

Dance Competitions and Recitals as Collectively Accomplished Events:
An Ethnographic Study of Amateur Dance

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.
I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a qualitative analysis of organized amateur dance participation as an example of human group life. Organized amateur dance typically occurs within a studio or school setting and is differentiated from professional dance by the lack of monetary compensation provided to performers. Consequently, this thesis considers the dance studio as an arena for pursuing hobby-based interests and activities, as well as notions of providing entertainment *as* entertainment in and of itself.

Using a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective in conjunction with ethnographic methodology, this thesis analyzes the centrality of performance among amateur dance participants, related to group-based definitions of competitions and recitals as the most significant aspects of their dance involvements. By envisioning competitions and recitals as instances of coordinated activity, this thesis employs Prus' (1997: 135) conceptual model for participating in collective events as a means of highlighting the processual quality characteristic of developing performance events. Further, this thesis uses Goffman's (1959) conceptualization of team-based dynamics as a means of illustrating how meanings about the group, the activity at hand and the event being anticipated are created, negotiated and perpetuated in a group-based setting.

Data obtained from the observation of dance groups as they prepared for and engaged in competitions and recitals as well as open-ended interviews with twenty members of the amateur dance community is used to illustrate the various stages of accomplishing performance events. This analysis begins with participant experiences in initiating events and becoming involved with them, followed by a discussion on how these groups prepare for, sustain and participate in performance events.

While this thesis focuses predominantly on amateur dance involvements, it also provides a transcontextual analysis of the interactionist concept of the collective event, through comparisons with research conducted on groups based on activities other than dance. Through field data and these various comparisons, this thesis finds that working toward and participating in group-based ventures encourages the development of a team-based awareness and sense of purpose among the participants of a wide variety of activities. Because having a central focus and common awareness with regard to an activity is integral to the sustained commitments and involvements of participants, this thesis finds the interactionist notion of collective events to be a central feature of human lived experience.

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DEDICATION

For my parents, for encouraging me in all of life's endeavors
and for Paul and Dora, for never ceasing in their love, support and companionship,
without which the completion of this thesis would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR’S DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL & EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Historical Overview of Symbolic Interactionism.....	6
The Premises of Symbolic Interactionism	9
Sociology of Dance	11
Dance as Symbolic Interaction	15
Amateur Dance as Subcultural Mosaic.....	16
Collective Events and Teamwork Dynamics.....	20
Dancing with the Mosaic: Understanding Dance Involvement as Generic Process	24
Dance as Marketplace Activity.....	26
Summary.....	30
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH SETTING	31
Overview of Data Collection	32
Research Setting	34
Participants.....	36
Sampling	38
Obstacles to Research and Ethical Dilemmas	39
CHAPTER 4: BECOMING INVOLVED IN COMPETITIONS & RECITALS	41
“Being Recruited” and “Seeking Out” Participation.....	42
<i>Recruitment Strategies</i>	43
<i>Pursuing Intrigues</i>	51
Managing Reservations.....	57
Initiating Events Involving Others	63
<i>Organizing Recitals</i>	66
<i>Assessing and Selecting Competitions</i>	69
In Summary.....	75
CHAPTER 5: PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE SEASON	79
Funding the Performance Season	80
<i>Charging Fees</i>	81
<i>Fundraising</i>	84
<i>Merchandising</i>	84
Developing Organizational & Preparatory Agendas	88

<i>Developing Choreographies: Music, Costumes & Other Preliminary</i>	
<i>Decisions</i>	88
<i>Classroom Dynamics</i>	92
<i>Creating Choreographies</i>	92
<i>Participating in Classes & Practices</i>	94
<i>Maintaining Interest & Handling Resistances</i>	96
Encountering and Handling Conflicts & Resistances	104
<i>Cost of Participation</i>	105
<i>Costume Decisions</i>	106
<i>Role & Placement Decisions</i>	108
Developing a Sense of Purpose/Mission	118
In Summary	123
CHAPTER 6: PARTICIPATING IN PERFORMANCES	126
Attending Final Practices & Dress Rehearsals	128
Getting Ready	131
Developing Bonds with Others in Performance Events	141
Managing Nervousness & Other Emotional Experiences	144
Taking the Stage: Engaging in Live Performances	149
<i>Competing: Experiencing Adjudication & Award Ceremonies</i>	158
Concluding Performances & Looking Ahead to Future Events	162
In Summary	165
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS	169
Summary of Findings	169
Contributions to Scholarship	177
Limitations of this Research & Recommendations for Future Scholarship	183
APPENDICES	
Appendix A – Facebook Recruitment Sample	186
Appendix B – Telephone Recruitment Sample	187
Appendix C – Information Letter (Adult)	189
Appendix D – Consent Form (Adult)	191
Appendix E – Information Letter (Child)	192
Appendix F – Consent Form (Child)	194
REFERENCES	195

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The exploration of hobbies and entertainment as social activities arguably holds secondary status in sociological inquiry to areas such as work and occupations, education, or crime and deviance in which activities are deemed problematic and necessitate amelioration. Yet, hobbies and entertainment remain predominant features of our social and communal lives. Prus (nd: 1) notes that although entertainment is not typically defined as vital to our existence, it “represents an enduring and consequential feature of human lived experience that can be found throughout recorded history.” Addressing how people define and interact with entertainment should be considered a viable area for sociological inquiry because of the predominance of entertainment as a central feature of human lived experience.

At any given time, people are involved in a variety of groups, including those centered on hobbies and entertainment, and it is these which make up their realities in certain times and places. This multitude of groups makes up what we refer to as society. Exploring these groups and how individuals might interact within them has sociological relevance, and contributes to a more general awareness of human lived experience.

Group-based activities centered on hobbies and entertainment, particularly for children, occupy a considerable amount of time and resources for many people, making research in this realm beneficial to understanding human lived experience. Adler & Adler (1998) note that children’s participation in after-school activities has increased significantly over the second half of the twentieth century, relating to the increase of women in the workforce and the societal fear of leaving children unattended. These activities include sports (hockey, soccer and baseball leagues) and academics (enriched

learning programs, debate teams). One of the more predominant hobby-based activities is dance. Many parents enroll their children, particularly daughters, in ballet, jazz, tap or the multitude of other dance styles available at studios. In turn, becoming involved with these groups implies that these children will participate in the group's events, such as attending rehearsals, classes and performances. Performances, in the form of competitions and recitals, are identified as the most salient feature of amateur dance. In turn, they represent instances of coordinated activity, as considerable planning and effort on behalf of all group members precedes the group's participation in these events.

If we are to understand society, research is required on as many elements of it as possible. This includes the pursuit of entertainment and hobbies. People expend considerable time and resources on producing and consuming entertainment. It is a central feature in the lives of many, and therefore, is a relevant and significant area of sociological research. In turn, the overarching objectives of this thesis are twofold. Firstly, I assess the applicability of the symbolic interactionist concept of group-based collective events (Prus, 1997) for understanding entertainment activities in an effort to better understand how people plan and organize themselves, and others, around these activity-based events. This thesis focuses on how participants in amateur dance competitions and recitals come together around events that they deem significant.

Secondly, I consider how the experiences of the participants compare and contrast with those involved in other groups. Using these various comparisons, I look to understand 1) how research on amateur dance can contribute to existing research on group-based involvements, 2) How groups coordinate multiple identities, roles and

perspectives in the given group around certain activities and events, and 3) how the notion of “entertainment in the making” is a relevant realm for sociological inquiry.

I have decided to focus this thesis on the notion of participating in collective events using competitions and recitals as the primary examples of collective venture in amateur dance. While this thesis could center on a number of aspects of group life, notions of developing relationships, acquiring identity and experiencing emotionality among many others available within interactionist literature (Prus, 1996 & 1997), I have selected collective events because competitions and recitals are the most salient features of the dance life. Although the events themselves occupy a relatively minor amount of time each year, studios spend months preparing for them and these performances are identified as the purpose of the group’s existence. Consequently, while the existence of other generic social processes within the dance world is undeniable, their manifestation is typically associated with preparing for or participating in the competitions and recitals and as such they will be discussed as they pertain to the pursuit of collective ventures.

Methodologically, this thesis employs ethnographic methodology, as data collection centered on observation and open-ended interviews. The majority of the dance year is what will be referred to as the “preparatory period” and consists of classes, rehearsals and practices. The “performance season” occurs at the end of each dance year and consists of competitions and recitals. I was granted an opportunity to observe both the preparatory and performance events of several studios. Through these observations I developed contacts with studio owners, instructors, parents and dancers. These, along with several personal contacts, amounted in twenty open-ended interviews encompassing a diverse set of themes. While interviews addressed numerous topics, such as developing

relationships, experiencing emotionality, achieving identities and acquiring perspectives, the most salient theme discussed was the act of performing and preparing to perform. Thus, this thesis focuses on how people get involved in amateur dance and the role images and definitions of performance play in these early involvements. Further, I will consider the events themselves and how dance groups come together to prepare for and participate in them.

This thesis addresses the symbolic interactionist understanding of participating in collective events as a central feature of group life. Engaging in collective ventures is a complex process, relating to the multitude of individuals, subgroups, perspectives and agendas that come together around a certain activity or event. Using Prus' (1997:130) understanding of collective events as having a processual quality, this thesis considers the natural histories of competitions and recitals. Further, invoking Goffman's (1959) concepts of cooperation, reciprocal dependence and notions of the team, the ways that the multiple and diverse perspectives are managed in the context of a collective venture will be addressed throughout the proceeding chapters. Using Prus' (1997: 135-136) outline of the natural history of collective events, this analysis begins in Chapter 4 by addressing how people get involved in these performance events, typically as an extension of their interests in dance as a whole. In turn, Chapter 5 explores how these events are coordinated and sustained and the ways that group members come together within the studio setting to prepare for the stage. Finally, Chapter 6 addresses the events themselves and the ways that participants make sense of and become caught up in competitions and recitals after months of preparation.

This thesis explores the sociology of entertainment by addressing the ways that people define certain activities as entertaining and worthy of their participation and commitment. Identifying dance recitals and competitions as the central collective events within the hobby-based group of amateur dance, I am able to compare and contrast my findings with evidence found in other groups regarding the same theme. In turn, this thesis aims to evaluate symbolic interactionist understandings of collective events as a central feature of human group life and contribute to existing ethnographic literature on group life and “entertainment in the making.”

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL & EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis uses symbolic interactionist theory that emphasizes the study of human lived experience: that is, understanding how people experience their lives by observing how they actually live. It incorporates interpretivist and constructionist methodologies which are adaptable to, and involve direct engagement with, the individuals or groups under study. The term “human lived experience” can encompass a great many things, but at its core is the quest for understanding how humans develop meaning and how these meanings work toward achieving understanding about their world. Individuals and groups reflect on, strategize, negotiate plans of action and pursue agendas, relationships and events by way of establishing meaning. Interactionists surmise that meaning develops in the context of social interaction. Thus, to understand human lived experience, sociologists and other social scientists study how individuals interact with others in the context of the activities and events they perform.

Historical Overview of Symbolic Interactionism

Pioneers of symbolic interactionism subscribe to notions of *pragma*, or human action. While definitions of *pragma* are varied, interactionists generally endorse studying human group life “in the making”: that is, as it actually occurs (Prus, 1996: 47). People are considered active agents in the making of social realities, and so interactionists focus on human agency, communication, social processes, action, purposiveness and negotiation in the context of their varied activities. This contrasts with positivist-based conceptualizations which assume that human action is primarily determined by environmental conditions, is best understood in causal terms, and that patterns or

universal explanations of human action can be attained through objective scientific investigation.

Contemporary understandings of symbolic interactionism developed at the University of Chicago^[1] in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This involved a coupling of the philosophical awareness of knowing and acting with a more direct means of studying human life, making the philosophical conceptualizations more conducive to empirical study. This development began with George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley and produced what is referred to as American Pragmatism. Herbert Blumer would eventually propose the integration of these theoretical and methodological agendas into what would become symbolic interactionism.

George Herbert Mead (1934) emphasized the necessity of language and focused on agency and interaction as fundamental to developing perspectives regarding objects and people by way of the self. Cooley (1909) similarly stressed the importance of language and communicative symbols and provided the basis for methodologically observing self-development through *sympathetic introspection*. Sympathetic introspection, the precursor to modern ethnography, emphasizes “intimate contact with various sorts of persons...allowing them to awake in himself a life similar to their own, which he afterwards to the best of his ability, recalls and describes” (Cooley, 1909: 7).

Herbert Blumer is credited with consolidating the pragmatist viewpoint and

1. While this thesis employs a traditional Chicago/Blumerian interactionist perspective, the author acknowledges the diversity in interactionist viewpoints and the impact of selecting the Chicago approach. Other potential interactionist perspectives applicable to this type of study include the Iowa school approach (Kuhn, 1964) and the more recently developed radical interactionist perspective (Athens, 2009). The author acknowledges that selecting another variant of interactionism may have influence on the conclusions drawn about amateur dance and human group life.

ethnographic methodology into what is generally understood as symbolic interactionism. Most basically, he retained the pragmatist emphasis on symbols, language and the development of awareness through interaction while further developing Cooley's sympathetic introspective methodology as a means of studying human knowing and acting.

At the very base of symbolic interactionism is Blumer's (1969: 2) emphasis on meaning and its relation to humans and their experiences:

- 1) Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they have for them.
- 2) The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.
- 3) These meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.

Blumer sees the processes of knowing and acting as intricately related to one another in the development of meaning and awareness. He argues this connection needs to be at the center of all sociological inquiry and research regardless of the specific topics or themes under study. For Blumer, people cannot meaningfully act toward things or engage in activities if they have no understanding of them and it is through these linguistically-based meanings that people are able to deliberate, negotiate and plan courses of action. Further, these meanings are established and negotiated between people who are involved with the act or object rather than occurring inherently within the "thing" in question. Instead, meanings are "social products" (Blumer, 1969: 4), developed through activities and interactions among people. Meanings are fluid and adapted through experience as people encounter objects in their worlds.

For Blumer, and symbolic interactionism in general, meaning is at the center of social research. To validly understand human lived experience, researchers study the processes of developing and negotiating meaning in its varied instances, as it actually

occurs within and across groups. In doing social research, Blumer (1969: 39) emphasizes *intimate familiarity*, or getting as close as possible to the people and subjects under study.

The importance of developing and conveying meaning cannot be understated. Employing notions of intimate familiarity through the ethnographic methodology, this thesis explores how group members get involved in dance and participate in performances based on the meanings they have for these activities. In focusing on notions of cooperation and the collective venture, it is impossible to explore how these actors come together around competitions and recitals without similarly addressing how they envision and define their events.

The Premises of Symbolic Interactionism

Prus (1996, 1997, 2004) elaborates on Blumer's discussion of meaning and interpretive processes as central tenets of studying lived experience by underlying several aspects of Blumer's work. Firstly, he notes that group life is *intersubjective*, as people come to understand objects and their own experiences with them through interactions with others as they establish and negotiate meanings (Prus, 1996: 10).

Human group life is also *knowingly problematic*, as knowing, acting and interacting in an effort to establish these meanings are not simple processes and often involve some level of ambiguity.

Thirdly, human group life is *object-oriented* with the world of lived experience containing things that can be acted toward, thought about and experienced. This concept of "object" need not just refer to tangible items alone, but also addresses experiences and interactions, as well as notions of the self and others.

Fourth, human group life is *(multi) perspectival*, as there are multiple groups within societies that develop somewhat unique understandings and viewpoints as a result of their particular interactions with objects and others.

Fifth, human group life is *reflective* and individuals routinely deliberate about tangible objects and events and also about themselves, by taking the perspective of the other with regard to themselves. People become “objects unto themselves” by taking the viewpoint of the other to establish understandings about themselves and their situations and use these perspectives to determine courses of action (Prus, 1997:12).

Sixth, human group life is *sensory/embodied and knowingly materialized*: through the process of learning about the world around them, people become aware of the perspectives of others in their same communities. These perspectives include establishing awareness about human beings as a group, interactions with various objects and the limitations of human life.

Seventh, human group life is *activity-based*. The focal point of interactionism is the notion of human agency and people as active participants within the various group affiliations that make up their lives. These groups that people associate with are centered on common activities and themes, creating a context in which interaction occurs. What is understood by people to be “reality” is created in the context of these activity-based interactions and is therefore constantly emerging and changing according to new experiences.

Eighth, human group life is *negotiable*: because meaning is established through group-based interactions, the process of influence/resistance work comes into play when establishing shared meanings and experiences. The meanings and realities individuals

subscribe to are not concrete and unchanging, but instead can be subject to the influential efforts of others.

Ninth, human group life is *relational*, as it occurs within a community context. People act with knowledge of others both within and outside of their groups of involvement. According to Prus (1996), activity never occurs in isolation. Instead, the individual is always interacting with the community in the form of the generalized other, if not interacting directly with a specific individual.

Tenth, human group life is *processual*, as there is an emergent and ongoing quality to all types of human lived experience and finally, human group life takes place in the *instances* and research should be focused on the specific rather than any kind of macro-level variables.

Each of these premises play a central role in studying how individuals come together around a single event. They highlight the significance of the group in understanding the coordination and accomplishment of action. This study explores how the various individuals of dance studios come together, negotiate meanings and understandings, reflect on strategies and develop plans of action with regard to making competitions and recitals happen.

Sociology of Dance

The study of dance is not a completely untapped area of sociological inquiry. Researchers have realized the importance that dance has in the lives of a great many people. Most notably, dance is associated with the discussion of social inequality, particularly as it pertains to race and gender. Dancing is often labeled a feminine act.

Therefore, researchers have considered the gendered construction of these understandings and the implications for participation in the activity. Gard (2008) looks at how boys define and feel about dance. He concludes that participation in dance is directly related to who people want to be. Hence, the claims many boys make about hating dance are less about the activity itself than the identity associated with participation. Wellard, Pickard and Bailey (2007) similarly argue that participation in physical activities by children is influenced by gendered identity and behavior, and consider the body a tool by which to convey gender. By studying a group of girls involved in ballet, they address notions of gender inequality in physical activities meant for children, arguing that girls often have less of a chance to garner the pleasurable aspects of physical activity in schools because the focus of physical education is often on male-oriented sports. In turn, they encourage schools to include dance in physical education as a means of encouraging physical identities to develop in both boys and girls.

Recent sociological research on dance has also focused on race and ethnicity. Some of these researchers argue that dance, more specifically traditional forms like ballet, has an ethnocentric quality to it. Atencio and Wright (2009) note that ballet is considered the most prestigious of all types of dance and it is given higher artistic praise than other styles. Further, they argue that there is a standardization of ballet and modern dancing, in which ultra-thin bodies are valued, a quality that is not physically attainable by all racial and ethnic groups and in turn “whiteness” is more valued in dance, segregating non-white dancers into “hip-hop” and other non-traditional styles which are artistically devalued compared to ballet. To pursue professional careers in dance, these non-white performers have to find a way to conform to the white standard. Hancock

(2007, 2008) also contributes to notions of dance as sources of racial inequality by studying the relationship between dance and racism/domination, and how notions of inequality are embedded within entertainment and popular culture.

Notions of the body and the conceptualization of “physical capital” are also popular themes in sociological research on dance. Potter (2008) discusses the process of becoming a dancer through developing a “sense” of kinaesthesia (felt body movement) and the ways dancers are socialized into the dance community by learning how to define this bodily experience. Wainwright, Williams and Turner (2006), consider how dancers learn about and come to embody the art of ballet and how this is often centered on the physical body. They note an intersection between the physical body, the institution of dance, notions of dance career and how this varies according to where and how they train. Finally, a considerable amount of body-related sociological research on dance relates to notions of eating disorders and other health concerns. Following closely with the racial themes discussed earlier, Gvion (2008) discusses the understandings Israeli female dancers develop around the body and the notion of thinness. She highlights the impact that the globalization of ballet has had on how non-western cultures view the activity, noting the meanings of success, power, commitment and recognition as salient among Israeli women’s definitions of an “extra thin” dancer body.

Considerable research has concentrated on involvement processes and experiences leading to and encouraging sustained involvement in dance. Pickard and Bailey (2009) use the concept of “crystallizing experiences” (significant moments, poignant events) to explain why young dancers get involved and stay committed to dance

participation. Gard (2008) explores how people, particularly boys, define dance and identities associated with it and how this influences potential involvement in the activity.

Further, notions of identity have been predominant in current sociological research on dance. While gendered identity has been a common theme (Gard, 2008; Wellard, Pickard and Bailey, 2007), some studies have been dedicated to the development of a dancer identity. As was noted, Potter (2008) studied the impact of a sense of movement on developing a dancer identity. Wainright, Williams and Turner (2006) discuss notions of “habitus” and how dancers learn to hold themselves and the significance of their body in conveying their identity. Further, some research has concentrated on notions of multiculturalism and the development of ethnic identities through music and dance. For example, Leonard (2005) highlights the ways that Irish cultural identity is developed among British-born second and third generation Irish people through folk dance, providing a means to forge relationships between generations and the processes and problematics of what it means to be Irish in a non-Irish setting. Also relating to notions of identity, Renshaw (2006) considers the identities of swing dancers who use activities and subsequent identity markers (such as thrift store shopping) to convey disdain for dominant corporate and popular culture.

Some recent sociological inquiry has involved the social element of dance participation. Nadasen (2008) considers the connection between engaging in physical activity and increases in social activity by studying elderly women who engage in line dancing. Both Wellard, Pickard and Bailey (2007) and Gard (2008) provide insight to notions of social development by discussing the gendered aspect of dance and how to

best revise current understandings and programs to benefit more children participating in them.

Most of these studies focus on professional dance as opposed to the amateur studio-based level of dance that is characteristic of this thesis. Much of the recent sociological literature on dance also focuses on ballet. While it is true that ballet is the most conventional and widely-recognized form of dance, there are multitudes of styles. Studying this diversity is of benefit to enhancing our sociological understandings of these activities. Similarly, these studies have mainly focused on the dancer role, without acknowledging the other identities at work in a dance setting. While there have been some symbolic interactionist discussions on dance, most of them have similarly focused on single roles and identities within the dance community as well as notions of identity and involvements discussed above. In turn, this thesis contributes to the study of dance by focusing on the amateur level. This is a relatively untapped resource of sociological inquiry yet a predominant activity in many peoples' lives. In considering dance competitions and recitals as the focal events of amateur dance, as well as instances of coordinated activity, this thesis gives attention to the multiplicity of roles and individuals involved in these ventures rather than focusing on solely the dancers. In turn, this thesis contributes to the existing sociological literature on dance by providing a more encompassing perspective on the various parties and efforts involved in sustaining the dance community.

Dance as Symbolic Interaction

There have been previous interactionist-based studies on the dance prior to this research. Mary Lorenz Dietz (1994) has explored the process of becoming a professional ballet dancer. She discusses the various parties involved in developing a professional dance career from the initial efforts made in childhood through to considerations of sustaining or ending involvements. She considers the impact of parental roles in a child's pursuit of the activity as well as their various perspectives on dance, and other themes like dealing with body image, competitiveness and subordination.

Adie Nelson (2001) also contributes to the data on dance involvements through the conceptualization of dream construction and how children come to inherit and embody the fascinations with dance and stardom that their parents have. In the context of this study, I will consider how notions of dreamwork and recreational inheritance relate to competitions and recitals and involvement in dance as a whole.

Amateur Dance as Subcultural Mosaic

To this point, the term "human group life" has been used with little definition. However, appropriately conceptualizing notions of "group" and "subculture" is essential to understanding symbolic interactionism and the sociological relevance of studying amateur dance communities. For Prus (1997) and other interactionists, human lived experience centers on the many groups that people are involved in. Consequently, in order to learn about the human condition through social research, scholars need to focus on the multitude of groups or subcultures that make up any given society. He uses the term subculture to refer to:

Any group or association that exists within some larger community context. Referring to any group of people who associate with one another around some common theme or realm of activity, the notion of

subculture draws attention to the collectively achieved nature of much human activity; that people generally do things mindful of or in conjunction with others (Prus & Grills, 2003: 97).

At any given time, people can be involved in multiple subcultures revolving around various activities, themes and perspectives which can also compliment or contrast one another. Involvement with subcultures can occur on both voluntary and involuntary bases as people manage these various aspects of their lives. People come to associate with subcultures in a variety of ways, relating to not only the activity itself but also as a result of pursuing relationships or other fascinations and goals.

This multiplicity of lifeworlds is what Prus (1997: 36) refers to as the *subcultural mosaic*. The mosaic refers to not only the variety of groups existing together on a communal basis, but also addresses the many group affiliations and associations an individual person can have at one point and time and throughout the course of their lives. Similarities throughout the mosaic arise as many of the same people are simultaneously involved in several subcultures and further, subcultures themselves have smaller identifiable groups that occur within the larger group setting.

Subcultures are defined and categorized according to some distinctive feature, based on insider and outsider definition, and exist together within the greater community. Studying subcultures fosters an understanding of society as “in-the-making” (Prus & Grills, 2003: 99). It is essential to center research *within* the subculture in order to grasp an understanding of that particular lifeworld. Sociological relevance is achieved by comparing these groups with others that have been studied in similar ways. By noting the similarities and differences of these subcultures, the researcher can begin to establish a more generic understanding of “society” and “human lived experience”. The more

subcultures that are studied in this way, the more accurate and detailed conceptualizations can become. In turn, these concepts can be used as tools for future studies on group life.

Although this thesis focuses primarily on dance competitions and recitals as the more dramatic aspects of amateur dance, the concept of collective events also encompasses the more mundane matters of attending weekly classes and practices as part of the process of preparing for more major events. For the purposes of this thesis, these more mundane events are understood in relation to the more visibly contrived events that occur during the performance season of each dance year.

It is possible for many collective events to occur on a daily basis with relatively little planning or extensive interchange, such as people convening for family dinners or customers interacting with salespeople in a store setting. However, dance competitions and recitals represent collective events that are clearly defined at the outset of the dance year and are planned and coordinated for months prior to their actual occurrence. Mindful of the upcoming performance events, participants come together months before to develop agendas, assign roles and prepare for stage performances. Studio personnel take on management tasks, set schedules and make decisions early in the dance year with the upcoming performance season in mind. The performers attend classes and participate in the training process as their parents occupy supportive roles. This thesis explores Prus' (1997) twofold understanding of collective events as having emergent and multiperspectival qualities by addressing how these events develop over time and the experiences of the various subgroups as they are accomplished.

Selecting competitions and recitals as the main events for analysis can be problematic. It is important to note the similarities and differences between the two. The

preparation process for these two events is similar in the sense that the studio takes on an overarching “performance season” preparation agenda, typically differentiating between the two types of performances only in the final weeks before they are to occur. For both competitions and recitals, choreographies need to be created and learned, costumes selected and purchased and classes attended, with competitive dancers engaging in these processes at a more intensive pace than recreational dancers. Once the performance season approaches, vast differences between the two become apparent. Competitions occur earlier in the year and are put together by third parties, businesses existing outside of the individual studio that specialize in the organization of these events. They involve travel and more direct contact with studio outsiders as studio teams compete for awards and prestige. Recitals, on the other hand, exclusively feature studio members and typically involve no formal assessment. Everyone who attends studio classes participates in the recital, while attending competitions is reserved for only a few of the studio’s most elite performers.

Rather than focusing on competitions and recitals separately, this thesis is structured according to Prus’ (1997:134) processual model of participating in collective events. Thus, rather than becoming preoccupied with differentiating between the types of performances or the individuals within them, this analysis considers people entering into and experiencing collective events generically. Further, collective events will be envisioned as taking on natural career histories as experiences are established, built upon and connected to one another. For our purposes, this means attending to 1) how people become aware of and involved in collective events, 2) how they organize, coordinate and

sustain these events 3) how they make sense of and become caught up in collective events and 4) how they conclude collective events.

Collective Events and Teamwork Dynamics

Erving Goffman's (1959) notions of impression management in the context of individuals and teams will be explored within this thesis. Goffman considers social interaction a dramatic production in which people take on roles, concealing some aspects of themselves while exposing or exaggerating other qualities in order to influence how others perceive them. Envisioning competitions and recitals as collective events, the studio unit as a whole will be considered according to Goffman's (1959:104)

conceptualization of the "team":

A team, then, may be defined as a set of individuals whose intimate cooperation is required if a given projected definition of the situation is to be maintained. A team is a grouping, but it is a grouping not in relation to social structure or social organization but rather in relation to an interaction or series of interactions in which the relevant definition of the situation is maintained.

While the impression management tactics of individuals are not ignored within this thesis, I am considering dance a collective *activity* and performances as *collective events*. Thus, the ways in which individuals coordinate and cooperate with regard to conveying images of themselves *as a group* is more central to this study than how they do this as individuals.

In the above quote, Goffman proposes that teams require intimate cooperation if they are to successfully engage in impression management. Displaying images of team-based cooperation is of particular importance when interacting with outsiders, however not all interchanges within the group reflect this type of harmony. Instead, teams often find themselves faced with controversy, conflict and animosity. Goffman is not denying

the existence of these tensions; instead, he stresses the necessity of having these occur “behind the scenes”, away from the awareness of outsiders. As long as these animosities are handled in such a way that outside audiences are not aware of them and subsequently distracted by them, Goffman argues that they are not detrimental to the impression management process.

This thesis explores the tensions amateur dance groups face as they prepare for and engage in the performance season. Focusing solely on team-based cooperation can be somewhat problematic, as it may downplay the significance of animosities and disagreements to the group life experience. It is important to stress that while studio members are working as a team to convey images of competence to outsiders via the stage, the individual members of that team may have ulterior motives, differing agendas and individualized goals that contradict those of the group. Goffman (1959: 85) notes the complexity that results from the incongruence between individual and team-based goals and how this complicates the process of impression management:

As a one-man team, with no teammates to inform him of his decision, he can quickly decide which of the valuable stands on a matter to take and then whole heartedly act as if his choice were the only one he could have possible taken. And his choice of position may be nicely adjusted to his own particular situation and interests. When we turn from a one-man team to a larger one, the character of the reality that is espoused by the team changes. Instead of a rich definition of the situation, reality may become reduced to a thin party line to be unequally congenial to members of the team.

As Goffman notes, individual team members have to first learn what the objectives of the group are, and then behave in a way that promotes these goals. Group members have to be consistently acknowledging and assessing the goals of the group, as they often change over time. This is further complicated when the group goals are inconsistent with individual goals, sparking controversy within the individual and even conflict between her and her teammates.

In an effort to understand Goffman's notion of cooperation as an integral feature of impression management, this thesis considers how individuals adapt their goals in accordance with team interests. Cooperation becomes a strategy for combating intragroup conflict on teams, avoiding distractions and ensuring focus remains on accomplishing a successful performance.

By invoking images of cooperation, those within the group are reminded of what Goffman (1959) refers to as "reciprocal dependence". Goffman (1959) notes that team members bond over feelings of mutual dependence and the understanding that the team is only as good as its weakest member. Subscribing to notions of group harmony and unity through cooperative activity serves as a remedy for the internal competitiveness that is often characteristic of dance. These bonds then encourage cooperation among the group, and in turn participants assign less significance to their individualized goals and focus on more collective objectives. Within the amateur dance community, individualized goals may relate to being the "star of the show" and receiving the most exposure and praise from both superiors and the outside audience. In turn, group-based goals most basically involve achieving a successful performance and building a positive reputation for the studio. Achieving these goals may demand that certain team members disregard their individualized motives by taking on less prestigious roles and handling the defeat quietly, so as not to disrupt the group and how others perceive it.

Engaging in impression management in an effort to appear competent and authentic in a role is not only related to managing internal strife prior to coming in contact with group outsiders. One strategy that is particularly relevant to the dance life is Goffman's (1959: 30) concept of "dramatization" or "dramatic realization":

While in the presence of others, the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure. For if the individual's activity is to become significant to others, he must mobilize his activity so that it will express *during the interaction* what he wishes to convey.

Essentially, Goffman (1959) argues that role performers can exaggerate certain aspects of their routine in an effort to convince others of their authenticity. Within dance, studios often spend time developing not only performance material, but strategizing ways to make the group stand out as the *most* competent and the *most* worthy of praise from the audience. While the technical quality of dance routines is undeniably the focal point of preparing for competitions and recitals, exaggerated notions of professionalism and stylized appearances are tactics used to convince audiences of studio greatness. Within the dance community, this is often referred to as “flash” or “flashiness” and involves selecting the brightest and most detailed costumes and teaching dancers not only the required steps but also certain tricks to add to the visual spectacle. This thesis will explore this “flash” factor as an example of Goffman’s dramatic realization.

Goffman’s discussions on impression management and teamwork have become an invaluable reference for this interactionist endeavor into the world of amateur dance. Because of the nature of collective ventures as incorporating multiple and diverse perspectives and roles, the ways in which meanings, understandings and agendas are established is an integral aspect of participating in a unified project. While the primary objective of this thesis is to develop awareness of how people get involved and participate in collective events, this understanding would be incomplete without also addressing how participants establish, negotiate, assess and adapt meanings as they prepare for and engage in events deemed significant by the group. This thesis will also explore how the multiple individuals in the various subgroups of amateur dance engage

in impression management as a studio team, as a means of influencing their audiences' definitions of them as competent in the dancer/performer role. Further, notions of cooperation and bonding over reciprocal dependence as strategies for downplaying the competitive nature of amateur dance will also be addressed.

Dancing With the Mosaic: Understanding Dance Involvement As Generic Process

Analyzing the data attained on amateur dance in conjunction with that which has been found in other groups provides an opportunity to evaluate the symbolic interactionist concepts of interest with regard to this thesis. These include Prus' (1997) conceptual model for participating in collective events along with the generic social processes of involvement through recruitment and seekership. Finding similarities and differences with regard to how these concepts manifest themselves in the actual world of lived experience gives this kind of exploratory study sociological relevance. As such, this thesis makes reference to several ethnographies as they relate to the major findings, acknowledging the ways in which processes found with regard to amateur dance compare and contrast with findings in other groups. Existing interactionist literature has been an invaluable resource for exploring amateur dance.

