration of the study makes generalizing the results, and determining whether they could be maintained long term, difficult. The researcher also noted that it may not be feasible to implement an hour long DMT session into traditional classrooms and this poses a challenge for replication in future studies. This speaks to how academically structured school curricula are and how little time and space there is for creative movement and dance programs. It raises the question as to why traditional classroom models are still so dominant in Western cultures despite children's difficulties with academics. Rather than finding ways to improve children's achievement

within existing models, these traditional models need to be altered to better suit children's emotional and cognitive learning needs such as by adding DMT programs like the one Anderson describes.

There is potential for researcher bias since the research team included the teachers and the school counsellor, who designed and led the DMT sessions. The teachers were supportive of arts integration in the classroom prior to the implementation of the intervention, which could have influenced the data collection and assessment, particularly the teachers' reports and interviews. The students were familiar with movement breaks during class before the intervention began which may have had an influence on the rate at which the DMT had an effect on their math skills, dance skills and social-emotional skills.

That the students were aware of the DMT objectives and had already set goals to improve their math and social-emotional skills is problematic because the results yielded correspond with these set goals and it is possible that self-reports and interviews were skewed based on these pre-existing expectations. It is possible that other interventions implemented at the beginning of mathematics lessons may have yielded similar social-emotional behavioural improvements, teaching students to center their emotions and focus their attention, such as seated meditation at the beginning of each lesson. Nonetheless, despite the limitations to the research mentioned above, Anderson demonstrates the benefits of the inclusion of body-awareness based movement activities within the classroom to aid with social-emotional skills, cognitive learning and engagement among students with emotional behavioural and learning disorders, ADHD and who otherwise have difficulties related to concentration and peer relationships.

Many similarities can be found between the research of Meekums (2008), Ylönen and Cantell (2009), Beaulac et al. (2011) and Anderson (2015). For one, that they demonstrate qualitative observations of the potential for creative movement and dance programs to be an effective preventative measure for children and youth at risk for difficulties related to socio-economic disadvantages, behavioural issues, learning disorders, language barriers and other intrapersonal and interpersonal difficulties. The research presented implies that creative movement and dance can be a means to build resiliency among children and youth so they are better able to cope with challenges they face over which they might not have control.

Anderson (2015) provides an example of how creative movement and dance can be paired with curriculum material, such as mathematics, to directly target students' in-class behaviour and achievement levels. However, Beaulac et al.'s (2011) research provides insight to the argument that even when creative movement and dance are implemented as an afterschool, extra curricular activity, they can have a positive influence on youth's school performance, demonstrating that their benefits affect multiple areas of functioning. In Beaulac et al.'s research, the students' increases in both school performance and self-confidence could be an example of what Gehris et al. (2015) discuss on how self-confidence achieved through physical tasks (here the physical task being dance) carries over to other areas of development. It could be that there is a correlation between increased self-confidence and increased school performance.

Meekums (2008) demonstrates the effectiveness of individual DMT sessions yet there does not seem to be much difference in outcomes between individual DMT

sessions, group DMT sessions and group dance classes. The research aims to capture qualities that are subjective therefore making it difficult to fully compare results between each child and with other studies. The subjectivity also makes it difficult to introduce control groups to be able to qualitatively compare the effects of individual versus group DMT sessions. Due to the subjective nature of the research, it seems as though determining whether individual or group DMT sessions would be most effective and appropriate for children and youth depends on the individual child/youth and what their needs are.

A common limitation of Meekums (2008), Ylönen and Cantell (2009), Beaulac et al. (2011) and Anderson's (2015) research is the lack of control over extraneous variables and the ensuing inability to determine causal relationships between creative movement/dance and research findings. Findings from all four studies are largely based on teacher and student reflections, which negatively impacts the generalizability, reliability and validity of the research. This is especially an issue with Ylönen and Cantell's (2009), and Beaulac et al.'s (2011) research because it did not include pre-data collection against which to compare findings. Researcher bias among these studies is common because the researchers had a dual role as researcher and therapist. In some instances this meant that the same individuals implementing the DMT were also the ones collecting and analyzing data. Beaulac et al.'s study (2011) included separate dance teachers yet there was still an issue of bias because one of the interviewers was also analyzing the data.

What seems to be another limiting factor to the research is that long terms effects of creative movement and dance programs are unknown. While the research does entail

tracking children and youth's behaviour over time, up to a year as with Meekums (2008) and Ylönen and Cantell's (2009), there lacks the ability to measure whether the positive effects of creative movement and dance are long lasting. What can be noted from the material presented here is that the effects seem to develop and increase over time.

Creative Movement in Classrooms for Young Children

A selection of the research reviewed regarding the social and emotional benefits of creative movement and dance with children and youth specifically explored the implementation of creative movement with young children in a classroom setting. Creative movement sessions were integrated into the curriculum with the intention developing children's overall social-emotional functioning with a focus on the expression of each child's creative body movements while also encouraging the development of impulse control of their bodily movements.

Inspired by Maurice Sendak's (1963) book *Where the Wild Things Are*, Bond (1994) designed a 15-week dance program for a class of 5 to 8 year olds (8 boys and 6 girls), of various ethnic backgrounds in a school in Melbourne, Australia. The 15-week program culminated in a dance performance performed in front of family members. The sessions ran for 45 minutes, once a week for the first 7 weeks, then more frequently as the date of the performance approached. Children had the opportunity to create their own dance routines, and design the costumes and masks to wear. The general aim of the program was for the "children to expand and refine their expressive movement vocabularies and apply them to a group performance" (p. 29). Shortly into the program, gender inhibitions were evident in the dance context and became a dominant theme that the researchers explored.

The sessions were led by a graduate student, Whittington, who had 15 years of experience as a free-lance dance specialist and as a primary teacher. Bond was the student's advisor and decided to stay involved as a researcher. Data was collected via observations (by both Bond and Whittington) of videotaped sessions, interviews with the dance teacher (Whittington), the dance teacher's field notes, children's drawings and a follow up group interview with the children 6 months later that was conducted by Bond and Whittington.

According to Bond's observations, at the beginning of the program, gender differences in expressive dance styles were prominent. Boys often danced with aggression, play fighting and using fast paced motions while girls tended to skip, move lightly with more 'ballet' like flowing movements. As the 15 weeks progressed, children began to move beyond these stereotypes and experiment with a range of movements. Wearing masks seemed to play an important factor in the breaking down of gender roles linked to dance and children developed a sense of individuality as they grew more comfortable with how their bodies could move and the ways they could express themselves physically.

When the children were given the opportunity to do brief performances in front of one another throughout the creative movement sessions, they demonstrated mutual respect, openness and improved concentration. Cooperation was evident among the group as they collaboratively prepared for the performance. Children were engaged and enthusiastic about the idea of creating a dance performance, especially about being able to make their own costumes. As Betty (2013) explains, providing children with opportunity for autonomy and contribution has been linked with the development of

emotional regulation. The children's excitement and joy was still expressed 6 months later during the follow up interview, which demonstrates that the emotional component of the dance program could potentially have long term beneficial effects.

A potential limitation to Bond's (1994) research is that observed changes in social behaviour, such as increased mutual respect, group cooperation, bodily expression and concentration could be attributed to the existence of group dynamics and the preparation of a performance rather than the creative movement sessions and the fact that it was a dance performance. This limitation to the research is yet another indication of the problem associated with conducting research on subjective factors and controlling for extraneous variables cannot necessarily be done. It seems as though with the nature of this research, it is always a possibility that third variables will have an influence on results and isolating creative movement and dance from other factors such as performance and group dynamics is not often done and perhaps difficult to do.

There was no pre-data collection and the only basis against which to compare data was the researchers' observations of the children's expressive movement styles and behaviour at the beginning of the program. Data was gathered and analyzed by the researcher, which poses potential bias. There is also potential bias since Bond was both the researcher and the student's advisor.

Bond's work addresses the gender roles that are prevalent in dance and movement starting from a young age, and provides insight as to how such social norms can be changed. As Arkin (1994) affirms, dance has the power to break down sociocultural norms such as gender norms. The dissipation of gender inhibitions was a focal point of the research and while there is less focus on other benefits of creative movement

and dance for the individual child, this benefit is a vital one in and of itself for the socially developing child.

Thom's (2010) creative movement based research is comparable to Bond's (1994) in that it too involved creative movement sessions within a classroom setting. Both Thom and Bond's research aimed to promote emotional awareness and expression, and bodily awareness, though Bond's research also included the exploration how children can expand their expressive movements beyond gender stereotypes of movement and dance they are often constrained by.

Thom (2010) explored the social and emotional development of preschool children based on the inclusion of daily creative movement sessions with a class comprised of fifteen of 3-year-olds, over the course of seven months. The start of the seven-month period was the beginning of the school year, and the children were new to each other and to the classroom environment. Thom led the creative movement sessions, simultaneously playing the role of teacher and researcher. The sessions incorporated movement activities such as playful yoga with postures that often mimicked animals, creative movement in which the children could move at their own free will, emotion vocabulary and instruction for the children to show certain emotions such as 'happy', 'sad' and 'angry' with their bodies. Thom gathered observational data based on the children's interactions with one another at the beginning, throughout the duration and at the end of the seven months.

Thom expressed that the crux of her teaching is "to foster the connection between children's bodily experiences and their emotional expression" (p. 101). Thom's research reflects various theories, which are briefly discussed in the article. Affect psychology,

recognizes the connection between human emotion and the experiences within the physical body, while Piaget's theories make a connection between bodily experiences and cognitive development. Similarly, the developmental-interaction approach posits that children play an active role in the interactions among their cognitive, emotional, social and physical development. While these perspectives vary, all have the commonality of exploring the link between bodily experience and the human mind and offer explanations for how body and mind are connected and emotional awareness, regulation and expression can be accessed via the body.

Over the course of the seven months, Thom observed changes in social, emotional behaviour among the group of preschoolers in that they demonstrated increased bodily awareness, emotional regulation and bodily expression of emotions. Furthermore, children began to interact and collaborate with one another, exhibiting shared emotion, peer support and empathy. Thom describes a scenario during free play time during which one child took on a leadership role, guiding her peers in a movement activity, based on concepts they had learned during creative movement sessions.

The ability to learn to recognize and name emotions through the practice of creative movement, as these children did, helps with the development of self-soothing strategies (Meekums, 2008). Breathing techniques practiced in yoga can be applied to different situations to help regulate emotions (Thom, 2010) and as Sherwood (2008) explains, the breath acts as the mediator between body and mind. Breathing into the body, during yoga and creative movement, connecting body and mind, strengthens mental health.

Potential limitations to Thom's (2010) qualitative research lie within the concept of reliability. Extraneous variables apart from the inclusion of creative movement, such as the mere existence of a group dynamic, may have been responsible for the social, emotional changes Thom witnessed. There is no sure way to claim that such changes would be apparent among another group of 3-year-olds nor whether social, emotional developments could be sustained over time without the continuation of creative movement sessions. The music that was often played during the creative movement sessions, the quiet, relaxation period at the end of each session and the practice of yoga are other variables that may have influenced children's social, emotional behaviour. It can also be noted that Thom does not provide information as to where exactly the study took place. It can only be assumed that it took place somewhere in the United States since the article was published by the American Journal of Dance Therapy.

While Thom's dual role as teacher and researcher, poses a limitation to the validity of the research, the findings lend support to the theoretical perspectives outlined and to the ways in which young children can gain an awareness of their emotions, learn to emotionally regulate and develop bodily awareness via creative movement.

Bond (1994) and Thom (2010) outline programs for young children that can be incorporated into the school day and combine creative movement and dance with other creative arts and movement opportunities such as mask making and yoga. While these combinations contribute to the possibility of extraneous variables influencing results, their observations demonstrate that children gain social and emotional benefits from the collective practice of creative movement.

DMT Frameworks with Adult Participants

While children and youth are the intended focus of this literature review, research pertaining to social and emotional benefits of DMT with adults is also useful to review to look at similarities between the effects of DMT with adults, and with children and youth. The research of Betty (2013) is also relevant to children and youth because Betty (2013) proposed a DMT framework intended for maltreated children in residential care. Betty proposed that the DMT framework be implemented as a training model for adults working with children in residential care. The DMT methods that the care workers learned would enable them to bring attention to their own bodily and emotional processes and they could then teach these methods to the children under their care.

Both Homann (2010) and Betty's (2013) research was based on neurobiological perspectives, particularly concerning body awareness and emotional regulation. Reference is made to the right hemisphere of the brain as the part responsible for emotional regulation. Homann (2010) explains that implicit memory, which is often body-based and unconscious, is responsible for storing emotions, and is also associated with the right hemisphere, drawing a connection between the physical body and emotional regulation.

Homann reported on an ongoing group DMT consultation that meets for 3 hours on a monthly basis. At the time of the research, the group was in its 5th year. The sessions were led by two trained DMT therapists and four clinicians. The participants of the group were 'mature' therapists who dealt with challenging cases in their practice on a regular basis. The sessions commenced with 30 minutes of self-directed movement with attention placed on the natural impulses of the body and sensory awareness. Following the 30 minutes of expressive movement, each group member had the chance to verbally share

their experience and identify the emotions they felt while moving ‘authentically’ to their body’s impulses.

A strong foundation of trust was built among participants as they shared their personal stories and emotions. They expressed gaining self-insight and awareness of the relationship between their body and emotions, gaining a better understanding of their emotions and were enthusiastic to be able to verbally express them.

That the DMT group participants were themselves therapists poses a limitation to the research since they might have been more readily available to experience the benefits of DMT, already having knowledge of therapeutic practices in general. In addition, if such group DMT sessions were done with children and youth, it can be pondered how results would vary in terms of effectiveness. Though, it has been demonstrated that non-verbal outlets for emotional expression help children and youth’s ability to verbally communicate emotions. Therefore, it could be presumed that the way that children and youth would verbally communicate their emotions might vary from adults, yet group DMT would likely still be effective in teaching children and youth emotional awareness and to learn how to verbally express their emotions. The clinical examples in Homann’s research are evidence of how DMT can enhance participants’ abilities to connect with their own emotions and to other people’s emotions with increased awareness.

Betty (2013) discusses a proposed DMT framework to enhance emotional regulation among maltreated children in treatment centres. Supported by theories of body-mind connection, Betty aimed to address the gap in literature regarding the development of emotional regulation with maltreated children (defined as children who are physically, sexually or emotionally abused, or neglected). Interactions between infant

and caregiver are believed to influence the development of emotional regulation and many maltreated children do not receive the responsive, affective interactions that nurture this development.

The theoretical framework was influenced by Betty's experience working with maltreated children in residential treatment centres and is supported by a literature review on emotion regulation in healthy development, maltreating contexts, psychotherapy, and residential treatment. The literature review was comprehensive of children ages 3 to 13. Part of the research process involved reviewing six residential treatment models to analyze whether they included emotional regulation components, of which two of them did.

The DMT framework was organized into four phases, which include: safety, emotional awareness, internal emotional coping, and external expression management. Attunement between caregivers and children is a central component of the framework. For this reason, elements from the Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP) are incorporated throughout. Kestenberg (1979) identified tension flow attributes that reflect temperament, and act as measures of regulation over the expression of needs (tension flow rhythms). Movement patterns based on the Tension Flow Effort System of the KMP are integrated wherein Betty (2013) outlines body-based practices and their neurobiological effects. One such example is the importance for caregivers to stay connected to their breath as a means to stay present and grounded when dealing with the range of emotions and expressions that arise when dealing with maltreated children. Betty further explains that:

Widening and narrowing the body in other ways can also encourage this self-replenishing cycle that allows caregivers to maintain regulated, stable, and balanced states. By utilizing both growing and shrinking in shape flow (bipolar and unipolar), caregivers can effectively adjust to both the needs of the self and the situation. The use of the tension flow attribute, flow adjustment, which consists of small adjustments in tension flow, can also be helpful when adjusting to others is needed. (p. 46-47)

In the safety phase, Betty outlines movement patterns that are important for caregivers to be aware of and practice to ensure that their body language is communicating and creating a sense of safety for the children. Betty notes that while some children may feel safe when their caregivers are close, others may require more physical distance between them and their caregivers to feel safe. As such, developing an awareness of these subtleties through the practice of the KMP is fundamental for caregivers.

The second phase discusses how caregivers can help children develop emotional awareness by encouraging them to become aware of and tolerate their bodily sensations. Caregivers can help children learn to notice various bodily sensations “such as ‘butterflies’ in their tummies, ‘knots’ in their throats, the grumblings of hunger, and their heartbeats” (p. 49). Caregivers can then assist children in externalizing these sensations by developing them into rhythmic movements. Mirroring children’s facial expressions, posture, gestures and vocal intonation is also useful for allowing them to identify numerous emotional states.

The internal emotional coping phase is characterized by ways in which caregivers

can assist maltreated children in developing self-soothing strategies to cope with negative emotional states and regulate their emotions in ways that are sensitive to their social context. Some techniques include caregivers mirroring the intensity of children's movements so they feel validated in their emotions, from which then caregivers can gradually guide children in lowering the intensity of their movements. The techniques suggested are geared towards helping children understand that by "changing how we move can alter how we think and feel" (p. 51).

Phase four, external expression management, focuses on teaching children to be able to control how they physically express their emotions. In this phase, caregivers can help children find alternative ways of expressing their emotional impulses so they physically express their emotions in ways that are "safe, in line with personal goals, and contextually appropriate" (p. 51).

The role that caregivers have in the development of emotional regulation was explored and as such, the implementation of the theoretical framework was suggested as a DMT training manual for professional caregivers working in residential treatments centres. The didactic, interactive training would consist of four 2-hour modules, each one corresponding with one of the four phases of the framework. "Each module contains five components: a body-based check-in, instruction, experiential exercises, observation reports, and self-care planning. Each module begins with a brief movement exercise intended to be relevant to the content of the module"(p. 52). Also included in each module is a discussion on how to adapt the check-in, experiential and self-care activities for children.

There are several limitations to the framework and most importantly its effectiveness as a training model has yet to be analyzed. For one, Betty recognizes that the framework may not be effective for children with brain disorders such as dyslexia and schizophrenia and points out that it is difficult to measure the construct of emotional regulation over time. Further, it was acknowledged that the framework might be challenging to implement when care giving staff are short in numbers in the treatment centres. This potential obstacle brings to attention the issues that staff shortages in care centres, schools and daycares pose. Such shortages are an obstacle to children and youth's social-emotional development because with fewer staff, there is less time and energy available to devote to acknowledging children and youth's emotions and fewer resources for supporting their emotional development.

Other potential limitations to Betty's research mentioned are that gender differences in the development of emotional regulation are not explored and the focus of the research is limited to information regarding child-caregiver relationships of middle and upper class Caucasians from Western cultures. To add to the limitations that Betty acknowledges, it can be pointed out that varying DMT styles depending on the type of maltreatment the child has experienced are not considered in depth. It could be that children may respond differently to DMT depending on what their traumatic experiences are. While Betty does point out that depending on the child's needs caregivers might need to alter their movement styles in regards to personal space between them and the child, there could be larger scale differences that are being overlooked.

Though the framework is theoretical and there is no information regarding the effectiveness of its application as a training model since it has not yet been analyzed as

such, Betty offers in depth consideration of body-based methods that might be effective in teaching maltreated children the skills of emotional regulation. The framework and its proposed application describe tangible ways that caregivers of maltreated children can implement theoretical research into their work. Betty's research highlights the belief that caregivers have a direct impact on maltreated children's emotional regulation. By becoming aware of their own emotions and bodily expression of emotions, and being able to regulate them, caregivers are in a position to model healthy emotional coping mechanisms and emotional regulating skills. Caregivers can help children under their care develop the skills of emotional regulation they did not previously have the opportunity to learn because of their maltreatment.

Both Homann (2010) and Betty's (2013) research involve DMT with adults who are in a position that involves caring for others, helping them attain social and emotional well-being. This research sheds light on the idea that individuals who have the responsibility of caring for others can also benefit from movement based social-emotional therapy, such as DMT, so that they are socially-emotionally healthy, and can model the behaviour they hope to instil in children and youth.

Overall Limitations, Findings and Generalizations of the Literature on Social and Emotional Benefits

The research reviewed focuses on North American and 'Western' school environments and the benefits of incorporating creative movement and dance into these settings. Two of the studies were conducted outside of North America, and the rest took place in Canada and the United States. Ylönen and Cantell's (2009) research based on DMT sessions with immigrant children in Finland, having emigrated from various

countries, such as Russia, Yugoslavia and Greece, offers insight into how creative movement and dance can be a way for children to connect and relate to one another, surpassing any differences among them such as differences in cultural identity and language. Some of the above discussed findings could be generalized to children and youth from other cultures that are not included in the research, however more cross cultural research would further strengthen the statement that creative movement and dance is beneficial for all children and youth's social-emotional well-being regardless of their ethnic and cultural background.

The research discussed aimed to observe, measure and describe children and youth's social and emotional behaviour, which are concepts that are difficult to capture and quantify. As Betty (2013) explains, emotional regulation and likely other social-emotional developments such as body-awareness and self-confidence are difficult to measure over time. Laban's Effort Qualities are used in some instances as a means to describe and classify types of movement, distinguishing functional movements from expressive movements, and some research tracks children's behaviour via scoring sheets.

While such methods help to measure and quantify children's social, emotional development, results may be inconsistent when dealing with such abstract concepts. The studies reviewed here are similar to one another and methodologies could be repeated, yet, no studies will ever yield exactly the same results. The qualitative methodology, exploration of subjective concepts and the inclusion of human participants generate research that is descriptive in nature and results are highly based on the perception of the researchers and participants involved.

Even more difficult to capture and describe is the spiritual aspect of creative movement and dance and how the expressiveness of these movements have the capacity to connect individuals with their spirit. The expressiveness of creative movement and dance is an expression of the spirit. This quality is elusive and is not discussed in the research reviewed here. Perhaps it is the spiritual elusiveness of creative movement and dance that make it difficult for some people to feel comfortable engaging in it, and why it is often a challenge to embed into school systems.

Another limitation with this body of research is that it occurred under specific contexts with targeted participants and therefore findings cannot necessarily be generalized to all children and youth. In addition, findings cannot necessarily be attributed solely to creative movement and dance interventions because of extraneous variables that were not controlled for, and the tendency for people to be easily affected by environmental surroundings. Some extraneous variables that may have influenced results include music that was played during creative movement and dance sessions, one-on-one attention (as was the case with Meekums (2008) individual DMT sessions with children) and the element of performance in Beaulac et al. (2011) and Bond's (1994) research. Yet, the fact that social, emotional benefits are consistently observed across the research indicates that creative movement and dance do have a positive impact on children and youth's social, emotional development regardless of extraneous variables that might contribute to such outcomes.