It is difficult to determine the parameters of most groups. While this thesis is analyzing amateur dance, this term is somewhat ambiguous because of the multitude of involvements existing *within* the overarching group. Consequently, research could focus on instructors, dancers and parents more individually as somewhat unique roles or identities within the amateur dance community. Noting this inherent ambiguity evident in group life, there is interactionist literature on the notion of subcultures *within* subcultures as a means of accommodating an awareness of role variation. For example, Prus & Irini

(1980) have studied what they refer to as “the hotel community” and how various individuals (hookers, rounders, waitstaff, desk clerks, clientele, etc.) interact with one another in the hotel setting. On the same note, Cressey’s (1932) “Taxi Dance Hall” considers the perspectives of bar owners, dancers, staff and customers in an effort to learn about the overarching club scene in Chicago at the time. Fine (1987) and Scott (1981) consider team-based groups that include coaches, athletes, spectators and the like. Prus & Frisby (1990) consider the home party circuit and how dealers, hostesses and clients come together around these party events. Daniel Wolf (1991) addresses outlaw biker gangs and how their members take on varied roles and engage the group in a certain way so that the gang can sustain itself and participate in club runs throughout the summer months.

While identifying the various roles at work within any given group is necessary to understanding that group as a whole, some ethnographic literature takes this notion of subcultures within subcultures a step further by analyzing how these diverse individuals organize around certain courses of action. In this thesis, I am considering how the multiple perspectives and identities present in the amateur dance community are able to come together around the activity of dance in order to prepare for yearly competitions and recitals. Other interactionist literature has similarly addressed notions of organizing individuals and planning events. As was noted earlier, Lofland (1966) highlights how people come together in a cult setting and both create and perpetuate common beliefs about the world and religion. Similarly, Westlake-Chester (1995) has studied wedding planning in a group context. Noting the multiple perspectives present in the process of wedding planning, such as the bridal couple, families and friends and the wedding

vendors they hire to contribute to the event, Westlake-Chester discusses managing conflict, notions of cooperation, engaging in influence work and notions of front/back region behaviour among the various parties involved in the context of organizing people and preparing for these events.

Dance as Marketplace Activity

Understanding that dance studios are also business enterprises for owners and personnel, this thesis incorporates research on the symbolic interactionist understandings of business and marketplace activities. The notion that studios are businesses cannot be ignored. This thesis envisions amateur dance as a hobby-based group activity as well as a career venture for the many studio owners and staff members involved. As such, they are a means of acquiring income, and without the profit participation within the group generates, not only would the performance events cease to exist, the studio would be unable to sustain itself. Dance studios do not supply goods. They provide a service. The performance events are the visual and tangible embodiment of that service. Further, participating in performance events solidifies the dancer identity and this connection with the activity encourages sustained involvement with the group. The marketplace is a relevant aspect with regard to understanding the structure of dance studios and how they sustain themselves.

Prus and Frisby (1990) envision the marketplace as inherently social, based upon interactions among individuals, influencing one another and establishing relationships on which the businesses may be built. Like dance, home parties combine business and making sales with notions of recreation, hobby and social life as sales are based not only

on the products themselves but also images of opportunity for social interaction with others.

The primary objective of business is to generate profit and this relies upon securing and sustaining a client base. As such, the relational component of group life becomes particularly evident in all business ventures with regard to the product or service at hand. Prus & Frisby (1990) and Lofland (1966) address similar attempts at getting people involved in group ventures to make money and achieve a sense of group legitimacy. Without customers the home party industry would quickly deteriorate. Similarly, Lofland's (1966) study of religious cults points to notions of solidarity in numbers, with cults relying on a steady stream of members. Interactionist literature on getting involved and the relevance of recruitment and seekership will be discussed more extensively in the coming section.

This thesis focuses almost exclusively on competitions and recitals and how dance groups come together around them. Performances provide legitimacy and authenticity to involvements and the subsequent cost of participation. Coming together to prepare for and engage in them gives group members an opportunity to bond over a mutual love of the activity and a shared awareness of the joys and obstacles associated with pursuing participation in the group. In turn, they foster commitment and encourage members to continue their involvement in future years.

Prus and Grills (2004: 104-112) outline four ways of getting involved: being recruited, pursuing intrigues, attending to instrumentality and experiencing closure. This thesis focuses on competitions and recitals as collective events, as opposed to more extended discussions on careers of involvement with regard to participation in dance,

since being aware of how people become involved in these activities is necessary to understanding them. Following closely with notions of the marketplace, studios can secure and sustain the involvement of participants, or “customers”, and so considering interactionist literature on recruitment and seekership is significant to this study.

A considerable amount of interactionist literature is dedicated to the process of getting involved in activities, events and groups. There is evidence of both recruitment and seekership at work within group life. In terms of recruitment, there is group-based evidence of both formal and informal attempts at persuading people to participate, as well as high and low pressure tactics of recruitment. Formal recruitment attempts involve a considerable amount of effort being put into determining desirable member criteria and approaching targets accordingly. For example, Grills’ (1994) discussion of the recruitment attempts of the Christian Heritage Party, Dietz and Coopers’ (1994) study on the recruitment of high school athletes to the post-secondary level and Wolf’s (1991) research on outlaw biker gangs highlight the importance of trust and reputation in recruitment. In both cases, the researchers note extensive target evaluation, with tacticians selecting only those that reflect the desired image and definition of the group and activity they want to convey to outsiders. These instances can often also be referred to as “high pressure” examples of recruitment, in which tacticians are heavily invested in convincing targets to take part.

In other instances, recruitment is much more informal such as that found in Sanders’ (1994) work with tattoo enthusiasts, Snyder’s (1994) discussion of getting involved in shuffleboard and Fine’s (1987) research on Little League teams. In these instances, recruitment attempts are more generalized with a much more inclusive policy

with regard to identifying potential targets of recruitment. Rather than heightened attempts at persuasion, these instances reflect “low pressure” techniques in which tacticians encourage target involvement but do not expend excessive energy to get specific individuals involved. In these cases, seekership seems to be the more common means of becoming involved than more structured attempts at outsider recruitment by inside group members.

Similarly, there is evidence of both high pressure and low pressure recruitment/sales tactics not only across groups, but within the same community, as tacticians adopt differing strategies in different contexts. If a target is someone the tacticians perceive to be especially valuable to the venture they may be more forceful with their attempts at persuasion. As evidenced in Karsh et al’s (1953) study of the union organizer and his tactics and Prus and Frisby’s (1990) discussion on home party plans, tacticians are continually evaluating their targets and the interactions they have with them, altering the “pitch” accordingly with the responses they receive from their targets.

While Prus & Frisby (1990) identify tasks of recruitment such as conveying positive images, neutralizing target reservations and managing target stage fright, Lofland (1966: 29) provides a “conversion model” with regard to recruitment and how people become entrenched within cults that can be extended to notions of initial involvement in other groups. Like Prus and Frisby, Lofland (1966: 51) underlines the significance of relationships and what he refers to as “affective bonds” as increasing the likelihood of successful recruitment. In some cases, tacticians are familiar with targets based on other involvements in their lives, while in other instances they achieve success by making extra effort to establish a warm and welcoming interactional environment in which to pursue

the recruitment agenda. This sets up an opportunity for feelings of trust to develop and the capacity for people to bond over shared understandings, beliefs and experiences. Thus, the relationships and bonds become a selling feature of getting involved not only during initial involvements but also a means of encouraging sustained participation among existing group members. Trust itself becomes an important element of the recruitment process, not only in the case of making targets feel welcome and included, but also for the peace of mind of the tacticians: they identify targets whom they can trust to behave according to the agenda of the group (Prus and Grills, 2004).

In Summary

This thesis explores the amateur dance community using a symbolic interactionist theoretical frame. More specifically, I am considering the significance of collective ventures to community life, particularly the relevance of competitions and recitals as the focal points of dance involvements. Using existing symbolic interactionist concepts such as generic social processes and impression management, as well as notions of the marketplace and recruitment/seekership, this thesis aims to contribute to interactionist understanding of group life dynamics.

While this chapter has focused on developing a conceptual context within which a comprehensive analysis of data can occur, Chapter 3 in turn focuses on the ethnographic methodology used to obtain the data for analysis. Because symbolic interactionist theory is rooted within world of human lived experience, it is thus intricately related to methods of data collection. Thus, Chapter 3 can be considered an extension of this discussion on interactionist theory.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH SETTING

Prus (1997: 192) defines ethnographic research as “the study of the lifeworlds of particular groups of people through active interchange with participants in those worlds.” One goal of ethnography is to achieve what Blumer (1969) loosely refers to as *intimate familiarity*, and this is done by studying various social worlds directly, through passive observation, participant observation and open-ended interviews. By engaging with members of groups in *their* settings, and by allowing *them* to discuss their experiences from *their own* perspectives, the researcher is able to understand the meanings of interactions in these particular groups. Research then focuses on people’s actual activities rather than on speculation or assumption. Thus, ethnography is the preferred method of conducting social research for symbolic interactionists. Accounting for the various perspectives of participants is necessary to truly understand how competitions and recitals are accomplished.

Ethnographic research provides the most appropriate means for learning about actors’ perspectives and for observing events and interactions as they unfold in their settings. In this thesis, I was able to interact with studio members and other participants as they engaged in their everyday activities. Further, observing these events as an outsider fostered the development of research themes considered most relevant to understanding these activities. A goal of ethnographic research is to achieve as thorough an understanding of the group as possible. Using group-specific findings and instances, researchers are able to develop comparisons with other social groups and ultimately establish generic concepts for explaining human lived experience (Prus, 1997). These concepts can then be applied to future research within other groups, and subsequently be

assessed according to new findings. For this thesis, I primarily relied on observation and extensive interviews with members of the dance community.

Overview of Data Collection

Observation involved attending dance-related events, such as two weekly practices, one dress rehearsal, two competitions and three recitals. I learned about these events through contact with interview participants as well as through flyers, local media, and postings on theatre bulletin boards. At these events I usually stayed within the common areas, where I had the opportunity to speak to participants, but I also sat in the audience for five live performances. Further, I was able to gain access to recorded material for a recital that an interview participant was performing in that I was unable to attend. These resources were extremely useful in developing and refining interview themes.

Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995: 19-24) note the complexity of taking notes while in the field and I similarly experienced some obstacles. Taking extensive notes was not always feasible during these eight instances of direct event observation. Dressing rooms and common areas of competitions and recitals are typically quite chaotic, with very little seating room. Generally, I preferred to use this time to talk with group members, ask questions and take part in some of the preparation processes. In these instances, I took advantage of quieter moments to take some notes and also collected contact information for many of the participants in case I needed clarification after the fact.

I also conducted twenty interviews with current and former amateur dancers. Participants included dancers, parents, instructors and community administrators. All

participants were female. The majority of interviews were conducted in person. However, four discussions occurred via MSN Messenger due to geographical disparity. Interviews were conducted at the convenience and preference of the participant. Locations included the university campus and easily accessible coffee shops. In the case of personal acquaintances within the community, I also conducted several interviews within participants' homes. Once again, the performance venue provided an interesting location for interviews, particularly because a lot of the participants I interacted with at these locations were from out of town and so an alternative meeting date was not feasible. These discussions were less structured and more fleeting than interviews conducted away from group-based events, as participants came and went according to the performance day schedule and other demands placed upon them. However, the events provided a suitable context for the discussion of dance-related issues regardless of the distractions.

Interview themes related to a wide variety of issues, including involvement/disinvolvement processes, identity work, relationship development, time/commitment management, planning and preparation and influence work, among many other topics. These interviews focused on the instances rather than generalizations or ideas: actual activities and interactions that occurred in the experiences of participants, articulated in their own words. While observation was useful in developing a more general understanding of amateur dance, it was through the instances presented by interviewed participants that the more thorough data was made available for this project. For confidentiality purposes, all locational information and names of participants have been changed.

Research Setting

At this point, it is important to define the parameters of this study, as well as some of the dance-related terms that will be used throughout this thesis. The use of the term “amateur” designates the differences between the dancer participants in this study and those considered professional. The main criterion differentiating the two is the lack of monetary compensation provided to amateurs. While this thesis does not address the professional realm directly, it is important to note the overlap between those labeled amateur and those considered professional. While not all amateur dancers go on to have professional dance careers, those who are professional began dancing as amateurs in studios and schools before pursuing the activity at a more intense pace. I selected amateur dance as opposed to professional performance ventures because I am intrigued by the idea of providing entertainment as entertainment itself, and I have an interest in learning more about the relevance of hobbies in people’s lives and how they go about pursuing them.

There are generally two types of amateur dance: school-based and studio-based. Amateur dancers attending schools are engaged in extensive technical training, usually with the goal of beginning a professional career at some point. While dance school attendees do participate in performances in the form of recitals and plays, they are rarely involved in competitions and the focus of their involvement is on learning the art of dance. While members of dance studios may similarly be interested in technical training and potential careers in dance, participation is more oriented toward performance and showmanship in yearly competitions and recitals. While there are some instances of individualized testing and examination at the studio level, particularly for those involved

in ballet, this educational component is more characteristic of school-based amateur dance. While I did have the opportunity to meet with two school-based current and former amateur dancers and discuss their perspectives on participating in performance events, this thesis focuses more on studio-based efforts at coordinated activity.

There are two predominant types of amateur dance at the studio level. The majority of amateur dancers are in the *recreational* program. Invoking an all-inclusive philosophy, anyone who is able to pay the required fees is welcome to join recreational classes and subsequently participate in dance recitals. The second type of amateur dance program is labeled *competitive*, and it is considered the more elite realm of participation. Competitive dancers are considered the most competent enrollees of the studio. Like recreational dancers, they participate in the studio-based yearly recitals. However, they also participate in competitions where they compete with performers from other studios and are subsequently judged on their techniques by third parties.

Dance competitions and recitals are considered the highlight of the dance year and for many participants they are identified as the purpose of their involvement in the activity. The dance year generally follows the public school year, with practices beginning in September and performances occurring in the spring, in what is referred to as the “performance season”. Competitions are organized by third party businesses and occur in the early spring months. Dancers present choreographies to panels of judges, who determine the quality of the performance and how it measures up to the techniques of competitors from other studios. Recitals, on the other hand, feature performers from within the studio exclusively. All studio dancers, regardless of their levels of ability, take the stage at least once during recitals.

In terms of data collection, observations occurred within the context of dance studio buildings and performance venues in a midsized metropolitan area of Southern Ontario. Sitting in the audience of live performances was interesting and entertaining. However, more meaningful data was acquired through direct interaction with members of the selected studios. Watching a live performance provides some insight into participating in competitions and recitals, but the lack of dialogue between myself (as audience member) and the performers on stage required strategies for direct interaction. Thus, I preferred conducting observations in common areas of performance venues, such as areas adjacent to dressing rooms where performers were observed to congregate before, between and after performances. Spending time with performers, parents and studio officials while they waited for curtain call provided interesting insight into the backstage workings of dance performance events that audiences are not often privy to. These observations provided extensive data in and of themselves, but they also provided the opportunity for me to establish contacts within the community that were willing to participate in the more extensive interviews at later dates.

Participants

Through the data collection portion of this thesis I interacted with several dance participants in varying degrees, some simply in passing while I attended community events while others participated in more detailed interviews. All were aware of my status as a researcher. Twenty members of the dance community participated in extensive open-ended interviews about their participation in dance and so their perspectives provided the bulk of the data for this thesis. Rather than focus this study on a single dance studio, it

was more convenient to attend the events of a variety of studios as they occurred throughout the city. The participants selected for this study can be organized into the following groups:

1) *Studio Personnel / Instructors*

There were six studio personnel who I interacted with extensively. All of these participants were female, ranging from 23 years to 39 years of age. Their experience in teaching ranged from three years to fifteen years. While all of these participants had the title of “instructor”, one participant was also a studio owner. The term “instructor” refers to those who choreograph dance routines and subsequently teach them to various classes. The studio owner takes this leadership role even further, as she is in charge of the entire studio group as well as the individual classes she serves as instructor for. Thus, the studio owner was not only in charge of choreographing routines and teaching them to students. She was also involved in the administrative duties of studio maintenance such as handling monetary issues, setting up studio and performance schedules and other organizational tasks.

2) *Dancers*

Extensive open-ended interviews were conducted with seven dancers. The youngest of these participants was eleven years old. The oldest was in her mid-twenties. All of these participants were also female. An additional two participants identified themselves as “former dancers”, similarly, two participants in this “dancer” category had participated in amateur dance in the past, but had since moved on to the professional level.

3) *Parents*

Amateur dance is youth-oriented. Hence, the parents of dancers played significant roles in their children's initial and continued involvements. One of the interviewed mothers had been a dancer herself while the other two had no dance experience. Their children ranged in age from three to fourteen years old and participated in ballet, tap, jazz and acro dance-styles. Some of the children were involved for only a few months and others for several years.

It is important to note that these three broad categories are not mutually exclusive. Role overlap was observed among my participants. For example, each of the studio personnel were instructors at the time of data collection but were also performers in the past. One instructor also had her two children enrolled within the studio, making her both "personnel" and "parent". Similarly, many parents of the performers took on the administrative and organizational tasks of the studio by extension of their enrolment and so they can similarly be referred to as both "parent" and "personnel". Consequently, there is considerable ambiguity involved in identifying the primary roles of each participant in this study, and thus it is more accurate to envision roles as flexible and participants as multiperspectival.

Sampling

In selecting samples for this thesis, I engaged in convenience and snowball sampling. I attended two amateur dance competitions with the goal of meeting prospective participants and discussing their experiences with them in the competition setting. Further, I used my *Facebook* account for recruitment purposes, discussing my

research on my personal profile and encouraging anyone with experience to contact me (see Appendix A).

The *Facebook* post was somewhat effective, but the majority of my participants ended up being acquaintances. Along with interviewing these personal contacts, I encouraged them to pass my information along to others who might be interested in participating. I gained a considerable number of contacts through this snowball sampling technique. I employed a similar strategy for approaching potential candidates at dance events (see Appendix B).

Obstacles to Research and Ethical Dilemmas

The ethics department of the University of Waterloo approved this research. Interviewees were presented with a study information letter (see Appendix C) and consent forms (see Appendix D). In some cases I was working with minors, and so information/consent forms used in these instances were tailored to children (see Appendices E & F). While I spoke with many children and their parents as a spectator at competitions and recitals, three children participated in the extensive interviews. Their respective parents were present during these discussions

There were some ethical issues during data collection. Firstly, there was a significant level of gatekeeping with regard to dance studios that lead to some difficulty when engaging in observations. Many studios have strict “no spectator” policies with regard to practices. Several of the parents interviewed expressed regret regarding the fact that I could not sit in on some dance-related events, as they themselves were not even permitted to do so. All observation of rehearsals and practices occurred with special

permission from instructors. However, recitals and competitions were considered public events and I was able to attend these with little difficulty.

Studio-based amateur dance is an activity intended for children, which meant that ethical considerations were present regarding their participation. There were some instances where parents were hesitant to respond to questions and appeared uncomfortable with my general presence in common areas of competitions and recitals, despite the documents from the University which outlined the ethical principles and procedures involved. I found this was best handled by maintaining a presence within the group, that for the most part, worked toward making studio participants more welcoming and eager to discuss their experiences.

This thesis uses the ethnographic research methods of interviews and observation to investigate the social processes involved in collective events participation. The instances provided by interview and observation participants enabled the contextualization of abstract sociological concepts to the performance of collective events as represented through amateur dance competitions and recitals. Chapter 4 discusses findings regarding how people become involved in competitions and recitals as an extension of their involvement with dance studios as a whole. In turn, Chapters 5 and 6 address the evolution of dance performances, beginning with the conception of initial ideas and plans through to preparing performance material and finally participating in the events themselves.

CHAPTER 4: BECOMING INVOLVED IN COMPETITIONS AND RECITALS

The first step in participating in competitions and recitals is becoming aware of their existence and making initial approaches toward involvement. Assuming that collective events have a processual quality, exploring initial involvements is the logical starting point of this analysis. Prus (1997) notes that there are four subprocesses involved in this stage of participating in collective events. These subprocesses are not mutually exclusive, nor are they equally prominent in all instances of collective ventures.

Firstly, Prus (1997) notes that in some cases newcomers can find themselves *in the midst of collective events begun by others*. People may find themselves inadvertently or spontaneously participating in collective events of some sort, without having engaged in extensive premeditation regarding that participation. These individuals instead make sense of and develop definitions of situations *after* they are already implicated in the event in some way. While it is true that from the perspective of the dancers and parents the performance events are begun by “others” (the studio personnel), they typically have some awareness of what these events are and what participation entails prior to getting involved. Being that competitions and recitals are accomplished through extensive planning rather than more spontaneous circumstances, this subprocess is less relevant to this discussion than it is to situations where people get involved more unexpectedly.

Rather than inadvertently finding themselves involved in competitions and recitals, newcomers to dance and performance events may experience *being recruited by others initiating or encouraging collective events* or, reversely, *seeking out collective events* (Prus, 1997: 135). Notions of being recruited, developing fascinations and pursuing intrigues, and attending to instrumentality (Prus & Grills, 2003) will be

addressed more extensively in this chapter as means of getting involved in competitions and recitals.

The final subprocess of becoming involved in collective events according to Prus (1997: 135) is *initiating events involving others in the community*. It is not necessarily the case that individuals are encouraged to take part in a certain event, nor that they develop specific intrigues with a particular event and then actively seek out ways to participate. Some individuals are not only looking to get involved in an event, they are looking to *start* a particular event. The final section of this chapter will address how competitions and recitals are initiated and what early organizational processes entail. While discussions on being recruited and engaging in seekership center on dancers and their parents, this final section will consider the perspectives of the studio personnel that create these events prior to assembling the participants on a more substantial basis.

“Being Recruited” and “Seeking Out” Participation in Competitions and Recitals

For the most part, competitions and recitals are considered not only the focal point of the dance year, but also the *purpose* of involvement in amateur dance. As the most visible aspects of the amateur dance industry, competitions and recitals contribute to outsider-based definitions of what amateur dance is and what participation in it may entail. Some potential participants may have technical training objectives in mind when enrolling in dance. However, dancers and parents generally approach studios with notions of performing in mind. If the individuals in question are not interested in participating in performances, then they could not move forward with enrollment, as there is a mutual understanding between the studios and enrollees that they will take the stage at some

point. Thus, simply enrolling in a dance class with a studio is the predominant example of getting involved in these performance events. Analyzing how people initiate participation in competitions and recitals is therefore an analysis of how they come to be involved in dance:

There would be no purpose in signing up, paying your fees, going to all of those classes and then not participating in the recital. What would be the point? That's why it's all there. That's why there's classes. That's why they exist. You go to classes to learn choreography not just for the sake of knowing it. You learn it so that you can perform it during the recital. – Former dancer

Prus & Grills (2003: 104-114) outline four possible ways of getting involved in activities and groups that are similarly relevant to getting involved in collective events: being recruited, pursuing intrigues, attending to instrumentality and experiencing closure. There are examples of attending to instrumentality and experiencing closure with regard to getting involved in dance as a whole. However, when it comes to participating in competitions and recitals, being recruited and pursuing intrigues are the more predominant means of involvement and will be discussed more extensively in this chapter.

Recruitment Strategies: Being Encouraged to Participate in Dance

According to Prus & Grills (2003: 104), recruitment refers to “the efforts of others (as agents or tacticians of sorts) to involve people (targets) in certain situations.”

Recruiting people into events participation involves a process of negotiation. Individuals approach each other as active agents with the capacity to reflect and deliberate over situations. In turn, they have the capacity to strategize ways of persuading others into similar lines of action. Those at the receiving end of these approaches are similarly capable of reflecting on the situation, and determining the authenticity of these

recruitment attempts in relation to their own agendas. Thus, while this section focuses on dancers and parents and their efforts to get involved in dance performances, the discussion would be incomplete without also acknowledging the tacticians encouraging them to take part.

Recruitment: Generalized and Directed Encounters

There are generally two types of recruitment in the context of amateur dance. Firstly, there are what will be referred to as *generalized* means of advertising that do not involve any *specific* targets, such as flyers and phonebook ads (field notes). These advertisements often include photos of dancers in costume or on stage at competitions and recitals, promoting images of the studio as performance-oriented. Similarly, the lobbies and common areas of studios are typically lined with trophies, medals, awards and professional photographs of the group at these events, again emphasizing performance as the most significant aspect of dance participation:

There is very little empty space on the walls or shelves in this studio waiting area. There are two large shelves completely filled with trophies, medals and plaques. There are several large photographs and posters of dancers in costume, assuming various dance positions. There is also a glass case displaying a particularly detailed costume. T-shirts, sweatpants, jackets and other clothing featuring the name of the studio are displayed, as well as programs from previous recitals and competitions (field notes).

These are often the first images a newcomer comes in contact with when approaching dance studios and they play an important role in developing understandings of what participation is all about. It is through these various symbols and images that outsiders come to define the amateur dance industry as centered on competitions and recitals.

Secondly, there are instances of *directed recruitment*, in which specific targets are identified and approached. Prus & Grills (2003) note how recruiters determine desirable characteristics and seek out the appropriate targets accordingly. In studying cultic

movements, Lofland (1966) establishes a “conversion model” where he identifies which personality characteristics and personal circumstances increase the likelihood of involvement with a cult. In turn, tacticians can seek out targets according to these criteria, making these individuals more desirable than those that are assumed to be less responsive to recruitment attempts. Recruitment can thus be a very carefully planned process, as tacticians consider timing and strategy prior to making approaches.

In the case of studio-based amateur dance, I found little evidence of such extreme directed recruitment. In some instances, gender was identified as increasing the likelihood of response to recruitment attempts, as this instructor identified the difficulty in encouraging boys to take part in dance:

There are not many male students. They’re mostly in hip-hop. The big thing is that if a guy dances it means he’s gay, which is a very hard thing to get past. – Instructor

According to Lofland’s (1966) conversion model, this could mean that female children may be considered easier targets, as they are more likely to respond to recruitment attempts based on common definitions of dance as a female-oriented activity. However, there are many other female-oriented extracurricular activities (such as gymnastics, Brownies and Girl Guides) and so “conversion” to dance based on gender is not necessarily guaranteed. Within the dance community, instead of notions of conversion or attempts at identifying specific targets based on predetermined criteria of desirability, there is typically an all-inclusive policy with regard to recruiting newcomers to the recreational track of dance. Thus, anyone willing to pay fees, attend classes and participate in the year-end recital is considered a desirable candidate for participation:

Everyone is welcome. You just go and sign up and there you go. They set up a table and announce registration is starting and whoever wants to dance goes and signs up. You put your name down and pay the fees and you’re in the group. I don’t think they refuse anyone. – Former dancer

You just sign up and you start basically at the level of your age. You'll just go in there. In the studio, entry level is like a recreational class or like beginner-teen. It all depends on the age again, but anyone can join and they'll all start out in rec. – Instructor

It's really low key, "Hi I'd like to join," "Okay classes are on Thursdays". That's what I liked about it. I heard all my little girl friends talk about the hoops they had to jump through to get into ballet and jazz, etc. and stay there. I just wanted to dance. – Dancer

Everyone's welcome. You sign up. But because they're getting bigger, classes are getting capped. Years ago you could sign up whenever you wanted. You could come along during the year and join a class, but they're getting full and sometimes just not letting people in. So what happens now, the last week of August, the studio owner and teachers work together and they put up a schedule...and then if that doesn't work with your schedule, you as a parent come in and rearrange during that last week of August. - Parent

Registrations are either in September or January. You go in and talk to the studio owner and discuss different class possibilities, what you want to do and if there's room you're able to get in. If you want to start with competitive you would have to have dance background, obviously, and switching from studio to studio they sometimes want you to audition or just put you in a class to see what you can do and judge you accordingly. - Instructor

Lofland (1966) also identifies "affective bonds" as increasing the likelihood of successful recruitment efforts and this is similarly highlighted in amateur dance.

Affective bonds are relevant to dance in two ways. This concept highlights both the role pre-existing relationships play in getting involved in a new activity as well the impact new relationships formed within the group have on sustained involvement. As such, people are likely to become involved if they find themselves connecting with insiders, relating with them and trusting them, but even more so if acquaintances of theirs are already participating and are subsequently encouraging them to take part:

My mom knew people in the dance group. I was six when I first started and my best friend at the time had already been in it for a year. A bunch of my mom's friends had kids in it too and I'm sure they told her about how great it was, so it made sense to enroll her daughter as well. My mom isn't really the type of person to just get me involved in something she knew nothing about, where I didn't know anybody. I was really shy as a kid so that wouldn't have worked. – Former dancer

I was 3, my mom was a nurse and was looking after the owner of [studio name] and they started talking about dance and decided that she was convinced that she should put her klutzy daughter in it. – Instructor

Within the context of this study, five participants noted indirect encouragement from the dance community with regard to participation, through invites to purchase recital tickets or attend performances as guests. In other instances, existing dance group

members may actively encourage friends and acquaintances to participate in more direct ways. Snyder (1994: 88) refers to this as “sponsored recruitment.” Sponsored recruitment implies that existing participants not only promote participation among certain acquaintances, but also assist them in fitting in with the group once they are involved:

I remember going to one of their shows before I was old enough to get involved. We were active in the community and so knew a lot of the dance families. I was really young but I was kind of jealous of how fun it looked and how they were all great friends, and I was just sitting out in the audience with my parents. My mom signed me up the next year... After I had been in it for awhile, my cousin got involved too. It was alright for the most part, but I also felt kind of responsible for her, in terms of introducing her to my friends and stuff and finding a way to get her to into like, the little group of friends we had. It was hard because she wasn't as experienced as we were, so there were times when she fell behind or didn't know what the hell was going on and I always kind of felt like it was my duty to get her on track, to make sure she fit in okay.
– Former dancer

While some recruitment efforts may be premeditated and blatant, involvements can be deemed more accidental in other instances. In these cases, targets come in contact with the activity unintentionally, as an extension of the relationships they share with existing members:

We heard of it because we were looking after one of Sadie's friends, and her mom had an appointment, and we had to look after her for the afternoon. The little girl needed to get to dance class, so I said I'd take her, because it's just around the corner. So I loaded up all the kids in the van and took them over, and when the little friend was dancing, Sadie was of course looking and thinking, “Wow, this looks fun” and so the instructor said, “Would you like to join us?” and Jennifer goes, “Yeah”. So she joined them and that was it. She was hooked... Andrea was a year old at the time; she wasn't quite two. She was mesmerized. They couldn't get her out of the room. She just stood at the door and stared at them. So, by March she had just turned two and the teacher said, “Do you want me to start a class for two-year-olds?” because they just couldn't get her out of the room. She was just by the door hanging onto the frame, just staring at them the whole time and watching their moves. So they started a class for two-year-olds. – Parent

Getting involved in dance through these types of casual encounters with the activity and the group is more likely than being directly targeted by community insiders. Through these initial interactions with the community, potential newcomers may develop more substantial interests and fascinations with dancing, leading to more contact with the group. In turn, they may become the targets of more concentrated recruitment efforts. In other words, existing group members may take notice of cues indicating interest in dance among their acquaintances, and then begin recruiting them on a more substantial basis:

Nobody was really forceful with like, “Oh my God you have to join, this is so awesome, you have to join”. If you asked about it, of course we would tell you about it, if you were interested. But we weren’t trying to recruit or get massive amounts of people to come. It was fun when a new friend joined; it would be really exciting. But we didn’t care either way. I got into it because my mom kind of knew about it through the community. They would advertise the shows and performances and we would go and just sit in the audience. A lot of people would go, even if they didn’t know any of the performers. My mom kind of liked it and a friend of mine joined and so she signed me up too. I wasn’t really into the whole thing, but the thought of getting in costume and being on stage was kind of cool, so I went with it. – Former dancer

Consequently, it appears that in most cases, studio growth relates to a combination of both formal advertising and word-of-mouth sponsored recruitment, particularly in the case of recreational dance programs. People may learn about studios through flyers and advertisements on a general basis, but then receive more extensive encouragement regarding participation from acquaintances in their lives:

People come back year-to-year and then they just pass the word around and it grows more and more. More so than any kind of advertising. I’ve been at the community center for nine years, and when it started we had just nine classes, and now we have thirty-two. We’re one of the biggest community centers running now, which is awesome. The studio I work at, she opened up four years ago and had one studio, and the next year had to open two studios and she’s expanding into three now...just because you have kids come back year after year, you advertise a little bit more, you go to competitions and do really well and people are like, “Oh, what studio is that?” and they switch over and bring their friends. – Instructor

We basically put our registration out, we put the dates on our voicemail or in advertisements and they come in and register with the studio. They only audition for competition, but most new kids just sign up for mini jazz. When people are picking a studio they pick what’s closest to their home or what they see in the phonebook or advertisements in the Leisure Guide. To me, it’s all word-of-mouth. What’s closest, what times work best for parents. Most parents go with what works, what’s most convenient. If we have jazz on Mondays but they have something else on Mondays they might call around and see when it is. – Studio owner

While most studios welcome all willing participants into these recreational dance classes, there are more stringent criteria of desirability when identifying targets for recruitment into the more elite competitive realm of amateur dance:

You just kind of sign up. Unless like, you want to be competitive right away, then they want to look at you. So when we moved to the new studio, Sophie wanted to start competing that year, so then she went to a class where they assessed her abilities so that they knew a) whether or not she could compete and b) where they place her. And Dana started out in rec, so you just sign up. – Parent

While friends and acquaintances play a predominant role in recruiting newcomers to the recreational track and anyone willing to join the group is welcome to participate in the recitals, dancers must receive studio approval before being permitted to perform at

competitions. As was noted by the above participant, there is a considerable level of gatekeeping when it comes to involvement in the competitive circuit and this often means that newcomers to the studio typically spend their first few years participating solely in recitals before a move to competitive routines is considered.

While dancers and their parents may express interest in participating in competitions, studio personnel serve as gatekeepers to this more prestigious type of amateur dance and it is they who make the finalized decisions regarding who will be recruited and accepted into the competitive program. Criteria of desirability become crucial at this level, as studios consider who will best reflect their interests and agendas at competitions. While the technical abilities of potential targets are the predominant criteria by which these decisions are made, notions of commitment, attitude and teamwork are also considered.

Goffman illustrates the importance of *teamwork* as a necessity in conveying images of competence when working as a group. He notes that team leaders, such as studio personnel, need to consider not only the focal activity at hand (dancing ability) when assembling teams, but a wide variety of characteristics to ensure that participants “can be trusted to perform properly” and adhere to the agendas of the group. He stresses that the success of the team is “dependent upon this cooperation in order to maintain a particular definition of a situation” (1959: 91). Thus, studio personnel assess not only a dancer’s technical ability and technique, but also her attitude and commitment to preparing for and engaging in the competitive event prior to recruiting her. Further, they often extend this assessment to include the attitudes of the dancer’s parents as well. In

turn, dancers and parents may try to influence their instructors' decisions to let them participate in competitions, but the decision ultimately belongs to the studio personnel:

For competition, usually what happens is the instructor will say, "So and so is good enough to go competitive, would your child be interested?" or "She's expressed an interest and we think she would be appropriate". That's kind of how they handle it. Most of the time they approach you and tell you if they think your child is appropriate. And the attitude should be appropriate as well. They don't want kids who won't listen and won't do what they're told and cause problems and so on. – Parent

For the competitive ones, you have to audition, which is good. You can fully see exactly what the child is doing, and then you don't get persuaded by the parents, you know, "I want my kid in it and that's it". It's like, "No, we need to see if your child is able to do it" because a lot of the time the parents think their children are better than they really are, which is horrible in the long run when they actually go and compete. – Instructor

Parents, in turn, have decisions to make regarding these recruitment attempts. A move from recreational classes to the competitive dance program means that dancers not only have to attend more frequent and intensive practices, they are also required to perform more often. Performing in several competitions and the recital as opposed to performing in just the recital requires more monetary and time commitments on behalf of the dancers and their parents. While children are typically quite eager to participate in competitions and acquire the prestige that accompanies that participation, it is typically the parents who ultimately determine how to respond to these recruitment attempts:

For me, my mom was strongly opposed to having Jessica and I in competitive dance, because she didn't want us to dance for competition, or to have the drive or pressure to win be the reason we danced. So we never did, which is why we switched studios when I was about eight or nine, to a studio that didn't compete and the emphasis was on solid dance training and performing, which we did a lot of in lots of different settings, like nursing homes or in local festivals, etc. – Former dancer

She has asked me for three years to be competitive and I've said no. It's too much. It's too much running, it's too much time. It's too much everything. – Parent

If you're going to be competing you can't really afford to miss classes, because attendance counts. So when Cassie said she wanted to go competitive, I talked to the teacher and said, "Well, what do you think?" and they said, "Well, this is what she's got to do. She's got to come back to ballet and jazz and then we assess her, because she hasn't been doing it for three or four years. We assess her attitude and her attendance". So you need to make a commitment to make sure that they're there and you get them there on time. And they have to make choices too. If there's a dance class and a birthday party, you know, you can't go to the birthday party. If you want to be competitive, you're expected to be there all the time. – Parent

For some individuals, getting involved in dance, and by extension participating in competitions and recitals, includes a process of being recruited by existing group members. This recruitment may be formal and indirect, using flyers and other advertisements to showcase the studio and the events, or it may be more casual and based on word-of-mouth advertising. Similarly, the process of recruitment differs according to the program of dance and subsequently whether targets are to participate recitals only, or if they will also perform at competitions. While studios promote a philosophy of inclusion when it comes to recitals, performing at competitions is reserved for a relatively few number of elite dancers that are selected at the discretion of the studio.

Conceptually, recruitment is best envisioned as a negotiative process in which tacticians identify targets and attempt to persuade them into certain lines of action. These targets are similarly active and capable of responding to these approaches according to their own agendas. In the context of amateur dance, studio personnel make attempts at encouraging people to take part in competitions and recitals either more generally by adopting an all-inclusive philosophy, or by determining criteria of desirability and approaching specific targets accordingly. As targets, the dancers and their parents evaluate the recruitment attempts and determine whether participation is viable and something they are interested in pursuing. Similarly, these targets may have their own intrigues with regard to performing in these events and how they pursue these interests will be explored in the next section.

Pursuing Intrigues: Seeking Out Opportunities to Dance

Although there is evidence of participants being recruited to participate in events like competitions and recitals, this thesis finds that pursuing intrigues is a more common explanation for how people get involved in these events. According to Prus & Grills (2003: 108), pursuing intrigues entails developing interests in certain activities and events and then actively seeking out ways to participate. They use the term intrigue to refer to “the attractions, enjoyments, allures, fascinations or mystiques that people may associate with particular involvements.” Having individuals who develop fascinations with activities prior to taking part implies they have been engaged in the activity beforehand. These definitions and understandings, as well as the more direct contact they may have with the activity and event, in turn impact their decisions to get involved.

For Prus & Grills (2003: 109), pursuing intrigues entails two subprocesses: *developing particular intrigues* and *engaging these fascinations*. Developing intrigues involves reflecting on the activity as an outsider: being encouraged to appreciate specific aspects by others, viewing instances of other people’s allures as relevant/desirable, attending to specific things on one’s own and articulating definitions of specific things as noteworthy/desirable. Individuals then decide the applicability of these definitions and understandings and determine whether or not these intrigues warrant making more substantial efforts to take part in the venture. While some individuals may dismiss their intrigues as irrelevant, others might also develop their fascinations further by seeking out ways to get involved.

Competitions and recitals are considered the focal events of amateur dance participation; taking part in them is defined as the purpose of involvement. Enrolling in a dance group and subsequently participating in performances typically involves some

level of premeditation. As is noted by the two participants quoted below, individuals can develop intrigues around images of dance after attending a competition or recital in what Pickard & Bailey (2009) refer to as a “crystallizing experience.” In these instances, people define their interaction with the activity as positive and subsequently pursue it:

I saw a performance of Swan Lake when I was three and I was completely captivated by the whole experience. My parents were very active in taking me to the ballet. From then on I improvised in my living room a lot. I didn't really see many other styles live and had very little desire, when I was little, to try anything else. I was totally wrapped up in the idea of being a ballerina...then I started classes when I was eight. – Dancer

I was six so I didn't know anything about dancing yet. I didn't really get what it was about, until you know, I saw it. And the only time you see it is at a performance, when you're in the audience and not part of the group and everything is perfect and everyone is in costumes. I'd never seen a dance practice or what was involved in getting to the stage. I don't think most people know until they're actually in it. You just know what a recital looks like. – Former dancer

Because children are typically very young at the point of initial involvement in dance, it is more likely that a parental interest leads to their first contact with the activity. In her study on the professional ballet circuit, Mary Lorenz Dietz (1994: 68) concludes that parents often enroll their children in dance “with little attention being paid to the children's interests or abilities.” These parents often develop their own fascinations with dance, expose their children to it in some way and subsequently seek out ways for these children to get more substantially involved. In some cases, the parents of young dancers were previously performers themselves and encourage their children to adopt similar interests in the stage. These parents may enroll their children in dance in an effort to continue pursuing their own fascinations, in what Nelson (2001: 443) refers to as “recreational inheritance”:

My mom was [in dance] at various points in her life. Not as seriously as I have been. I think that she always, kind of, and I think this is typical of all mothers, but they really wanted to be a dancer, but they really weren't that good at it, but they dreamed that for their little girls. So they put them in dance to see if they like it. My mom at times did like, bellydancing, too. She was kind of an experimental mom. She took bellydancing and was actually what in those days they called a Go-Go dancer at the bars. It's a little bit risqué. It's not like a stripper or anything, but she was a Go-Go dancer and she took some Indian dancing classes, so she was involved in the community and in performance. – Dancer

My mom wanted me in it because seeing me up there on stage and in costume brought back memories for her. Reminded her of the old days, I think...and things she thought it was important for me to understand too. – Former dancer

If my children showed signs of wanting to go into dance like I did when I was young by dancing around the house, then I would [enroll them]. I was never forced; even though my dad was a dancer and has had it in him he never forced it upon me. However, I know he was ecstatic when I began classes just because it was something that he could relate to his daughter with, but whatever my kids show interest in, is what I will enroll them in. I will not be forceful. – Former dancer

Involvements based on recreational inheritance are somewhat controversial within the dance community. There is concern that when children feel compelled to participate based on the fascinations of their parents they lack the opportunity to develop intrigues regarding the activity on their own. Instead, these children are considered to be participating in competitions and recitals based on the dreamwork of their parents. Nelson (2001: 440) conceptualizes dreamwork as “purposive behaviours that allow dreams to be worked out in an exploratory way as a series of short- or long-term projects”, “a variety of parental behaviours undertaken on behalf of children that potentially demand significant investments of time, energy and themselves” and “an interpersonal accomplishment, developed, negotiated, sustained or discarded in interactions among parents, their children and interested others. The concept of dreamwork frames a variety of parental behaviours undertaken on behalf of children and suggests how parents come to invest potentially great amounts of time, monies, energies and themselves in the activities of their children (Nelson, 2001: 439).

Nelson’s (2001) study explores the ways that children get involved in dance-based performance events through their parents’ (typically mothers’) fascinations with achieving stardom and celebrity status, rather than their own ambitions. She labels parents that are highly invested in images of the stage and pursuing the prestige that may follow performances as “stage mothers.” These parents often face stigma within the

dance community, based on the commonly held belief that overly involved parents negatively impact the young dancer's self-confidence on stage and her appreciation of performing:

They're the moms that know the routines better than the kids... They try and get backstage and they stand there watching them. You see them in the audience. They're like, doing the dance with the kids while they're on stage... After the routine you're there, normally they're the ones yelling at the kids telling them what they did wrong. It's never, "Oh, you did a good job." It's always, "Your toe wasn't pointed on this. You could have had a higher kick. You're gonna lose now." Kids cry over the things parents have said. – Instructor

You'll get two sets of parents, I find. One that is like, "Oh, as long as they're having a good time" but the other side are like, hardcore. Like, they're professional dancers and they're going to do so good one day and are so into their children doing well that they're missing the aspect of having fun. I see the kids with those parents, and they could care less whether they're getting new shoes or new clothes or whether they're dancing at all. But then the parents who are like, "Oh, as long as they're having fun," they love it. – Instructor

There are those parents who are living vicariously through their children. But I think that's probably true of anything. Hockey, gymnastics, cheerleading. You see parents there, of kids, and those kids really don't want to be there. I've got a couple in mind, they were rec kids. Those kids did not want to be there. It's like, "oh geez, your kid is so unhappy, it's so obvious to the rest of us." – Parent

It is important to note that while some parents may be considered too invested in the notion of their children gaining prestige within the community through excessive performance participation, parental fascinations with stardom and the stage are not the most predominant means toward involvement noted within this research. Instead, instrumentality may play more of a role in these initial involvements, as many parents develop interests in dance simply as a way to keep their children occupied in the after-school hours. In these cases, seeking out ways to participate in competitions and recitals may have little to do with the act of dancing itself. Instead, two parent participants in this study reported enrolling their daughters in dance as a means of pursuing social relationships. Similar to Prus & Frisby's (1990) home party attendees, participating in dance is often related to issues of social life and an interest in spending time with friends. Other goals of participation stated by participants included increasing physical activity, learning discipline and keeping children out of trouble:

I just want them to be a part of a group and to make it a fun, interactive activity. To make more friends. Just get used to the idea that you have to go to the same place every week and a learning kind of thing, where you have to meet certain requirements. I want them to learn routine and just get used to routine. – Parent

I don't really care, for the most part, what it is they do. Just an activity that gives them fun, teaches them something, whether it's coordination, whether it's being comfortable on stage. It keeps them physically fit; I want them to be physically fit. I want them, obviously, to be coordinated and I want them to do something good for them, something wholesome with their time. I want them to be confident, and I think dance helps with that. They're on stage all the time, they're used to being on stage. That's all I want from it. I want them to have fun, stay fit and be confident. – Parent

I'd rather they be there and having some sort of interest than, you know, just hanging out at the mall. It keeps them off the street. – Parent

I think a lot of times people just throw their girls in dance because there's nothing else and they don't want them, you know, smoking pot at the park with all the bad kids. Dance is kind of like the major activity for little girls. There is a studio on every corner. Seriously though. If you're at a studio four nights a week, that is four nights that they don't have to worry that you're getting into trouble. – Former dancer

Further, it may simply be convenient to enroll children, particularly daughters, in an after-school dance program and it may be the case that dance is perceived to be “a routine rite of passage in the lives of both daughters and mothers” (Nelson, 2001: 442). In these instances, female children may become fascinated with the activity of dance as an extension of other gender-based interests:

She became interested in ballet and fascinated with being a ballerina. She became interested because she was into princesses and Barbies, and ballet is so closely associated with that stuff. That stuff that's associated with little girls. – Parent

Because of the young age at which children typically get involved in performing, it is inappropriate to consider their experiences and perspectives without also addressing the experiences and perspectives of their parents. Although there is evidence of interests and fascinations on behalf of the children themselves, their awareness of dance and what it means to perform is typically based on contact they have with the event through their parents. While these intrigues may exist, it is ultimately the parents who make finalized decisions regarding whether or not they will be pursued. Further, it is more likely that children get involved in competitions and recitals through recreational inheritance and the fascinations their parents have with the activity. These fascinations may relate to notions

of stardom and include other elements of parental dreamwork relating to the performance and the stage. However, within this study, participants note other incentives of involvement to be more predominant, such as providing children with supervision as well as educating them in discipline and self-confidence.

Managing Reservations

Prus & Grills (2003) note that regardless of the predominant means of involvement, interested individuals often engage in a process of managing reservations prior to getting involved in an activity or event. Within this study, parents and dancers alike expressed several concerns with participating in competitions and recitals, relating notions of sexual imagery and exploitation, and the risk of injury:

Some of the older girls, the teenagers, in some numbers, I find that they just aren't dressed appropriately on stage. I don't think. And I really don't want my kids looking like that when they hit their teen years and I worry about that. They look like they belong on street corners, some of them...the one before last year, they had a lot of numbers for the older kids where they're in sort of hip-hop clothes. Sort of street clothes. And honestly, I've never seen the girls in our studio look so trampy. Like, really trampy. And I thought, this is not what I want my kids growing into in the next few years. I don't want them looking like this. – Parent

There's always the possibility of injury with acro, because Sadie's starting to work on aerials, which is a cartwheel with no hands. So when they're in the air and they can fall on their heads and there's no hands to support them, I just don't like that feeling. It scares me...kids pull things all the time. There's always the possibility of injury, so that scares me. – Parent

I never had dance...but a lot of people who did and competed will say, "Now that I'm in my forties and getting close to fifty, I'm starting to pay for all that exercise I did". Joints and so on. So I don't know, how the road, what it's going to do and I worry. I mean, even ballet. Ballet's not good for you. Your body's not supposed to be standing on its toes. It was never meant to do that. – Parent

There's a lot of misconceptions about us. I think that one of them is that everybody is very sexually active. I think that's a big one. I also think in terms of guys, that every guy is gay and overly feminine^[2]. Which is not true at all. – Dancer

Reservations based on stereotypes and previous experiences within the community may impact decisions to get involved. Lofland (1966) notes that recruitment tacticians are typically aware of these reservations and may incorporate them into their tactics to ease the minds of their targets. Lofland (1966) and Karsh et al. (1953) note instances of

tacticians being excessively friendly, warm and interested in targets. Lofland refers to this tactic as “false friendliness” and while I did not notice this extensively in the studio-based dance community, there is evidence of staff members attempting to neutralize concerns in an effort to encourage individuals to take part. For example, some dancers receive injury avoidance training:

They do warm-ups at the beginning. They show them how to loosen up a bit, and they do that with most classes...I know one of the parents does Brain Gym, and she says...there's Brain Gym things you can do to prevent injury, and so with some of the classes she was doing that too. – Parent

Further, Lofland (1966: 177) discusses the concept of a “moral image” playing a central role in recruitment attempts, as are group-based efforts at appearing positive and wholesome. In these cases, studios may develop strict dress codes for instructors and encourage family-friendly behaviour to put parents at ease about involving their children:

The instructors, I've noticed, are starting to wear more material. I'm not quite sure why that happened, but you know, some of the parents come in, so they thought that the instructors looked a little inappropriate. They don't look trappy, they look wholesome, but there's not a lot on sometimes. And I noticed the owner, she's starting to wear longer tops and things that cover up more. I know a lot of the parents didn't like what the instructors were wearing. They didn't like the message it was sending. Maybe someone complained and they made the change. It's a whole other issue, because even when it's subtle, it comes through. – Parent

Our one instructor, I remember hearing about this once I was already older, but apparently he got really drunk this one time and was involved in all of this legal drama. I don't know if it was a drinking and driving thing, or if it was drugs, or what. But apparently it was some sort of hoopla because it was making the whole group look bad, and they thought people would be uncomfortable leaving their kids in his care. Pretty sure he lost his job, but I'm not completely sure how they handled it, because it was so long ago and I only found out as I got older. Although honestly, who even knows if it's true, people in the group were gossips. – Former dancer

2. Interestingly, stressing femininity was less prevalent in this study than in the work that Nelson (2001) did on ballet families, both in terms of male and female dancers. While many of this study's participants discussed the stereotypes regarding sexuality and sexual orientation, they were quickly brushed off as irrelevant and dated. Nelson (2001) notes that mothers often enroll their daughters in dance as a means of education on stereotypically feminine traits such as grace and poise, which also contributes to the concern with enrolling their sons in the same activity. Instead, the parents and instructors in this study rarely discussed the feminine traits associated with dance. Instead, a focus was on strength and core training, discipline, assertiveness, self-confidence and even competition as being the main attributes of dance. However, it should be noted that Nelson's (2001) study focused on ballet which is a more traditional and rigid form of dance, while this study explored many diverse types of dance which often stray from convention and this could account for the difference in values.

Sometimes dance gets too flashy and I would change that. Some of the kids' costumes can be quite risqué, and I've gone to competitions with seven-year-olds in two pieces and I think that's a little too much. I kind of cut down on the props and make it more about being technical dancers compared to the flashiness of it. The stuff you see on TV all the time and movies, the whole eating disorder thing totally goes into it. It shouldn't be what you look like, it shouldn't be what you're wearing, it should be how good of a dancer you actually are. Hopefully they see me as a positive aspect of dance. I really do try and fight the flashiness of dance. I truly try to make technical dancers. I've gotten commended that a lot of my, especially hip-hop routines, that there's no swearing. It needs to be family-friendly, there are like, little children watching the show. Even in a lot of competitive hip-hop, you see a lot of it is taken straight from music videos. And then some of the stuff, like crunking, is not appropriate for ten-year-olds. So I have gotten kudos from dance judges, other dance teachers and parents that I keep my routines age-appropriate, which is something that is very difficult to try and get around when you want to push them more. You have to remind yourself that they're only eight. - Instructor

Generalized images of the activity and the participants in it become very important in the recruitment process. Instructors become ambassadors for the cause and it is up to them to appear competent, conveying positive images of participation so that targets will want to get involved. Instructors are often the first contacts that newcomers have with the studio, and so it is up to them to neutralize concerns by portraying involvement as desirable.

Similarly, those seeking out participation evaluate their interests participating in light of these concerns and determine plans of action accordingly. In turn, some parents and dancers develop their own strategies for managing reservations. These strategies may include ignoring the concerns, or adapting involvement to accommodate for them, such as limiting participation or seeking out the assistance of professionals:

Twice we've brought her to the chiropractor to have her back adjusted, in the last couple of years. And I said to the chiropractor, "Is this common, for kids this age, to need an adjustment?" and he said, "No. That's not good. Your body was not meant to be doing these walkovers and things she's showing me she's doing. And if she continues doing this, when she's fifty, her muscles will not support her spine properly, unless she does exercises all the time and continues them." There is an option there, but she won't do the exercises. She refuses to do them. You can't get her to focus on these things. And then growing up and into adulthood, she has to maintain that, because the muscles have already been stretched. So to keep them limber, you've got to keep exercising...I don't know down the road what it's going to do...I figure she's doing only one hour a week of acro. It's not a tremendous amount of acro. So far she's doing one hour a week of ballet. - Parent

We put her in physio. It's more soft tissue issues than anything. She went to physio for six months and I don't think there was a week where we didn't run into someone we knew there from their dance studio. She had a soft tissue injury, but the physio was more to strengthen her leg. - Parent

You need to find something that they like and really want to do. But at the same time, I don't know whether it would affect her in a negative way and so that's always in the back of my mind. You try and find a balance. - Parent

Managing reservations is a common aspect of getting involved in both instances of recruitment and instances of seekership. Further, it is important to note that these two means of involvement are more accurately envisioned as part of a similar process. This process is further complicated by the capacity of individuals to reflect on both the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing participation and develop their own agendas according to what they think is appropriate when considering involvement in dance.

While existing studio members may determine desirable targets for recruitment, these tacticians are often aware of target interests as well. Interested individuals often make contact with the group by attending competitions and recitals, further developing an understanding of the activity and fascinations with it. In turn, studio insiders may validate these intrigues in an effort to encourage future participation among these targets.

Essentially, there is a balance between recruitment and seekership, making it difficult to discuss the two means of involvement separately. The recruitment attempts of event insiders often occur in the context of *interested* outsiders who have already made initial approaches to the group, rather than as an attempt to involve desirable outsiders at random. The complexity of this process highlights the negotiative element of becoming involved in collective ventures, as both targets and tacticians are active in setting and pursuing their own intrigues and agendas. Similarly, reflectivity is an integral aspect of recruitment/seekership as both targets and tacticians are continually involved in evaluating their interactional partners, tacticians altering their “pitch” and targets altering their responses accordingly.

Based on Prus’ (1997) definitions of recruitment and seekership, it appears that seekership is the more predominant means of getting involved in competitions and

recitals. However, the close connection between these two processes complicates this assertion. It could also be argued that while people attend performances as a means of pursuing their intrigues, the act of putting together these events and making them visible in the greater community is an example of studios recruiting newcomers and encouraging them to take notice of the activity.

The predominant means of getting involved in dance events may differ according to the type of event being considered. While intrigues and fascinations may lead newcomers to enroll with studios and participate in recitals, these same individuals may be met with obstacles when trying to get involved in competitions. There is considerable evidence of gate keeping with regard to participating in competitions, and while interested individuals may attempt to negotiate their way into a competitive dance routine, it is the studio personnel who determine their fate. These staff members determine which potential candidates are most likely to adhere to the team and contribute to the success of the group. While dancing ability is considered significant, studio personnel also consider attitude, behaviour, enthusiasm and commitment as integral qualities in a competitive dancer.

Interestingly, in their study on the recruitment of high school athletes to the college level, Dietz & Cooper (1994) note the role of the recruiter identity in determining desirable targets and making approaches, which is similarly applicable to the competitive realm of amateur dance. In other words, Dietz & Cooper (1994) highlight the concerns recruiters have with their own careers and notions of legitimacy in the recruiter role, and how these issues contribute to their target selections. Studio staff members are similarly invested in the studio business and consider how selections will best serve that business

as a whole, as their selections impact the functioning of the group. Essentially, recruiting dancers to the competitive circuit who then fail to live up to the standard of the group impacts the way the staff member who selected them is viewed within the community. As such, this may in some instances mean skipping over an exceptionally talented dancer who is unreliable for a more average dancer who they perceive to be dedicated to the agenda of group.

Similar instances of careful target selection are seen in other activity-based communities. For example, Daniel Wolf (1991) explores how newcomers are recruited into The Rebels outlaw biker gang through a “striking” period in which they are required to prove themselves based on not only their biking ability, but their perceived honesty, sincerity and commitment to the group over other obligations and interests. In turn, the “strikers” may try and convince group members that they are worthy targets of recruitment by exaggerating loyalty and dedication to the activity, much like young dancers attempting to persuade a move from recreational to competitive participation. While this is commonplace in the case of the competitive dance circuit, there is little evidence of similarly intense recruitment efforts in the case of recitals, because everyone who enrolls with the studio is permitted to participate.

Being recruited and engaging in seekership are significant aspects of getting involved in competitions and recitals. However there is a key means of initial involvement that has been overlooked up to this point: establishing and initiating these events. The expression “getting involved” invokes images of individuals taking part in an event that is already somehow underway. These images are appropriate in the case of dancers and parents, as they typically get involved with competitions and recitals once

the initial plans and agendas are in place for accomplishing these events. However, this discussion on initial involvements would be incomplete without considering how people establish collective events in the first place. The following section considers the perspectives of studio personnel, who not only assemble the participants, but also are responsible for initiating the events that others participate in.

Initiating Events Involving Others in the Community

Planning for performance season typically begins with studio owners. As was noted in Chapter 2, studios are business operations with owners and other personnel providing a service to dancer and parent customers. Holyfield (1999) illustrates in her study on white water rafting how hobby-based businesses sustain themselves by providing opportunities to participate in a certain activity or social/emotional interaction. Members of dance groups define performance events as the purpose of dance involvements, and businesses provide ways for dancers to take the stage. Thus, studio personnel are responsible for initiating plans for recitals and competitions, and subsequently assembling the group in ways that they can effectively participate.

Initiating group participation in competitions and recitals begins with the establishment of the studio business. While organizing the actual events themselves is of great significance and will be discussed extensively in this section, the importance of the studio as the venue for these preparations cannot be understated. Studio owners are typically dancers or instructors themselves that decide to branch off and begin their own projects:

I worked at another studio for seventeen years and another teacher that was there, we just decided that it was time. We were just basically like, it was time to make our own money. We were working for someone else. We can do this. We just need to get a ballet teacher. We did most of the teaching for jazz, tap, lyrical.

It was just time to, you know, move on. I worked for this lady for seventeen years. It was a hard thing, to tell her I was leaving, but we did it. So that was like ten years ago. And here we are today. I've been dancing since I was four and teaching since I was thirteen. – Studio owner

The owner of the studio has danced since she was little, and taught part-time at one of the studios. When she finished high school she opened up her own place. Really young. So her parents help her run it. She's now between twenty-five and twenty-seven, I think. She just has a lifetime of training and competing. – Parent

Based on an interest in showcasing dance and converting their interests into a career opportunity, the first steps in starting a studio business involve renting locations and hiring staff:

First you have to find a place, obviously, that's going to have a certain amount of room. At least two or three rooms... basically, we rented a building, painted the building, had to do flyers and stuff, to let people know we were there. You know, getting a sign for the studio, making registration forms. Getting your name out there. – Studio owner

Having a well-rounded staff is essential to the successful pursuit of studio-based performance events and the survival of the studio as a whole. The recruitment of instructors is highly varied from studio-to-studio, as there is really no standardized criteria for teaching dance. At the studio level, it is up to the individual studio owners to hire and train instructors according to their own agendas. Dance instructors always have some sort of training in dance and quite often they are dancers within the studios themselves. As they reach adolescence they are approached about teaching:

At our dance studio, some of the older girls teach the younger classes, like the little kids. And there's a few people, like the advanced acro people, who teach some solos and work on them with the kids. – Dancer

It was a part-time job during high school. I started at the community centre and it was only about two hours a week, and I figured it was a lot easier with dancing myself. I spent at least ten hours [a week] dancing myself, and then two hours teaching, but as I got older I got more and more involved in teaching. I don't dance anymore because I'm too old. I was at Keep Dancing as a dancer for six years and then I moved to Dance Motions and I was there until I was eighteen. I danced with a girl when I was younger and she emailed me and told me she was opening a studio and needed a teacher. – Instructor

The ballet instructor is part of the Royal Academy of Dance. She's qualified. She's also part of the Actors Guild. She's also an actress. So she used to do musical production, musical theatre as well. So singing and dancing as well. So they've all got a lot of background. And sometimes if they need an extra teacher, one of the older people who have danced there for years and years will end up teaching. – Parent

Studio owners begin determining class divisions once these initial concerns are handled.

Dancers are typically grouped according to age and ability. Studio owners group dancers in ways that are helpful for instructors who develop the choreographies that will later be showcased on stage:

There are two-year-old classes and three-year-old classes. Four-year-olds. Then as you get older it switches by two years and then all the adults are lumped into one. – Instructor

They are split up by level in the tap classes I teach, up to fourteen years. Age will factor into the level, but sometimes we will have an older student in a younger class because they are not on par with the students. – Instructor

There's different skill levels. In ballet there's grades. It goes one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Jazz is more skill, mostly. At the end of the year the teachers decide if someone's good enough to move to the next group, which is older most of the time. – Dancer

When I danced, there was an actual syllabus we followed and then we would go through exams, 'cause my studio, we weren't hardcore into competing, at least the second studio I went to. So we were always stressed out with exams and learning the syllabus and all the technique and stuff and that would push you up. The studio I teach at for tap, they just kind of base it on whether the teacher, once you meet a certain level of what you need to know to move up, they lay out the criteria, it's kind of based on our own judgment. You add sounds, like for tap, you learn your basic steps, your building blocks, and then from there you just go on and build from them. – Instructor

They tend to move along pretty much in their same groups. Some people move up on occasion, but generally speaking, they've been pretty much dancing with the same people and competing with the same people since they started. Some of the schools do testing to determine placement. Audrey did the jazz exam. Ballet exams are pretty common. – Parent

While determining class divisions according to age is fairly straightforward, establishing classes based on dancing ability is often controversial. In the absence of standardized criteria, what is considered appropriate is often up for debate:

In terms of moving students up and figuring out classes, there's pressure. I find that a lot of the kids are always pushing me to put them up a level a lot of the kids are like "Why can't I be with the older students, I want to be like them" and they look up to them, which is good, but sometimes it gets to be like, "Well I can't move you up yet" and I wonder how I can tell them they aren't good enough. – Instructor

In the tap classes it's harder because some of the students can't...like I have incidents this year where one of the students was new to the studio and she couldn't be in the level she was in, but her mom said she had taken tap before, so we put her in Level 3 thinking she had a good solid background. But when she got in she was just completely lost, so it was kind of worse telling someone they have to move down. – Instructor

Further, once final enrolment numbers are confirmed and class divisions have been determined, studio owners assign instructors to each of the classes according to ability, availability, and when feasible, the interests of the instructor:

The way the owner divided it at her studio, she does the majority of the Irish [dancing] because that's her specialty, that's what she loves and does. She brought me in for the tap because she doesn't know anything about tap and tap's my favourite. I also teach some little preschool programs, the jazz and the ballet...but mainly I do tap and hip-hop because I trained hip-hop in university...She brought in another instructor for ballet, because when you do ballet there's a lot of exam work and she knows the exam work and in order to teach it a lot of the time you need to have done them. Sometimes there's little petty things like, "I wanted that class and you got them" kind of thing. "You've got more kids in that class", but you kind of know it's for the greater good of the studio. – Instructor

Studio owners begin making more concentrated attempts at putting together the performance events once these more generalized efforts of establishing the studio and setting up classes are underway. Initial planning for recitals and competitions differs, and so they will be discussed somewhat separately.

Organizing Recitals

Studio owners begin organizing year-end recitals by selecting dates, locations and event themes. Recital location is of particular importance, in that studio owners need to find a place that is both affordable and can accommodate the size of the their studio. This often occurs before all other preparations, as there are a limited number of performance locations available in any given area. It is typically the studio owners that research potential recital locations, make their selections and provide deposits:

First we have to go to the theatre, figure out the lighting, do the signing of the contracts of the show. Get insurance, sit with the people that make the tickets, decide on ticket prices. We always use the same venue, and we basically book it a year in advance, so you usually do that right after the recital. You book for the next year. Ours ends up being in a stupid spot all the time. We don't get to actually pick the weekend we want, so we just take whatever's available. Even if we have a date and then, like, Celine Dion says she wants that date, we get bumped. If they know they're going to make way more money on some big person coming in and they book way in advance, they can change a lot on us. So there's a lot of preparation. – Studio owner

Owners select locations for recitals based on their availability and their size, ensuring that there is adequate stage space for performances and enough audience seating to accommodate the predicted number of spectators. If larger theatres are not available or deemed affordable, studios may opt to have two or three identical recitals on different days so that everyone interested in seeing the show has an opportunity to do so.

Similarly, owners may decide against larger theatres even if they are available, preferring a staggered show schedule so that settings are more intimate and the stage can be seen clearly by all attendees. Choice of venue can be a problematic aspect of event planning, as owners make decisions according to what they think is best for their businesses:

I don't like the June show schedule. There are three separate shows, which is insane. And on three weeknights. It used to be on a weekend, which was ridiculous enough with three shows. And they won't go to a larger venue where they can do one show and be done. They refuse. They said the reason is because you're so far away, you don't recognize the kids. Possible. It might well be. But you get to the point and you've had, you know, dress rehearsals and photograph evenings where photographers come in, and then the shows. It's just too much. So, a lot of studios will do one show. Sometimes they'll do two. We've had two and it was better. I think three is just crazy...and it's late. So, depending on when you get scheduled, you could be on at the beginning and you could be on at ten-thirty, almost eleven o'clock and then by the time you get your kids home and get them to bed, you know, it's crazy. – Parent

We used to do it at a school theatre and we ended up having three or four shows and getting complaints that they had to do the show four times, so now we book at [larger venue] and it is a lot more money. But they still complain, because they think that the show is too long. They're complaining because their kid goes to bed at seven and the show is too long and goes too late, but I mean, it's only the one night a year, you can't have your kid take a nap in the afternoon? – Studio owner

Once locations are booked, studio personnel can more adequately determine the cost of putting on a recital and so they begin to deliberate on ticket prices. This is an easier task for those experienced studio owners, who typically book the same venues and therefore charge similar amounts each year, with minor increases every few years to account for rising costs. Booking larger theatres for recitals typically leads to a higher cost of attendance, ensuring that the studio is not losing money. Recital ticket prices generally range from no charge to upwards of fifty dollars and again are often met with some resistance:

The kids are cute and they put on a great show, but I can't help but think it's kind of nuts to charge thirty dollars a ticket to watch kids run around in tutus. It just seems really unreasonable; it's not like I'm going to see a Broadway show or something. But we come because we're here to support the kids. They are working hard. But thirty dollars? – Spectator (field notes)

The only setbacks sometimes would be the parents, in my experience. That's the only reason I sometimes hate my job. There are certain parents that just don't understand certain aspects of dance. They think it's such a big deal to pay. They think it's stupid to pay \$35 a ticket. I understand it's a lot, but then they'll go to the store and pay \$100 for a pair of jeans, but they don't want to see their kid? I mean, come on. – Studio owner

Once enrollment numbers are finalized, studio owners begin developing a recital program. The show program is typically structured around the various classes within the studio because all dancers within the studio participate in at least one number in the year-end recital. All routines that are created and are learned within the studio are added to the recital schedule. This includes routines taught in recreational classes, numbers that are created for competitions, solos, duets, trios and group work, as well as additional acts that the owners think are beneficial to showcase:

Everything that we learned and practiced, they put in the show. What would be the point of learning it if you didn't get to perform it? Sometimes to fill time too, they would just pull a couple of good people and teach them something. The show would be about two hours long. The finale was always something that included all the groups and all ages, in some way. – Former dancer

Every grade got a piece. Grade nine, ten, eleven, twelve would all get a piece and in the program it would say "Grade Nine Piece". The older grades would sometimes have two or three pieces...and then the company would fill in the rest of the show and then there were also characters. Like Romeo and Juliet, the parents, stuff like that. So there would be the duets between Romeo and Juliet, solo of Romeo, solo of Juliet, whoever was in the company would fill the rest of the pieces, sometimes we would be split into different pieces. Typically, everyone was in the opening piece and the final piece. We'd dance in the aisles and stuff because we couldn't all fit on stage. – Former dancer

Structuring the recital may also include selecting a theme for the show, which choreographies are then created to complement. Themes vary from year-to-year and are usually determined during initial event planning, so that the production of props and stage setups can begin. They can encompass a wide variety of images and ideas, such as pop culture references (e.g. Disney, Universal Studios), books and plays (e.g. Mother Goose,

Romeo & Juliet) and other more general concepts (e.g. Under the Sea, Around the World):

Usually in January we pick a theme, but we've had our theme for our tenth year for a long time. We have meetings with teachers and let them know the theme and have to base it all around the theme. We throw out ideas...Every year we're like, "What are we gonna do this year?" and we throw out ideas and go with it. It's hard to kind of, top the year before. You want to make it innovative and different. – Studio owner

The initial steps toward planning a recital involve administrative and organizational tasks, such as securing theatres, determining ticket prices and assembling participants in a preliminary way. Studio owners handle these concerns regarding costs, locations and schedules somewhat exclusively, without excessive input from other staff members or dancers and their parents. Once these early decisions are made, the rest of the studio members come into the preparatory process and the studio classroom becomes the focal point of coordinating the recital event, which will be detailed in Chapter 5.