Research pertaining to the benefits of creative movement and dance for children and youth's social, emotional well-being is often qualitative in nature and data is most often gathered via observations, interviews and student and teacher self-reports. Often,

more than one method of gathering data is used by researchers, to help control for limitations of validity. Though self-reports pose a limitation to the validity of any research, in this body of research they have the potential to be considered as even less valid because they involve child and youth participants. It could be that children and youth's opinions are not taken as seriously in comparison to adults'. Nonetheless, the inclusion of their input demonstrates the researcher's recognition of children and youth autonomy and how their self-reflections on the effect of creative movement and dance in their lives and behaviour are valuable contributions.

A common limitation across the literature is the potential for researcher bias since much of it has been conducted by dance therapists or teachers who are simultaneously leading DMT sessions or creative movement programs as well as gathering and analyzing data. This suggests that it is individuals who are interested in and already working within the field who are the ones primarily conducting research about creative movement and dance. In some of the studies, more than one teacher or dance therapist was involved with leading the sessions and gathering data. These collaborative observations and interpretations entail interrater reliability and offer more than one perspective of data analysis, which helps to avoid researcher bias.

The majority of the research reviewed involved preschool and grade school children, with less research with youth participants. The majority took place in classroom settings, which is appropriate since children spend a large amount of time at school. Observing children in a school environment provides a natural context and one that is conducive for observing children and youth's social behaviour. Research that takes place in school settings is also compatible with exploring how, in addition to the social and

emotional benefits they provide, creative movement and dance are also an important element in learning processes.

Two of the studies involved extra curricular afterschool dance programs, which draws attention to the potential for comparison between social, emotional aspects of creative movement and dance within and outside of the classroom setting. Comparing whether children and youth respond to and behave differently to creative movement and dance in different social contexts could be explored. No such comparative research is included in this paper, nor was there any readily available when searching for research about creative movement and dance with children and youth.

Studies involved multiple dance or creative movement sessions, indicating that the research tends to look for changes in children and youth's behaviour over time and findings suggest that the modalities are most effective when they are continuous and become part of the child and youth's lifestyle. However, there exists little knowledge about the long term effects of the interventions and programs, and whether positive outcomes remain after children and youth are no longer participating in such programs. It seems as though longitudinal research that could provide insight about long-term effects of creative movement and dance is lacking.

Only one article focused on gender issues in dance education, while another one at least recognized that there might be gender based issues related to dance. Gender differences and issues related to creative movement and dance are connected to deeply rooted social issues and while this topic is acknowledged here, a decision was made not to delve too deep into it for the purpose of this paper, as it is a vast topic and could be an extensive review of literature in itself. One main point to be acknowledged, along with

the topic of gender issues, is how creative movement and dance can be used to break down these issues, and Bond (1994) offers a supportive example of such a concept.

Creative movement and dance are often social activities. Even in individual DMT sessions, there is a relationship between therapist and client, indicating an association between emotional expression and social functioning and how creative movement and dance can connect individuals socially and emotionally. This concept supports the idea that emotional, social, physical and cognitive functioning are interconnected and develop on an individual as well as collective basis.

Overall, common themes in relation to children and youth's social and emotional development can be gathered from the research findings. In summary, findings suggest that through creative movement and dance, children and youth can gain a sense of bodily awareness, learn how to recognize and regulate their emotions and express themselves. In doing so, they develop self-confidence and empathy and improve their verbal communication skills and social functioning. Movement and dance opportunities have also been found to create group dynamics, instil respect and the development of leadership skills.

While there are limitations in the content of the research discussed and the range of research covered, findings suggest that creative movement and dance offer many benefits to children and youth's social and emotional development and well-being. Creative movement and dance both as an individual or group practice, within the school environment or in other contexts, nurture and nourish children and youth's body, mind and spirit.

Chapter 3: Kinaesthetic Learning Through Creative Movement and Dance

Body, Mind and Emotional Connection

The intention of kinaesthetic learning is based on the belief that information is more readily understood and remembered when the process of learning simultaneously engages body and mind. Kinaesthetic learning is “learning through the language of dance and movement” (Griss, 1994, P. 78) and allows children the opportunity to see the relevance of learning in their lives, draw connections between learning and everyday life (Hagensen, 2015; Hanna, 2001; Koff, 2000; Leppo & Davis, 2005) and create new meaning with the material being learned (Rowen, 1963). Meaningful associations are made in the process of learning when there is an emotional connection to new information, allowing it to be retained more readily in memory, and creative movement and dance often evoke such emotional connection (Skoning, 2010).

This embodied way of knowing through movement, also called movement literacy (Fede, 2012), is linked with implicit memory which is the type of memory responsible for the, often unconscious, storage of body based and emotion based memories. As Fede (2012) explains, “implicit learning often occurs through movement, life experiences and emotions and is the preferred way for the brain to acquire information” (p. 17). Furthermore, the right brain hemisphere is responsible for implicit memory, which is also the area of the brain responsible for emotional regulation (Betty, 2013).

Among research pertaining to kinaesthetic learning, Howard Gardner’s (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences is often referenced, since he distinguishes kinaesthetic intelligence as one of the eight types. As Carla Hannaford (1995) explains in *Smart*

Moves, the body plays a crucial role in the process of learning, and learning that relies on kinaesthetic intelligences is more effective than learning that attempts to only engage the mind, as a separate entity from the body. Kinaesthetic learning, through creative movement and dance, is holistic in that it nourishes children's cognitive, social, physical and emotional well-being, offering ample opportunities for children to play and move freely without constrictions such as desks they are forced to sit at (Kentel & Dobson, 2007).

Creative movement in a group setting that creates a “friendly, trusting, safe” (Rowen, 1963, P. 30) social environment is conducive to learning because these qualities help soothe the nervous system, leaving the individual both relaxed and engaged and new information can be integrated more easily (Homann, 2010).

Inclusivity. Kinaesthetic approaches to learning cater to children's various learning styles and allow each individual to participate as much as they are capable, and to focus on their strengths rather than weaknesses (Skoning, 2010). As Skoning explains, “using creative movement and dance techniques is one way to reach many of these children who do not learn through more typical instructional formats” (p. 170). Creative movement and dance in classrooms is an efficient way for all students to be able to participate despite language barriers and cognitive and physical disabilities (Rowen, 1963).

Creative movement and dance is an effective solution for diagnoses such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). On a neurological level, creative movement and dance increases dopamine levels in children with ADHD, which increases their attention and decreases hyperactivity. Findings such as increased attention and focus

when children are engaged mentally and physically in a learning environment have been found among all children, not only those labeled with hyperactivity. Creative movement and dance as primary teaching tools in educational curricula offer children a positive outlet for their energy and the opportunity to productively channel this energy rather than it being seen and labeled as disruptive behaviour (Anderson, 2015). Movement based education provides children with a way to release excess energy while simultaneously learning concepts that are part of the curriculum (Gehris, Gooze, & Whitaker, 2015).

Just as they can be incorporated into all areas of the curriculum, creative movement and dance are effective for various learning needs. An example is the Total Physical Response learning strategy, in which linguistic concepts are represented physically, such as by forming the shape of letters with the body. Likewise, geometric shapes can be made with the body to teach children mathematical concepts (Dow, 2010).

Motivation and Increased Focus. Dance as a teaching method has been known to instil intrinsic motivation to learn (Kaufmann, 2011) and there is a correlation between movement and learning in which increased movement leads to increased learning (AbdelRahim, 2013). When learning through creative movement and dance, children and youth exhibit increased focus and attention and, on a biochemical level, movement oriented learning styles encourage the development of new nerve cells within the hippocampus for encoding new information (Fede, 2012). Participation in creative movement and dance activates the brain and increases mental capacity for mathematical, logical thinking and creative problem solving (Anderson, 2015; Dow, 2010) and many students demonstrate increased comprehension when learning through movement

(Hanna, 2001). Learning through creative movement and dance is also correlated with less risky, antisocial behaviour (Fede, 2012).

Unstructured Play and Movement for Movement’s Sake. Unstructured free play is self-directed, purposeful and strongly associated with movement (AbdelRahim, 2013). While it is important to discuss the ways in which children and youth can learn mathematical, linguistic and other academic concepts via creative movement and dance, it is also necessary to acknowledge that there is much that they can learn simply from engaging with and moving throughout their environment, without striving to achieve specific set learning goals. Kentel and Dobson (2007) convey this idea by explaining that “we must stress the inherent value of movement and free play, not only as a means to an end, but as an end in itself”(p. 160). Unstructured play allows children and youth to wander, nurturing their creativity, curiosity, imagination and autonomy (Fede, 2012; Hoffman, 2001), fostering inventiveness and understanding (Kentel & Dobson, 2007).

Literature Review

The following literature review outlines qualitative research that explores the implementation of creative movement and dance with children and youth for the purpose of positively influencing their cognitive learning and classroom behaviour. In other words, the kinaesthetic learning benefits of creative movement and dance.

The research has been organized into three categories: *Cross Cultural Comparison of Movement and Learning, Dance Education Programs for Primary School Children and, Teachers’ Reflections and Observations of the Connection between Movement and Learning for Preschoolers*. The goals, methodologies and main findings of the research will be summarized and limitations and generalizations of each article

reviewed are discussed with brief comparisons and contrasts made between the articles.

Cross Cultural Comparison of Movement and Learning

While most of the research presented in this paper is based on creative movement and dance in North American settings and educational systems, it is also necessary to recognize that the benefits of creative movement and dance are apparent in other cultural settings. Kentel and Dobson's (2007) research demonstrates this, and exemplifies that creative movement and dance are evident in children's natural unstructured play and are useful teaching tools in any learning environment.

Kentel and Dobson's cross-cultural research compared the prevalence of movement opportunities in educational contexts between Kenya and Western industrialised countries. Their research was inspired by the body-mind connection and the important role the body plays in learning, with the intention to promote movement literacy and holistic approaches to learning.

Kentel and Dobson highlight the value of unstructured, outdoor free play and discuss how the widespread use of technology in Western industrialized countries is a factor that contributes to a decrease in children's active play. Other factors in Western societies that impede children's movement opportunities are mentioned and include standardized curricula, which often take priority over physical education in curricula, and overemphasis on the concern for children's safety in which attempts are made to take any element of risk out of their play. This attempt to eliminate risk often stems from fear of parents filing lawsuits when children get hurt while playing on the playground at school.

Over the course of four months, Kentel and Dobson gathered data from 14 Kenyan primary schools located in urban, suburban and rural areas. They videotaped

children's play, tape recorded interviews they had with students and their teachers and took observational field notes from which to reflect and discuss findings. Kentel and Dobson assert that just as body and mind share a connection, there is a strong connection that exists between play and movement, and also between play and learning.

Kentel and Dobson describe their observations of Kenyan children preparing a dance performance they were to perform for their parents and city officials. When engaged in dance, the children were in synchronicity with each other and their environment, and developed a sense of community and cultural awareness through dance. As Thompson (1993) explains, dance is a fundamental part of African culture and African dances often portray ideas about everyday life, and tell meaningful stories about a culture's way of life.

Kentel and Dobson (2007) go on to discuss the symbolic meaning of desks in educational settings and how they are often used to seemingly control students' movement and attention, and point out that in many cultures the act of learning is often associated with sitting still at a desk. AbdelRahim (2013) depicts the traditional classroom setting in which children are required to sit at desks as a form of domestication, that goes against human nature and the natural tendency to need to move, stating: "Education depends on literacy and verbosity having substituted the natural learning patterns of introspection, action and motion...with inaction, overstimulation and verbal abstraction" (p. 102).