Assessing and Selecting Competitions

Studio owners make preliminary plans for recitals and develop organizational strategies for competitive participation. Initiating participation in competitions is somewhat different from the first stages of organizing recitals, because it typically involves a third party.^[3] While recitals are established and prepared for exclusively within the studio, competitions are organized by external businesses that specialize in bringing together several studios around a single competitive event. Thus, participation in them begins when studios initiate communication with these organizations.

3. See Gawley (2007) for a more thorough interactionist conceptualization of third parties as a feature of everyday life. Because this thesis explores dance performances from a *studio*-based perspective, more detailed analysis of competition organizers as external sets of businesses and their subsequent roles within dance is best reserved for future research on amateur dance.

While it is possible that competitions are affiliated with a specific studio, it is more likely that they are established and run by competition-specific organizations. The owners of these businesses have experience in dance and may have owned studios in the past. These competition organizers locate theatres, set up registrations, establish rules for participation and recruit studios to participate. Once these preparations are underway, the studios play a more predominant role in their accomplishment. The competition organizers send information regarding the event to the studios in hopes that they will choose that particular event over the several others that occur within any given competition season. Depending on how far studio members are willing to travel, there can be dozens of events available and so studio owners reflect on the best interests of their groups:

The main ones are in the States. It all depends on what competitions the studios sign up for. So, they're not all the same. Like in this area, not every studio will go to the same competitions, they'll maybe pick four or five competitions to go to and they'll go there. I know the one studio in our area goes to Philadelphia this year and then one went to L.A. for a big workshop and a big competition. – Instructor

What happens is, we have the manager, she enters about a hundred routines into about four or five competitions and every other year we go away to big finals. This year it's in Myrtle Beach in July. It's kind of like, this competition they do the preliminaries in about 25 different cities and whoever wants to go to the finals, it's all those studios that won. We decide based on who runs them, word of mouth, experiences. Sometimes we go back to the same ones, sometimes we go to different ones. They're all basically the same costs. We look at where the venues are, what the venues are like. Like, Niagara is good, where they can stay in a hotel and parents like it. We look at the person who runs it, someone that is efficient with time. It just kind of varies. There's probably 50 different competitions out there with six or seven venues that they do them in, so it's hard to pick them. And you don't want to do weekends back-to-back, and then there's Easter and May Two-Four [Victoria Day Weekend] in there too, which I hate doing. We try and pick based on those things – Studio owner

Similarly, some studio owners may make decisions according to what other studios are doing, in an effort to either avoid or increase inter-studio competitiveness and establish their prestige in their respective areas:

There's a lot of competition between studios as well. Between the three of them in [this area] they are like, head to head all the time, so a lot of the times the studios will just avoid going to competition against each other so that they can be the best at the competition they are at. But then as soon as they come together, it's like cats and dogs going at each other, because then it's a true competition of like "Oh this studio is better

than this studio” and it’s the teachers getting in. If the teachers don’t like each other than the whole studios can’t like that studio, they have a lot of influence on their kids. – Instructor

The major preparations at this stage occur outside the studio, as competition organizers work out the details of these events. They will maintain open lines of communication with studio personnel, providing them with information on scheduling and cost so that they can relay this information to dancers and parents. Adequate communicative efforts are essential, so that parents and performers know what is required of them well in advance. This limits the potential for confusion or conflict as the event approaches.

At this point, competition organizers also develop a rulebook and provide it to the studios. Detailed rules are considered a necessity when bringing together numerous studios with differing internal policies and regulations, creating a common ground by which to avoid misunderstandings. The rules stipulated by competition organizers typically specify performance categories, what types of routines are permitted and what will lead to disqualification, as well as codes of conduct for participants. The following is an example of the types of rules common to competitive events, taken from a competition program (field notes):

Age Categories- 3 and under, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and over. All categories will be divided into individual age groups.

Competition Categories: Jazz - must not contain more than 2 acro tricks.

Tap - music must not contain pre-recorded tap sounds and must not contain more than 2 acro tricks.

Acro - acrobatics/gymnastics set to any style of music. An acro trick is defined as a movement where the hips pass over the shoulders.

Ballet- Pointe - classical ballet technique with the use of pointe shoes.

Demi Pointe - classical ballet technique on demi-pointe.

Demi-Character - a routine portraying a character set to classical style music

- Qualified, professional judges will critique and record the dancers at each location using DVD which will be delivered to the studio following the competition.
- Competitions with less than 325 entries will have 2 judges. Competitions with 325-450 entries will

- have 3 judges. Competitions with more than 450 entries will have 4 judges
- General audience members will not be allowed to VIDEOTAPE, PHOTOGRAPH, or take ANY KIND OF REPRODUCTION. Smith Dance Competitions will have professional videographers and/or photographers who will be selling their reproductions of the performers over the weekend.
- Teachers will play their own music and are welcome to bring their music recorded on either cassettes or CD's. CD's are encouraged, cassettes are strongly discouraged. Ipods may also be used at some locations. Please call ahead to verify compatibility.
- Competitors may not compete against themselves in ANY category. If a competitor has more than one routine in the same category they must move up an age category or change to a different discipline with one of their routines.
- Smith Dance Competitions Inc. reserves the right to disqualify inappropriate routines.

The specific rules regarding technique and code of conduct may differ across these events. For example, some competitions do not allow outsiders to observe performances while others encourage spectators. Further, while some organizers require formal identification, such as birth certificates, to verify ages of performers before allowing them to participate, others are less stringent with categories and qualification processes (field notes).

As studios begin to mobilize resources and assemble participants for competitive events, the earliest efforts are concentrated around selecting which events to enter and which events to avoid. Studio owners and other personnel make these selections based on a wide variety of criteria that may differ across groups. They consider the amount of travel and subsequent costs of attending certain events, and may prefer to keep cost down by selecting only local competitions. They also consider previous experiences had with certain competitions and their organizers, avoiding events deemed unsatisfactory in the past. Finally, studio owners may also consider the rules and regulations of the competitive events prior to enrolling their studios within them, since these guidelines may represent the first major points of contact between the studios and those that are in charge of the event. Personnel may define meticulous rules as worthy of greater prestige

than more lenient demands or similarly, they may decide that the regulations are too demanding or complicated and opt to enroll in a more casual event instead (field notes).

The process of initiating studio-wide involvements in recitals and competitions differs somewhat according to the event at hand. The conception and initial planning for recitals occurs exclusively within the studios, and therefore, represents the agenda of that studio, getting the studio group involved in competitions involves interacting with the third party businesses that arrange these events. In the case of recitals, the studio owners mark the start of the events with administrative tasks, such as booking theatres and selecting event dates, so that there is an event to participate in. In the case of competition, while studio owners take on the organizational leadership role by means of assessing and selecting which events to enter, the events themselves are organized by external businesses. In contrast to starting up recitals, the studios must adhere to competition organizer agendas as well as their own. Thus, they have to determine the goodness of fit between their interests and goals and those of the various competitions available to them, determining which events are most desirable.

Once these details are handled, studio personnel begin assembling the participants in meaningful ways, dividing them into classes according to age and ability where these participants then learn the material that will be showcased in the performance events. At this point the process of getting prepared for the stage is remarkably similar in the case of both recitals and competitions and will be addressed more extensively in Chapter 5.

Studio personnel, particularly studio owners and upper level managers, are the most likely studio members to initiate group-wide participation in competitions and recitals. Goffman (1959: 97) notes that this type of leadership is common in team-based

performances:

When one examines a team-performance, one often finds that someone is given the right to direct and control the progress of the dramatic action...In general, the members of the team will differ in the ways and the degree to which they are allowed to direct the performance.

Considering Goffman's (1959) conceptualization of the team, studio owners are most accurately envisioned as team leaders, overseeing initial plans to make these events happen. Because they are the ones providing the opportunity to perform as a service through their studio businesses, it is logical that studio owners take on this leadership role and make the events happen. During this initial stage of planning, studio owners make decisions somewhat independently from the rest of the group, but with the interests of that group as a collective in mind. While studio personnel note that they are open to suggestions from other group members, they stress the impossibility of pleasing everyone and so as leaders it is they who determine what is best for the group as a whole:

They'll complain about the other kids. They'll complain about each other. They'll complain about routines they're not in, they complain about prices, they complain about not enough shows, they complain that there's too many shows. You never please parents. So you just have to do what is best for the group. – Instructor

The significance of this leadership role is not unique to the dance life. In Little League baseball (Fine, 1987), basketball (Scott, 1981) and other sports-related communities, team coaches take on this leadership role, making decisions and initiating events on behalf of the group. One participant in this study on dance even made direct comparisons between studio personnel and coaches of sports teams:

Hockey teams have coaches. Our teachers are like our coaches. They teach us things, they are there when we perform. They make decisions for us and manage us. They deal with all the drama so that we can just get out there and dance. It's the same thing, really. – Former dancer

Team leaders are a similarly significant aspect of outlaw biker gangs. Wolf (1991) notes that the biker community is centered on participating in club runs, and while all group members contribute to the planning of these events, it is the "road captain" and his

assistants that develop itineraries, plotting out highways and selecting food and fuel stops for the entire group. Designating a group leader allows for a more cohesive unit, maintaining the interest of the team as opposed to becoming distracted by more individualized agendas and goals. While this is met with some ambiguity, in that team leaders are also team members with interests of their own, the alternative of group anarchy is considered too chaotic to be productive.

In Summary

Prus (1997) identifies four predominant means of becoming involved in collective events. In some cases, individuals find themselves more inadvertently or spontaneously participating in events started by others. These events often involve very little premeditation and occur more randomly, with participants making sense of them once they are already involved. This means of becoming involved is less relevant to discussions on recitals and competitions as the most significant events of the amateur dance industry, as these performances are planned and accomplished over the course of the dance year. In turn, this subprocess may be more suited to an analysis of engaging in dance at nightclubs or parties as opposed to the more structured means of dancing at recitals and competitions.

In the case of dancers and their parents, Prus' (1997) subprocesses of being recruited to and seeking out collective events are the more likely means of becoming involved in recitals and competitions. Dancers and parents often become involved in performance events as a means of pursuing some sort of fascination with the stage and its association with stardom and prestige. In the context of this study, however, participants

were more likely to identify positive socialization and increasing self-confidence as their predominant goals of involvement. Thus, there is a close connection between pursuing intrigues and attending to instrumentality, as many parents identified becoming interested in the *gains* of dance involvements more so than developing intrigues with the act of dancing itself. Similarly, as these individuals become interested in participating in performance events, studio insiders may identify them as potential recruits and subsequently encourage their participation in some way. Highlighting the negotiative and often ambiguous qualities of becoming involved in activities and events, this chapter notes the close connection between the seemingly opposing processes of recruitment and seekership.

Interestingly, a few participants expressed surprise when asked about initial involvements, some not recalling any extensive premeditation or consideration prior to joining. Instead, these participants defined dance participation as a normal aspect of female childhood and identified “defaulting” to dance as an after-school activity because of ease of accessibility and availability within their neighbourhoods (interview notes). For these participants, initial involvement was a very quick process in which they heard about the services offered by a particular studio and then enrolled shortly after.

It would be inaccurate to refer to these types of involvements as inadvertent or spontaneous (Prus, 1997) as an alternative means toward involvement in performance events because there is *some* element of awareness prior to taking part. However, while these participants had some sort of images or ideas about dance prior to their participation within it, many of them responded to questions regarding initial involvements with phrases like “it was just something to do” and “I hadn’t really thought about it much

before joining, it just looked fun” (interview notes). In these instances, involvement in amateur dance typically falls somewhere in between the two of extremes of spontaneity and excessive recruitment/seekership efforts. There is some element of reflection and awareness predating involvement, but there is also a lack of extensive planning and weighing of options prior to enrolment. Thus, while recruitment and seekership undeniably play integral roles in securing participants for competitions and recitals, this research suggests that in some instances becoming involved in amateur dance is not always a highly reflective and negotiative process.

Finally, it may not be the case that all individuals get involved with an event. Instead, they may be the ones initiating the event and the group’s involvement within it. Studio personnel take on the leadership role with regard to making competitions and recitals happen, initiating the events and assembling the group in a way that is conducive to participating in them. As they make preliminary plans and more fully develop recital events, owners are in charge of selecting dates, booking performance locations and assembling the participants. Further, while they are organizing recitals they are simultaneously assessing and selecting options for studio participation in competitive events.

Becoming involved and securing participants is the first step in participating in these collective ventures. Without these initial arrangements there would be no events to participate in, and regardless of how organized and efficient these events are, without participants they would similarly cease to exist. Once planning for recitals and competitions has begun, the studio classroom becomes the focal point of preparations. The following chapter highlights the process of coordinating and sustaining collective

events by addressing the ways that studio members come together and prepare for the upcoming performance season.

CHAPTER 5: PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE SEASON

In amateur dance, getting involved in competitions and recitals is an extension of enrolling with the studio. For competitions, there are some unique processes involved in that the studio makes contact with the external businesses that set up and run competitive events. Thus, getting involved with them includes considering the goodness of fit between the studios and these businesses. Putting dance teams together is also a relevant aspect of these early efforts as studios select those within their member populations that they perceive to be the best fit for the requirements of the competition. Recitals typically adopt an all-inclusive policy: everyone that pays enrolment fees and attends some classes can participate. Once competitions are chosen and participants are grouped into classes and teams, preparing for competitions is very similar to preparing for dance recitals. The preparation period occupies the majority of the dance year, namely the fall and winter months. During this period, the studio owners handle administrative duties while other studio members convene within the classroom to develop material for showcasing. This involves choreographing dance routines, selecting music and costumes, teaching/learning dance routines and managing instances of conflict and resistance among the various subgroups and individuals.

Prus (1997: 135) highlights five aspects of coordinating and sustaining collective events. This chapter will first explore the process of *accessing funding and other supplies*. At the most basic level, money is needed to participate in the performance season and this section will consider how the studio business secures the financial resources necessary to put on recitals and participate in competitions. Next, in anticipation of events, participants are involved in *developing agendas (plans of action)*

and developing associations. With regard to this subprocess, this section will consider the ways routines are created, choreographed and taught to dancers within the studio classroom with the performance season in mind. *Encountering isolated, widespread and coordinated resistance* is another aspect of coordinating and sustaining collective events, and this section will address various sources of controversy and conflict as dance studios prepare for performance season. Finally, this chapter will explore how the various individuals come together as a group during this preparation period and how this relates to notions of *developing (and articulating) a sense of purpose or mission* and the role this plays in managing conflict and maintaining harmony in the face of diversity.^[4]

Funding the Performance Season

Maintaining group harmony and developing material to showcase at performance events are significant aspects of coordinating recitals and competitions; however, without adequate monetary support these events are impossible. As businesses, the studios need to have enough money to not only put on recitals and go to competitions, but to contribute to the costs of running the studio.

At the very minimum, studios need to make enough money to pay studio bills. Even further, studio ownership and operation is a source of income for those employed within it and so profits are as necessary as they are in any other business. There are three

4. Prus (1997) also identifies “promoting via influence work the event to others” as a significant aspect of coordinating and sustaining collective events. While the ways that the studio encourages people to purchase tickets and attend performance events is significant, other than letting parents know about the performances via newsletters and postings throughout the studio there is very little formal “promotion” that occurs and thus will not be discussed extensively within this thesis. However, promoting the event to others *within* the group will be addressed in later sections, with regard to handling resistances and motivating the group.

ways that studio owners are seen to go about financing the studio so that the performance season can occur: charging fees, fundraising and selling merchandise.

Charging Fees

When it comes to recitals, studios typically consider themselves fortunate if they break even, let alone make a profit. Because of the controversy surrounding ticket prices, that was discussed earlier, studios struggle to keep prices down while ensuring that their costs are covered:

We discuss it, you know, “What do you think? Can we bump prices this year? How much did we make this year, how much is going out to staff, how much is going out to rent?” A lot of people think we’re making huge bucks but they don’t think of the cost to run a studio. You don’t make money by having a recital. You lose money. – Studio owner

Ticket prices barely cover the cost of renting a theatre. Therefore, studios first and foremost charge enrolment fees to participants interested in taking dance classes and participating in performances. Enrolment fees are meant to cover the cost of renting the studio, advertising and paying staff members with extra funds going toward organizing recitals and sending groups to competitions. The actual cost of taking classes varies per studio, relating to the cost of running that particular studio and the quality of experience provided there, based on the reputation it has within the industry. These costs can be controversial and so owners proceed with caution when increasing fees, making decisions according to fiscal demands and the willingness of the established customers to accept the changes. In his research on musicians, MacLeod (1993: 112) refers to the club date musician scene as a “luxury business” impacted by the health of the greater economy. Similar to other non-essential entertainment-oriented businesses like club bands, amateur dance studios are often impacted by economic downturns, rising living costs and unemployment rates. As such, they may set their fees with the greater financial

environment in mind, in an effort to keep existing customers and encourage newcomers to take part in spite of financial insecurity. Further, owners want to remain competitive in their particular markets, and so the fees they set may relate to the fees decided upon by other studios:

We set our fees ten years ago and every other year we usually put them up ten percent or something. You've got all your costs in the office, you got your staff cost, which is huge. Every staff member makes good money, like well over twenty dollars an hour, so you've got that many teachers, that's a huge cost. Obviously we're coming into a recession now so we're probably not going to be putting our prices up. People do shop around and might see other studios are cheaper, but they're a worse studio^[5], but nobody knows that unless they are in it, so we still have to compete with those prices. – Studio owner

In order to stay competitive in neighbourhoods with several dance options available for interested families to seek out, studio owners need to strike a balance between matching competitor fees and ensuring their business costs are covered. This may mean lessening the financial impact of enrolment by allowing parents to make payments rather than requiring a lump sum at the start of each dance season. By doing this, studios are able to charge amounts that adequately reflect the cost of running the studio without risking the loss of customers:

There's a couple of ways it can go, but now the community center program is a lot cheaper than anything I ever paid. Compare like, \$3 per hour to \$10-\$15 per hour. The more things you want done and the smaller classes, the more you will be expected to pay. The studio I work at, you can either pay in six-month installments, four-month installments or three-month installments. You do kind of have choice about how much you want to pay and when. – Instructor

Part of the issue regarding the costs of dance relates to how studios charge for more than

5. As was noted briefly in Chapter 4, studios display quality via their reputations within the dance community. These reputations are often determined by number of competitive wins (trophies attained and displayed within the studio setting) and customer satisfaction with regard to how children are taught and treated when participating in dance events. One instructor participant in this study commented that the dance community is “small” and information regarding both the positive and negative reputations of studios spreads relatively quickly by word-of-mouth. She says that active members within the dance community, particularly those involved in competitive dance, are fully aware of which studios are “best” in their respective geographical areas (field and interview notes).

just enrolment and lesson fees. Parents are also required to purchase practice attire, equipment and performance costumes, on top of these yearly enrolment than just enrolment and lesson fees. Parents are also required to purchase practice attire, equipment and performance costumes, on top of these yearly enrolment expenses. From a studio owner's perspective, these charges cannot be avoided and have a direct impact on the quality of upcoming performance events. Studios often stress that new and elaborate costumes are a necessity for aesthetic purposes when performing, but that the studios themselves see very little, if any, financial return. Instead the money goes to the designers and stores that provide them:

You get parents breathing down your neck because it's a four hundred dollar costume, but then they'll go out and buy a pair of hundred-dollar jeans. I get that you only wear it once, but you go into it knowing, when you sign up, how much the costume is going to cost and we keep it to that cost. But, if you have to pay an extra five dollars for something here and there and then the parents start asking why, they just don't get it. The cost of everything has gone up and we try not to put a markup on anything, but when it comes to shipping costs we have to cover our butts there and they have to understand that. We don't make any money on recital stuff. None. – Studio owner

Two participants noted instances in which dancers are permitted to recycle costumes, or search for a creative alternative to traditional performance attire in an effort to minimize the financial strain and keep group members interested in pursuing the activity:

I've had some places set it up so if a kid is doing a solo, they'll get the costume from someone else, so a second-hand costume. That makes it a bit cheaper. The most expensive costume my mom ever bought for me was \$300 and I was eight. She was not happy about that. At the center, we're kind of around eighty dollars. Getting pre-made ones is a little cheaper because you don't have to pay labour. – Instructor

One of mine this year just has to be from a second hand store. We're doing "I Feel Pretty" from West Side Story, so they just told us to go to Value Village to get dresses. – Dancer

Enrolment and lesson fees are the predominant sources of income for the studio, while recital ticket prices contribute to the rental of performance venues and other miscellaneous costs of putting on a show. When it comes to participating in competitions, studios and their participants are required to pay entrance fees upon enrolment. There are

several ways that studios ensure these costs are covered. One parent notes that some studios simply add the entrance fees onto the enrolment and lesson fees that parents are required to pay each year but her daughters' studio establishes fundraising initiatives to offset the cost:

Some studios charge you. If you're a solo participant, I think it's \$50 to compete and if you're a part of a group it's \$30 per child. So, for example, Kelly and Amanda together are in nine numbers this year, so that would be \$270 to \$300 a competition for us. As, as opposed to the studios saying, "Okay, you've got to pay \$270 for that competition" they expect everyone to fundraise, whereas some studios will just bill you. – Parent

Fundraising

The parents of competitive dancers typically organize fundraising projects. With most of the money raised going toward competition entry fees, it is the competitive families who benefit the most from fundraising:

There's a fair amount of fundraising. Not this year, but most years there's a big production that needs to be paid for... This year I'm doing the Zehrs tapes. Over the last six weeks we've tallied \$350,000 worth of Zehrs tapes [Grocery Receipts]. So things like that, and just other fundraising. Any of the shows, the showcase, year-end show, etc., everyone is expected to do their part and volunteer. It's like everything else. There's a certain number of people who do more than their share. – Parent

Fundraising is important. Like, without it you couldn't do competitions at all. We have a dance-a-thon where we raise money. You have to get sponsors and stuff. All we do is have a big party for money. – Dancer

While fundraising duties rest on the parents in many studios, other studios also incorporate the dancers themselves, and the role of dancer moves beyond practicing and performing and encompasses the more administrative duties of the studio:

I know Hannah's ballet class, the grade fives every year, the teacher selects one class, whoever completes all their barre work properly earliest in the fall gets chosen to put on the Nutcracker performance. They do Nutcracker Tea, and the kids do the whole thing. They do the posters, the tickets, choose the costumes, get everything organized from the boxes of stuff they have upstairs in the store rooms. They do all the baking, greet the parents at the door, seat them, take the tickets, take the money, serve all the treats, serve the tea, perform, clean up and get ready for the next performance. They're performing all day, they're there the night before doing all the baking. So they raise money. - Parent

Merchandising

The final means of generating extra income for the studio is selling studio-branded merchandise. The sale of these items helps contribute to the overall studio and keep enrolment and lesson fees down. Further, they become identity markers, as many dancers and staff alike also feel that they help instill a sense of community and insider belonging among members:

We have the whole warm-up suit. Jacket, pants, shorts and a t-shirt. They don't have to buy it, but they're encouraged. It's something nice for competitions because you have your costume underneath, throw the warm-up suit overtop. It's just less clothing to get in and out of. You look forward to going to the group when everyone's in the same jacket. - Instructor

Pretty much every studio has like, t-shirts or jackets. Pretty much every studio has videos of competitions or recitals. It's an additional way for them to get money. It definitely shows spirit. You see it in high school a lot. Different competitive studios will have jackets and the girls will all be wearing the jackets and be like, "Oh, you're from that studio, I'm from this studio". It takes the competition away from the studio and puts it into the community. - Instructor

There's lots to buy. And your kids are begging you for it. There's jackets, there's pants, there's shorts, there's t-shirts, there's hoodies, there's bra tops. There's also dance bags, dance jackets. So years ago from Santa, Jennifer wanted a dance jacket, so I bought it big and she still wears it. The competitive kids all have the same dance bag, you know. There's all that. And then of course they bug you for all the clothes they wear in classes, so you have to go buy the shorts, the pants, the tops and the leg warmers... The staff doesn't push the merchandise stuff. If you want it, you buy it. But it's the kids that want it. It's what they belong to. - Parent

Drawing striking comparisons with other team-based involvements, identity markers featuring the group name designate the parameters of the ingroup while creating the notion of the "other". With regard to the Little League teams, Fine (1987:128) notes that these preadolescents "draw a boundary around themselves and resist intrusion" by the other, and this boundary is more concretely defined using branded merchandise. Employing symbols of the group is similarly relevant to Wolf's (1991) outlaw bikers, who use "colours" (insignias, logos) to not only assert their loyalty to their respective gangs and designate themselves as somehow different from mainstream society, but also as a means of ingroup bonding through the recognition of the other gangs as somehow inferior to their own. Purchasing and subsequently wearing these types of symbols becomes as significant as participation in the activity itself.

These types of merchandise are available through the studio, in catalogues and at dance-related events. Interestingly, there is also a competition-specific market for clothing-related merchandise, as the waiting areas of competitive theatres often feature displays of shirts, jackets, luggage and other accessories labeled with the competition logo, the profits going toward funding the competition itself. T-shirts embossed with slogans such as “I competed at Dance Champs!” are available for purchase and these items become symbols of the dancer identity and the reputation of the studio, and are often considered desired commodities for young dancers (field notes). While the purchase of these items is not a requirement and studios typically do not push the merchandise on dancers or their parents, the dancers themselves may pressure their parents to purchase them so that they too can fit in with the group. These logos not only serve as a motivational tool and a sense of pride in the studio, they are also a source of rather simple advertising for that studio in the greater community.

Studio-based merchandise is not relegated to clothing and accessories only.

Studios also sell other keepsakes of a dancer’s time with the studios, in the form of formal photography and videography services that are made available to families looking to preserve their memories of the experience:

You can’t take pictures at [the theatre], or videotape. So they have somebody come in and videotape, and you can buy the videotape or the DVD. You’re not allowed to use any kind of film or camera of any kind...so at the end of the year they have a photographer come in and they have the kids scheduled, so for every number you’re in, you have to be there a certain evening and a certain time in full costume, full makeup, hair done, to get your group picture taken and then your individual picture goes with that as well. So you’re all scheduled for every number and then you can buy those. So for every number there’s a photo that goes along with it that you can buy. - Parent

My mom always, always, always bought the video. It’s been like, what, ten years since I quit dancing and she still watches them now and again. Good memories, I guess. – Former dancer

Funding issues are an integral aspect of establishing and maintaining a studio, because without money the studio would be unable to hire staff, rent the studio building and provide an opportunity to dance to its customers. While studio personnel go about organizational and administrative routines, setting schedules and developing performance material, none of these tasks can be accomplished until funding for them is secured. While charging admission to recitals contributes to the cost of putting on the show, studios often rely on other means of accessing funding. Enrolment and lesson fees are set in accordance with the cost of running the studio and handling the additional expense of putting on a recital not covered by ticket prices. Fundraising programs are also created to ease financial costs, particularly in the case of competition entrance fees and travel costs. Finally, studios often sell merchandise in the form of clothing and accessories to make ends meet and contribute to the cost of running the studio while fostering a sense of community.

Participants of hobby-based groups like dance come to expect that some monetary contributions on their behalf are necessary to pursue participation. Similar to participating on Little League teams (Fine, 1987), and in outlaw biker gangs (Wolf, 1991), participants are required to pay fees to contribute to the existence of the group. If the group does not have the financial means to participate in Little League games, biker runs or dance performances, participation in these respective activities would lack purpose and may even lead to their demise. Thus, while these costs are sometimes met with controversy, participants come to accept them as a part of belonging to the group and pursuing an activity that they are passionate about:

I think that it's well worth the money. People put so much money into other things that they think are so important, whether it be material things or an expensive academic education. Spending money on the arts is

just as important, and people should be okay with the fact that taking a dance class is so much money because it is so important. – Dancer

While accessing funding is the most basic aspect of sustaining collective events, the majority of effort is concentrated on developing agendas for pursuing these events. In the case of amateur dance performances, studios get organized and prepare for the stage by meeting within the studio classroom to create and rehearse the dance routines that will be showcased at these performances.

Developing Organizational and Preparatory Agendas

Once competitions are decided upon and rules made available in the case of competitions, and themes selected in the case of recitals, instructors can begin to choose music and create choreographies that adhere to the predetermined criteria conveyed by management. The studio owners, instructors, performers and their parents all come together in the studio setting to work toward a successful performance season. For owners, this means handling the administrative details and overseeing the work undertaken by other members of the group to ensure it matches their own goals regarding the events. For instructors, preparing for the stage involves creating appropriate dance routines and teaching them to the performers, while these performers (and by extension their parents) concentrate on attending classes and participating to the best of their abilities. The first task at hand is typically developing choreographies, and this is further divided into two processes: making preliminary decisions regarding music, costumes and props and developing and teaching/learning dance routines.

Developing Choreographies: Music, Costumes and Other Preliminary Decisions

Once finances are secured, the next step on the organizational agenda is the choreographing of routines, which is a task typically handled by class instructors. Early in the dance season, instructors begin strategizing their own plans of action, as they consider what kind of performances they would like to showcase and subsequently evaluate the abilities of their dancers. For recitals, they also need to consider the recital theme and for competitions they may consult the rulebook to ensure that their intended routines adhere to the necessary criteria. In this stage of planning, instructors are also involved in accessing and organizing materials for the stage show, such as costumes and props.

Instructors typically choreograph routines according to their own preferences. In some cases, an idea for dance steps is generated and then music is selected to fit that vision, but more often instructors are particularly interested in a piece of music and then proceed to develop a dance routine around it:

I like to choose fun, upbeat songs...Every so often I do different shows that are themed shows, a lot of other studios do it too. I do a Disney-themed one, so I pick songs from Disney movies, or the Disney Mania CDs and then do the choreography. Right now we're doing musicals, like Abba's "Mamma Mia". I have "Beauty and the Beast" and "Lion King". "Rent". I kind of choose them differently according to the theme. Anything that you can play and do a dance in your head, I use that song. – Instructor

Music represents one of the ways that choreographers convey meaning to their audiences. Choreographers often use music as a tool to encourage a certain understanding of the piece they are putting together, using upbeat tempos when they want to convey joy and happiness and slower melodies for more somber routines. Costume choices are similarly made according to how choreographers want their audiences to perceive the performance. Bright colours and vibrant designs are typically reserved for upbeat performances, while more muted tones and simpler materials are selected for

slower pieces. However, this too can vary according to the choreographer's ideas and preferences (field notes).

How costumes are selected and provided to dancers can vary from studio-to-studio and even class-to-class. In some instances, performers are permitted to recycle costumes or purchase them used, but this is a rarity as there is an emphasis on looking new and fresh to competition judges and recital audiences. Instead, performers are usually required to purchase new costumes from seamstresses and specialty dance stores. The studio owners and instructors, often under the advise of costume designers, decide upon these costumes. In some cases, original costumes are designed according to studio concepts while in other instances studios may select pre-made outfits from catalogues:

The teachers at the studio and the owners talk. The main teacher is the owner of the studio...so she will kind of do a lot of the choreographing and pick the designs of the costumes and then the other teachers, for their own classes, will kind of figure out what they want and then they'll talk to each other and talk to the people who run the place that makes the costumes and they kind of pick and choose the costumes and fabrics and styles and price points from there. – Parent

A lot of studios have their own seamstress. I just go to Kelly's Dance Store they have costumes out of a catalogue. I pick and choose the ones I want, I measure my kids and figure out their sizes, send it all in and I get them sent from the distributor. They're great at the store. They ask, "Is it a slow jazz, a hard jazz, a soft jazz?" and we just pick the colours accordingly, just something you think would match the choreography. Like last year, we did Shake Your Tail Feather, so we had feathers on their costumes, that kind of thing. – Instructor

While making costume selections for competitive dance routines, choreographers not only select outfits that reflect the meanings they wish to convey to audiences. They may also use the costumes as a means of influencing judge definitions of the routine and similarly employ other "tricks" to enhance the aesthetic quality of the piece, in an effort to stand out from the dozens of other routines performed at any given competition:

Lifts and stuff, where a guy lifts a girl and stuff. But they always lift the smaller girls. Chelsea and Charlotte, they always do the lifts. Like, they do the ones that flip over the head and stuff like that. Last year, in the part where the pirates are on the ship and on the waves, the one group older than us and the one group younger than us, they were there 'cause they are all really good at acro, they did all these flips and stuff and because they were all wearing blues and stuff, they were like the waves. And then there were younger kids who had long pieces of fabric and it made it look like they were making waves. – Dancer

Oh, the flashiness. Wearing really big, bright costumes. The props. There's always the cuteness factor that makes you stand out. I've seen a lot of studios, I've been a part of routines like that. Where we'll throw in a little kid in the class and have them come out and do something extra cute so everyone goes "Awwww" and we get higher marks. Just little things like that, like the flashiness. – Instructor

These kinds of impression management tactics employed by studios in an attempt to convey authenticity in the dancer role and worthiness of praise from judges and audiences relate to Goffman's (1959: 33) concept of *dramatic realization*. Goffman uses the term dramatic realization to refer to the ways role performers exaggerate certain aspects of their performance while concealing others and those that are exaggerated are not always the focal activities at hand. In the case of amateur dance performances, there is a considerable amount of effort that goes into preparing for the stage that has very little to do with the actual act of dancing. While the technical quality of the dancing is undeniably a focal point, studios also put significant effort into appearing professional while on stage, through highly stylized routines with fresh costumes, elaborate stage set ups and extra tricks that go above and beyond the requirements of the competition.

Goffman (1959: 33) notes that role performers engage in a balancing act between employing these exaggerated symbols of their competence while still focusing on technique as the focal point of their performance, in what he refers to as "the dilemma of expression versus action." Thus, while costumes, props, music and stage settings are of paramount importance when attempting to sway judge votes and subsequently win awards, they are considered secondary to the development of quality dance numbers that focus on technical footwork and stage showmanship. During this initial preparatory period instructors may be considering costumes, props and tricks to add to their routines, but they are more likely to focus on developing the choreographies themselves and subsequently teaching them to their dancers.

Classroom Dynamics: Creating Choreographies and Teaching/Learning Dance Steps

For the studio instructors, the most significant task on the organizational agenda prior to performance season involves conducting classes and providing instructions while the performers work on mastering the dance routines required of them. They come together in the classroom setting, where time is dedicated to the teaching and rehearsing of routines that will be performed on stage at competitions and recitals.

Creating Choreographies

At the beginning of a dance season, instructors begin brainstorming ideas for choreographies and how they can best teach them to the performers. This could involve some lesson planning and schedule setting, building on steps that dancers learned in previous classes and dedicating the most time to the more complicated maneuvers. More seasoned instructors may create completely original routines by introducing unique dance steps, while other instructors may consult outside resources to generate ideas:

We have choreography books. They have pictures and steps and some of them have videos. It made it easier that way. We just looked through those. – Former instructor

Similarly, for some competitions, instructors often have pre-determined criteria stating what moves and steps are required and in what capacity for competitive participation, and instructors build their routines around these requirements. Further, while initial ideas regarding the creation of routines occur in the early months of a dance season, it is common for instructors to add and eliminate portions as they have more consistent contact with their students and become more aware of their capabilities:

It's kind of difficult, because you need to look at your students. You need to know if they're [the] more slower type, graceful dancers or if they're more quick dancers. A lot of times you have a mixture and go with the majority. Then you try and do something that they can do, something that will push them a little bit, but you don't want them to go on stage and do something that's too hard for them, that doesn't look

good at all. But you don't want it to be totally basic, that doesn't look like they learned anything. So it's kind of difficult judging how to go around that. – Instructor

You always want it to look good. You don't want to be the laughing stock of the competition ever, because it's not good on anyone's self esteem so you don't want it to be too hard or too easy... You want to be a positive studio in the area for sure, especially when there's a lot of studios and you got to fight for clients. – Instructor

Consequently, the process of getting prepared and organizing classrooms is continual throughout the dance year, as initial ideas regarding appropriate routines and efficient use of classroom time are altered throughout the year to provide a better fit for the particular people involved. In some cases instructors develop extensive lesson plans in order to make the most efficient use of classroom time, while those with more experience may be more relaxed with regard to teaching and conducting classes:

I had to always make sure that I remembered the dance, so usually before practice I was always there earlier. And then I'll go through it on my own before the class. – Former instructor

As an instructor, I don't like the planning of the classes. I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that I'm busy with school too and that stresses me out. So I'm like, "Oh I have to plan classes, but oh, I have to write an essay"... I basically print out a set of exercises that we'll do, what I want them to learn by the end of my lesson. So I'll do the same lesson for three weeks and the fourth week I'll have a test day. It's just something fun, something for me to see whether or not they grasped on to a concept and we'll go from there. One class is probably one hour of planning. - Instructor

I have it all mastered now, as to what I teach for different age groups, where I don't need to plan every class so much anymore. My four, five and six year olds, it's pretty much the same thing, I can't teach them more than that because they're so young. But with my older ones, it takes a bit of planning to figure out exactly what I want to teach them. – Instructor

Creating and teaching the actual dance steps and determining how they will be taught and learned is of great importance as dance groups prepare for performance events. However, instructors similarly need to determine group formations for when these routines are performed on stage. Many instructors find this aspect of choreography to be more difficult than developing ideas and teaching methods because it often involves assigning lead roles to some dancers. Selecting dancers for lead roles can occur in a variety of ways, relating to the preferences of the instructor. In some cases, they may hold

auditions, as is typically done in professional dance. At the amateur level it is more likely that instructors will assign lead roles based on informal observation:

You actually don't audition for the roles. The dance teachers just pick you and assign you to the roles, and you can actually refuse them, if you want. But nobody would ever refuse them. So it's kind of like...we start rehearsing and it's usually about a month or two later they'll start picking the main roles. They'll pick what show we're going to do that year, then they see what characters they need and then they'll start watching in rehearsals to see who would be best for those parts. – Former dancer

As will be seen in the coming section, assigning lead roles can be somewhat problematic within the amateur dance community. Thus, instructors sometimes choose group formations where all performers receive similar amounts of time in the spotlight. Still, even these group formations can be problematic, as those in the front and center are likely to receive more attention than others when on stage. Thus, instructors often struggle with making an arrangement that is aesthetically pleasing while still allowing for perceptions of equal treatment and group satisfaction among dancers.

While making stage arrangements is given high priority, during the preparatory period prior to performances the majority of time spent in the classroom is occupied by rehearsing the choreography.

Participating in Classes and Practices

Classes are conducted in a variety of ways, but generally begin with a warm-up and progress to the teaching of new steps, culminating in the practice of the choreographed routine. From there, there is considerable variety in the way classes are carried out. For classes involving younger children, instructions are less extensive and instructors are more likely to emphasize notions of “having fun” than when they are teaching older children:

Normally, for younger kids, it's a half hour long. Until they are about six, they only do a half hour. It's about a five minute warm-up where we're touching our toes, touching our arms, touching a bit of our legs.

Then we'll work on center work, which is sometimes squat jumps, tuck jumps, some basic little turning motions, kind of just to get into it, then we'll do some traveling exercises, skipping, running, kicks, some traveling jumps, but not so much. Then right before we have the actual class we'll do some exercises together. We'll do four walks, one turn, one jump, kind of bring in everything we've done for class. And then I always let out with a game, so they always leave on a good note. – Instructor

It's just a couple of steps that they will kind of mix. They only have four or five steps and they integrate them all in different orders kind of thing, and then make a dance routine out of it. Their dance for the year will be, at most, five minutes. – Parent

We would start with about a five or seven minute warm-up. Then we would go right into the choreography. They would never teach you the whole thing at once. It would be like, the first part one week and then you practice, practice, practice and then the next week you come you practice what you learned the week before for a bit and then they introduce the second part and you practice that a few times, then practice the first and second part together a few times and so on and so forth until they taught the whole choreography and everyone remembered it. – Former dancer

Classes for older children and adolescents are generally longer and focus more on perfecting technique and routines than classes geared toward younger children. Overall, more time is spent dancing than in younger classes, and the quality of movement and showmanship becomes the reward, as opposed to external prizes and games:

For older kids, classes are normally an hour long. Warm-ups are longer. Little kids have this great flexibility and at about seven or eight they lose that and we have to work at it so the stretching becomes a lot more in depth. Then we'll just go over some steps, so I'll be like, "Okay, practice balancing", so they'll stand on their toes for about a minute. It comes a lot easier for me, 'cause I can just tell them and a lot of times they just know, whereas with little kids I have to remind them every week 'cause they don't remember the names...we can just do it a lot quicker and we can fit in a lot more stuff. And then normally we're working on a dance, so for half the class we'll be working on their routine, going over it, remembering, adding on new things. – Instructor

Classes for older children generally follow the same structure as those for younger children, but the difficulty level increases, as does the instructor's involvement in the class. For older children, the instructor is often at the side of the room, calling out commands and steps, whereas for younger children she is often right in the line-up or directly in front of it, performing the same steps and serving as an example for the children to follow.

Instructors of younger children usually dedicate a considerable amount of time to getting organized during each class: tying shoes that have come undone, pinning back hair, demonstrating proper posture and reminding children of the difference between left

and right. Further, children in these age groups are more likely to have difficulty building on earlier skills as a result of not remembering what was taught at previous practices and so instructors have to spend more time reminding the students of what they have already learned:

The tap instructor stops the class several times to remind dancers what they should be doing (i.e. not talking, keeping their feet still to prevent excess noise). Further, she begins the class with a warm-up and then asks the young dancers what they remember from the previous class, often requesting them to dance out what they remember. From there, she concentrates on what is forgotten before proceeding with new instructions and spends the remainder of the class calling out steps and formations for the dancers to display. (field notes)

Maintaining Interest and Handling Resistances

Maintaining interest and composure in young children can be a difficult feat, as instructors develop strategies to get and keep their attention. This can be particularly difficult for children who got involved in dance due to recreational inheritance and the interests of their parents as opposed to their own intrigues:

I didn't have a choice. I was seven years old, I'm not sure there could have been that much protest coming from me, what could I do? It was when I get into that preteen stage that it got to be a bit of a struggle, but when she first signed me up or was thinking of signing me up, I probably whined a lot about having to go to practice every Sunday but other than that, I was just a kid. What mom says, goes. But when I was there I did a lot of eye rolling and I didn't really put forth any more effort than I had to. So I'd do whatever I could to try and ditch practice and I complained the whole time I was there. I was constantly begging my mom to let me quit. It was kind of fun when I was a kid but when I got to be around twelve or thirteen it wasn't something that interested me and I absolutely did not want to be there. – Former dancer

It is imperative that instructors and administrators factor in this ambivalence toward dance on the part of some children in order for practices and recitals to be successful and involvement in the activity to be sustained. Furthermore, lessening the nervousness and apathy of the actual new dancers themselves is a significant part of recruitment and early involvement in the activity. Many young children, and even older children who start dance for the first time, are nervous about meeting a new group of people and handling these new requirements and demands:

I don't really remember any conscious thoughts I had towards dance before school. Directly before I entered the program I remember being nervous, kind of, because of my lack of experience, especially more for ballet. – Former dancer

When they first started they would resist sometimes. Just really shy and clinging to me, that sort of thing. But just from taking the girls there they got used to the routine. [The instructors] are very friendly, very good with kids. They know how to get the kids involved and excited. – Parent

Some of the children can be annoyed with having to attend an activity that was selected for them by their parents, and the studios and groups work to create a common ground that can both motivate the ambivalent new dancers and ease the fears of those who are interested in the activity but are unsure of how they will fit in. Instructors often try to lessen the competitive burden on children, with a focus on “having fun” and “trying your best” rather than winning every competition that is entered. Consequently, instructors may attempt to mediate the competitive nature of dance by providing non-competitive social activities for the children to participate in, as well as games to incorporate new members into the community. This often involves organizing non-dance related events to foster friendships between new and existing members, like pizza parties or amusement park outings where members are able to bond with each other outside of the competitive and rigid structures of dance:

They tried to get us excited about it with like, trips to perform in the States and stuff. There was also a trip to Wonderland every year, I think it was. Sometimes they'd have contests for various things, like you could win a Nintendo if you did such and such and that's how they tried to get us going. Every year they would hold a big costume party and rent a hall and everything. – Former dancer

We have pool parties and a big dance-a-thon where you just go and have fun. – Dancer

In the classroom itself, instructors may make the class into a game, providing rewards for those who behave appropriately and concentrate on technique, such as allowing them to lead warm-ups and other dance activities. In order to maintain high morale among all the dancers, including those with less technical skill, instructors often reward dancers based on more ambiguous criteria, such as drawing straws or picking

numbers. Ending off classes with a game is also quite common when dancers are in the younger age brackets, and instructors may try and develop games that revolve around dance:

It is nearing the end of the half-hour class and a dancer asks the instructor if the class can play a game. The young dancer suggests freeze tag, which is a game that involves playing music and when the music stops the participants have to be still until it starts again. The instructor obliges the dancer, but says that they can only play if they use the dance moves and routines they have learned in class. When the game is complete she passes out candy canes to all the dancers and congratulates them on their effort in class (field notes).

Instructors typically work to create a balance between teaching technique and providing a source of fun when working with young children, so that it keeps them interested in coming to class but also teaches them something substantial that can be performed in studio recitals and competitions. For the younger age groups, technical development is emphasized less than it is when teaching older children, and at this stage effort is concentrated on fostering an appreciation of dance and garnering interest in pursuing the activity in the future.

While it is usually beneficial that instructors have some level of preparation before a class, it is nearly impossible for them to follow a predetermined lesson plan for a class or a dance year. Studios are often small in size, so the opportunity for interruption from other classes and the waiting area is likely, as well as certain interruptions within the classroom when dancers do not follow instructions. Further, the interviewed instructors often find that their teaching styles do not translate from studio-to-studio and class-to-class. Just like the young dancers are learning how to dance and rehearsing their routines in anticipation of performance events, instructors go through a similar learning process where they try different teaching methods and alter them according to the needs of the situation at hand:

The one time, there's an example, I just started teaching at this studio so I was becoming familiar with the students. In my Level 3 class there's the "Chatty Cathys" as I like to call them. They weren't getting the

exercise, and apparently I was teaching too fast, but I don't know their teaching styles. But it was like, the third week and I had no clue. So I'm teaching them and going about my business, and I hear somebody behind me say, "This is so stupid." So I turned around and was like, "What did you just say? Tell me what's wrong" and a lot of them were like, "I don't get it, you're going too fast" and I said, "Well tell me," but they didn't want to do it at all. So I was just like, "Let's just can it and go from here, we'll do it next time." – Instructor

Instructors are also constantly dealing with ambiguity when developing choreographies and teaching them to their classes. Some mention that on certain days the class is impossible to organize and the students are disinterested and unmotivated, regardless of what teaching tactics they employ. They are also often involved in altering classes to fit the demands of the group as they change, as new people join and others leave or move up levels at unexpected times in the dance year:

Depending on the time of year, like if it's in September it's not too brutal, because I have to refresh all the other girls on what we've learned. When it's halfway through the year, normally it's January, some kids come in, it's very difficult because they have no experience and they walk into a class that already knows stuff, it's kind of playing catch up with that student. And you're only as strong as your weakest player. So trying to get that person caught up, a lot of times I will send them off with the assistant. They'll do some things with the class and they have their own little private time to try and get caught up. It can be quite difficult. - Instructor

Consequently, a significant aspect of conducting classes and preparing for the performance season is developing classroom rules and codes of conduct in an effort to minimize these unexpected interruptions. Firstly, because of the time and availability crunch that they face, studios develop strict attendance policies for their dance families that are made known during registration processes and are stressed throughout involvements with the studios. The attendance policies are essential to the smooth running of the studio, as missed classes and confused families create havoc for the rigid class schedules that studios create. In general, competitive students face the strictest attendance policies. In some extreme cases, missing classes and repetitive tardiness can even result in being asked to leave the group:

I had one girl, she was highly into hockey and ringette, that was her main thing and dance was secondary. I went and talked to her dad and said, "She's going to need to make a choice, 'cause she's missing a lot of

dance practices and its not fair to the team if you're missing almost half the classes." So they had a talk and then she decided to come back. I've never had to kick anyone out, it's been their decision, but I know when I was younger I was into figure skating and dance, and my mom sat me down and basically said "Dance or figure skating" and I went with dance. – Instructor

Further, students who are going to miss classes are often required to make the time up elsewhere at their time and expense:

In our studio, sickness is one thing, but if you're going to miss more than one or two classes, like she was missing Wednesday nights for six or eight weeks, they expect you to make those classes up elsewhere. So you still get your number of hours in. So it becomes a bit more complicated. – Parent

Generally, competitive families understand the commitment required of them and are well versed in the repercussions of not taking it seriously. Recreational dance instructors, however, face more difficulties when enforcing strict attendance policies and express frustration when these are not adhered to as strongly as those in the competitive circuit:

Practices weren't a big deal if someone was sick or on vacation or something because we would just leave the space open 'til they came back. The only time it was really bad if people didn't show up was when the lead choreographer was there because he only came a few times a year and it was always when we were taught new things, you know, so if someone wasn't there that meant that the instructors would have to backtrack at the next regular practice to catch up the kids that missed. It was huge if you missed a practice when he was there. The teachers and the owner and everyone else were not happy about it at all but like, people have lives. There was nothing they could do about it. It wasn't like a super serious offense that would get you kicked out or something; it was just frowned upon and really frustrating for them. – Former dancer

I said they had to come. I started harassing people to come, like "I'll see you tomorrow, right?" But some people, when they didn't feel like coming they just didn't come...It's hard. It's not like it's just one person doing something. The one dance, with the bamboo sticks, you need one person on each end to click the sticks. So if this person chooses not to come, who's going to click the sticks, right? And of course we try and get somebody else to do it, but that person's not going to be at the performance and they need to click exactly right because my feet are going to go inside, right, and if that person doesn't get the rhythm and doesn't get it right, I'm not happy. So during things like that, it's a lot harder, because there's times where you're going to have to do all these things. – Former instructor

While proper attendance is clearly integral to a proper functioning group, instructors often develop other codes of conduct to ensure the efficient use of time while at the studio. There are certain rules that are established early on and are fairly straightforward, rules that are reflective of other teacher-student scenarios such as formal

schooling, with which children are already familiar. These include not talking during class, not chewing gum, paying attention and putting forth solid effort:

Not talking, definitely. Not dancing. I get that every so often. Where I'm like, "Okay, we need to go over this part of the dance" and there's that one kid standing there and it's like "You need to be doing this." Also, no chewing gum. - Instructor

They hated it when people talked. They would really flip out. Chewing gum was also a big no-no because we also had to sing while we danced. They were huge on posture too, and footing. You did it right or you didn't do it at all, kind of thing. When I was in the junior group they weren't so hardcore with these rules. I mean they taught them to us and tried to constantly remind us, you know, do this, don't do that, that's not right. But we were little and our main purpose was to look cute on stage. It was when we got to the intermediate stage that they would always be on our asses about something. – Former dancer

Further, in many studios rules regarding practices not only incorporate the dancing children, but also their parents. Studios are often structured with waiting areas in separate parts of the building than the practice studios themselves, in an effort to avoid parent spectators. In many cases it is up to individual instructors to decide if they allow spectators at practices but often times there are strict studio-wide policies restricting parents from watching classes:

They want to sit in more than I'll allow them. At the studio there's no windows in the classroom, which is nice. I'll set up viewing weeks. There's one in the fall, one in the spring, where you get to sit in and watch a child's entire class. Other than that, you don't see a thing they do. At the community centre for legislation reasons, they need to have windows on the doors. They're just little slit ones, so they kind of crowd and have a peek. Every so often at the end of class I'll open the door and the parents can come and peek in and watch the routine and it gives the kids an extra little boost. I don't like parents watching. It's a little intimidating. Especially when you want to direct their kid, like, "Point your toe!", when you get like that out of frustration. It's not yelling, it's just that you're moving so fast you got to go so fast and a lot of parents take that offensively if you're yelling at their children. - Instructor

These rules are generally understood to be beneficial to the entire functioning of the group, as they limit activities that could be distracting to the young dancers and their teachers. While there are many parents that oppose these no-spectator rules, several reflected on the positive impact that it has on their children, teaching them independence from their parents and increased productivity in learning. Some parents find that when they sit in on practices their children are more likely to cling to them and refuse participation:

They have one week that's a viewing week and that's it. Other than that, parents don't sit in. I think the kids do better without seeing their mommy or daddy there. They follow instructions better. If I was in the room with either of them, they probably wouldn't participate. – Parent

Studios also develop rules about appearance and proper attire, in hopes that uniformity will limit distractions. These rules are often studio-wide, but are also dependent upon the type of instructor, the level of dance and the particular genre and style that the dancer is participating in. This reflects designations made earlier, as recreational and casual dancers generally have more lenient wardrobe requirements than competitive students:

It wasn't like, super hardcore or anything. You could wear whatever you wanted. I just wore jeans or tights with a baggy sweater. The only thing they were really adamant about were the shoes. Right when you signed up they let you know what kind of shoes you needed and you bought them then and there and it was just understood you would be wearing them to practice. But even with that they could be pretty lenient. Kids would wear just running shoes now and again. The only time they really weren't happy with that was when the head choreographer was there, or if it was close to performance time and it was a dress rehearsal or something. – Former dancer

It is quite common that while a dress code is established within the studio early on and children are introduced to it as they first enroll, however it generally becomes enforced only as children reach older ages:

Our studio is pretty relaxed. Some of them you have to wear specific things, especially ballet classes. You have to wear a specific body suit, in a specific colour and a specific style, tights, on and on. Our studio is more relaxed. As long as you're in appropriate dance clothing for classes, it's okay. But for ballet, the teacher now, as they're getting older, wants them to be in a body suit. And now she wants tights. Specifically pink. But until now, it's been whatever. You know, something appropriate. But now they're getting to the point where they're starting to be a little stricter with the ballet portion. - Parent

Dress code involves not only attire, but often includes the physical appearance of the participating children as well. Generally, instructors prefer their students to look uniform when performing, and students not conforming to the standard of the group may be asked to make changes about themselves:

I think the big thing is hair. They expect you to have long hair that you can put back. If you prefer short hair, they want you to have long hair for dance...My friend who's in my tap [class], she has her hair short all the time. Her ponytail is only that long so only the back of it gets in, and they have to use tons and tons of gel to keep her hair back. But if you want to be in competitive dance you know that your hair has to be long, so cutting it isn't a good idea. - Dancer

They really didn't like it if you had anything, you know, kind of crazy with your hair. Like dyed weird colours, or things like nose rings or whatever that you couldn't take out. – Former dancer

The success of a performance season rests on the quality of training provided prior to a competition or recital, and classes where students are continually missing or misbehaving are considered a hazard to these preparations. Training for the performance season is considered the purpose of classes and rehearsals, and these types of rules and regulations are believed to assist in the development of choreographies and training of dancers. Because children may be tempted by distractions, these rules are often believed to limit the potential for these kinds of disruptions before they even begin. However, despite these generalized attempts at managing resistances, there are more specific instances of conflict and resistance during classroom preparations, which will be discussed further in the coming section.

It is important to note that while competitions and recitals are the focal point of the dance year and dance involvements as a whole, perfecting the routines to be showcased at these performances is not always the priority of the studio. While studio personnel and other participants alike are interested in winning awards and receiving praise from audiences, many studios emphasize that “having fun” is more important than achieving a flawless performance. Studios thus engage in a balancing act, ensuring that their dancers are capable of doing their routines, thus avoiding embarrassment and frustration on the stage, while keeping them motivated and interested in participating in future performances with the studio.

Decisions regarding music, costumes, stage arrangements and the structure of choreographies are typically made early on in the dance year so that performers have a chance to practice routines and avoid confusion as the performance events approach.

However, instructors are continually involved in assessing and adapting their routines and the choreographies themselves to better fit the abilities of their performers. In some cases, instructors may begin to develop choreographies before final enrolment numbers are even secured. However, as they come into contact with their groups and observe first-hand their varied abilities, they may decide to make changes to account for newcomers or to better showcase the capabilities of that particular group.

These preparations occur with studio members and their varied roles and agendas coming together in the classroom. Their success depends on the group's ability to cooperate and assign predominance to team-based interests as opposed to focusing on more individualized goals. This is not unlike other groups, such as that found in Prus & Frisby's (1990) study on home party plans, where success in business rests on the successful cooperation of dealers, hostesses and guests, or the coaches, parents and players in Fine's (1987) Little League study coming together to pursue baseball wins. These and many other studies on group life clearly highlight the necessity of some form of coordinated action in the pursuit of collective events, however cooperation is a complex process. As individuals are active agents with the capacity to reflect on varied courses of action that benefit not only the group but also themselves, there is the potential for these collective ventures and instances of coordinated activity to be met with resistance and conflict.

Encountering and Handling Instances of Conflict and Resistance

While studios can make generalized attempts at avoiding resistances and other disruptions by establishing rules and codes of conduct for interaction in the classroom

setting, there is still the potential for conflicts to arise. Because of the multiple perspectives present in any given community venture, there is the potential for disagreement with regard to what is best for the group and the individual. Subsequently, an integral aspect of coordinating and sustaining collective events involves managing the conflicts that arise as a result of these discrepancies.

In managing these conflicts, instructors typically take on the role of “middlemen” within the studio, receiving information from both those who run the studio as well as the dancers and their parents. The instructors are usually the first studio staff members to become aware of dancer and parent concerns. Relatedly, the instructor is typically responsible for handling the more minor concerns before bringing them to the attention of the studio owners because of the multitude of tasks facing upper levels of management. For instructors, therefore, the studio classroom and waiting area become the predominant locations for expressing and managing tensions:

We have three different waiting room areas and everyday the same people are in the same different rooms. You kind of walk in and the whispers stop, and they kind of look at you. Luckily, I don't own the studio so it's not usually about me. They'll complain about other kids, they'll complain about routines they're not in. They complain about prices, they complain about not enough shows, they complain that there's too many shows. You can never please parents. – Instructor

Within the dance community, there are three predominant sources of conflict and resistance among members: the cost of participation; the decisions made by instructors regarding costumes; and notions of favouritism in the selection of lead roles and prominent placements. The severity of the conflict and the preferences of the studio can influence how these disagreements are handled.

Costs of Participation

The cost of participating in recitals, but especially competitions, may lead to some reluctance among parents who are required to pay for costumes, props and footwear:

I'd heard from people that it was expensive and all that, but it really does add up more than I thought it would. I just ran a total for this year so far this morning, and it's only January. I don't have any boys, so I have nothing to compare it to. We don't do hockey, we don't do anything like that. Rhiannon does competitive judo, but there's no costumes or shoes. Shoes alone are a lot. We're up to \$600 for just shoes and tights already this year, on top of lesson fees. And if you compete, of course you travel, so there's fees for that. – Parent

The lessons are not ridiculously expensive. Classes are expensive, but I don't think they're tremendously unreasonable, as far as lessons go. What I find a little out of line is the costumes and shoes and the accessories and all that stuff. When we started off, the studio was really small, so Jill's class only had four of them...so they just borrowed costumes. It didn't cost us anything, and we gave them back. And then in June there was just a little body suit and it was not unreasonable. I mean, I could make it for a lot less than that, but you know, it was okay. But as the years have gone on and they've grown the prices have really gone up...it adds up. Some of them are more detailed, some of the fabrics are nicer, but still, I don't think they're worth two, three hundred each. I really don't see why the price is what it is, it really makes me wonder sometimes. – Parent

Part of this difficulty arises because not all costs occur at the outset of involvement and instead come as a surprise to some parents. Further, the cost of participation tends to increase as children grow within the community and get more intensely involved, participating in several performances a year as opposed to just the recital:

I know some of the competitive parents have found it unreasonable, and a few of them have said, "Why aren't we recycling costumes? Why aren't we keeping them and reusing them?" Because you buy your costume, you wear it for that show, then you hang it in your closet and then it's done. You know, why are we doing that? A few times I've heard from some of the competitive parents, because they're much more involved with the studio, that they'll make a comment and the owners will say, "Well if you don't like it, go somewhere else." So I think that part of it is that they only hear complaints...And I think the place that makes the costumes has a really close connection with all the studios, but particularly ours, because their children dance there and that's the studio they chose to deal with. So I kind of wonder. I don't know who gets the money. I don't know if the studio gets part of the cost of the costumes. I have no idea how that works...I think that part of it is unreasonable. – Parent

Brianna is starting pointe, for ballet, because the class is old enough that their ankles are strong enough to start pointe. So they have to get pointe shoes...And the teacher said, "We're just going to use them ten, fifteen minutes a day. Just every time they have class, just to get them used to it. And we really don't start pointe 'til next year, but the shoes have to be fitted properly, so by next year they won't fit anymore." So we went to buy her pointe shoes and I knew they'd be fairly expensive, but by the time we were done it was almost two hundred dollars. For pointe shoes. So the shoes are over a hundred, then you have to get the little gel things for the toes, so your toes don't, you know, fall off. Then you have to have toe separators, 'cause your toes will be separated otherwise. Then you have to buy the ribbons and sewing kit with the special thread and on and on. And the owner of the store, she says, "Make sure you don't store them in a wet area. Get a dance bag, because if they get damp, you'll destroy the shoes completely. The block in the toe will just completely turn to mush and they're ruined. They're only designed to last sixteen to eighteen hours of dance." I thought she said sixteen to eighteen months, you know, if the kids don't grow out of them. Sixteen to eighteen hours. And at that point is when I thought, "You people are crazy. This is insane. This is absolutely insane." – Parent

Costume Decisions

Cost is not the only source of conflict with regard to costume and equipment selection. In some instances, the dancers also dislike the design and appearance of costumes and may complain or even resist wearing them:

You'll always get people that don't like it. You get some parents that think they're cute, some don't. Some of the kids complain. I have a lot of very self-conscious girls, in their teens especially. If it's a tank top, it's "Oh my God, I'm wearing a tank top?" They don't like the colour; they don't like the pattern. It's up and down. I have some kids that love everything and some kids that just want to complain. – Instructor

Sometimes the girls don't like their costumes. One year Kayla's acro class did Aladdin. So she was a carpet. One of the magic carpets. So it was this bright, bathing suit patterned fabric. It was just a huge rectangle, and when arms and legs were outstretched, this thing fits so they're all completely enclosed and only their heads are out. She didn't like it. It just wasn't pretty. They like pretty. But she's a carpet and that's what she's going to wear. You have no choice. You have to wear the costume they've selected for you or else it just won't work. – Parent

Instructors often keep their dancers in mind not only when creating routines that match their abilities but also with regard to their appearance preferences, in an effort to minimize their apprehension when taking the stage. While it is rarely the case that dancers refuse to take part in the event based on a costume selection made for them, the studio tends to experience less resistance if they keep the interests of the performers in mind. This ensures that efforts stay focused on the stage performance rather than having to spend time dealing with student complaints.

However, studios are often depicted as harsh and unwavering when it comes to costume design and purchase. Instructors are similarly concerned with allowing too much input from students and parents. Difficulties arise when trying to incorporate everyone's ideas and demands in an organized fashion. Further, there is a stigma with regard to wearing old and subsequently inexpensive costumes because of the competitive element: there is an emphasis on looking new and fresh to judges by using what one instructor referred to as the "flashiness" factor (field notes). Instructors either dismiss the concerns

of the dance families or they work to justify their own choices. For the most part, there is very little room for negotiation once an instructor has made the decision:

What they say goes, the end. Of course we didn't like some of the things we had to wear. Or sometimes all of the costumes weren't the same in the routine. They mixed them up sometimes, where some were one colour and others were another, or ones were plain while others had really bright and fun colours. The best dancers usually got the "cooler" costumes and the rest of us would sometimes be bummed about it. But there really is nothing you can do. They have the final decision and you are wasting your breath and end up looking like you have sour grapes if you try and fight it. – Former dancer

Because they often realize that pleasing everyone is improbable, choices are made and enforced with little justification in order to continue on with the demands of the dance season and not get held up by this kind of conflict. This is similarly the case regarding other studio-based conflicts and controversies as well.

Role and Placement Decisions

The most controversial decisions are with regard to arrangements and the assignment of lead roles. Decisions regarding the placement of students within the piece occur early on, often during the first classes. This is necessary for the young dancers to learn their footing, as exact positions influence their steps and timing. It was mentioned previously with regard to developing choreographies how some instructors attempt to avoid this controversy by refraining from using any kind of lead roles. If lead roles are necessary, as they often are for story-based choreographies, instructors may hold an audition process as is usually done in professional dance, but at the amateur dance level they are more likely to make the decisions by informal observational processes:

You actually don't audition for the roles. The dance teachers just pick you and assign you to roles, and you can actually refuse them, if you want, but nobody would ever refuse them. So it's kind of like...we start rehearsing and it's usually about a month or two later they'll start picking main roles...They'll pick what show we're going to do that year, then they see what characters they need, and then they'll start watching in rehearsals who would be best for these parts. – Former dancer

Many participants in this study discussed notions of favouritism and preferential treatment in dancer selection despite attempts at neutrality:

Our ballet teacher favours some girls. Jennie used to be a figure skater or something, and she came into our group and stuff and the ballet teacher like, favoured her for everything. Sometimes they deserve the favouritism but some of them don't. – Dancer

Sometimes I think it goes beyond the fact that they're better dancers. It's politics. History. They know each other from before, sort of thing. I think we've seen it at pretty much every studio. There's always some kids that get more exposure and things. – Parent

While avoiding lead roles is a legitimate strategy when trying to prevent backlash from group members, decisions made with regard to regular group-based formations are often similarly controversial:

I always stay away from lead roles. A lot of time you'll only find that in ballet, because ballet always tells a story. The stuff I'm used to, like jazz and tap, it's usually just a choreographed number. People are in rows, so I guess you can say that sometimes people are singled out if they are like, in the front and it does get to be a problem sometimes, because some people do go in the front all of the time. A lot of the time, when you're doing choreography, it's not intentional that I'll put someone in front, it just might work out with the formation height-wise or something, but sometimes from a student's perspective, I know I even felt it, you feel like you're being pushed to the back. - Instructor

Consequently, a major part of the preparation process not only goes into planning lessons and the actual choreography, but also includes struggling with these arrangements in an attempt to make an aesthetically pleasing piece that still allows for fairness in exposure. As was noted in the earlier discussion on developing choreography, the more unique dancers are typically placed in predominant placements within the arrangement and for the most amount of time. However, moving beyond aesthetics, there are also functional reasons behind these arrangements:

How I do it, I like to divide it up. I put more of my strongest ones in the middle, and then the not-so-strong ones go on the outside of the line. If I have a class of eight, I put four in the front and four in the back and we'll switch through. I just find, especially when they're younger and we have the recitals, myself and then my assistant, we dance on the outside so they can peek over and watch us, so the weaker ones are more on the outside so they can watch us and catch up, whereas the stronger ones with the stronger memories are in the middle, they can just go and they're fine. - Instructor

Personal characteristics can be a major factor in placement decisions as well, especially according to height. Changes to height arrangements are usually non-negotiable:

Well if you practice a bit more then we can put you in front, but you're never going to get any shorter. I had no reason to [put them in front], other than the fact that they knew it well and if you were taller. And if you're taller, you go in the back. I'm sorry. – Former instructor

Gender identities can also play a role in creating formations. Males often find themselves in sought-after positions in arrangements because of their minority-status. This can generate frustration among members as evidenced by this interview dialogue between a mother and her daughter:

They have a fair number of guys. Five or six..they get really good treatment. Because there's only one or two. I mean, they're always featured. – Mother

Well, they're always in front. – Daughter

Maybe you girls get jealous, I don't know. – Mother

Well they're always in front and stuff. And they don't have to worry about having their hair right and things like that either. – Daughter

This sentiment is echoed by an instructor who states:

Some of the little dancer moms don't like it so much, because a lot of the boys are put front and center. It's kind of hard to not center the whole dance around the guy, whereas a lot of other studios will do that. I definitely try not to. If he's normally in the front he's at the side, or at the back and the side, depending on how good he is. And then it's, "Is my daughter going to dance with the guy?" because you know if your daughter is being lifted, she'll be the center of attention at that point of the dance, so you try and work around that too, which is difficult. – Instructor

There is often disagreement with who is judged most worthy for these prominent positions. Competitiveness is observed between and within dance groups, as dancers try to outshine each other for lead roles and maximize stage exposure.^[6] This individualized competitiveness can hinder bonding among teammates and thus can be hazardous to preparing for competitions and recitals. Pursuing relationships with other group members can become complicated when those who are turned down for roles have to manage

6. One such strategy may involve embodying more stereotypical images of dancers as slim and so the shape of body becomes a tool with which to convince instructors of the dancer's competence. The physicality of dance and the competitive quality of the activity contributes to dancer awareness of how their bodies compare to those around them. Certain aspects of participation may perpetuate that awareness, such as lining classrooms with mirrors and selecting revealing costumes for performances (see Dietz, 1994 for more). Dancers are continually seeking out ways to set themselves apart from others in the group in order to secure lead roles, and having extra pounds in comparison to other dancers can cost them these coveted positions. Some participants in this study discuss concerns with unattainable body images as a detriment to pursuing dance, while others note that notions of eating disorders and emaciated bodies are a highly exaggerated stereotype.

feelings of inadequacy and defeat in the presence of successful teammates. Scott (1981) states that even the most egalitarian-minded teams show evidence of status-systems with certain members receiving higher status than others. These can lead to feelings of resentment and an exaggerated competitive element. Similarly, even when the use of lead roles is avoided, certain positions within a group formation are assigned higher prestige than others. There are still opportunities for jealousy-based conflicts among members.