Kentel and Dobson (2007) aim to dispute the belief that the desk is necessary for learning and affirm that there is much learning that takes place when children are able to physically move. The Kenyan children exhibited attunement with natural outdoor

settings, using their creativity to make skipping ropes, baskets and other play objects using trees, plants and various materials they found outdoors. Kentel and Dobson noted that the Kenyan children were almost always “moving as they learned and likewise learning as they moved” (p. 159) and that the most inventive learning took place at times of play through movement.

Kentel and Dobson do not mention any limitations to their research. It can be noted that they generalize Western industrialized education, focusing on the factors that impede movement opportunities in these countries (without mentioning any specific countries), depicting an image of Western industrialized educational settings as strict, harsh, academically oriented with little opportunities for movement. While this generalization does have some truth to it and Western education would greatly benefit from curriculum changes that include more kinaesthetic learning methods, there is no acknowledgement of existing progressive education styles that have been put in place in some Western schools. These non-traditional education styles, such as Waldorf, make an effort to include more play based movement opportunities for children and youth.

The fact that they gathered data from urban, suburban and rural areas takes into consideration changes in children’s behaviour and learning styles that may be apparent depending on what environment they live and learn in and controls for these variables. On this note, it was observed that children in urban areas were able to learn about rural traditional ways of life through dance, which further demonstrates how dance can be a way to teach cultural awareness.

Kentel and Dobson’s research opens discussion of factors in Western societies that impede children’s movement opportunities both within and outside of the school

setting. Being aware of such factors is a vital part in the promotion of movement based education as it is helpful to know what obstacles stand in the way of successfully implementing creative movement and dance in school curricula.

Kentel and Dobson's cross-cultural research indicates the importance of movement, dance and play for children's holistic learning regardless of what country they come from and whether they live in urban or rural areas.

Dance Education Programs for Primary School Children

The term kinaesthetic learning is used throughout this paper to refer to learning that occurs through the use of creative movement and dance. When schools incorporate creative movement and dance into the educational curriculum, dance education is a term often used. Dance education is a way to learn kinaesthetically and has been defined as "a movement art form that promotes learning to communicate and express ideas, feelings, perspectives, and concepts through kinesthetic modes of learning" (Cone & Cone, 2011, P.28).

Skoning (2010) and Kaufman's (2011) research involve reflective observations on the importance of dance education programs within primary schools in the United States. As part of their research, creative movement and dance were introduced and intended as instructional methods that would engage all children and their various learning styles, encouraging the development of their self-esteem, intrinsic motivation, self-expression, empathy, self-regulation, non-verbal communication skills and increased comprehension of educational content being taught.

Skoning's (2010) research involved a classroom of 27 students in grades 4 and 5 at a suburban elementary school in a north central state in the U.S. Nine of the students in

the classroom were identified as having behavioural, emotional disabilities including autism, learning and cognitive disabilities; three of the nine students were English Language Learners. Prior to the implementation of creative movement within the classroom, teachers reported having to constantly deal with the students' behavioural issues and that students often had difficulty concentrating on the task at hand. Furthermore, teachers reported that students had difficulty with comprehension and retention of content being taught. This was evident particularly among students with language-based learning disabilities, as was apparent in their written and oral recall of words and ideas.

Skoning's investigation was based on the body-mind connection and her ideas are supported by Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983) as well as the constructivist approach to teaching that places value on students' perspectives and the ability to develop their own understanding of concepts in a way that makes sense to them. The Total Physical Response was one of the movement methods used in the classroom in which students responded to words using their bodies. Reflections on the effects of creative movement within the classroom were based on teacher observations and student self-reflections.

Overall, based on teacher and student observations and self-reflections, it was noted that students demonstrated increased engagement and participation in their learning. Fewer behavioural issues that typically impede their learning were exhibited and instead students experienced increased comprehension and retention of concepts being learned. These changes were observed by teachers, expressed in the students' self-reflections and observed in oral and written recall tasks. Moreover, group problem

solving skills evolved from the inclusion of creative movement in the classroom. Skoning makes reference to Kentel and Dobson's (2007) cross cultural research that, as discussed previously in this paper, reports children's increased participation and joy of learning when forms of movement and dance are incorporated into the school day.

Skoning acknowledges limitations to her research such as the lack of inquiry as to whether there are certain academic disciplines for which movement is better suited than others. Another question left unanswered is whether there are certain children (for example children with specific learning disabilities) for whom creative movement is more or less beneficial to their learning process. Skoning also points out that it would be helpful to measure how much improvement in academic and social skills results from creative movement compared to other teaching methods.

Skoning admits, "further empirical evidence is still needed if creative movement and dance are to be considered research- based instructional strategies" (p. 174). A lack of empirical evidence is a limitation to Skoning's research. Pre-data collection was based on teacher observations and student self-reports, which are not highly reliable measures.

An additional question that could be directed to Skoning regarding her study is how much teacher support is necessary to organize creative movement curricular activities and how much do teachers require assistance and training to plan and implement such activities. Whether student group sizes have an impact on the creative movement outcomes is another area that could be explored in future research.

Despite limitations and gaps in the research, Skoning presents information that lends support for how the implementation of creative movement is a useful tool for

encompassing students' differing learning needs, simultaneously providing them with opportunities for social, emotional and cognitive learning and growth.

While Skoning's research was largely based on one group of children, Kaufman (2011) recounts her experience over a five-year period in advocating for dance education programs for children and youth from kindergarten to grade 12 in public schools in the state of Montana.

Inspired by the belief that dance fosters social, emotional benefits, such as self-esteem and empathy and, aids in learning comprehension, Kaufman addressed the lack of dance education in the Montana school curricula. Just as Kentel and Dobson (2007) discussed, Kaufman (2011) points out that there is an overemphasis on teaching for standardized testing and it often takes precedence over dance programs within the school system.

Kaufman's first endeavor in regards to this research was the founding of the company CoMotion Dance Project in 2006. The company organized college students, who were training to be dance teachers, to do 50-minute interactive dance performances at Montana public schools. The dances incorporated concepts that were part of the curriculum, such as learning about gravity in an embodied way.

The CoMotion dance performances generated excitement and facilitated students' understanding of academic concepts. These performances were also beneficial for the university student performers by strengthening their interest for teaching dance and gaining experience in doing so.

Following the CoMotion Dance Project, Kaufman merged with Flagship, an

afterschool program that offers children and youth the opportunity to explore new educational experiences. Kaufman made dance education an addition to Flagship and children and youth from varying socioeconomic backgrounds had the chance to learn various dance styles, experiment with acting/playwriting and watch university dance performances. Flagship was funded by university grants and bus tickets were provided so that all interested participants could have access to the program. As with CoMotion, university students taught the younger students the dances at Flagship.

Kaufman founded another afterschool program called Math Movers, which ran for three 6-week sessions. Once a week, students took part in 50-minute creative movement lessons that taught them math concepts. They took a quiz before and after each session to measure their progress. Students demonstrated improvement in math literacy and comprehension as was measured by the pre and post session quizzes. Teachers observed that students began to use movement to solve problems and communicate the meaning of math principles.

Another effort that Kaufman made to integrate dance education into Montana public schools was in the form of a week-long community based dance festival. The *Making Connections: Dance and Learning* festival was intended to raise awareness about the benefits of dance in education and to develop an interest (by students, parents and teachers) for a larger, more long term dance education project. During the festival, students had the opportunity to learn curriculum content through movement and dance. Second graders, for example, created dances representing their interpretation of the water cycle.

The Making Connections dance festival was met with excitement, engagement,

and positive feedback from students, teachers and parents. Teachers and parents made remarks about the innovation, creativity and possibilities for increased comprehension of dance as a teaching method in classrooms.

In September 2008, a long-term project came to fruition and Kaufman launched MoDE: Montana's Model Dance Education project, which was a multiyear arts integration project. MoDe was equally funded by public schools and the Montana Arts Council and was introduced in seven schools in Montana with up to 1000 students participating. MoDE paired professional dancers with classroom teachers and Kaufman created specific programs to meet each school's objectives for integrating dance and academics.

Kaufman's efforts to integrate dance and education in Montana public schools were successful, yielding results that benefitted students' learning. While there was much profit from Kaufman's work, there were also many challenges faced along the way, such as the difficulty of getting schools to participate, and receiving funding to run the dance programs. On this note, the Math Movers program ended after 6 weeks due to staff changes, not because it was not successful or helpful for students. In addition, many teachers were uncomfortable with the idea of teaching dance. This relates back to the question in regards to Skoning's (2010) research as to whether teachers require specific training to include dance and creative movement as part of the curriculum and what efforts would need to be made for this to happen. Proper training would likely ensure that teachers feel more prepared and comfortable combining creative movement and dance with academics. This point, along with the challenges Kaufman (2007) encountered, indicate some of the many barriers that get in the way of creative movement and dance

being commonplace in schools.

Adding to the limitations that Kaufman mentions, it can be noted that limited information about specific benefits of the dance programs and background information about dance education are included in the presentation of the research. Only brief information is presented in regards to the benefits of dance, and it relates to Kaufman's personal experiences. The personal nature of the research makes it hard to generalize its findings. However, by comparing it to other research of a similar nature we can look for similarities among findings and be able to hypothesize and generalize concepts. For example, in this case we can compare Kaufman's research to that of Kentel and Dobson (2007). Kentel and Dobson discuss the social barriers that stand in the way of having dance education as a common practice in schools in Westernized countries, which include overemphasis on a standardized curricula. These discussion points align with Kaufman's (2011) research and the barriers she faced in trying to implement dance education programs in Montana schools. They were hesitant to provide funding for dance education programs because focus is often placed on standardized curricula. Research such as Kaufman's and Kentel and Dobson's (2007) creates awareness about such barriers, which is the first step to overcoming them and for creative movement and dance to be a dominant, standard and valued part of school curricula.

Overall, Kaufman's (2011) research is a great portrayal of the challenges and rewards of implementing dance education programs in public schools and Kaufman offers advice, inspiration and encouragement to others pursuing the integration of dance and academics by sharing her experiences in doing so. Kaufman's research brings up the importance of dance integration in the classroom as a long-term project, not a one-time

occurrence, in order for benefits to be maintained. This relates to Beaulac et al.'s (2011) study about an afterschool dance program for youth, and Anderson's (2015) DMT intervention for youth, in their remarking that the short duration of these programs posed a limitation in being able to consider long-lasting effects and tracking youth's social, emotional and behavioral changes over time.

Skoning (2010) and Kaufman's (2011) research indicates their reflections (and some students' reflections) on the implementation of dance within the school environment. Both researchers explored the integration of dance and academics within the public school system, demonstrating how creative movement and dance can positively influence children's cognitive and social learning, and understanding. Their research also indicates that it is possible to teach children academic concepts in alternative, embodied ways, in spite of their varying learning needs.

Teachers' Reflections and Observations of the Connection between Movement and Learning for Preschoolers

Teachers and early childhood educators are role models for engaging children in creative movement and dance in the school environment, where children spend a large part of their day. Therefore, it is valuable to assess educators' perspectives on creative movement and dance, how these activities connect to children's development and what influence they have on children's learning.

Stinson (1988) wrote about her reflections and observations of creative movement sessions with a group of preschoolers in North Carolina. Stinson, an associate professor of dance at the University of North Carolina, along with two classroom teachers, led a group of 20 four year olds in daily 30-minute creative movement sessions for one week.

These sessions included themes that appealed to the children and that they could relate to, such as gardening, and they were offered the opportunity to share their feelings and contribute their ideas. The children were reported as being enthusiastic and engaged during these creative movement sessions.

A crucial point that Stinson notes is the focus that teachers and parents place on scheduling activities for children that will teach them academic skills and place them on the path to being productive individuals in the future. Stinson argues that what children actually need is less structure and fewer scheduled activities. This relates to the importance of unstructured play, such as Kentel and Dobson (2007) discuss, as well as theories about children's autonomy. By providing children with unstructured playtime they develop a sense of identity and the confidence to explore their bodies (through creative movement) and minds in the world around them.