Dancers themselves admit that jealousy is common within studios. However, it is understood that dwelling on, or expressing, these negative emotions hinders the proper preparation and functioning of the group. Subsequently, managing conflicts relating to favouritism, jealousy and ingroup competition typically involves remaining composed and suppressing these feelings of defeat for the benefit of the group:

There's tons of jealousy all over the place in dance. It fluctuates and comes into your head at certain times. But it's always there. I am jealous in dance class everyday, of other dancers, changing all the time. I like their technique, I like their style. I experienced some jealousy in high school towards me because I was always getting lead roles. – Dancer

It's more internal...in the studio you won't get it. No one will ever say, "Oh, why is she always in the front". It will always be in the change room. Change room chatter. But never to the teacher. – Instructor

Sure there's jealousy. But it's hardly productive to get all up in arms about it. You might get a little snarky here and there, under your breath. But you're not going to scream and cry because that girl gets a better spot than you in the choreography. Who would that be helping? It would probably just make everyone dislike you even more. – Former dancer

Dancers learn quickly that the community generally loses tolerance for emotional outbursts relating to jealousy and feelings of inadequacy, particularly when they involve instructors or other superiors:

I remember one girl in our class. She was clearly not liked by the ballet teachers. She would skip class and she wouldn't try very hard in class. She would roll her eyes a lot. Kind of like an "I don't care" attitude. It may have been her choice to leave but it was probably pressed on by the teachers. – Former dancer

This one time, one of the teachers singled me out and just really, really embarrassed me in front of the whole group. He knew I didn't know what I was doing and I wasn't the greatest but he made me do it all by myself with everyone watching anyway. I was almost in tears, but I somehow maintained composure and just kind of took it. If I cried it would have just made it worse and more embarrassing. I should have told him off. Or just walked out. You shouldn't have to take that. – Former dancer

This can lead to more secretive methods of expressing negative affections, often through the more passive means of rumours and gossip. In other instances, members of the group instead manage these feelings more secretly, in an effort to remain team players:

You watch your best friend get a role instead of you and you have to be happy for them, meanwhile you just want to cry. – Dancer

My cousin once got a role that I really wanted. Well, not wanted per say, but a better position than me in the choreography and she got a really cool prop, etc. and I was kind of stuck somewhere else. She was kind of smug about it, but anyone would be. It wasn't over the top. Anyway, I did nothing. It's not worth it to start drama when it wasn't her fault she got it. It was just that she had something that I didn't. – Former dancer

It's the fake kind of nice. There are true relationships within the studio but once you get people being friends with people outside their studio, they're like, "Oh it's really great to see you" but on the inside they're like "Oh, she's not so great." You always get the backlash...you always hear people talk about other people behind their backs no matter what...I've even caught myself doing it a few times. We still compete with each other to be good at exams, or just the best in the studio, get the lead role for the show. – Instructor

Both the dancers and instructors develop strategies to manage feelings of defeat and competition. Dancers may engage in a rationalization process to account for their defeat by "saving face" and displacing blame from both themselves and their teammates. These dancers may employ what Shaffir and Kleinknecht (1994) refer to as "a denial of responsibility tactic"^[7], viewing their defeat as out of their realms of control:

It's always a bit of a downer to get any kind of rejection, but I didn't take this one too personally. I felt like I had a good audition and had enjoyed it and just reasoned that she was looking for something specific that I didn't bring to her work. – Dancer

You literally just talk to yourself and tell yourself that the past has nothing to do with who you are as a dancer, but just that you weren't right for that part. It could just be that they were looking for someone who is 5'2" and blonde. Also, I just tell myself that if I stick with what I'm doing and work hard at it, I have to get something else. – Dancer

Instructors may pre-emptively strategize to avoid these competitive dynamics altogether.

7. Shaffir and Kleinknecht (1994) explore the ways that politicians handle defeat after being voted out of office. The time and resource investments these people make to the politician role are similar to those encountered in dance involvements, making this concept easily applicable to the similar types of identity work that dancers engage in when confronting defeat.

They may be mindful of the impact lead roles and singling out certain individuals may have on the morale and motivation of the group, and so they will consider methods of showcasing as many dancers as possible rather than just one or two. Avoiding the use of lead roles is one such strategy, as is rotating the positioning of the dancers throughout the duration of a choreographed routine, allowing each dancer a front-and-center opportunity at some point during the performance. While it may be more beneficial to the quality of the routine to focus only on the strongest dancers, promoting images of cooperation, teamwork and the perception of equality within the group is often deemed more significant. While instructors attempt to manage these situations prior to their occurrence, there are instances where some element of ingroup competition cannot be avoided. In these cases dancers are expected to manage feelings of jealousy and defeat and other negative emotions in a way that does not disrupt the progress of the group.

Studio personnel can handle parent and dancer complaints regarding costs, costumes and other issues in a wide variety of ways. In her study on wedding planning, Westlake-Chester (1995) notes similar concerns where bridal couples adopt strategies such as ignoring advice, negotiating control by confronting involved persons or terminating the involvement of advisors in wedding planning. These strategies are similarly evident within amateur dance studios, as some studios can informally ignore difficult parents and dancers, while others have more formal means of handling these types of issues. In some of the studios observed, there are formal committees available to file complaints while in other instances the instructors themselves have to decide whether mediation is necessary or if the issue can be ignored:

Every so often you get a couple complaints from different parents. Either it's not what they wanted or the kids were pushed too hard or the kid wasn't pushed enough. We just kind of forget those little complaints

because there's only a couple a year. The studio I work at is run by a non-profit organization and they have [group] meetings every month, so the complaints come up and then they discuss it. If they don't think it's overly important they just bypass it. – Instructor

Rather than taking the issue to their superiors, instructors often handle conflicts on their own by taking on a “customer is always right” approach to handle the issue quickly and efficiently in order to revert attention back toward performance preparations:

They would comment when I would put their kids in different spots and things like that. There was a little bit more when there was the big show, when some kids' faces got in the newspapers and some didn't, and then they were like, “Well maybe they would have if they were in the front.” Stuff like that, a little bit. Because you know, that's your little kid. I ignored them. I was like, “Well if you practice more then we can put you in the front, but you're never going to get any shorter.” I had no reason to, other than the fact that they knew it well and if you were taller, you go in the back, I'm sorry... Once in awhile I had to speak to parents, but a lot of the time I just ignored it. – Former instructor

The one mother messed up her child's dance show time. Of course, it was my fault. She yelled at me in front of a large amount of people, and I was very embarrassed by it all but there's nothing you can do. She stormed out with her kid. We have a sign up list, you have to sign up under the show date with the amount of people you're bringing. It's very, very low key. She wrote under the right time and came at the wrong time. So one of the other moms was like, “If she signed up under 3:30 she should have come at 3:30.” – Instructor

Appeasing parents is not always the most effective strategy. Allowing parents complete reign over decision-making with regard to choreographies and performances could be disastrous, so instructors continually work toward striking a middle ground that pleases the most amount of people possible. Generally, allowing open dialogue for parents to highlight their desires is considered effective, but at the same time instructors and staff develop strategies of compromise between members' interests and the needs of the studio:

We would get a letter saying what routines we were in, how many duets and trios we were being offered, 'cause normally you can go in and tell them “We want so many,” but it's always up to the director of the studio. It's either a yes or a no. A lot of the time, the studios just don't want the parents to rule the whole show. So when you'd get that note the parents would rip it out of the kids' hands and compare them, and then the kids would be like “I don't know what I'm dancing in!” and then the little cliques get a little angry and there's a lot of meetings with studio owners, “Well I want my child to be in this one yet” and they have to be like, “Well they're not strong enough yet, they got this one.” It's kind of a constant battle... Parents just want everything for their kids, but as an instructor you know the kids can't handle it. They'll just burn out. – Instructor

As evidenced above, the instructor-as-mediator role involves being sensitive to

maintaining a positive image of the studio via appearances and behaviours, but also the ability to manage potential conflicts in their early stages. For the instructor, this often requires the balancing of group and individual needs, which is not always straightforward. In his study on the club date musician circuit, MacLeod (1993) notes that while band leaders have a vested interest in keeping their clients satisfied by providing what they asked for at time of booking, this is not always possible or in the best interest of the group. As such, they weigh the benefits of breaking contract with the risk of harming their reputation within the industry. In the context of dance, studios may opt to appease parents in an effort to maintain harmony, however they may also deny parent and dancer demands regarding costumes, stage exposure and costs of participation if they see the benefits as outweighing the potential negative feedback they may receive from the community. As a result, maintaining group harmony is a highly reflective and negotiative process as studio personnel and customers alike can ponder potential responses to a variety of tensions and conflicts prior to developing solutions.

Handling tension and resistance in preparing for the performance season includes not only the more dramatic issues regarding the choreography itself, but also relational issues among group members. The major points of resistance regarding preparation for competitions and recitals typically involve participation costs and the choreography and costume decisions of instructors. More minor resistances such as talking and refusing to dance during classes are managed before the performance events. If left unmanaged, these conflicts may be detrimental when the performance season approaches, as they serve to distract the group from concentrating on technique.

Further, Goffman (1959: 86) states that managing these team tensions can occur

during the preparatory period in a secretive manner, in the context of group insiders only. This ensures that outside audiences are not “in on” these conflicts and privy to information that may be distracting to their perception of the team as composed and competent. According to Goffman (1959: 86), “Public disagreement among members of the team not only incapacitates them for united action, but also embarrasses the reality sponsored by the team.”

When a dance group takes the stage during a performance, they are to display images of competence to the outsiders in the audience. Subsequently, emotional outbursts and frustrations have no place on the stage as they become distracting elements to the outside audience and may compromise the competent image of the team. As such, overt in-team emotional expressions may be tolerated in certain contexts and times during the period prior to participating in the events:

They really didn't want you to embarrass them in any sort of way. While they are your superiors and you can't backtalk or be dramatic about things, it was at least a bit more okay to do it if it was just a practice and it was just the group and the teacher there than if you flipped out at a performance and people that weren't in the group heard or whatever. I would imagine it would be really embarrassing to them, like they can't control their group or something. – Former dancer

This is not unique to a performance-oriented team and instead relates to any kind of group attempt at influencing the ways outsiders perceive them. For example, Wolf (1991) notes that in outlaw biker gangs, honesty and open emotional expression are not only permitted in, but are encouraged in the context of the clubhouse, as no topic is considered off limits in the context of one's brothers. Thus, once the bikers leave the clubhouse and enter public spaces, notions of “playing it cool” when interacting with other gangs and the greater community come into play, in an effort to convey images of masculinity and toughness and to further solidify outsider definitions that the group is something to be feared.

Fine (2001) notes similar examples in the context of adolescent debate teams, as debate wins and losses are determined not only by the quality of argument, but the professionalism and composure with which the argument is made. Thus, participants learn to control their frustrations with themselves and their teammates when participating in debates, expressing them only in the safety of group insiders.

In the context of amateur dance, there are three prominent means of conflict: the cost of participation, costume selection and accusations of favouritism in the use of lead roles and prominent placements. While resistances are considered a normal part of any kind of collective venture, ignoring their existence may be detrimental in pursuing events. Resistance from group members distracts group efforts from developing strong technical routines and in turn hinders their ability to perform properly when it comes to attending competitions and recitals. Because of the competitive nature of this activity, conflicts often have an inter-relational quality, as teammates are typically in direct competition with one another for lead roles and praise from their superiors. To avoid these types of emotional distractions, dancers and their instructors develop strategies to minimize the competitive quality often characteristic of dance. The dancers may deny their responsibility or control over their failures, while instructors strategize ways to showcase as many dancers as possible to avoid these feelings of inadequacy to begin with. Further, studio owners and personnel need to strike a balance between the needs of their customers and the functioning of the studio as a whole. While in many cases this may mean adhering to parental demands and desires, it may also mean disappointing some of their customers in order to ensure the studio agenda stays focused on preparing for performance season. More generally, studio personnel may encourage notions of

cooperation in place of competition, as the group further minimizes tensions by focusing on collective goals as opposed to the more individualized agendas that pit teammates against each other.

Developing a Sense of Purpose or Mission

Goffman (1959: 86) conceptualizes teamwork as *bonds of reciprocal dependence* as all members of the team rely on one another to achieve their purposes. In dance, particularly in the case of stage arrangements, even the most talented dancer will not showcase the best of her abilities in the presence of weaker, disenchanted performers, because judgment of that routine is based on how they perceive the group on stage. Thus, the performers are interdependent in knowing the routine and participate to the best of their abilities. Similarly, the studio is also dependent upon these performers to showcase themselves in ways that highlight the competence of that studio. Consequently, notions of the team replace the more individualized goals of gaining stage exposure and being the star.

Goffman (1959) further states that team members bond over this kind of dependence on one another and the level of secrecy that goes along with concealing the preparation period from the audiences of competitions and recitals, in what he refers to as *familiarity*. This familiarity in turn solidifies dedication to the common activity the group is participating in. He likens people's experiences on a team to participation in a secret society, as members conceal the various tensions and resistances experienced in getting to the stage, conveying to outsiders only the final products of their labours:

We were young, so of course issues of popularity and cliques and teasing came into it a bit. There are just some people who are not cool, you know? I don't know what makes them not cool, but when you're eleven there are always those people. The dance group was the only thing some of us had in common and we

understood that about each other, regardless of our differences. We worked together to put on a good show.
– Former dancer

Familiarity and bonds of reciprocal dependence subsequently become a part of the team's sense of purpose. Not only do amateur dance participants have a responsibility to perform to the best of their ability at performance events, they also have a responsibility to one another to contribute to the group effort in some beneficial way. The awareness of this responsibility and sense of obligation to one another helps combat notions of competitiveness and jealousy in the context of team stratification:

A lot of people find it really cliquey and they're just coming into themselves and they just remember feeling like, not cool enough or self-conscious or whatever. But there, everybody wanted to be there, everybody had a purpose...it was never, like, catty. Everyone wanted to be there working toward one goal. Everyone was interested in the arts community and what everybody else there was doing. – Former dancer

However, while this inclusive ideology is evident on the surface, there is also the element of competition among dancers who are often times even in the same routines, discussed in the previous section. This competitive dynamic characterizes friendships in many dance groups and while people are generally accepted and welcomed in the group on the basis of talent and ability, there is also an element of caution when pursuing friendships based on these same traits. First impressions are paramount with newcomers engaging in initiation processes to prove themselves and to determine how their presence is received by ingroup members:

Since the dance community is so small and everyone tends to know each other, especially when a new student comes in, you get judged right away in terms of your ability because you're the new student and they want to feel you out. So if you don't live up to their standards, or if you're not seen as so great, they automatically think down on you. They're always judged. When a new student comes in they're looked at as foreign. They look at your ability and wonder if you're up to par. I find that they're really embraced or hated. There's nothing ever in between. – Instructor

Typically, the way people are welcomed is if you're a good dancer, you're welcomed a lot more than if you're a bad dancer. – Instructor

While lack of technical ability can lead to relational rejection in the context of dance, this criterion is even more detrimental if a dancer is identified to be arrogant. Some dancers

are aware of the negative stigma placed on dancers with less experience and they develop impression management techniques to influence a tilt in their desirability and potential for acceptance among the more experienced dancers:

I was going to say that I didn't want people to know how little experience I had, but actually it was quite the opposite. I remember mentioning frequently that I had very little experience, so that they wouldn't think I had been dancing for ten years and was still that bad or whatever. – Former dancer

Social acceptance is also often determined by other factors as well, not necessarily based on dance but more so on the greater preteen subculture. This includes their appearance and the socioeconomic status of their families, which in turn relates to what Adler & Adler (1998) refer to as “expressive equipment”, such as the quality of clothes and footwear:

I think it's a little cliquy. I think it starts to get a little bit cliquy. Whoever has the nice clothes and then, you know, whoever competes...It gets a little bit cliquy. I don't think that's necessarily the studio, I think it's just the kids. - Parent

A lot of the time if they don't have the right dance clothes or dance shoes it results in alienation. But I think that's just a mirror image of society today. But in general, you don't find too much isolation because when people keep to themselves students will approach them, especially with the younger grades. It's when you get to the older ones, like the tweens, it's like, “I don't know if I want to talk to you because you're not cool enough” - Instructor

You know how when you're like, eleven, some kids just aren't cool? Now that I'm an adult I can't figure out how kids determine who is worthy of their friendship and who isn't. But there's always those kids who are left out and you may not even know anything except that they're not popular and showing interest in them would be like, social suicide. Dance wasn't an exception. When you're that age you just want to be popular with whatever group you're in that particular minute. Like at school it's one thing, then with like, older cousins it's another thing and at dance it's another thing. Like, popularity is defined in so many different ways, I have no idea how we kept it all straight. There were the standard things like having cool clothes and knowing popular music and having boys like you and call you. It was pretty fickle, but really not that different from like, the playground. The same rules applied. We watched Muchmusic and like, the old 90210, and decided what was cool and if you didn't adhere to that you were kind of an outcast no matter how good of a dancer you were. Sometimes if you were a really good dancer it would be worse, because everyone thought you were a teacher's pet. – Former dancer

Instructors often try and avoid these kinds of group-based stratifications and instead focus on notions of inclusion:

As a teacher I do the “Oh, it's her first day, let's make her feel welcome” and then they get all excited and try their best to do it. Every so often there's cliques. I find the outgoing, hyper ones hang out together and the quiet, shy ones hang out together. Just 'cause they come to class and they either want to scream or they just want to sit and giggle. Every so often I intermingle. I'm like, “Okay, grab a partner you've never been partnered with before” and that kind of gets them out of their clique. If I find a class that's developing an

outsider, I normally go to the more outgoing students and be like, “I want you to include her more today” and no questions, they do it. They understand everyone’s there to learn and have fun. – Instructor

This may involve capitalizing on notions of mutual dependence and secrecy, enhancing the parameters drawn between the ingroup participants and the “other” (members of other studios, amateur dance outsiders), subsequently fostering feelings of inclusion within the group. As was discussed briefly in the previous section, in many cases instructors will go so far as attempting to displace the ingroup competition by focusing on the outgroup as a means of encouraging bonding among teammates:

There’s a lot of competition between studios. Between the three in this area, they are like, head to head all the time...as soon as they come together it’s like cats and dogs going at each other, because then it’s a true competition of like, “oh this studio is better than this studio.” The teachers get in on it. If the teachers don’t like each other than the whole studios don’t like each other. They have a lot of influence on their kids. – Instructor

The best way to deal with that is to put all that negativity toward like, other groups, that you’re in competition with. So there may be cliques and the cool kids and the not-so-cool kids, but it’s like a family, where if some other dance group crosses you or whatever, they’re the bad guys. Even if they don’t cross you. You look down on them and put your nose up at them for whatever reason and it unites your team, ‘cause you’re competitive, you kind of bond over that because you’re all a part of the same group even if there are some who are popular and some who aren’t. They’re more like family to you than this other group that you don’t know. – Former dancer

This agenda of ingroup cooperation emerges as the group mission, with successful competitions and recitals being their common purpose. While the group becomes distracted by within-group tensions and animosities within the studio, the awareness of this mutual dependence brings the group back into focus. Further, invoking images of the “other” and subsequently displacing animosities contributes to the mission of ingroup cooperation, as diverse teammates bond over their common ground: they are a part of *this* studio and not that studio.

Developing a sense of devotion to the group is not unique to amateur dance and other groups may develop strategies to ensure their members stay motivated with regards to their participation. In his study on club date musicians, MacLeod (1993: 121) notes the

importance of ensuring band members are “working together as a unit” and notions of keeping band members happy on a more individual basis by providing booking guarantees and monetary incentives so that they in turn stay devoted to the interests of the band. Fine (2001) provides a different approach to motivating team members in the context of adolescent debate teams, more closely aligned with that of the amateur dance studio. Tensions arise as participants compete with one another for status and prestige on their teams, but at the same time they rely on one another to secure wins. In turn, these animosities are often displaced to other debate teams, allowing the team as a collective to pursue the goal of a win. They unite over dislike of the other as they join together to intimidate opponents, similar to the ways studios unite against their opposition when they attend competitive events.

Developing a unified sense of purpose is integral to pursuing collective events, especially in a group characterized by competition. When dealing with children, preadolescents and adolescents, this is not always a simple task as the norms and stigmas of overarching peer relations can influence group dynamics in terms of defining the criteria for group cliques and individual popularity. In the context of amateur dance, this involves replacing the more individualized goals of being the “star of the show” with group-based initiatives regarding a successful performance. This typically means defining a successful performance as one in which all participants contribute to the best of their ability, rather than one where participants are singled out for praise and prestige. Encouraging participants to adopt these mutual goals, while minimizing individual objectives, can involve a tactic of emotional displacement as within-group animosities are directed to the dealings with outside groups. By displacing competitiveness to the other,

performers and instructors are able to forge bonds within the team and this familiarity further promotes team goals.

In Summary

Once participants are either found to establish or get involved in collective events the events then need to be organized and prepared. Thus, coordinating and sustaining collective events is a significant aspect of participating in group ventures.

In amateur dance, the subprocess of coordinating and sustaining collective events is most accurately reflected during the preparation period of the performance season. This is when studio members come together and get their groups ready for the stage performances. Prus (1997) highlights five subprocesses involved in coordinating and sustaining collective events: accessing funding, developing agendas, encountering resistance, developing a sense of purpose and promoting the event.

Accessing funding is the most basic step toward making events happen. Studio owners need to decide the cost of putting on recitals, attending competitions, and set prices accordingly. Studios typically rely on three means of financing the studio and these events: enrolment/lesson fees, fundraising initiatives and merchandise sales. Securing funding is a significant aspect of not only pursuing competitions and recitals, but also pursuing any kind of substantial group-based venture. While some collective events occur more spontaneously, deliberately organized events need funding of some sort. Prus (1997) also considers developing agendas to be a part of coordinating and sustaining collective events. While there are many organizational tasks at hand in preparing for competitions and recitals, developing choreographies and material to showcase at these

events are considerable priorities. Studio members convene within their studio classrooms to develop and perfect choreographed dance routines. This section highlights the dance-specific processes of music and costume selections and the teaching/learning of dance steps, and points to parallels between dance and other activities. Because of the multitude of participants and subsequent perspectives in any given group or team, effective organizational strategies and agendas are necessary for pursuing projects as a collective unit. Certain individuals emerge as team leaders and oversee these preparations, ensuring that participants are fulfilling their required roles and handling issues that may distract the group from the tasks at hand.

Conflicts can introduce internal distractions for a dance group. Prus (1997) subsequently identifies that “encountering resistances” is an important aspect of coordinating and sustaining collective events. Once again noting the capacity for any community venture to have a multitude of both complementary and competing perspectives and individualized agendas, collective events are not always a smooth pursuit. Participation costs, decision-making outcomes and the competitiveness of amateur dance can hinder competition and recital preparations. Other groups similarly face resistances as individuals come together, possibly with competing agendas, around a common mission. Regardless of what these tensions may be, how they are handled has a direct impact on the success of the group. Participants have vested interests in finding quick and effective solutions to emergent conflicts.

In turn, Prus (1997) notes that “developing a sense of purpose” is an integral aspect of coordinating and sustaining collective events. Purpose generates unity in the context of tension and animosity. In the context of amateur dance, participants are

encouraged to bond over the dependence they have on one another. Similarly, images of the “other” are often invoked as a means of defining the in-group and displacing animosities to outsiders so that the group can focus on bonding over the common goal of a successful performance.

Prus (1997:135) also states that “promoting (via influence work) the event to others” is a subprocess of coordinating and sustaining collective events. This thesis finds this subprocess to be less relevant than others. Group members may indeed actively promote the performance events to outsiders as a means of encouraging them to get involved with the group. However, because these events are considered the purpose of dance involvements, once people are involved with the studio or group it becomes less necessary to continually promote the event. Instead, group members are aware of and active participants in preparing for the events as an extension of their decision to get involved with the studio as a whole. While this subprocess could be used to elaborate on issues of motivating resistant or ambivalent dancers, this topic is more relevant to participating in the actual events themselves as opposed to this discussion on the preparation process.

The preparation period discussed in this thesis occupies the majority of the dance year while the performance season is considered to be the highlight of a dance group’s involvement. Chapter 6 presents data on how actors make the transition from preparation to performance by exploring how participants make sense of, and become active in, competitions and recitals.

CHAPTER 6: PARTICIPATING IN PERFORMANCES

After several months of preparation, the performance season begins in the spring with various competitions and ends with the year-end studio recital. However, there are some competitions that occur throughout the summer, after the traditional dance year has concluded. All of the individuals involved in dance, regardless of their specific roles and titles, are mindful of the performance season as they go about their daily tasks throughout the dance year. As such, members of the dance take competitions and recitals very seriously. This thesis addresses how involvements, associations, activities, efforts, ambiguities and resistances arise in the context of recitals and competitions. This chapter focuses on the events themselves and how participants make sense of, become caught up in and even become disenchanted with performances.

More specifically, this chapter considers the ways that individuals handle performance commitments and demands by exploring of the final weeks and days before recitals. This is followed by the process of “getting ready.” This occupies the majority of a competition or recital day and includes the acts of getting into costume and makeup and organizing the group within the performance theatre. The importance of role designation becomes especially clear at this stage, as personnel, parents and the dancers assign task priorities within designated roles. For example, performers focus on practicing their routines and getting in a performance mindset while their parents handle costume and makeup concerns. Personnel, in turn, manage the events, assign tasks, motivate their dancers and oversee performance readiness.

After exploring the process of getting ready, attention will shift to the dancers and the act of performing. Once again, it is interesting to note how the performers are the

focal point of the event and the only aspect of the amateur dance world that is seen by the outsiders in the audience, yet they play a comparatively minimal role in making the event happen. Because of the young age of most of these performers, their parents and studio personnel handle the majority of the backstage efforts so that performers are able to take the stage, yet remain unseen by the audience. These individuals not only ensure that the performers are physically ready to take the stage, by teaching them the routines and ensuring they are in proper costume, but they also work at managing fears and anxieties that often come with performing. Once on stage, the performers are left to their own devices for handling unexpected events. This chapter explores how dancers manage those few minutes of performance time, with parents and studio personnel watching from backstage.

The generic social processes of acquiring perspectives, developing relationships and experiencing emotionality will once again be relevant to this discussion. Rather than focusing on the individual subgroups involved in amateur dance, this chapter considers these generic social processes as they occur in the context of the *team* and the diverse roles and tasks that are accomplished as a part of the collective venture.

For organizational purposes, this chapter follows the natural history of the competition and recital events. While Prus' (1997:135) subprocesses of making sense of and becoming caught up in collective events provide the conceptual base for the discussion, exploring these events as they actually occur provides a more coherent understanding of what it means to participate in competitions and recitals.

An increase in practices and dress rehearsals will be considered as the natural shift from the regular dance year to the performance season and so it is where this

discussion will begin. Competitions typically occur chronologically before the recitals, but for organizational purposes they will be discussed together under the umbrella term “performance events”. This chapter begins by addressing the experiences of studio members as rehearsals increase in frequency in anticipation of the events, followed by the process of getting ready the day of the event. Finally, notions of taking the stage will be discussed as well as the process of concluding the collective ventures of competitions and recitals.

Attending Final Practices and Dress Rehearsals

While studios spend the majority of the dance year preparing for the performance season, the time spent within the studio and practicing at home typically increases in the spring months. When preparing for the performance season, particularly in the case of recitals, there is often a change to class and rehearsal schedules, as owners and instructors work to provide adequate time for final instruction. The performance season is the focal point of studio-based efforts throughout the duration of the dance year. At this time, it often becomes the center of not only dance involvements, but the overall lives of participants. Consequently, to accommodate the changing demands in dance, participants’ other interests and commitments may be given less priority until the performance events are over. Prus (1997: 135) refers to this increasing dedication as *making commitments (public and personal) to pursue the event at hand*.

The main task for studio personnel is scheduling, as they may increase practices for performers that they feel are not appropriately prepared for the stage. This is often met with resistance from dancers and parents, and is further complicated by the limited

amount of hours available on evenings and weekends:

All the competitive kids, if you want to be in this big production, big huge number at the end, there's extra practices for that. And there's extra practices for other competitive things they put together, and extra practices for solos and duets and there was so much stuff booked that they didn't have time to do their practices. So they practiced once a month, and then started practicing on Sundays because they'd run out of time. So obviously they're booking too much and I think they need to do fewer and do them well, because if you haven't got time to practice, then obviously this isn't working. – Parent

The weeks before recitals are particularly intense as these may include dress rehearsals in addition to regular class practices. Studios often book theatres for additional days prior to a show so that they are able to go through the recital program several times before the event itself. Regardless of the potential strains resulting from these types of changes, they are generally viewed as necessary to increase the likelihood of a successful show:

For the year-end show, the whole month before the show is really intense. The week leading up to the show is even more intense, it's dress rehearsal. We have dress rehearsal two or three nights in a row where you actually have to be in full costume and full makeup and everything to make sure everything goes right and the lighting is all right and everything. So that's really intense because basically for three nights before the shows we're doing full shows. We're doing full three-hour performances for three nights and then we have the actual shows. So that's pretty intense and you're there until like, nine or ten at night. And I remember in like, grade nine for instance, being in only two pieces, we're waiting around for the entire show. Your pieces are maybe like, five minutes at the most. And in the dress rehearsals they practice full intermission and everything, so that everyone gets the timing right in being back from intermission...it definitely gets tiring. – Dancer

It would always get more intense in spring, 'cause that's when the major show was. So there would be an extra practice here and there on a weeknight. I remember missing school now and again the week before a concert, 'cause you'd just be so tired. We'd be practicing 'til really late, like midnight. Not that we'd be dancing the entire time, but when it's a dress rehearsal you have to run through the whole show and because everyone's in the finale everyone had to wait around until the very end. It's hard on a little kid's system. And you'd never dream of missing one of those rehearsals or even leaving early. I don't ever remember anyone missing it; they were pretty hardcore about that. If you missed during the year they were like, "It sucks, but whatever", but when it came to dress rehearsal there were no excuses. The week before the big show there was the Sunday practice, then like a Tuesday or Wednesday practice where everyone in the whole group was there but just in regular clothes, not at the venue or anything. And we'd run through the whole show in the practice hall, not yet the venue. It was like a trial for the dress rehearsal, I guess. And then the dress rehearsal the Thursday or Friday. You'd feel like you should just bring along a sleeping bag to the hall and not bother going home. At that point it never bothered me though. It wasn't like the boring practices at the beginning of the year – Former dancer

While studio personnel use this time to make minor changes to routines and provide final instructions, they may also focus on motivating and exciting the dancers as they get ready to perform in the coming days. Once again, the sense of purpose and mission of the group

is stressed through images of teamwork, cooperation and togetherness. Group philosophies of inclusiveness and mutual dependence become prevalent, as performers, parents and studio personnel often bond over the long hours, exhaustion and the ultimate shared goal of a successful performance:

This was the real deal. The excitement was in the air, and you'd feel like you were a part of something big and you were there late with all the cool older kids. I can't really explain it, but it was really exciting to have everyone there, all together. Plus they'd always order us pizzas or get us McDonald's or something, so it was something we got excited about. Plus we got to see what the other groups were working on all year. – Former dancer

While members of the dance community experience excitement and mutual encouragement, they may also experience instances of heightened stress as they attempt to manage all of their varied commitments both within and outside of dance. Long nights and practices called with little notice become common, and dancers find themselves making more sacrifices with regard to their other involvements in order to adhere to these new demands:

It gets busy. It gets really busy. They can't miss classes, 'cause they need to know their stuff. They have to make sure your costumes fit. Cassie will have to then do her second ballet class, for sure. Sometimes there's extra practices, there's photos and there's dress rehearsals so it gets really busy. It does. And then part of the problem is crossover. So activities that run during the [school] year go until May or June, and activities that start for the spring and summer start in May. All of a sudden you've now got soccer going, and Cassie is on two soccer teams. So you've got two kids on three soccer teams, plus however many nights of dance, plus piano. So there's crossover until the end of June when dance finishes. So it gets really busy. I told Cassie, "If you want to do dance there won't be soccer this year"...we can't do three, four nights - and it will be four nights at that point - of dance, plus rehearsal, plus all the other stuff, plus several nights of soccer, plus piano and on and on. She's got to pick. – Parent

On average, scheduling was not a huge deal because I knew practices were on Sundays. But when it got to be the time right before the show they would just assume you could be there whenever they wanted you there. Every now and then they would randomly announce a mandatory extra practice because the head guy was going to come down. So they'd call on a Saturday morning and demand that everyone be there within a couple hours. That wasn't cool. I mean, people have lives. In the end I think that was pushed me to throw in the towel on dancing altogether. I was willing to give up scheduled times but I wasn't about to dedicate entire weekends to it, especially last minute. – Former dancer

Getting the entire studio together at least once before a recital is typically considered a necessity, as the various dance groups and classes usually develop their

material in relative isolation. Participating in these intense final preparations not only allows the group to come together and coordinate themselves in a way that is deemed appropriate for conveying images of competence and quality to the various audiences that will attend. It also allows them to bond as a collective unit. Prus (1997:135) refers to this as *attending to the enthusiasm of others/encountering encouragement to participate*.

Personnel and performers alike can use this time to engage in motivational routines, offer words of suggestion and encouragement and develop a sense of community. Becoming aware of the excitement and enthusiasm of others may in turn increase the performers' devotion to dance and the studio. This can motivate them to participate in the performance to the best of their abilities while similarly managing any nervousness that may begin to develop close to show time. These enthusiasms and motivational tactics extend beyond these final practices and into the day of the recital or competition as the studio gets ready for the main event.

Getting Ready

Like in the weeks prior, the day of the event is quite intense. Typically, studios and other dance groups vary with regard to their preferred methods of handling a performance day. Some develop extensive itineraries and schedules while others prefer more casual organizational methods, allowing parents and dancers to make their own decisions regarding how, when and where they get ready to perform, which will be detailed shortly. Further, while most aspects of getting ready for the stage are the same for both competitions and recitals, competitions present some unique challenges and so they will be discussed more extensively in this section.

When it comes to getting ready for the stage, parents become more involved than they do in the earlier parts of the dance year. Studio owners and staff members spend the majority of the dance year handling the administrative requirements of performance preparation by booking venues, handling costs and developing the routines. When it comes to the day of an event, they are typically occupied by similar organizational duties such as ensuring that people are in their appropriate locations, all props and equipment are working properly and other details are being handled. As a result, they are typically absent from the dressing rooms where the majority of dancer-related preparations occur. This is particularly true for out-of-town competitive events. In the case of some competitions, studio personnel and instructors are not present at the events at all, particularly for teams featuring older children. This may relate to a number of issues including schedule conflicts and travel difficulties that the instructors may have, and so in their absence the parents of the performers in attendance often oversee the process of getting ready.

When it comes to attending competitions, the studios provide dancers and their parents with itineraries, directions and preparation instructions for the day of the event. It subsequently becomes the parents' responsibility to organize the children according to these demands. Studios typically care little about how the performer gets ready, as long as she is in costume and set to perform at the appropriate time:

Parents are responsible. This is a competition: you better be there on time. The owner gets the handout from the competition organizers. They let you know exactly when the kid is dancing and what day. You give it to the parents. They better be there. Parents usually know when there is dance and when things happen, but we often only get our competition schedule maybe two weeks before a competition, so you need to be able to get that day off work in case you do have to dance on that Friday. If you're highly competitive, you do five or six routines, you're pretty much guaranteed to be dancing the Friday, the Saturday and the Sunday. You take it off and go. – Instructor

In turn, parents typically develop their own organizational strategies with regard to travel and preparation. Their preferences change according to their own needs and agendas.

Depending on the distance of the commute, some parents may choose to book hotels near the venues while others prefer to make the drive each day that their children are performing:

We compete three times a year. So it depends. This year we're in [name of city], so we'll probably have to stay two nights. In [name of city], depending on when they're scheduled in, sometimes we'll travel back and forth. – Parent

Getting performers to the event location is fairly straightforward, but getting them organized on location can pose some difficulties. When it comes to recitals, the dress rehearsals that occur before a performance day are invaluable for anticipating uncertainties that may develop on show day. Studios use this time to assign dressing rooms and show dancers exactly where they are to be and at what times during the day. Establishing this awareness before the performance date enables day-of-recital preparation to generally run more smoothly and may reduce pre-event nervousness. This same luxury is not typically afforded to participants in competitions or out-of-town performances:

The group would be especially nervous coming up to out-of-town shows, just because we really had no idea what the venue would look like, the positioning of the stage, where we were supposed to go. At least I was a bit more nervous. I like to have things planned out and know exactly what I'm doing. At our home theatre where we were able to have dress rehearsals and stuff like that, it was like our home base, we knew the place inside and out. We knew where everything was. How to get to the bathroom from our dressing room. Where all the dressing rooms even were. When it came to performing in other cities it would take time to orient ourselves, and the stage would sometimes be smaller or an awkward shape and we'd have to rearrange ourselves while on stage in front of a live audience in order to accommodate it. – Former dancer

In some instances, performers and their parents are somewhat familiar with even out-of-town event locations based on previous experiences in the competitive circuit, however competitions change with regard to the number of groups participating and how

the organizers decide to manage them. While studios attempt to minimize confusion by providing itineraries and instructions, it is not uncommon for routines to change the day of a performance. This leads many parents to feelings of frustration as they consult their outdated instructions and receive little direction on the day of an event.

In an effort to combat this confusion, some competition organizers hire volunteers who stand in common areas to direct groups to their designated dressing areas. However, it is not unheard of for there to be nothing more than a sign with various studios and room numbers listed, leaving dancers and their parents responsible for finding their way around the potentially unfamiliar buildings. Consequently, children can get lost, and rooms can be changed with little notice, as the organizers cope with unexpected attendees and oversights in their own preparations:

There is a woman who has introduced herself as the best friend of the competition organizer and says that that is how she came to volunteer with the competition. She says every year she sets up a table in the lobby area where she sells merchandise, holds a raffle and directs dancers and their parents to their designated areas. She states that it is a very chaotic job, characterized by a lot of misunderstandings and clarifications as competitors try and orient themselves around the venue. These ambiguities relate back to inaccurate schedules and itineraries, studios that are no-shows and the need for accommodating unexpected or last-minute enrollees, all in the context of the nervousness and excitement that precedes taking the stage (field notes).

Handling ambiguities is an integral aspect of participating in any kind of collective event, resulting from the multiple and diverse themes, perspectives and definitions of situations as varied individuals come together in the context of a common activity (Prus, 1997: 135). At competitive dance events there is a constant quest for information in the hours before taking the stage, with performers and parents attempting to organize themselves and alter plans of action in the context of unfamiliar and changing surroundings.

Experienced competitive dance families typically come to anticipate this kind of ambiguity. As a result, they may alter their routines accordingly to avoid excess trouble. Some parents prefer to get their children in costume before going to the competition and

therefore have extra time to orient themselves once there. For those that choose to get ready at the theatre, once dressing rooms and locational information are established the process of getting into costume and makeup begins. This is a similar process in the case of both competitions and recitals. Studio personnel are often not present in dressing rooms, due to pressing obligations. Instructors not only have several different classes and groups performing in the same shows, they are often also performers themselves and subsequently have to attend to their own dressing routines. Consequently, studios usually rely on parent volunteers to manage dressing rooms and ensure performers are in proper costume and makeup. While these positions are referred to as voluntary, taking on these roles is in many cases mandatory, particularly for those involved in competitive dance:

All the competitive parents, that's their responsibility. You sign up for duties and they're in charge of certain dressing rooms. You've got parents who monitor and who are in the dressing rooms looking after the kids and making sure everything is done. And then people backstage. There's Quick-Change parents, for people who come on and off really quickly when the numbers are close together...and then there's people who are by the stage door ushering, and parents who are running to get the groups and parents in the change rooms. It's all the parents. – Parent

There were a few volunteers that were absolutely incredible in making sure wardrobe changes stayed sane. There were a couple people that were part of the group, but usually it was the parents of the dancers, because everyone else was busy getting themselves organized. The instructors themselves were usually dancers in the older group, so they didn't have time to make sure we were wearing the right costumes. They were in the wings and hustled us off to the change room and made sure everything was on properly, and then they hustled us back to the stage and they would sit there with us between performances in case we needed anything and to keep us out of trouble. They would take us back down right before our performance, our instructors would come off stage and we'd get sent on. It was total chaos. I'm surprised there weren't more catastrophic incidents. I don't even remember anyone losing any articles of clothing or anything in the process. Those volunteers were golden. – Former dancer

It is important to note that the process of getting ready is not exclusive to the start of the performance day, because dancers are often required to perform in multiple show numbers. Changes in routine call for changes in costumes and hairstyles. Those filling the 'quick-change' roles described above have exceptionally stressful responsibilities as they are more limited by time than those only getting ready before the show. While owners

and organizers do keep time restraints in mind when setting up the performance program, it can be the case that dancers have to be on stage in consecutive numbers with very little time in between performances to switch costumes in their designated dressing rooms. In these instances, a small area of the backstage region is spared for quick changes between numbers:

A lot of the main characters, like, basically are just getting naked backstage because they have no choice. You'll have like, a dressing committee, you just ask a couple of your friends to help you out, you just say like, "In between this piece and this piece you're not in either of them, can you help me dress into this?" And people will just stand backstage with your costumes to step into, you just rip everything off and just do that. Sometimes you have more time where you can go back to the change room in between pieces and change and then come back and you're ready for the next piece. If you're ever in two pieces, like, back-to-back where you don't even have a second to change, you obviously don't change costume. – Former dancer

Parents often work together in getting performers into costume to ensure that no one falls behind. It matters little if they are dressing their own child. It is often more productive to help whichever child is the closest to them in the room or whomever is struggling the most with preparations. One competitive mother describes this as a strategy to combat the lack of time and space in the crowded dressing rooms:

A performer (who looks to be around age six or seven) emerges from the dressing room in full costume, followed by her mother. The mother says that getting ready at the theatre is a difficult process relating not only to the lack of space, but also the resistances of the children. She says that it is normal for there to be at least a couple children who are fussy and refuse to follow direction, particularly from their own parents. She says that her and the other mothers have developed a strategy where they dress each others' children as opposed to dressing their own. She claims that children are less likely to refuse makeup, hairstyles and the costumes designated by their instructors if they are being dressed by a non-parent (field notes).

Regardless of the strategies put in place, conflicts and resistances in the dressing room are common. Studio personnel attempt to resolve conflicts and minimize resistances within the studio prior to these major events so that day-of preparations are not hindered and focus can remain on the goal of achieving the flawless performance. Nevertheless, protesting costumes and makeup can be a commonplace occurrence as parents work to get children ready for the stage:

Costumes. Most of them are really bad. And putting on makeup. You have to wear so much of it, like false eyelashes. Ugh. The red lipstick. And all the sparkles and hair gel. And when you're like, in the changeroom, it's like, hard to breathe 'cause there's so much hairspray from like, aerosol cans. – Dancer

Sometimes we didn't like the costumes. They weren't always all that pretty and they were uncomfortable to wear. And because the show was always in spring and sometimes in the summer, some of them would be really hot and itchy and uncomfortable to be in when it's like thirty degrees outside. My mom has the funniest picture of me looking absolutely miserable, in complete costume hours before we went on stage, because you had to be ready, and it was such a hot day and I'm actually making a fist, it's so funny. I probably wasn't the most pleasant kid to be around that day. – Former dancer

Recitals are based within the studio and therefore rarely involve any outsiders. A relative lack of space at competition locations, however, may result in rival studios having to share the same dressing rooms, leaving little space for parents to help dancers get ready. In these cases, the parents themselves may not even be present during this process. Instead, children as young as eight or nine-years-old are sometimes taught to do their own hair and makeup in the fashions required by choreographers.

When it comes to competitions and recitals, organizers typically require performers to be in costume and makeup several hours before they take the stage. The amount of time required varies between as little as one hour to as much as three hours, depending on the preferences of the event organizer. These long wait times are established to ensure that all performers are accounted for long before they are required on stage. This allows for extra time should any unexpected instances arise, such as missing props or malfunctioning costumes. Performers can use this time to run through their routines and receive finalized instructions from their superiors. Further, individual dancers and groups may participate in motivational or preparatory rituals prior to performing, such as warm-ups, prayers and cheers:

We would have warm-up before the shows. It's usually led by the older students and it'd be a really energetic, fun warm-up. We'd do it all together and do it in the gym because it would be like, all the grades together. Like, a lot across the floor stuff and simple body warm-ups. Just really high energy, get everybody pumped for the show. – Former dancer

We stretch, practice lifts, and run through our dance. And my group, we sing this song while we're doing it, and Miss Amy gives you a pep talk before you go on and stuff like that. Like, "Smile, do your best, have fun, it's okay if you screw up" and stuff like that. – Dancer

Engaging in these motivational activities provides opportunities for performers to encourage enthusiasm within themselves and with each other, and further develop their relationships in the context of this excitement. The impending performance provides a common ground among the studio members in which they can relate to one another and ultimately foster stronger senses of community and increased devotion to the group and the event at hand.

Dancers may further develop their own preparatory strategies aside from the efforts of the group, tailored to their own needs and understandings of the upcoming event. They use these pre-performance times to go through their more individualized rituals:

Sometimes people go over their dances. I just warm-up and make sure I'm not feeling hungry or that I have to go to the bathroom. I can't go on stage if I'm feeling hungry or have to pee. - Dancer

Eat Candy? Joking. Bad dancer habit. I usually visualize the performance before going on stage. If I'm doing a duet I have some time with that person where we just sort of chill out and prepare. – Dancer

Using this time to prepare can pose difficulties, however, particularly at competition venues as there is not only little room to get dressed, there is also a lack of space for gathering for final practice and instruction:

Many groups are found huddled in hallways and corners of lobbies in full costume receiving instructions from their teachers and practicing their steps, despite several "No Dancing" signs that are posted throughout the area. The lack of space appears to lead to overcrowded common areas of the venue. At this particular competition, young dancers are not allowed in the viewing areas of the theatres when in-costume, so they are often found in crowded doorways, trying to catch glimpses of the dancers on stage. There is a lot of excited chatter, jumping around and practicing steps and one competition volunteer reflects that she is constantly amazed by the hyperactivity and difficulty involved in controlling the young dancers when in the common area, yet minutes later they go on stage with composure and professionalism. An instructor mentions that the hyperactivity is also a part of the preparation process, a way to "blow off steam" and handle nervousness before an event (field notes)

Our hair had to be in French braids, so that can be a bit time consuming when you're working with fidgety children, and then makeup was the most fun because it was like playing dress-up, so that the lights and

cameras would pick up our faces. But all this had to be done well in advance so that there would be no last-minute panic, you know, if someone couldn't find a shoe or something. So that meant there would be like, hours of just sitting around and doing nothing and we couldn't play or really do anything, 'cause we might wreck our costumes or hair or something. So lots of sitting around, both before the show, obviously, but also during the show when other groups were performing. Especially when I was in the younger group, because they usually have just one number and then the finale but the show is like, two hours long. They had their hands full with keeping us in order during that down time. They didn't like us running around the halls, but sometimes we would sneak out of the dressing room and look down the stairwell to see the audience start pouring in. It used to get us pumped and the adrenaline going and ready to go out there. During the show they kept us on pretty tight lockdown until after we performed. After the performance we had to stay in costume for the finale, but they were usually much more lenient with what we did and would even let us sit in the very back rows of the balcony and watch the show if we promised to be good. – Former dancer

While having extra time between the dressing room and the stage is necessary for organizational and instructional purposes, it also means that there is a considerable amount of downtime that occurs at dance performance events, particularly for competitions, which can be several days long. Competition organizers tend to anticipate these wait times and try to keep people entertained by organizing activities in the common areas, such as raffles, music and merchandise-selling. While watching performances is an effective way to spend idle time, fascination with and interest in spending hours doing this begins to wane for experienced competitive families:

Yeah, you watch. Sit out in the lobby. I can only stand so much and that's the honest truth. I can't sit there for three days and watch. - Parent

The most boring thing is like, tap solos. Any solos, really, they can be boring. It's always the same thing. The one time at one competition, in the tap category, three or four people did the same song. So the same song over and over again gets really boring. – Dancer

While some parents and dancers may prefer to not watch performances they are not participating in, some studios make it mandatory. Watching others' performances can provide moral support to fellow studio members on stage:

One studio made it mandatory that you had to be in the auditorium watching anyone from your studio and we had different cheers. When you have the audience screaming at you, really cheering for you, you're going to work harder. But also, then it kind of throws off everyone else in the audience, because once that studio was done everyone got up and left, waited, even for two or three dances, and then would come back in sit down and only watch their studio. So that was distracting, and for the judges too. – Instructor

In instances where observation is not required, parents often bring along bags of activities for young dancers to keep them occupied during this down time, such as books and handheld electronic devices as well as schoolwork, which is particularly important as these dancers often have to miss classes to attend events:

Sometimes we would have three hours straight. One would dance, then the next would dance, then the first one would dance again. So we would bring homework and reading, do all that in between. – Parent

Typically, the dancers and parents themselves determine the use of this time and are permitted to engage in individualized routines, as long as they are not jeopardizing the group or performance in any way by leaving for extended periods of time or getting out of costume. While some performers and their parents may choose to participate in these individualized activities, others instead focus on developing relationships and engaging in interaction with their fellow studio members.

In conclusion, when it comes to the “day-of” preparations for performance events, particularly in the case of competitions, notions of *watching things develop over time* (*developing processual [re]interpretations*) become particularly relevant (Prus, 1997:135). This part of event participation involves an ongoing quest for and evaluation of information and instruction from personnel with regard to one’s role in the event. While studio members spend months engaging in generalized preparations in an attempt to predict the various issues that may arise at performance events, it is not uncommon for them to be met with some ambiguity regardless of these efforts. Consequently, as was seen in the above testimonials, participants in the event at hand are continually seeking out clarifications and assessing the information as it unfolds, adapting their routines accordingly as they get ready to take the stage.

It is at this stage of the event that certain people take on more central roles with regard to the venture. As was noted in Chapter 5, during the preparation period parents of performers have a less active role within the community, simply providing transportation and paying fees. As is evident in this discussion on getting ready, they become more central features of the community during day-of preparations, as they take on the organizational role that was previously exclusive to studio personnel. Parents are responsible for managing dressing rooms and getting performers in costume, as well as supervising them during downtime, so that studio personnel can concentrate on more central organizational duties.

Maintaining organization during these final preparations involves extensive cooperation and communication among the various members of the group, as they work to establish understandings of the event as it unfolds, adapting their routines if necessary. The group in turn often bonds over this cooperation, but also may experience instances of conflict and tension in the context of the competitive nature of dance.

Developing Bonds with Others in Performance Events

Prus (1997: 135) identifies the process of “developing affective bonds with enthusiastic participants” as an integral feature of collective events participation. As group members become caught up in preparations for approaching competitions and recitals, the relational aspect of amateur dance becomes evident. Positive bondings as well as animosities can occur among the varied participants.

Developing relationships as a generic social process was explored more extensively in Chapter 5. However, it is important to note how these relationships

develop not just around the general activity of dance, but in the context of major performances themselves. As was mentioned earlier, developing relationships can be complicated by the competitive nature of amateur dance as performers compete against one another for lead roles and prominent placements in routines. Issues of favouritism, jealousy and individualized goals can lead to animosities and conflicts as these individuals pursue dance.

To mediate these potential animosities and encourage cooperation, images of the competitions and recitals as collective ventures are often invoked. Internal competition and conflict may be ignored or deemed temporarily irrelevant in the name of teamwork and mutual dependence. Further, this mutual dependence with regard to achieving common goals (namely, a successful performance season) may not only discourage competition among group members, it may also provide a venue for bonding and the development of friendships that is not always evident in the studio classroom. In turn, these friendships solidify notions of cooperation with, devotion to, and performance for the group:

Of course, performing was one of the best parts though, like in shows and on stage, because you could just dance your heart out. The times I felt most judged or intimidated were always in class, or in class exams, because I was dancing with a lot of really talented people. But that is one of the things I learned the most about, was how to be in class and take criticism well for the purpose of learning more and seeing other people learn more. And I always tried to do my best and improve and learn as much as I could in class, from my peers and teachers, because I was lucky to have such an amazing form of education experience for so long. But when you got on stage with everyone, the same competition isn't there, to be the best. You just dance your heart out. – Former dancer

We were a team, on stage. Like, one unit. All of that petty crap from before is gone because you need each other on stage and even though you might be jealous of so and so and you might be mad at the teacher for picking them over you and you might be jealous of their costume and that they have a solo so all attention is on them, all of that is just kind of gone when you're on stage. It's hard to explain, it just is. The classroom stuff matters a lot less and you are more concerned with making yourself and the group look good on stage in front of the audience than you are about that other stuff. You don't think about all of that stuff. You're just too excited. – Former dancer

Individuals share the excitement, nervousness, stress, exhaustion and sacrifice as they prepare for, and perform at, competitions and recitals. The bonds they form are further impacted by the amount of time they spend together during final preparations and attending the events. This is particularly evident among competitive dance participants who are not only required to spend more time at the studio, but are often required to travel together to and from events. One instructor states that relationships are likely to form on the road because of the amount of time participants are required to spend with one another:

There is an instructor present and she mentions the impact relationships have on competitive dance participation. She says that “the dance life becomes your social life” because of the long hours spent tending to the activity both in the studio and on the road. She thinks that some parents have little opportunity to make friends outside of dance, as they have to spend several nights a week and several weekends a year tending to their dance involvements. Subsequently, dance families often spend time together outside of dance and during the off-season, because they understand what it is like to have that lifestyle (field notes).

I don't really make a social thing of it, but a lot of the parents do. You spend a lot of time with those people. I'm pleasant and I know them, but some of them plan trips together and other activities outside of dance. Last year they all even went to Las Vegas. – Parent

Studio members can bond with one another over the long hours, sacrifices and mutual love of the activity. They may feel that others in their lives do not understand these experiences. This draws striking parallels to participation in other activities, particularly Wolf's (1991) outlaw bikers bonding over motorcycle trips (“club runs”). The Rebels members develop social bonds as they prepare their motorcycles for the road, much like dancers spending long hours practicing, getting into costume and waiting to take the stage. Mutual support not only distracts dancers from in-group conflict in the final moments before show time. It may also play a role in managing nervousness and other emotional experiences.

Managing Nervousness and Other Emotional Experiences

The generic social process of experiencing emotionality was discussed earlier. According to Prus (1996), as people engage in group life they subsequently learn how to define emotional experiences and appropriate ways of expressing or controlling them. Like developing relationships, these concepts have specific relevance to participating in competitions and recitals. This section focuses on how performers and other studio members define and manage the experiences of nervousness or *stage fright*.

In his analysis of stand-up comedians, Stebbins (1990: 89) defines stage fright as:

An emotional state that arises in connection with the problem of sustaining an identity in the face of apprehension about one's ability to do so. It develops when performers know in advance that their performance could bring in scrutiny from others.

Erving Goffman (1959) provides a similar conceptualization of this type of emotional experience, stating that stage fright relates to a lack of belief in one's role and one's own uncertainties regarding ability and authenticity. He differentiates between the "sincere" and the "cynical" performances put on by people as they interact with others and attempt to negotiate the definition of a situation. Sincere performances occur when individuals believe in the reality they are creating and conveying and so their likelihood of experiencing stage fright lessens by virtue of their confidence in that role. Cynical performers, or those who have difficulty defining themselves in particular roles may become more preoccupied by their own inadequacies. They subsequently exert more effort in "giving off" impressions of competence rather than concentrating on the activity at the center of the performance. Thus, these performers are not only working to convince the audience of their competence, but they are also attempting to convince themselves, in what Goffman (1959: 81) calls an "intricate maneuver of self delusion." The

inconsistencies between the performances and the performers' own beliefs often lead to instances of stage fright, as they question their abilities to competently perform the task at hand.

Stage fright poses an interesting discussion point when considering participation in performance events because there is the literal imagery of performing a role in front of an audience. Performers convey two images to the audience. They attempt to establish certain understandings and emotions among audience members with regard to the stories being told through the dance choreographies. They also attempt to convey images of their own competency and composure, so that they are perceived by audiences as authentic in the dancer role. While it is considered normal for these performers to experience some level of apprehension when met with these tasks, those who are particularly unsure of their own abilities and who may feel unprepared in some way may experience stage fright in a more pronounced way:

You would always get nervous, but I remember this one year they had us doing two separate dances, and they concentrated more on the one than the other and so we had no clue what we were doing in the other one. To the point where we were making so many mistakes in the dress rehearsal, and we just didn't have enough time to work on it because the show was the next day. That's always kind of nerve-racking. If you don't know it, you don't know what could happen when you get on the stage. Who will forget what, how disastrous it's going to look to the people watching. It's unpredictable and I think that adds to getting nervous because you just don't know how to prepare for what might happen. – Former dancer

Experiences of stage fright may also be elevated in the competitive dance arena, where audience members are unfamiliar to performers and quality of performance is given more significance than in recreational dance:

It's different because you want to be like, perfect, so you can get a higher mark and stuff. And you don't know most of the people watching and stuff. There's people from other studios watching. It's kind of like, pressure. – Dancer

An integral part of performance preparation is making sure that material aspects of the performance, namely costumes and hair are ready. Instructors and volunteers alike

are also involved in helping the performers manage stage fright. Because some level of nervousness is defined as ‘normal’ for even the most seasoned dancers, many performers choose to handle the emotional experience in a more individualized way, often by ignoring it or defining it positively:

Only the second before I go on. Never days before, and never while I’m dancing. Just that second before the music starts. I ignore it. From experience, I think it’s better to be nervous. When I wasn’t nervous I thought it was weird and then I would like, screw up or something. – Dancer

I was pretty nervous for that and I get really, really nervous before performing, but in the end I think it helps me concentrate. If I can succeed in channeling all that worry into focus on the present moment, as cheesy as that sounds. – Dancer

It’s just butterflies. It’s not really nervousness, it’s excitement. Adrenaline. Sometimes you’re waiting in the wings, which have the curtains separating and we’d peek through and see the audience and get really pumped up. We’d all just kind of smile and breathe. Maybe shake a little bit but it was only for that split second. You just have to remember that you know what you’re doing. You were at all the practices. It’s normal to feel nervous because you’re going out there in front of hundreds of people. It would probably be weird if no one felt anything, it would mean we didn’t care. – Former dancer

Interestingly, it is not only the dancers who experience nervousness and excitement before competitions and recitals stemming from the uncertainty of live performances. Instructors and others who have contributed to the studio throughout the year also experience increased levels of nervousness resulting from their investment in the project. Controlling the expression of this nervousness is especially significant in these cases, as there is a fear that expressing it will encourage heightened apprehension in the young performers:

I do feel really nervous for them, but I find that in the end it’s not as much nerves as it is excitement. And it’s not so much for them, but for me, to see what I’ve produced. I feel nervous that they won’t remember, but I also feel confident that they’ll be able to pull through because I’ve drilled it through them. It’s just self-assurance that I know what they’re doing. They know what they’re doing. But when I see they’re nervous, that makes me nervous too. – Instructor

Nerves are shot. There’s about a million things running through your head. You do the worrying about if you’re going to set up in time, are you going to be there in time, are the kids going to be there in time, are the kids going to be okay, what’s going to happen, what’s not going to happen. There’s a lot that goes into it. – Instructor

Conveying images of composure and confidence are integral tasks at hand for instructors as they manage their own nervousness in the context of similarly concerned dancers. Consequently, instructors often develop strategies to minimize the level of stage fright within the entire group, while motivating apprehensive performers so that their emotional experiences do not hinder their interest in participating in the event. They encourage dancers to perceive themselves as competent, so they focus on dancing and not their nervousness. These motivational techniques may involve prayers, cheers and pep talks, as well as reminding dancers of what they have already accomplished:

Even my very last one. Still nervous. What can you do? I wasn't too bad, just shake it off...I was mostly in charge of the little kids and they were like, "Oh my God" and I was like, "It's okay, just do it." It wasn't significant. It was just one of the things we'd be like, "This is what you do on Saturdays, this is what we do it for, you just go out and do it, you know it." – Former instructor

We always thought our instructors were kind of mean; they were always yelling at us and whatever at practices. Just frustrated when we didn't pay attention or didn't care. But then right before we went on stage they were super, super nice. I wonder if they were being fake. Probably. They just knew everyone was nervous and telling us, "Oh my God you guys sucked so bad at the dress rehearsal don't do that again" would just make everyone even more nervous. So they were always, like, super cheery telling us that we were going to be awesome. Reminding us to smile, reminding us last minute things about our steps. And then after the concert, no matter how awful we did they would be grinning and giving us high fives and telling us we were awesome. I think because at that point everything was over and if we screwed up it really didn't matter because it was done and we couldn't change it and the season was over, so if they were nasty to us we probably wouldn't come back the next year. – Former dancer

Stage fright is not always easily managed with positive words of encouragement from others. There are instances where it becomes a more consuming aspect of participating in performances, with dancers refusing to go on stage and instructors having to react quickly, as stage times cannot be delayed to accommodate for lateness and missing dancers. It is unlikely that a resistant child will be forced to take the stage but there are often last minute attempts to sway their opinions about performing. Instructors often evaluate the severity of the stage fright, as well as the characteristics of the performer in question before determining how to respond. If they perceive the stage fright

to be minimal or fleeting they may make more substantial efforts to get the child on stage. However, it can be more beneficial to allow the resisting child to avoid participating in the performance:

Hannah, once when she was little, she was maybe five, decided she wasn't going to go on stage at the Christmas show. They called me and I had to walk up with her right to the curtains and she would not let go. She would not go on stage. The owner took her, and still, she wouldn't go. Absolutely refused, for whatever reason. Once, only, and has never done it before or since. And they don't push it. If you don't want to go then you don't want to go. It even happened this Christmas at the show, a couple of kids, one who just wouldn't come out. So they don't push it, it's not high pressure or stressful for kids. They actually do carry them. They bring them to the stage and kind of, you know, try and just set them down and encourage them gently onto the stage. If they'll go, then great. This year, the owner actually went on stage and called the little girl out. She was actually on stage, you could see her saying, "Come on, come on," but nope. And usually they will. Or they'll even lead them by hand sometimes, do a couple steps with them and then maybe leave. – Parent

The lengthy wait times on event days further complicate instances of nervousness, as they allow performers to reflect extensively on their abilities and preparedness for the stage. While some level of stage fright is to be expected when on display in front of a live audience, there are incidents of extreme nervousness leading to reluctance to perform. If this is the case, studio personnel, as well as others in the community, may strategize ways to encourage participants, attempting to minimize fears and convince the performer to take the stage regardless of the emotional experience. This may include reminding the nervous performer about the work they put into the performance up to that point or evoking images of talent and ability as ways of convincing performers of their abilities and authenticity. If these techniques are unsuccessful, as they often are with the youngest of performers, a resisting performer is likely to discontinue her participation in the event, perhaps even reconsidering involvement in the group as a whole. Regardless of the resistances of any individual member of the group, the event continues on in the context of many potential unexpected events, which will be discussed in the following section on "taking the stage".

Taking the Stage: Engaging in Live Performances

As was established in Chapters 4 and 5, participating in performances is typically considered the purpose of studio-based activity. Thus, a discussion on amateur dance would be incomplete without dedicating a section to the act of performing. Interestingly, although performances are considered the most important events of the year for the performers and the studios alike, the actual time spent performing is strikingly minimal compared to the amount of time and effort put into preparing for those few minutes on stage. Further, since competitions and particularly recitals are usually the only means of contact that outsiders will have with amateur dance, it is from this limited contact with the activity that outsiders develop definitions of the group, the studio and dance as a whole. From the studio's perspective, live performances are held in high regard as a means of conveying positive images of the studio. These positive images define the relevance of the group within the community by encouraging support for the activity from outsiders and potentially recruiting them to participate in the event in following years. For existing members, their time on the stage provides them with a concrete example of what they have accomplished over the year. Defining time on stage as enjoyable and successful can serve as incentive to pursue the activity of dance in future years. Consequently studios invest in ensuring that the audiences enjoy the show and that participants are also satisfied with the experience, so that the latter will put forth similar kinds of effort as they prepare for future performance events.

Studio personnel oversee preparations and the initial stages of event development. These occur before performers find themselves on stage. The dancers come last in the process, but they take on the role of the most visible members of the dance community.

Whereas earlier in the year they took on a secondary status to the studio personnel and supporting casts who coordinated the events, the dancers now fulfill the central role in the collective event. Further, these dancers become ambassadors for the studio: they symbolize the backstage efforts that occurred up to that point and the work of the studio itself. To understand the performance experience it is important to first establish the shape that these dance events take, by exploring the competition and recital programs as these programs dictate how performers take the stage. Again, there are notable differences in performance program schedules between competitions and recitals.