Constructivist theories assert that children play an active, rather than passive role, in their development and have their own interpretations of the world. The term *interpretive reproduction* has been used to describe this belief that children participate in society in their own way, create their own peer cultures and are actively contributing to cultural production and change in society. Such theories regard children as individuals in and of themselves rather than simply adults in the making (Corsaro, 2015). Providing children with opportunities for free, unstructured play in which they can move as they wish honours their autonomy and supports the concept of interpretive reproduction.

In regards to dance, Stinson (1988) argues that instead of structured dance classes like ballet, young children would benefit more from creative movement and that this is the best type of dance experience for them. This argument is made for similar reasons

that children thrive from unstructured free-play time. If children are asked to learn certain dance techniques before they've had the chance to explore what their bodies are capable of, or before they are developmentally able to execute techniques, they will likely feel discouraged. On the other hand, providing them with creative movement opportunities, free of pressure or expectations, allows them to explore their bodies, discover what they are capable of, what feels good to them and develop confidence in their bodies which then translates to confidence in their minds.

Stinson's ideas are supported by Piaget's theories about the way that children internalize movement and draw a connection between creative movement/dance and cognitive learning. During the week of creative movement sessions, Stinson noted the children's excitement and engagement and believes that dance allows them to better understand themselves and the world around them. Stinson asserts that creative movement encourages the development of sensory awareness in children and awakens the potential to discover the dance within themselves. This seems to refer to the self-expressive and spiritual elements that creative movement and dance entail. The dance within each child is the dance that they create as a way of expressing themselves and being in tune with their mind, body and soul.

One limitation to Stinson's research is that the demographic of the group was not discussed, such as information pertaining to the ethnic background(s) of the children. Neither was there any mention as to whether the children had any physical, cognitive, emotional or behavioral disabilities which all have the potential to effect the outcome of the creative movement sessions. Another limitation is the fact that Stinson played the dual role of teacher and researcher, so there is potential for researcher bias. It's possible

that Stinson had an idea of what she was hoping to discover through her research while observing the creative movement sessions over the course of the week and these preconceived ideas might have influenced her perceptions of the children's behavioral reactions to the sessions.

Stinson does however acknowledge that due to the short duration of the creative movement sessions, no specific, identifiable skills were necessarily acquired on an individual or group basis. Yet as Stinson explains, sometimes learning occurs even though it cannot be recognized and measured and children should not be rushed in their learning.

Gehris, Gooze and Whitaker (2015) aimed to gain insight into early childhood educators' (ECEs) perceptions about preschoolers' movement experiences. The researchers sought to explore how movement experiences influence children's learning, what contexts best support their learning and what challenges ECEs are faced with in terms of children's movement opportunities.

Eighty-nine ECEs were invited to participate in the research and 37 chose to take part. All were ECEs of a Head Start program servicing low-income families in eastern Pennsylvania. Six focus groups, each comprised of 4 to 8 ECEs, were organized and conducted between March and June 2010. The focus group sessions began with open-ended questions followed by more specific questions to address certain themes the authors hoped to explore. Each lasted approximately 70 minutes and were digitally recorded.

As Gehris et al. had hoped, various themes arose in conversations throughout the focus groups. The beliefs expressed by teachers in the focus groups were based on their

experiences of engaging children in movement activities in the classroom and what they observed among the children during such experiences. Teachers felt that children have an innate tendency to want to move and that learning through movement best reflects this need, and is the most efficient way for them to learn. The ECEs believed that movement activities were the most resourceful method for children to learn academic concepts, and allowed for greater recall of concepts. The preschool teachers felt that movement activates children's brain for learning and provides an outlet for their excess energy. Children demonstrated increased self-confidence after experiencing success at movement tasks and outdoor, unstructured play stimulated children's learning.

Within the focus groups, teachers discussed the importance of their engaging in movement along with the children and that this encouraged preschoolers to want to move. Engaging in movement with the children allowed the teachers to get to know children on a personal level and to form emotional bonds with them, which suggests a link between emotional expression and creative movement. Teachers believed that children having feelings of trust in their teachers was important for their willingness to try new movement-based skills.

Some challenges that ECEs encountered in regards to providing movement opportunities for children include feeling a lack of in-service training and having to manage with limited physical space in the classroom. ECEs felt that they did not have adequate training about children's physical development and gross motor activities they can do with the children and that this should be included in in-service training they receive. They expressed that in order to engage children in gross motor activities inside the classroom, furniture had to be moved around to make space for such activities, which

is not ideal and takes away from the time devoted to these activities.

Gehris et al. express that there were a limited number of Head Start teachers who participated in the focus groups and therefore they are not necessarily representative of all Head Start ECEs or other ECEs outside of the Head Start program. Another limitation to their research is that the preschool classrooms were not observed to confirm the themes and observations about the students that the teachers reported in the focus groups.

Adding to these limitations, was that only a portion of those invited to participate decided to take part, which could lead to narrowed perspectives since it is only teachers who willingly took part whose opinions are discussed, adding to the lack of generalizability of the research. It could be that only those who already thought movement was important participated. Certain elements that teachers discussed such as emotional bonds formed between them and the children are not entirely reliable measures because they are abstract concepts and no tangible ways to describe how emotional bonds were formed were mentioned. Furthermore, just as the 37 ECEs perspectives cannot be attributed as representative of all ECEs, they are also not necessarily representative of elementary and highschool teachers' perspectives about learning and movement.

Nonetheless, Gehris et al. raise thought provoking ideas about the differences between structured versus unstructured movement, how movement influences children's learning and how teachers play an important role in instilling children's movement habits and their desire to learn through movement.

Both Stinson (1988) and Gehris et al. (2015), offer observations made by early childhood teachers who recognize that children's learning is optimal when it involves movement because of their innate desire for movement. They claim that encouraging

children to participate in creative movement and unstructured free play caters to their tendency to want to move and allows them opportunities for self-expressing, feeling engaged in their learning, and developing self-confidence.

While research in the field of early childhood is relatively recent, it is not brand new. The 27-year gap between Stinson (1988) and Gehris et al.'s (2015) research illustrates that educators have been advocating for creative movement opportunities within classrooms for quite some time, adding to the fact that such integration continues to be a struggle. Any changes that are being made within school systems towards more kinaesthetic learning seem to happen at a slow rate. Kaufman's (2011) challenges implementing dance education in Montana public schools are an example.

Overall Findings and Limitations of the Literature on Kinaesthetic Learning

Benefits

Findings from the literature report that students enjoy kinaesthetic modes of learning and are engaged and focused while learning through creative movement and dance in the classroom. Overall, when creative movement and dance are incorporated as methods for learning, students exhibit better comprehension and retention of curricular content because they are simultaneously engaging their bodies and minds to encode new information. Teachers observe less disruptive behaviour since creative movement and dance increase engagement and provide an outlet for excess energy. From a social standpoint, students cooperate more with their peers and exhibit pro-social behaviour.

Kentel and Dobson (2007) and Gehris et al. (2015) extend on these findings by demonstrating that children can also benefit from unstructured play outdoors and that it is

important for their social, emotional and cognitive learning. Children move and learn as they play by engaging their creativity in unstructured outdoor settings.

However, a limitation to these findings is that the research often lacks empirical evidence. Many of the findings were based on teacher and student self-reports, and researcher observations, which limits the reliability and generalizability of the research. Another limitation is researcher bias, which occurred in some instances, in that the researchers who gathered and analyzed data were also responsible for teaching the children creative movement and dance.

Discussion Based on the Literature on Kinaesthetic Learning

The research presented here regarding the benefits to children and youth's learning when creative movement and dance are used as learning tools demonstrates the importance of kinaesthetic learning. Also demonstrated is the struggle to implement creative movement and dance programs into school curriculums and how oftentimes doing so is taboo.

As Kaufman (2011) and Kentel and Dobson (2007) emphasize, there are many societal barriers that stand in the way of the implementation of creative movement and dance in educational settings in Westernized countries. These barriers include lack of funding for creative movement and dance programs in schools and the fact that such programs are not made a priority within the curriculum. Instead, standardized testing is mandatory and specific academic criteria are mapped out, which leaves both teachers and students feeling pressured to meet curricular expectations. As Gehris et al. (2015) point out, these curricular expectations often begin at the preschool age, with focus placed on children becoming familiar with phonics and being able to recite the alphabet.

Curriculum structure even carries over into the time set aside for children and youth to be physically active. Rather than having the freedom to be able to develop and explore their own physical capabilities and learn to enjoy creative movement and dance, there is often set criteria for what they are expected to be able to accomplish in physical education class. For example, within Nova Scotia's public school system, there is a rubric of physical education curriculum outcomes on which children are graded ("Nova Scotia Teachers Union", n.d.).

These examples are evidence of the goal driven society of Canada (and other Westernized Countries) and that activities included within the school system usually have specific learning goals and outcomes, and rarely include activities that promote emotional well-being, or that are purely for entertainment value. Rather than having children and youth engage in activities and then reflect on what they learned, it is commonly the belief that they should engage in particular activities to learn specific skills. This is not a holistic approach to education; neither does it take into consideration the range of learning styles that children and youth prefer, or individual differences of physical, emotional and cognitive capabilities. On the other hand, as Degarmo (2006) explains, "reflective responses to learning through movement are important because they help make known the meaning of an experience for a learner" (p. 1).

Based on the research, it seems that incorporating creative movement and dance into classrooms as tools for learning is more accepted at the preschool age than when children are older in elementary and high school. While preschools have curriculum standards and criteria, and school readiness programs, play-based learning remains common within the preschool environment. Once children enter elementary school, play-

based learning begins to phase out of their educational experiences and this also often means less movement-based learning.

Apart from changes to educational curricula that outline what and how children and youth are supposed to learn in school, changes in the training teachers receive also seems necessary as part of the process to implement creative movement and dance into schools. As Kaufman (2011) remarked, teachers felt uncomfortable with the idea of teaching dance, so it seems that a kinaesthetic pedagogy needs to be part of teacher education to help avoid this barrier and get them used to teaching via creative movement and dance.

When societal barriers are surpassed and creative movement and dance do make their way into school curricula, the benefits they yield are evident, as observed by the research presented in this paper. One of the most valuable benefits is that “dance is for all students of all abilities; everyone can participate, create, learn, and experience the joy of dancing with others” (Cone & Cone, 2011, P. 28). Collaboration and cooperation that develops among children and youth as they move and dance together create a foundation upon which their social, emotional and cognitive learning is based. Learning becomes less of a competitive, individualist, mind focused, outcome based process and more of a supportive, process based journey of discovery involving body, mind and spirit.

Kentel and Dobson (2007) provide an appropriate thought to conclude this portion of the paper :

Play habits are established at the preschool age (Reilly et al., 2004); therefore, it is essential to continue to advocate for the presence of movement in preschool and school curricula and to promote its benefits in children’s discretionary time. We

might go so far as to argue that children have a fundamental right to play, and that it has become necessary to counter political agendas for schooling that seek to deprive them of this right. (p. 49)

Conclusion

Research regarding creative movement and dance for children and youth can be categorized based on its focus, as was done for this paper. However, it is crucial to look at the bigger picture, at how social, emotional and cognitive learning interconnect and how the interplay among these areas of children and youth's development influences their overall well-being and is enhanced through creative movement and dance.

Gehris et al. (2015) provide an example of this interconnectedness when they report that while preschool children are cognitively learning via creative movement, early childhood educators thought that if they engaged in creative movement along with the children, it also helped form emotional bonds with them. Skoning (2010) makes reference to other research, including Meekums (2008), that has demonstrated that in addition to improvements in comprehension and classroom behaviour, "creative movement and dance strategies in the classroom have also been documented to increase students' self-esteem, emotional expression and regulation and social function" (Skoning, 2010, p. 170-171), which further demonstrates the connection and overlap between children and youth's social, emotional and cognitive development.

The act of performing was sometimes a part of the creative movement and dance programs outlined throughout this paper and it deserves some attention. It is worth discussing what effect the element of performance has on children and youth. Duggan (1978) explains that performance adds structure to dance therapy and can provide

children and youth with a sense of purpose and boundaries to work with. Recalling Bond's (1994) research, children aged 5 to 8 years participated in an in-school dance project and while preparing for the culminating performance they experienced a sense of pride, excitement and leadership. By taking part in creative movement and dance performances, children and youth feel a sense of contribution and have the opportunity to create something they are a part of and can gain self-confidence in doing so.

When children and youth are permitted to emotionally express themselves through creative movement and dance, their autonomy is respected and valued. Autonomy support refers to the guidance that teachers provide for children in a way that nurtures their autonomy and supports their self-expression and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004). Autonomy support has been linked with the development of emotional regulation.

Consistently across the research, findings indicate that creative movement and dance are a beneficial component of children and youth's lives in the various contexts they engage in. The classroom environment (whether it is inside or outdoors) is one of these contexts. By engaging in creative movement and dance in the classroom environment, children and youth are able to learn to express themselves and interact with their peers, blossoming socially, emotionally and cognitively as they learn with their body, mind and spirit. An important aspect of the integration of creative movement and dance in schools is for there to be supportive educators who guide children and youth in a holistic learning process and who recognize that social and emotional learning are just as important as cognitive learning. When children and youth are provided with the

opportunity and are encouraged to practice creative movement and dance, they are also more physically, emotionally and cognitively ready and motivated to learn.

Including creative movement and dance, especially in the classroom environment, creates an inclusive school environment and is a means to unite children and youth despite their differences and encourage them to cooperate and appreciate each other's differences as well as recognize their universality.

Creative movement and dance can be the cornerstone to developing resilience against unpredictable life factors as well as healthy positive coping mechanisms to deal with trauma and challenges that children and youth are faced with. Creative movement and dance can also act as preventative measures to decrease likelihood of behavioural, emotional and learning disabilities that could potentially develop in particular among children and youth who are more prone to such developmental difficulties.

Creative movement and dance as an integral part of children and youth's lives fosters their healthy and holistic development. It allows them to self-express, connect with their spirit, and develop a sense of individuality as well as a sense of belonging among their peers and in society. Creative movement and dance nurture qualities of self-confidence, bodily awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, communication, intrinsic motivation, enthusiasm and focus among children and youth.

Though findings are consistent across the literature, there are however limitations as to how research on creative movement and dance with children and youth is conducted that impede its credibility. These limitations are potentially part of the reason why educational curricula often do not place as much value on creative movement and dance

as they do academic subjects, or at least why their implementation into schools seems to be such a slow process.

Since educational systems that resist change and attempt to hang onto traditional ways of educating children and youth are what research advocating for creative movement and dance is up against, efforts will need to be put into designing research that yields more empirical results. From there, the hope is that slowly as research on creative movement and dance with children and youth gains more recognition and credibility, changes will be made in educational curricula to include more of such kinaesthetic learning opportunities for children and youth.

So the question is this: What further evidence that creative movement and dance are beneficial for children and youth's learning and emotional literacy is needed for school systems (including policy makers, teachers and curricula) to start to take creative movement and dance programs more seriously, and value them as an essential component in teaching children and youth fundamental life skills? Discussing limitations across the research and considering methods to decrease them will help provide answers to this question.

One reoccurring limitation across the research was researcher bias meaning that the researcher(s) was collecting and analyzing data and in some instances also leading the creative movement and dance sessions. The researchers, who are advocating for creative movement and dance, have biased opinions, which might skew their interpretations of the data and decrease the overall reliability and validity of the research. Keeping the roles of the researchers and dance teachers separate would decrease the likelihood of researcher bias. For instance, dance teachers leading the creative movement and dance sessions

would solely have that role and there could be one (or more) researchers assigned to gathering data, one assigned to analyzing data and another assigned to preparing a written report of the findings.

Likely due to the abstract nature of some of the qualities being measured, such as emotional expression and regulation, much of the data from the research was gathered via student and teacher interviews and self-reports. This type of data collection can pose as a limitation because of the potential for teachers and students to report findings that vary from what (if anything) actually changed in their behaviour during and after creative movement and dance sessions. As research participants they might feel pressured to respond in a certain manner based on what they believe researchers might want to hear. While interviews and self-reports remain a useful means to collect data, researchers could include additional means of data collection to support and against which to compare findings from self-reports and interviews. One example is Beaulac et al.'s (2011) research wherein %80 interrater reliability was achieved among various data collection methods used which included student self-reports, a 9-item survey filled out by the dance teachers, parent and dance teacher focus groups and interviews with some of the students.

Much of the research did not include pre-data collection as part of the methodology, making it difficult to justify reported changes in children and youth's behaviour claimed to be a result of creative movement and dance sessions. Without pre-data collection there is no basis against which to compare findings. It is also problematic if pre-data collection is solely based on teacher and student self-reports such as with Bond (1994), Thom (2010) and Skoning's (2010) research for the same reasons why student and teacher self-reports as data collection pose as a limitation. The inclusion of

pre-data collection in the methodology of research attempting to measure the benefits of creative movement and dance for children and youth would help to increase the reliability and validity of research findings and potentially track the extent to which behaviour changes occurred.

A reoccurring limitation of the research was the short duration of the studies that make it difficult to track significant changes in children and youth's behaviour and learning over time. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial towards the advancement of research pertaining to creative movement and dance with children and youth. Conducting studies that take place over longer durations of time, would allow researchers to further explore how creative movement and dance effect children and youth's lives socially, emotionally, spiritually, cognitively and physically.

Also lacking in this field of research is follow-up research to assess whether beneficial changes in children and youth's behaviour from creative movement and dance programs remain after the interventions are no longer being implemented. Follow up research and longitudinal studies would help with gaining an understanding of potential long-term effects of creative movement and dance for children and youth. This knowledge would help with the planning of creative movement and dance programs (offered in schools or as extra-curricular programs and DMT) by providing information about the length of time programs and interventions should run for in order to optimize benefits and whether they should be offered on a continual basis.

The possibility that extraneous variables influenced findings was another limitation to the research. When attempting to measure certain aspects of human behaviour it is difficult to control for all extraneous variables and there will always be

some variables that cannot be controlled for. Nonetheless, in trying to gather data that demonstrates the benefits of creative movement and dance for children and youth, more attempts could be made to control for extraneous variables that might be influencing results. While not all variables can necessarily be controlled for, it is important to eliminate any variables that can be controlled that might have an effect on results. Extraneous variables that were evident across the research discussed above were performance, group dynamics and music as part of the creative movement and dance programs. While all three of these factors are often part of any creative movement and dance environment, the inclusion of control groups could help to determine if any of them are contributing a significant amount to changes in children and youth's behaviour.

Whether the consistency of creative movement and dance sessions has an influence of children and youth's behaviour and learning is a perspective that could be explored in future research. For example comparing how results may differ depending on how often children and youth take part in sessions such as daily, weekly or bi-monthly.

Future research that explores the effects of creative movement and dance on children and youth's social, emotional and cognitive learning would profit from researchers' recognizing limitations of past research so they can be avoided when possible. This will allow for more in depth research that demonstrates whether the findings discussed throughout this paper would be obtained when there is no researcher bias or extraneous variables, and when pre-data collection, more reliable data collection methods and longitudinal studies are part of the research methodology. Such precautions and considerations while conducting the research would likely yield results that are more reliable, valid and generalizable, rendering them more credible. This would increase the

likelihood for creative movement and dance to be woven into school curricula thus nurturing children and youth's social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development and well-being.

Chapter 4: Interview Analysis and Discussion

Participants' Definitions and Descriptions of Creative Movement and Dance

When asked how they would define or describe creative movement and dance, participants expressed that it involves a personal element that each individual brings to the practice. They spoke about children and youth being allowed to move in ways that feel good for them and having freedom in the way they move even if there are some loose guidelines or structure involved.

Michelle made the distinction between creative movement and creative dance explaining that creative movement could involve any type of movement done with creative energy while creative dance involves doing a particular dance move such as the twist but the individual does it in their “own way”, with their own style. This distinction helps to support the idea that even when choreography is involved, individuals can embody the moves and contribute their unique expression to the movements. Michelle also made mention of how music might effect creative movement and dance by stating that:

But you can have creative movement...I suppose you could have creative dance with or without music. But it would be easier to have just creative moves. You could do them without music. It wouldn't be contingent on the music. Creative dance I feel would be more contingent on the music.

Music is so often paired with creative movement and dance and therefore it is a relevant point to consider. Within this discourse however music is not further discussed in regards to what role it plays within creative movement and dance contexts or what influence it may have on these practices.

Katia described creative movement as being “accessible to everyone” and “open to people of all abilities”. This statement along with Michelle’s distinction of creative dance helps to emphasize that when it comes to creative movement and dance, importance should be placed on the expressiveness of the practice rather than technique.

Katia further described creative movement and dance as having an “abstract quality”, which is also an appropriate way to describe the spirituality and emotional expressiveness that are a part of creative movement and dance to which participants referred.

Caleb defined creative movement and dance as moving with intention and conscious awareness. The mover brings conscious awareness to the way they move their body and engages with their body in an “inquisitive way”. Caleb explains that, “if that element isn’t there then it’s just moving. But to define it as creative movement then you have to be bringing something to it”. This idea parallels Laban’s distinction between functional movements and expressive movements, arguing that movement becomes dance when movements transition from being functional to expressive (Konie, 2011).

Teaching Style

The way that creative movement and dance are offered to children and youth can affect whether or not they feel comfortable to self-express, emotionally express and connect with their spirituality when engaging in these practices. All four participants spoke about the influence that teaching style has on children and youths’ creative movement and dance experience. One of the key aspects discussed was how important it is for instructors to create a space in which children and youth feel safe to participate openly in creative movement and dance. When such safe places are created, children and

youth are given the permission and freedom to express themselves in an embodied way through creative movement and dance without fear of being judged or ‘doing it wrong’. Caleb said, “my role is simply to provide them with the environment and the context for their exploration. Just like the right exercise or the right question and they’re off to the races”. He also expressed that gymnastics could be considered creative movement depending on how it is taught.

Creating such safe spaces is congruent with what Bhagwan (2009) refers to as ‘sacred spaces’ as discussed in the previous section of this paper given the subheading *Aspects of Children’s Spirituality Associated with Creative Movement and Dance*, on pages 15 and 16 in which Bhagwan claims that when such spaces are created, children feel spiritually safe, safe to be themselves and to share their emotions. Participants’ discussion of the importance of creating safe spaces within a creative movement and dance context draws a connection between self-expression, spirituality and creative movement and dance. One participant directly expressed that teaching style can influence whether or not a child can access their spirituality via creative movement and dance.

Katia spoke about the importance of the language that she uses to help create a safe space for the young children. Speaking in affirmatives and “trying to be positive as oppose to ‘Get over here right now!’ or ‘Stop that!’ ” is both more productive in terms of having children pay attention as well as making them feel inclined to want to participate in the creative movement and dance class.

Creating boundaries. Three of the participants explained that from their experience part of creating a creative movement and dance environment wherein children and youth feel comfortable to express themselves included creating boundaries within the

space. Children and youth seem to have the most enriching experience when they are given the freedom to be themselves and engage in creative movement and dance while simultaneously having some structure set in place for them.

Michelle pointed out that boundaries could refer not only to the structure set in place within a space but also the physical space itself:

So I guess that, you do need some boundaries in there, like, you need to create the safe space for them to be able to, to feel, yeah that they can be safe. Like I don't think I would ever do, like, free dance outside. Cause it's too open, it's not a secure little capsule in there for them.

Two participants acknowledged the anxiety that some children exhibit when there are no boundaries and they don't know what to expect. Other children thrive on that freedom. The teachers' challenge seems to be finding a balance between structure and freedom within their creative movement and dance class so that all children and youth along with their varying needs feel safe and willing to participate. Katia had the following to say about this:

I think some structure is important, especially for the little bodies that really require it. The more anxious children who just need to know what to expect, but not to be so rigid so that the kids who are a little freer in their ability to cope...

You know that they can also have their moment too.

Katia explained that following a certain routine each class helps children in knowing what to expect. For example, each class might begin with a welcome circle, followed by a warm-up routine, followed by a certain activity done each week and so on. Within the components of this structured class children are still given the freedom to

move in ways that feel good for them and allow them to self-express.

Springboard technique. Katia introduced the Springboard Technique, which is the style they received their creative movement training in. The Springboard technique follows the concepts of time, space and energy, which are the same concepts that Laban Movement Analysis is based on (Konie, 2011). The idea behind the Springboard technique as discussed by Katia during the interview is that the theme for a creative movement class can be based on what is present in the environment. “They didn’t give us exercises to regurgitate, they taught us how to create our own exercises through things that were in our environment. So that it’s fresh all the time.” For example:

We could develop a whole class from your sweater, you know. You’ve got animals, you’ve got patterns, you’ve got numbers through and design and pathways and colour. So there’s time, space and energy in your sweater and we could create a whole class from that.

Instructing creative movement and dance through the Springboard Technique seems like a helpful tool for creative movement and dance teachers to be present, focusing on what is available to them and perhaps this would also help them to find balance in meeting the needs of all the children and youth they are leading.

Learning Fundamental Social Skills. For many young, 3 and 4 year old children, being part of a creative movement and dance class is often their first exposure to a structured social setting. In addition to learning how to self-express and learn bodily awareness and gross motor skills such as how to run and jump, they are also learning what Rebecca refers to as “fundamental social skills”, such as waiting your turn in line

and making a circle together. Structure and boundary setting are important aspects for the learning of these fundamental social skills.

Self-expression and Emotional Expression

Many comments made during the interviews in regards to self-expression were connected to emotional expression insinuating that emotional expression is an integral part of self-expression. Participants expressed that part of what makes creative movement so expressive is that it does not involve “this whole technical language” and there is no right or wrong way to do it. Once a safe creative movement and dance environment is created, children and youth have the opportunity to self-express. Rebecca said the following with respect to emotional expression:

I definitely feel like if it's fostered then you see it, you see it in the kids and how they express themselves on stage, you see it in their comfort in the room and in the way that they connect to the movements that they're doing. I think it's every teacher's goal that kids will be able to express their personality, their kind of passion and love through the movement. And some families who foster that really well too. Some groups and community groups that you just feel that it's been ...not coached but that people are allowed to express it. Whereas other people diminish that side of it a little bit or you know 'We need to stay in this certain way until we get to the next step', and so...I do think, and then when I'm thinking about the children I teach, and in my inclusive classes that's what we're trying to foster the most.

This perspective emphasises that emotional expression via creative movement and dance is associated with the freedom to self-express, without rigid structure enforced upon the children and youth in the way they move.

Empowerment, Autonomy and Self-Confidence

Creative movement and dance is a means through which children and youth can feel empowered and have the opportunity to exert autonomy. Having control of their body and the way they move allows children and youth to feel empowered and the sense of autonomy they gain from it has the potential to instil in them a sense of autonomy in other areas of their life outside of their creative movement and dance practice.

As Michelle pointed out, for many children and youth, their lives are structured and scheduled and creative movement and dance class may be one of the only opportunities for them to have the freedom to do and feel what they want to.

That's so empowering for them to be able to feel what they want to feel. Cause little kids are often... every moment of their life is watched and directed and like they get up and they're fed something and they're shipped off to school and then they're told what to think and then they come home and they're told what to do.

When I work with kids I often think like, this might be the only half an hour or 45 minutes in the run of a day or in the run of week or in the run of a month, if I only see them for a month, that they get to be completely free.

Contrary to power dynamics that often exist between children/youth and adults, creative movement and dance instruction can be empowering for children and youth to decide for themselves what feels good for them and decide how they want to express themselves. As Katia expressed:

I find that the kids that I teach, they are given authority over themselves and what they do and how they do it as oppose to being told from outside. Now for course there's a whole philosophy that's changing really big time in the dance world. You know, it's the power structure and differentials between teacher and students. But creative movement has always allowed for a general, you know, the self-directed process for the kids.

When adults support children and youth's autonomy, it fosters their self-expression and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004) and, is positively correlated with their emotional development. Children and youth's autonomy is nurtured in creative movement and dance practices, supporting the claim that creative movement and dance also nurtures their self-expression, intrinsic motivation and emotional development, accentuating the interconnectedness among these social-emotional skills.

Inhibitions to Creative Movement and Dance

Two participants spoke about changes that occur in many children around age 10 when they begin to demonstrate inhibitions to engaging in creative movement and dance. In contrast to the free spirited, carefree way that children move and dance when they are young, children seem to reach an age when they become more embedded in social contexts and are inhibited in their creative movement and dance practices, displaying less emotional expression.

Some potential explanations for the inhibitions that children and youth display that were brought up by participants include social conditioning, bodily changes that occur at puberty and home life. As Caleb expressed, creative movement and dance can be

a means to encounter emotional and embodied inhibitions (both those that are related to creative movement and dance and those that are related to other aspects of an individual's life).

When asked with what age group they preferred to teach creative movement and dance, two participants responded that they prefer younger children because they are “so fresh and innocent” and uninhibited. As Michelle explained it:

Ah they're just... You give them something and they go with it. Like they, they have no inhibitions. You say 'Be your favourite animal' and they'll be like a walrus on the floor. Or like a frog jumping around trying to catch flies with their tongue. Yeah I find that just how imaginative they are and how they just don't care very inspiring. Cause you don't get that with adults.

Parental Resistance. In contrast to allowing children and youth to have authority over their bodies and feel empowered when they engage in creative movement and dance, some instructors often witness parental/adult attitudes towards creative movement and dance practices that inhibit children and youths' self-expression and creativity while engaged in these activities.

For example, Michelle teaches creative movement classes at an afterschool care program in a public school in Halifax. She said that sometimes during the class a child might be laying on the ground, doing their own thing for a bit. When she sees this she is fine with it and realizes that maybe that's what the child needs in that moment, it's ok if they don't want to dance and she doesn't want to force them. However, teachers will see this and think “Oh they're doing it wrong and they're not participating”.

Connections can be drawn between adults' resistant attitudes and the diminishing self-expression that occurs as children and youth mature and are exposed to social pressures and expectations. This is not to suggest any causal relationship or state that when children and youth are inhibited in their creative movement and dance that it is because they experienced social pressures or resistance from parents/adults, but that there is a potential correlation.

Process not progress. One of the most important parts of creative movement and dance is how children and youth feel when they are dancing and ensuring that they move in ways that feel good for them and that allow them to express their individuality and emotionality. Rebecca said, "it doesn't need to be prescribed, dance doesn't need to be what A, B and C looks like but it can be all in between".

What children and youth gain from creative movement and dance lies within the process of engaging in such embodied practices rather than the progress they make and what the outcome will be. While many children and youth have the opportunity to perform creative movement and dance routines they have been practicing, the benefit of performance does not come from what the performance looks like but from the act itself. Children and youth can gain a sense of confidence from performing creative movement and dance in front of an audience. It is crucial that they learn to feel pride and confidence in their accomplishments regardless of how things turn out.

Rebecca spoke about the structure and rigidity that comes with intensive dance training and the discipline that goes along with it. It is when this structure is integrated that children and youth begin to feel pressure and may not enjoy their dancing as much. Rebecca spoke about her personal journey through dance training and how she didn't

realize until later how important “the identity piece” is rather than aesthetics. She talked about going from experiencing the freedom of movement as a young child in creative movement classes, to the rigidity of dance training and, then re-finding the passion and freedom within prescribed movements.

Privilege

Socioeconomic background. A point of discussion that came up during a couple of the interviews is how creative movement and dance classes are often not accessible to all children coming from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Creative movement and dance classes that are offered outside of the school system are often expensive, narrowing the diversity of the children and youth who can participate in these classes.

Children with special needs. Another type of privilege linked to many creative movement and dance classes is that there are limited opportunities for children with special needs. Rebecca explained that this was the incentive for starting a dance class offered to children and youth with special needs so that they could have the opportunity to engage in expressive creative movement and dance as well.

Gender stereotypes. It is interesting to consider privilege in relation to the gender stereotypes that exist around creative movement and dance and that being female entails a certain privilege in that it is often more acceptable in society to be a female dancer rather than a male dancer. As Caleb expressed, “in today’s day and age, gender roles is a hot topic”. While not on the list of questions prepared to ask interviewees, gender stereotypes was a theme that frequently came up either by participants on their own accord or when something they said sparked the topic and they were asked the

question as to whether in their experience they've noticed differences between boys and girls when it comes to creative movement and dance.

Rebecca said that in their experience they do not tend to see a noticeable difference between boys and girls but they made the point of saying that they also do not teach many boys and that most of their students are girls. This statement alone sheds light on the gender stereotypes that exist when it comes to creative movement and dance in that it is generally more acceptable for girls to dance than boys.

Bond's (1994) research, as discussed in the literature review portion of this paper on pages 49-52, highlights how the language used to talk about dance demonstrates gender stereotypes. The influence that language has on the way boys and girls respond to creative movement and dance instruction was brought up by two of the participants.

Rebecca remarked on the terminology:

I think maybe in the younger classes, like in the very early creative movement there's a couple more boys usually that come in cause that same fundamental their parents want them active and moving but as soon as it has a ballet title on it they tend to drop off a little bit. Yeah that stereotype is still there a little bit.

Michelle expressed:

I really have to be careful of my language. When it's boys and girls, like when... I try to keep it... like boys will resonate with, like, 'Ok let's be ninjas or let's play basketball.' And for the most part girls will as well. But if I say 'Float around like a fairy, the boys won't. Girls will but boys won't. But if I say 'Float around like you're floating on a cloud' then they'll all do it. But there's always...there's always both majority girls that want to dance, but there's always a few girls that

don't want to. But there's more resistance with the boys. Especially if you call it dance. If you call it dance it feels like there's more resistance with the boys.

Another participant remark that resonates with the results from Bond's (1994) research was that generally boys are interested in bigger movements, whereas girls tend to move more delicately. Participants expressed that such gender stereotypes were less evident among younger children and became more apparent as children got older. Michelle commented on how three and four year olds in their creative movement class came to class wearing frilly skirts and that sometimes it seems as though it is the parents choosing to dress their children in gender stereotypical outfits. Rebecca commented on how it depends on 'family comfort' as to whether boys participate in creative movement and dance activities as they get beyond the preschool age. These are examples of the way parents and other adult figures have the potential to reinforce gender stereotypes among young children and of the authority they have over children and youth's creative movement and dance participation.

Katia commented that in their experience teaching creative movement and dance to all ages:

I'm finding certainly in the past 5 years that gender identities are becoming more fluid, and where that begins for people, you know it's different. I mean much, much more now, whether it was always prevalent and people just weren't able to express that they were gender fluid or identified as something other than what they appeared to be.

This comment offers a hopeful outlook that there are social changes happening within the creative movement and dance context. If gender roles are becoming more

fluid, gender stereotypes have the potential to change and dissolve so that all children and youth, regardless of whether they identify as female or male, can have the opportunity to self-express via creative movement and dance. As Caleb expressed, part of creative movement and dance is about trying on different roles and being able to identify with “the strong man and the elegant woman.”

Spirituality and Creative Movement and Dance

All of the participants conveyed their passion for creative movement and dance in the way they spoke about their experiences. It is this passion that motivates them to teach and create an outlet for children and youth to express themselves, their emotions, their creativity and their spirit when engaging in creative movement and dance. It is this passion that nurtures children and youth’s physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Participants made connections between children’s spirituality and their emotional expression. Vulnerability, honesty and “being one’s true self” were mentioned while discussing the connection between children’s spirituality and their creative movement and dance practice. As Ruiz and Mills (2004) explain, “Every emotion comes directly from our spirit, from our integrity; it is completely authentic” (p. 105).

Katia explained it accurately by saying that “body, mind, spirit ... it’s not like it’s a concrete, visual, measureable thing but (something) that we expose”. Katia explained that she feels that three and four year old children do not yet have an awareness of their spirituality. Not to say that it’s not there but that they have not yet identified it within themselves. She believes that creative movement and dance can be a means to expose children to their spirituality by providing them with opportunities to self-express and emotionally express in embodied ways.

Katia further expressed that young children live so presently and when they feel an emotion, they naturally express it with their whole bodies, without even realizing it. That is to say that they do not suppress or hide their emotions. Because young children live so presently, I would argue that their body, mind, spirit connection is strong; their body, mind and spirit act in unison, openly displaying what they are feeling. This reiterates what Adams et al. (2015) claim in that children's spirituality is expressed in their way of being 'here and now'.

Michelle believes that spirituality is part of creative movement. "I don't think you can have the creative part without the spiritual part". She talked about being able to experience the physical benefits and cognitive benefits by following a dance routine but the spiritual benefits happen when one "goes within and adds their own flair" to the dancing. This speaks to the importance of engaging body, mind and spirit in creative movement and dance practices to fully express emotion and spirit via the body, nurturing overall well-being.

Rebecca conveyed that whether children and youth can connect with their spirituality through creative movement and dance depends on whether it is fostered by teachers and families. She also mentioned that placing too much focus on dance technique diminishes the spiritual side of creative movement and dance. From this comment a connection is inferred between inhibited self-expression that can occur when creative movement and dance is too prescribed and the focus is on progress and, inhibited spiritual expression.

Caleb believes that creative movement and dance is spiritual because it is about "connecting with the deepest part" of ourselves, being honest and "wide open and

compassionate.” When speaking about his experience doing contact improvisation he felt that this was the most spiritual of his dance practices because it has no parameters.

Discussion

Many of the topics outlined based on what arose from analysis of the interview data were themes that were already considered and discussed in the introduction and literature review portions of this paper. It is exciting to see such themes arise in conversation with creative movement and dance instructors because it strengthens the arguments that these themes bring forth and provides concrete examples of scenarios wherein they emerge. Along with already mentioned ideas, new perspectives were brought forth by participants such as the importance of setting boundaries within creative movement and dance classes and the vital role that the teachers play in allowing children and youth the freedom to self-express and share their emotions and spirit.

In theory, all children and youth have the potential to engage in creative movement and dance. They are born with an innate passion for movement and honest self-expression. They all have the potential to self-express and share their emotions in embodied ways. It is through the practice of creative movement and dance that children and youth can fully live out this passion. When provided with a positive, encouraging, safe environment within which to engage in creative movement and dance, children and youth develop the confidence to self-express in embodied ways, exercise their autonomy, learn fundamental social skills, connect with others and connect with their spirituality. Society’s role in assisting this process is to encourage children and youth’s freedom of self and emotional expression, rewrite the stories that exist around gender stereotypes in

regards to creative movement and dance and, to work towards making creative movement and dance more accessible to all children and youth.

Limitations of the Research

The number of participants interviewed was few and had there been more than four, additional perspectives would have been included to compliment or differ from what was discussed by the four participants. Including more participants would strengthen the points that are discussed and/or offer new points of consideration to discuss in regards to creative movement and dance with children and youth. Interviewing more participants would also add to the generalizability of the research.

The four participants are Caucasian and therefore represent a narrow range in terms of ethnic diversity. Including a more diverse range in ethnicity among participants would help strengthen the validity of the research and incorporate cross-cultural perspectives.

Two of the participants teach at a dance school where it costs money to attend classes so most of their reflections are based on children and youth coming from more privileged backgrounds. This is a narrow lens in terms of diversity among the children and youth their reflections are based on.

Another limitation to the data collection is that not all the same questions were posed to each participant. For example, only three of the participants were prompted with questions in regards to gender stereotypes in creative movement and dance. However it is interesting to note that the one participant who was not asked such questions brought up the subject of gender stereotypes of their own accord. One of the participants was not

asked how they would define or describe creative movement and dance because I accidentally skipped over this question during their interview.

Only two participants, Caleb and Michelle were given the Interview Questions Template before the interview to have time to reflect and know what questions to expect. Unintentionally, the other two participants, Katia and Rebecca, were not provided with the questions template ahead of time because I forgot to send it to them via e-mail. It's possible that their responses would have been different had they been given the opportunity to prepare their answers ahead of time. Caleb mentioned during the interview that he had reflected on his responses. I am unsure as to whether Michelle had the chance to reflect on questions ahead of time. There was no correlation between length of interview and depth of responses depending on whether the participants were given the questions ahead of time.

The fact that this was my first time conducting interviews likely poses as a limitation. Having more practice doing interviews would have likely enabled me to come up with additional questions to ask interviewees and help to ensure that I pose all the same core questions to each participant.

The one interview conducted over the phone felt different than the interviews that occurred in person. This interview was also different because it was the first one I conducted and was attempting to write notes while listening to Caleb's responses. This made me feel a bit scattered and I learned that not taking notes (relying on audio recording device) as well as having face-to-face contact is a more efficient way to conduct interviews and be able to fully engage with the participant.

One thing that was overlooked before the interviews took place was providing participants with an explanation of what my interpretation of ‘spirituality’ is. During the first interview, the participant seemed to have an understanding of what it meant to them and did not ask for clarification when I posed the question whether they believe there to be a connection between children’s spirituality and their creative movement and dance practice. During the second interview the participant asked for clarification. They were immediately given a brief explanation based on a description that was already prepared in written format included in this paper on pages 8 and 9. This same request for clarification occurred during the third interview. During the fourth interview, the participant was provided with a brief explanation of what ‘spirituality’ meant in context along with the question about potential connections they see between creative movement and dance and children’s spirituality.

The focus of this research has been on children and youth, covering a large age range. Focusing on a more specific age range and looking at creative movement and dance with children and youth separately across various age ranges would provide a different perspective. It would offer comparisons to be made between age groups and potentially give indications for when inhibitions generally begin to occur and what children and youth experience from creative movement and dance at certain ages.

Personal Reflection on Writing my Thesis

Preparing a thesis has challenged me to practice self-discipline and self-confidence. My thesis has been a journey in learning about myself. Throughout the process of writing my thesis, I have been learning to be more aware of and regulate my own emotions through the practice of creative movement and dance. Since I am so

passionate about engaging children and youth in creative movement and dance, encouraging them to self-express and be in tune with their bodies, physically and emotionally, then it feels necessary to deepen my own practice in doing so. I want to practice what I preach.

When I dance alone, I move in ways that my body compels me to move, letting go of thoughts and simply feeling, thinking with my body instead of intellectually with words. This practice of ‘thinking’ via movement later enables my emotions to appear more clearly and I can more easily find the words to express them. It often brings to the surface emotions I didn’t even realize I was feeling.

While writing my thesis, constantly thinking about and observing creative movement and dance, I have begun to practice dancing as expressively around other people as I do when I’m by myself. I can feel myself gaining more confidence to do so and enjoy the liberation of moving so freely without inhibition. Though it is sometimes a challenging process. There are still times when I feel shy and inhibited dancing in front of others.

I was caught in the midst of what felt like a very tangled and confused point in my thesis. I was desperately trying to hold onto the little bits of self-confidence and motivation floating around in my thoughts. For the past year my motivation and inspiration came and went in waves. Sometimes I would get ideas about the research I wanted to do and feel excited about them. Other times I felt incapable of writing a thesis, I felt like my critical and creative thinking skills were non-existent. More and more, my self-confidence was waning and clarity in terms of what I really wanted to achieve with my research was clouding over. More often than not I began feeling constantly anxious,

fearful and ridden with self-doubt when I thought about my thesis, sat down to work on it or when anyone asked me how my thesis was going (which happened often). I knew that I didn't want to give up on myself though, that no matter how challenging it would be I wanted to complete my thesis. I wanted to choose to embrace the ups and downs, the challenges, the confusion, the self-doubt, and believe that they were all part of the journey. Yet wanting to and actually believing are not quite the same thing. It felt like I was treading in stagnant, murky waters and though I wanted to keep going I was feeling unmotivated, uninspired and unsure of where it was that I could go.

At this particularly low point in terms of motivation and productivity, I realized I was experiencing emotional reactions to reflections in relation to my dance experiences and my experiences with self-expression and self-confidence. While contemplating creative movement and dance with children, believing how important it is for their overall social, emotional and cognitive well-being, I was becoming more aware of my own body-mind-spirit relationship.

What kept me continuing to make progress on my thesis and regain motivation was engaging in creative movement and dance and allowing myself the freedom to tap into what it was that I was feeling and embrace my emotions. I learned to accept that there were times when I did not want to work on my thesis and needed to take a break both mentally and emotionally. I learned to accept the way that I worked on my thesis and be ok with the ebbs and flows. I stopped comparing myself to other students and let go of feeling inadequate.

To paraphrase what my uncle Andrew said to me during this low point "Make sure you're doing your thesis for the right reasons. This isn't about what other people

want or expect of you but what you want for yourself. It's about what you make of it".

This advice paired with a phrase my Mom said once, "Finish what you start", urged me to keep going.

Passages that I reread from the Qualitative Research Methods course I took provided further inspiration. I read "I urge you to be creative and bold. I urge you to take a risk and follow your own muse. I urge you to disclose who you are to others and especially to yourself. We are always in a place of becoming. I have come to find that the journey and process are perhaps more important than the outcome or final product... You need to explore why you are in school, what you hope to accomplish, and how you plan to get there" (Lichtman, 2013, P. 163).

All throughout the process of writing my thesis, I have been very grateful for the support I received from friends and family, and even acquaintances the first time I met them, when they showed interest in what I was doing, asked me how things were going, offered words of advice and encouragement and asked me questions that allowed me to self-reflect. I am also extremely grateful to my supervisor for her continuous support, brainstorming help and encouraging me to follow what I'm really passionate about.

I hope for all children and youth to have the freedom and nurturing guidance to realize their emotional needs and expressive capabilities. May they develop the confidence and motivation to learn and, embrace their individuality. May engaging in creative movement and dance be a means through which they discover their emotional needs and feel inspired to self-express fostering emotional, physical and spiritual well-being.

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