When it comes to competitions, the categorical divisions stipulated by the competitive organizers during the earlier preparation process determine when participants take the stage. The studios generally have no say in what order their dancers are required to perform. Typically, groups or “pools” are divided according to ages, genres of dance and size of groups and the competition organizers then decide when each pool will compete:

They’re divided according to lines, which is fifteen kids or more, a large group, which is twelve to fourteen kids, a small group, which is four to nine kids and either a trio, which is three, a duet, which is two, or a solo, which is one. Normally, duets and trios are in the same category. They’re also divided according to age. Some competitions do two-year age groups, like thirteen to fourteen years, and some just have thirteen-year-olds and just fourteen-year-olds. As well, jazz is all separate, lyrical is all separate, ballet is all separate. It’s very particular. It’s either you’re this age, this style of dance, this many kids, ta-da. And then later on they’ll have awards according to your own individual group. – Instructor

Recitals also follow a performance program that is created during the coordination and organization phase of the performance season, however the placement of numbers in these events is somewhat less rigid than in the case of competitions. While studio owners are not permitted any input in the case of competitions, it is they who

determine the shape the recital will take. Owners can arrange performance numbers according to a variety of criteria and dancers go on stage accordingly:

I know certain numbers would compliment one another, but they would also not want a lot of really fast numbers, then slow numbers for like, an hour. It would just get boring either way, so they like to make it kind of balanced. I know they sometimes would like to get the littlest kids out of the way first, in case they got overwhelmed or tired. Plus if you get them all dressed up and then have them sit around for hours in costume before they are going on stage, they're going to wreck their hair or makeup or mess up their costumes somehow. It's best to just get them on and off and then they should stick around for the finale, but if they fall asleep or whatever no one is going to notice just one missing, whereas they would in their group number. – Former dancer

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the case of both recitals and competitions, performers are required to be in costume and ready to perform several hours before they take the stage. This is to ensure that all performers are accounted for, limiting the potential for last minute disorganization and confusion. While these programs are made available and performers are made aware of what time they are required on stage, it is not unheard of for performers to be missing just minutes before they are required on stage:

It's happened where they didn't calculate the time. As a studio owner, you can go to the competition organizer and be like, "Can you hold off? Can we delay the routine a bit, we're trying to find where this person is." A lot of people forget costumes, shoes. We try and do that last-minute scrounge up and if we can't do it, they just don't dance. It happens. I've seen it happen where a studio owner will tell a competition organizer, and as they're announcing the group they'll just be like, "One child is missing from this routine." Right away the judges know. You can see the holes, especially when you're trained in dance. – Instructor

Dealing with missing dancers is not uncommon in the performance arena. While some unexpectedly refuse to go on stage minutes before show time, there is also a possibility that others are not able to attend due to pressing issues in other areas of their lives:

My great aunt passed away in grade ten. Our show runs for three nights, and her funeral was on one of the show nights and I had to choose whether to go to her funeral or whether to be in the show. I remember I went and talked to my teacher. I was deathly afraid that they were just going to be like, so angry, because if someone's not there on show night, because the position you're in on stage, all the other dancers know where they are supposed to be because of where you are. At one point we had a big circle formation, and if I wasn't there, there would be like, this big hole there, so I was worried. I talked to my ballet teacher, who was kind of the go-to person for all show problems like that, like if you have to miss a show. I think I was in one, maybe two pieces that year, in a three-hour show, so not very much. So I talked to her about it and

she was surprisingly nice about it. Obviously I was afraid because she was my teacher, but she is a human so she understands. I said I don't know if I should go to the funeral, because it was five hours from the city, so it would have to be a full-day thing... So she said, "You know, I think that you'll regret it in the future if you don't go." So she kind of did encourage me to go, which is good and I'm glad she did. It would have been more serious of a problem if I had been in a lot more pieces and I may have had some like, semi-main roles and stuff like that. So I chose the funeral over the dance performance. If anything else, like, not as serious would have come up, dance would come before because it's just the expectation... if you're going to do the shows, you have to be where they say, unless something happens, like a death in the family. –
Former dancer

This latter circumstance is preferred as it is generally easier to re-work routines when it is known in advance that a certain dancer will be missing. However, because of the variety of roles and responsibilities each performer has outside of the dance group, these absences cannot always be predicted or planned for and instead may become an issue just minutes before show time. Furthermore, other commitments, relationships and conflicts within the group itself can also become problematic, complicating the process of taking the stage.

Regardless of how these last minute details are handled, maintaining composure is again considered an important aspect of managing these ambiguities. Handling this confusion quickly is necessary in avoiding any further disruption to already nervous performers. Further, it preserves the quality of the routine to ensure that the audience is not aware of these backstage problems. If a missing dancer can be predicted ahead of time, as in the case of illness, injury or personal circumstance, instructors use the dress rehearsals to account for the disruption. Also, if feasible, instructors may assign understudies to the more predominant performance roles ahead of time, although they may not be needed, just in case a last-minute issue arises and the main performer cannot go on stage:

The main roles do have understudies. We have three nights, and there is a Cast A and a Cast B and then Cast A performs the first and last nights and Cast B performs the middle night. And so then there's backup

both ways if the understudy or if the main person injures themselves. A lot of the time the rest of the choreography can be rearranged some way, or it wouldn't matter if you were missing. – Dancer

Making adjustments for the performance at hand takes priority over other issues, but once the show is complete studio personnel consider how to handle the deviant performer. In some instances, such as when a dancer does not attend a particularly important competition or recital, the absence may result in dismissal from the group. Much like in the case of Wolf's (1991) bikers missing the two major yearly club runs, missing a significant dance event can be defined as a sign of lacking commitment to the group and activity and implies that the individuals in question cannot be trusted or depended upon to promote the best interest group. However, while handling these kinds of issues can be frustrating to those committed to the project, for the most part this kind of ambiguity and uncertainty is considered a normal and manageable aspect of dance ventures:

I do remember instances of like, people actually not participating in the year-end show, which would actually be a huge deal. That would be a big deal for the teachers. Aubrey didn't one year because she had a skating injury on her ankle and she was healed but the doctor didn't recommend her doing all that extra practice and all those extra things around show time. I remember it being kind of like taboo, and I remember the teachers being really pissed about it. They never said it outright to us students, but somehow, you just knew. They weren't happy, but there wasn't really anything they could do because it was true that she shouldn't injure herself any further. – Dancer

Sometimes people don't show up and then you're like, "Oh, where'd they go?" A lot of times students are pretty fast at reorganizing themselves. If we know ahead of time that someone like, two weeks before someone fell terribly ill, we'll revamp the dance a bit to make it so the extra spot is filled and just kind of revamp the choreography a bit. If it's like, a last minute thing, usually students are pretty good with dancing with that space open, and just leaving it open as if somebody was there, or some of the senior students will go through it themselves and make sure their bases are covered themselves... They're pretty intellectual like that. They just figure it out, like, "Oh, instead of doing that we'll do this instead," because sometimes you have to revamp the counts too and make sure everyone is on the right count. They're pretty smart that way too. They'll just do it themselves. – Instructor

There's this one where we dance on a bench. We hop up on a bench and do that. My cousin and I did it once. Ashley was going out with a guy, they were supposed to do the dance together... you're partners and you have to hold each other and flip each other around. Last minute, she didn't want to do it. So I was going to go and do it with her boyfriend, because he was the one practicing. She didn't want anybody to dance with her boyfriend. Blah, blah, blah. So we scrapped them all out and my cousin and I did it last

minute together. If one person can't do it, especially on dances that rely on somebody else, you can't not do it. It was good that I was the instructor and I knew all the dances. I had to know them all. Because if she didn't do it, we would have had to scrap it all out and then that would have changed the whole thing. – Former instructor

When it comes to performing, there is typically a “show must go on” mentality among the group, regardless of these and other issues that may arise just before show time.

Dancers congregate backstage in the minutes before their performance. In his discussion on stand-up comedians, Stebbins (1990: 89) refers to these final moments before taking the stage as a period of “psyching up”. Dancers use this time to get motivated about performing, manage instances of stage fright, and receive last minute directions from their instructors. They then take the stage to participate in their designated show numbers. While the performers are on stage in front of an audience, it is not uncommon for their instructors to be within eyesight of the dancers, often acting out the routines themselves, so that young dancers have a reference point, should they forget steps or get lost in the routine:

I'm usually backstage..a lot of the times the students take a little bit more comfort knowing that I'm backstage, and then I take comfort too, because if they freeze I can do the steps in the wings for them and they can look over and see. – Instructor

I'm dancing on side with them. If they're older and they kind of tell me, “We don't need you,” I'm like, “Okay,” but really in my head I'm like, “Yes you do!” Unless they do a little mess up, they're fine, they just don't want the teacher on the side, they want to do it on their own, so I let them do it. – Instructor

When we would be on stage, the instructors usually hung out in the wings. Within vision of the dancers on stage. Especially for the little ones. Sometimes you'd see them doing the dance moves too, in case anyone got lost. Not only that but other things like performance mannerisms. Like, she would be there with a giant smile on her face, pointing to her cheeks, reminding us to smile. Smiling was a big thing for those people, I don't know what it is. To me it looked really unnatural for us to be grinning with all teeth for the entire performance, but whatever, they thought it was important. But all the same, it was kind of nice to see them back there, it made it almost feel like a regular practice and like we weren't just being thrown to the wolves. – Former dancer

Instructors spend the majority of the dance year preparing dancers for the stage and may even take part in the performing process by keeping close backstage. However,

when it comes to taking the stage the performers are essentially on their own. Instructors use their past dance experiences to establish understandings of the tasks at hand, but how performers will interact with the audience and handle the demands of the setting are up to them. Part of this process involves handling unexpected incidents that may occur, testing the dancers' abilities to think quickly and clearly without the assistance of their superiors. These unexpected events can involve such things as forgetting dance steps, tripping and falling or even severe on-stage injuries:

I fell and hit my face. I was shaken up, and just stood there and continued. The first thing I did was check if my teeth were still there and when I got off stage I wanted to die. I had a fat lip and a bruised chin. I have it on tape. I watch it and die when I see it. – Dancer

I had a girl fall down and break her foot. It's the only injury I've ever had and it was horrible. I don't know what she did, but she went down and then she was like, "Oh, my foot hurts" but was kind of walking. Right away in my head I was thinking she was just embarrassed because she went down, so I told her to go sit down, so she went and sat beside me and they kept dancing. Later on her foot swelled up and her parents said they were taking her to the clinic, and the week after she came and had a cast on. It was the only injury I had, and of course it happened at a dance show in front of everyone. – Instructor

While injuries and missing dancers are considered the more detrimental setbacks of engaging in a performance event, technical glitches and costume malfunctions are also common. The stringent dress rehearsal schedule before recitals is often put in place to avoid these minor glitches, but even the most successful dress rehearsals do not necessarily guarantee a smooth-running live performance. Instead, dancers often find themselves having to improvise their pre-determined routines:

One performance, we had these outfits. Purple leotard and a long purple skirt, and it was actually one of my favourite pieces that we did. So beautiful. And just to a really gorgeous piece of music. We had our hair down and would fling our hair all over and stuff. And when we were performing, two of the girls' skirts fell off on the stage, so they were just there in these purple leotards and bare legs and it was really obvious because the skirts were really long and the rest of us had them on. It was so weird, because one girl's skirt fell off and you're not supposed to touch your costumes or anything when you're on stage, so if it falls off you're just supposed to leave it there. And then, like, five seconds later another girl's skirt fell off. It was just such a coincidence. We were terrified that our teacher was going to be so mad afterwards, but she actually came into the change room and she was like, "You guys handled that so well, that was the most amazing performance ever, I think you're adrenaline just started running and it was the best performance you guys ever did." – Former dancer

A general rule of thumb for handling unexpected and unrehearsed events that occur while on stage is to ignore what has transpired and/or behave as if it is somehow a part of the performance. This draws parallels to MacLeod's (1993: 76) study of club date musicians and the concept of "faking", which he notes are instances in which band members avoid disappointing audiences by playing requests even if they are not entirely familiar with them, improvising while on stage in an attempt to appear competent. Dancers similarly may need to "fake" choreography in instances where they forget dance steps or somehow become distracted on stage. Faking is not always successful, and the notion of improvising may be lost on some who are already overwhelmed by the prospect of being on stage to begin with:

I have majorly fallen flat on my face in a performance of Madame Butterfly where I was Madame Butterfly. You just keep going. Just keep doing something, and pretend it's not happening. Or, if you're in the right environment, work what is happening into the performance somehow to be humorous or creative. – Dancer

Just continue dancing. Don't look back, don't fidget, don't even act like anything happened. That's what we are taught and it makes for a better performance when the dancer just goes on like nothing happened. You know that they are really in the zone and the performance when that happens. – Former dancer

The odd time someone falls. My sister did once and she just stood and gave a goofy thumbs up and kept dancing. I was laughing so hard that I almost couldn't dance and it was a huge professional performance, the biggest we've done. – Former dancer

Once a partner of mine fell off the stage during our duet. But he just got back up and we continued. He was pretty embarrassed but it was no big deal. I was younger, and made a major no-no by having a visible reaction to his falling. Like, I put my hand to my mouth or something. You're supposed to act like nothing happened, which is kind of silly anyways. – Dancer

The panic with which some of these instances are met varies according to the type of performance. When the audience is made up of family, friends and community acquaintances, as in the case of recitals, mistakes and misfortunes are more easily dismissed as irrelevant. Competitions are defined as more serious performances, and so even minor mistakes and glitches can cost studios highly prestigious awards and

placements. As a result, recital participation has a greater emphasis on notions of having fun and experiencing dance in the context of a welcoming environment that is familiar to those on stage, whereas competitions involve both formal evaluation and the judgment of competing studios that may be watching the routines from the sidelines. Thus, participants in competitions were often met with increased anxiety over these potential unexpected events:

It's a lot easier when you recognize faces in the audience and they are just there and happy to see you. Your mom and your grandma and Janie's mom over there too. They clap and smile and are happy even if you just stand there looking cute in your costume. They know it's just for fun; there is no expectation of greatness there. I would imagine if you were doing it professionally, or if you were competing it would be completely different because the entire point of a performance like that is to be judged. There would just be a lot more pressure to avoid even the smallest of screw-ups. – Former dancer

Taking the stage is considered the focal point of all dance involvements; it is considered the highlight or “purpose” of being involved with the group: dance is learned with the expectation that it will be performed. The various subgroups involved with each studio spend months preparing for the relatively short performance period, but regardless of the extensive amount of preparation, some level of ambiguity is expected when accomplishing performances. Missing dancers, injuries and costume- and prop-related dysfunctions, although not necessarily the norm, are considered “normal” aspects of dance events. Consequently, experienced dancers become accustomed to handling these incidents while remaining composed and focused on the task at hand: dancing. This is particularly important at competitive events, as even the most minor mistakes can cost the group their awards. Once a show number is completed, the dancers exit the stage and prepare for their next number, or in the case of competitions, they prepare to be judged on their efforts.

Competing: Experiencing Adjudication & Award Ceremonies

For competitive dancers, their participation in the event does not end with the conclusion of their performance. They must await judgment in the form of *Adjudication Ceremonies*, which can occur approximately every two hours during the competition and incorporate many performance categories at once, in an effort to save time (field notes). Authority to determine the winners of competitions is given to designated judges, who are chosen by the competition organizers and who typically have extensive backgrounds in dance:

Normally there are three or four judges. The competitions choose them. They are very trained dancers, have tons of experience. Reading their bios is absolutely ridiculous, some of the things that they have done. They choose the best of the best. – Instructor

These judges determine the winners of the various categories according to the rules of the competition. Rules are stipulated in the programs given to studios during the preparation period of the dance year. For some categories, there are pre-established criteria regarding what steps and movements must be present and which techniques will result in penalties, while at other events judges focus on more generic standards like technical skill, unison and flexibility:

They have someone called an Adjudicator, and they basically sit there with a tape recorder, each individual, and watch the performance and talk into the tape recorder and tell them, “Oh, that was a good extension” or “They tripped up on their turn there” and they basically get graded on the same terms as exams, like flexibility, performance. Performance is really high, obviously, and they all get rated and get like, sometimes it’s gold, silver, depending on the competition, like four stars, five stars. – Instructor

Interestingly, waiting for adjudication ceremonies involves the same, or even higher, levels of nervousness among performers as when they are waiting to perform. There can be several hours between a performance and the awards ceremony, as judges are usually not permitted to make comments immediately following the performance. Performers are

left to reflect on how they think they performed, and more importantly, how they think the judges perceived that performance:

While waiting for Adjudication to begin, one mother expresses her nervousness and the difficulty with which defeats are handled, particularly for younger dancers because of the “subjective criteria” by which decisions are based. She speculates that nervousness stems from the ambiguity with which awards are given out, and the inability for dancers to know how judges viewed their routines. Her daughter is also involved in track and running. She mentions that while dance is competitive like other sports, wins and losses are more clearly defined on the track or field, by goals or speed at which a finish line was crossed, while winners in dance are defined by what particular judges deem as appropriate or worthy (field notes).

There are normally several awards that each group can potentially win when participating in a competition, but this depends on the particular event and how categories are divided and judged. In addition to more focused competition, extra categories may be created so that more awards can be given out. This could be to promote the image of dance as a rewarding and inclusive activity for children:

Every few hours they have awards and they do like, overalls for some groups. And then they do gold/silver and stuff like that. If there's been a lot of solos then they do solo awards and stuff like that. And there's a Judge's Choice Award. They'll give out ribbons for like, “Best Style” or costume awards. - Dancer

Normally, you're only competing against a few people, not overly large groups. I've seen some competitions where, say, there's nine ten-year-old jazz soloists, they'll cut them in half and they'll do one pool and one pool so there's more winners. Normally a lot of places will do second and third and if there's only five people in the category you have a better chance of winning. And they'll have overalls, which are normally divided Senior, which would be like, fifteen and over, then Junior, which is like twelve to fifteen and Mini is twelve and under, something like that. It'll just be something like that, like the best mark of all the groups, so anything that had four to nine people in it, regardless of whether it's tap, jazz or ballet and it's with say, eight- to twelve-year-olds, then they get a separate award. It's pretty complex. – Instructor

Awarding is generally complex and the lack of standardization can lead to confusion. The types of awards that are given, and who qualifies for them, can change from competition-to-competition and year-to-year as organizers develop their programs and reform categories according to demand and efficiency. Further, these changes can even be made last minute as categories are collapsed or removed from the program altogether due to low enrolments and no-shows. While certain groups may be turned away if there is no one else in their category for them to compete against, the organizers

may also choose to adapt other categories to fit the strays or allow them to compete alone, judging them on a points system similar to dance exams rather than in relation to other dancers (field notes).

While taking the stage occupies far less time than the preparations leading up to that point, it is the focus of dance involvements and the predominant aspect of the events at hand. This is the major point of contact between those within the dance community and outsiders participating in the event as the audience. Months of effort are concentrated into mere minutes of show time, as performers take the stage to showcase what they have accomplished. While dancing is undeniably the focal point of this part of the event, these performers are also involved in conveying positive images of dance as an activity and the studio as a group, by appearing professional and composed in the face of potentially changing circumstances. The audiences, in turn, assess the quality of these final products and subsequently develop definitions of what the activity is and how the particular group at hand measures up to their expectations. These audiences are not privy to the organizational processes and backstage effort that brings these performers to the stage, and so what occurs on stage becomes the sole criterion defining the situation.

While the audience is establishing awareness of what dancing is and how the performers in front of them fit into that understanding, the performers attempt to influence their perceptions. These performers attempt to convey images of worthiness and effortless on stage, both in terms of their technical abilities and the impressions they are giving off via body language and other nonverbal cues. This involves maintaining composure in the context of emotional events such as instances of stage fright, handling ambiguities through quick reflection and adapting plans of action so as

not to distract the audience. Performers are taught to be unresponsive to any unforeseen incidents while on stage in an effort to avoid distracting the audience. For instance, acknowledging costume dysfunctions or mistakes among dancers distracts them from the dancing and can jeopardize their control of the group and its performance.

These tactics are not always foolproof; when it comes to particularly young performers, maintaining composure in the face of unexpected incidents on stage is unlikely. However, the audience also comes to the interaction with notions of appropriateness and preliminary understandings of live events. When it comes to younger children, they may be more accepting of this lack of composure if they consider the task of performing live to be difficult for an age group. Similarly, mistakes may be dismissed as irrelevant by the audience if other aspects of the routine are particularly good or if they occur at less formal events such as community recitals.

Taking the stage involves an intricate process of interaction between the performers and their audiences as they work to establish meanings and negotiate understandings in the context of the activity. While the performers are typically more ‘in-the-know’ than their audience during recitals, they do not have complete control over how the audience perceives them. Thus, they may invoke impression management tactics such as ignoring unexpected mishaps and mistakes in an effort to maintain composure and not distract the audience. As discussed earlier, choreographers also put together routines with this audience in mind. They will select costumes and dance moves as means of appearing professional and capable. The group’s dancing and performing abilities are undeniably the focal point of these performances, and therefore, these

impression management tactics are crucial to convincing the audience that an excellent performance has just taken place.

Concluding Performances and Looking Ahead to Future Events

Much like there are natural histories to people's involvements with groups and activities, there are natural histories to participating in collective events. Maintaining the awareness that there is an emergent quality to human group life, collective events are similarly processual and some attention should be given to not only how they are created and how people get involved in them, but also the ways that they conclude. Envisioning performances as having natural histories implies that one of the subprocesses of engaging in collective events is participating in their conclusions. For Prus (1997: 136) this aspect of collective events involves the tasks of communicating ends, facing obstacles hindering continuity, experiencing apathy and disinterest with the task at hand and encountering resistance among participants. Interestingly, these subprocesses indicate the possibilities that struggles or unanticipated occurrences can spur on the conclusion of events, whereas participation in competitions and recitals is viewed as naturally and appropriately coming to an end each summer. However, the final subprocesses identified by Prus (1997), *resurrecting collective events*, as well as notions of *reviewing*, *reliving*, *redefining* and *readjusting to collective events* become especially important.

The conclusion of the performance season marks the start of summer vacation. This is a time when studios prepare for the next dance year. This has interesting implications for discussions on concluding performance events, as they clearly mark the end of the event at hand, but are also highly connected to future involvements. Thus, discussing the process of concluding collective events is so closely connected to the

initial stages of future events that it may not be accurate to refer to it as a conclusion at all, but rather an ongoing aspect of developing and coordinating performance events.

The performance season represents the most exciting time in a dance year for all those involved since it provides participants with concrete results from the work they put into their performances throughout the year. For competitive participants, this can come in the form of winning awards and receiving external recognition of their efforts. At the end of the competitions, these participants can take awards and trophies with them, which can be proudly displayed within the studio as a symbol of their accomplishments. While these rewards serve as tangible evidence of external recognition, year-end recitals are also intrinsically rewarding, as they involve bringing the entire studio together and working toward a single goal. Wolf (1991: 225) discusses a similar phenomenon within biker gangs, as participating in club run weekends gives membership in the club meaning and “validity”, as they come together and bond over the experience. Consequently, he notes that experiencing this kind of cooperation and coordinated activity “has the greatest psychological impact on its members”:

Awards would be cool. I always wanted something to hang in my bedroom or take for show-and-tell at school. But there is something really cool about the year-end show. Most of us didn't really care about dance throughout the year. It was just something we did on weekends. But when it was time for the show, when we were there late at night rehearsing and trying to get everything right, I really felt like I was a part of something. I know that sounds kind of weird or cheesy or whatever, but seriously. It just kind of all came together and all that complaining and exhaustion and whatever else we did during the year seemed kind of worth it. We were all in it together. It was like I was a part of something. I hated dancing and that my mom made me do it, but on the day of the show, none of that mattered. I was a part of something and I accomplished something and we accomplished something together. It was just a cool sensation when the curtain would be falling after the finale, and all the older cool kids would be jumping around and cheering and laughing and the audience would give a standing ovation and all our parents would look really proud. I remember catching a few people in the audience crying now and again. And then after we would go and have a huge party at a hall with tons of food and a band where we could just let loose and celebrate what we had accomplished. It just gave it a purpose, you know. A purpose for us, that our hard work paid off, and a purpose to our parents who were carting us around and paying hundreds of dollars and whatever else. It was just kind of cool, I can't explain it. – Former dancer

Although the main events may have concluded, and the performers spend a few months away from the studio before potentially re-involving for another year^[8], the conclusion of the performance season also marks the beginning of the following dance year. Studio owners and other personnel typically use this time to assess last year's events and determine the successes and failures of their performances. Instructors may take extensive notes or purchase recordings of performances, particularly at competitions, and use these to develop strategies for avoiding mistakes in future events. Owners are similarly involved in evaluating the year-end recital. Depending on the demand for performance theatres and locations, they may even be required to pay deposits and begin developing the next year's recital while the current one is concluding. Some studios also use the post-recital time to set up pre-registration programs for those interested in signing up for the following year:

As soon as we're done the recital, it's starting again. We have to get our flyers out again. Get our registration started. We have a pre-registration right after the recital for people that want to sign up again. We start thinking about themes, have meetings with the teachers. – Studio owner

Within the community, it is understood that studio-based recitals typically mark the end of the dance year, with dancers spending a few months away from the studio concentrating on other extracurricular commitments before potentially returning to the activity of dance the following year. However, while the dance year has ended, it also

8. While this thesis focuses on competitions and recitals as incidents of collective venture rather than the concept of career contingency (Prus, 1997) with regard to involvement in groups, it is important to note the significance of processes of disinvolvement and reinvolvement in dance. While a more thorough conceptual analysis of this topic is better suited for future research in the area of dance, the conclusion of a performance season and subsequent dance year may mark an opportunity to exit from the community for some individuals who deem their involvement to be inconvenient or troublesome, or who may find themselves lacking opportunity to continue participation because of their increasing age or other demands in their lives.

marks the beginning of future dance ventures, with instructors making preliminary decisions regarding the following year's performance season. As they prepare for coming dance years they assess the successes and failures of the concluding dance year, in an attempt to avoid similar mistakes and secure future successes.

In Summary

While using Prus' (1997) model of participating in collective events was fairly straightforward with regard to becoming involved and coordinating and sustaining collective events, organizing discussions on the performance events themselves poses some difficulty. Rather than focusing strictly on the concepts outlined by Prus (1997), this chapter acknowledges the emergent quality of collective events and instead follows the natural history of competitions and recitals, beginning with dress rehearsals and ending with the event conclusions. In the interest of exploring group life, this allows for a more detailed and thorough analysis of how these events actually occur as opposed to how they relate to pre-established concepts.

Still, this discussion highlights several of Prus' (1997: 135) subprocesses pertaining to *making sense of collective events*, *becoming caught up in collective events*, *assuming more central roles in collective events* and *concluding collective events*. While studio personnel and other members work at developing a sense of purpose for the group based on cooperation and collective goals rather than individualized agendas, this awareness is often noticed only as the major community events occur. Participating in these events gives group members a sense of meaning and purpose, providing concrete

examples of what they have accomplished and the necessity of teamwork and cooperation to maintain success.

Achieving cooperation is not always free of obstacles. Prus (1997: 135) notes that participants of collective events need to deal with multiple themes and definitions of circumstances stemming from the diverse individuals and perspectives involved.

Although studios attempt to manage the competitiveness and animosity among teammates during the preparation period, taking part in performance events may also be met with resistance by some participants. Similarly, *watching things take place over time* (Prus, 1997:135) is an especially significant aspect of participating in competitions and recitals. Regardless of the amount of preparation and planning put into these events, the hours before a performance are often met with ambiguity, confusion, and changes to the agenda and schedules. Relating to the multiple themes and agendas of the various subgroups in dance (owners, personnel, organizers, performers, parents), participants learn to consistently assess and adjust their routines to account for changes to group plans.

Prus' (1997: 135) subprocess of *assuming more central roles in collective events* is similarly relevant to this discussion on participating in recitals and competitions, as responsibilities often shift from studio personnel to performers and parents. While studio owners and other staff members are in charge of getting the group organized during the preparation period, they are often occupied by other tasks on the day of a performance and may even be performers themselves. The parents, who earlier had few responsibilities aside from paying fees and providing transportation, are now required to oversee day-of preparation by caring for costumes and props, as well as ushering

performers into their appropriate dressing areas and subsequently getting them into costumes. Similarly, the dancers take on a more predominant role than they had earlier in the dance year. As these performers take the stage, they become the image of the studio and the sole connection between the audience of studio outsiders and the dance group. The audience is not privy to the workings of the backstage area and the months of preparation that are put into participating in a competition or recital; instead, their understandings of dance are formed through these few moments of interaction while performers are on stage.

Evidence of Prus' (1997: 135) notions of *attending to the enthusiasm of others/encouraging encouragement to participate* as well as *developing affective bonds with enthusiastic participants* are also found in the context of participating in competitions and recitals. Participants in this study continually stressed notions of bonding and developing relationships in the context of the exhaustion and uncertainty characteristic of the days before performance events. Similarly, they noted that participating in dress rehearsals and spending extended hours practicing with the group is often met with excitement and enthusiasm rather than frustration and extreme anxiety. These participants often bond over this excitement, as they come together and watch their accomplishments unfold on stage, further perpetuating both their relationships and their dedication to the group and activity. Similarly, this enthusiasm and encouragement in the context of friendships may serve as a buffer to feelings of nervousness and other negative emotional experiences as participants get ready and take the stage.

Finally, adhering to interactionist notions of human group life as processual, this chapter considers *concluding collective events* (Prus, 1997: 136) as an integral aspect of

participating in competitions and recitals. While more spontaneous collective events may have less clearly defined beginnings and endings and instead have conclusions that are met with some ambiguity, concluding dance performance events is both expected and anticipated. Prus (1997: 136) notes that concluding collective events entails announcing event endings to participants, facing operational limitations, becoming weary or bored with the event, and/or encountering extensive resistance. Because concluding recitals and competitions is anticipated and planned for, these subprocesses are not as relevant to this discussion as they may be in other instances of collective venture.

Instead, Prus' (1997) subprocess of *resurrecting collective events* as well as *reviewing, reliving, redefining and readjusting to collective events* are more pertinent to considerations of amateur dance performances. While there are clearly marked endings to the performance season, typically occurring in June as the groups disperse for summer vacation, these conclusions are more accurately envisioned as the beginnings of future events. Studio personnel in particular use this downtime to begin developing organizational agendas for future performance events, evaluating the successes and failures of those that have just concluded and adjusting their plans for subsequent events accordingly.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

This thesis uses a symbolic interactionist theoretical frame and ethnographic methodology to explore amateur dance. More specifically, it considers the notion of participating in collective events as a central feature of group-based involvements and “entertainment in the making” as a valid theme for sociological inquiry. This is not new, but applying symbolic interactionism to the unique circumstances of amateur dance provides an alternative to previous empirical efforts. This thesis contributes to existing interactionist analysis of the subcultural mosaic, envisioning amateur dance as an example of an entertainment-based subcultural involvement. By comparing and contrasting amateur dance findings with those of other communities, more generic interactionist concepts with regard to activities and participations can be established. More specifically, this thesis assesses the interactionist notion of collective events as central feature of human group life by exploring competitions and recitals and subsequently considering the applicability of using Prus’ (1997:135) model of participating in collective events while studying group life.

Summary of Findings

This thesis considers how varied individuals, with diverse goals, agendas and perspectives come together in pursuit of a common activity. Given the capacity for diversity in any number of community involvements, establishing a coherent and comprehensive discussion of dance as a collectively accomplished activity can be somewhat complicated. Invoking the concept of *collective events* and exploring competitions and recitals as an arena for these collective ventures provides a useful context for addressing group-based attempts at teamwork and cooperation.

Conceptualizing the term “collective event” poses challenges, as both minor and major dance-based events could be considered examples of collective ventures. For the purposes of this thesis, the term “collective event” was reserved for the live performances. More minor instances of coordinated activity, such as classes and practices were considered as they occur in relation to these more dramatic events. The interactionist notion of group life as having a processual quality (Prus, 1996) is particularly relevant as the more mundane events of attending weekly classes are so clearly implicated in engaging in competitions and recitals. These events occur in the context of preparing for the performance season. Thus, adhering to interactionist understandings of human lived experience as having a processual quality, performances have been envisioned as having natural histories unfolding over the course of a dance year.

The dance year begins with selecting competitions and making early decisions regarding recitals. This includes theatre locations and date selections. Participants then become involved with the activity in some way, usually as an extension of their involvement in dance as a whole. Whether they are recruited by existing group members or seek out the activity in accordance with intrigues they may have regarding participation, people get involved in dance with the assumption that they will participate in performance events.

Once enrolments are completed and classes are established, instructors and performers convene in the studio to develop the material that is to be shown at competitions and recitals. While priority is given to creating and perfecting choreographies, the group is also involved in managing conflicts, resistances and other

obstacles. In the spring, the materials prepared in the classroom setting are then performed at competitions and recitals, followed by summer vacation and early preparations in anticipation for the following dance year.

Chapter 4 addressed how people become involved in competitions and recitals as an extension of getting involved with dance. Highlighting interactionist notions of *being recruited*, *pursuing intrigues* and *managing reservations* (Prus & Grills, 2003) as well as *initiating events* (Prus, 1997), this chapter considered the complexity with which people become involved in dance events. In particular, this thesis highlighted the negotiative aspects of both recruitment and seekership, and how these involvement tactics were intricately related. Existing members and potential newcomers were envisioned as active participants in the involvement processes who weighed their options and developed plans regarding involvements. Noting the diversities in involvement experiences, this thesis also showed how initial involvements could involve little forethought and reflection. For some people, getting involved in dance was observed to be a normative aspect of childhood or as a pragmatic way of keeping children occupied. Finally, Chapter 4 addressed the process of initiating an event by considering the ways that studio owners and personnel set up studios, select competitions and make initial decisions regarding recitals.

Chapter 5 discussed findings pertaining to the process of competition and recital preparation. This related directly to Prus' (1997: 135) subprocess of coordinating and sustaining collective events. Studios use this time to secure resources (funding, costumes) and develop the choreographic material that is to be shown on stage, with the majority of time being spent in the studio classroom. Further, it is during this preparatory stage that

group members negotiated strategies of cooperation in competitive contexts, negotiated collective goals in efforts to guide preparations and minimize notions of individualism and competition among teammates. Relating to Goffman's (1959) work, this subprocess of collective event participation encompassed backstage work that occurred among studio members as they prepare to encounter outsiders and negotiate definitions of the studio. It is at this stage of the event that individuals and teams handle conflicts and resistances so as to protect images of competence and authenticity. Achieving this sense of group harmony was done by stressing images of teamwork, mutual dependence and inclusiveness in place of the more individualized goals of stage exposure and stardom. Prus (1997:135) refers to this as "developing (and articulating) a sense of purpose or mission." This teamwork philosophy was invoked throughout preparatory efforts to maintain focus on the dance activity rather than on conflicts or other relational issues, such as ingroup competition regarding stage exposure and disputes among group members.

Chapter 6 addressed the performance of events. It represents a departure from Prus' (1997) model of participating in collective events in that it follows the natural histories of competitions and recitals as opposed to the use of pre-established processual models. Prus' (1997:135) notions of "making sense of collective events," "becoming caught up in collective events" and "assuming more central roles in collective events" were highly applicable to this discussion on competitions and recitals. When it came to participating in these events, I noted instances of *defining changing situations*, *managing increasing commitments*, *watching things take place over time* and subsequently *assessing and adapting agendas* over the course of the performance. Further, *attending to*

the reactions and enthusiasms of others, participating in mutual encouragement and motivational tactics and developing affective bonds (Prus, 1997) were all observed in the amateur dance performances. This part of the thesis considered how participants adapt to changes in schedules and the subsequent sacrifices that may occur, how instances of nervousness and stage fright were handled, the notion of developing relationships during the performance act and the experiences of performers as they take the stage. Returning to the notion of collective events as having an emergent quality, Chapter 6 closed with an analysis of *concluding collective events* and the ways that studios use the downtime following the performance season to prepare for the upcoming dance year.

Erving Goffman (1959)'s conceptualizations of teamwork and impression management have been invaluable for analyzing dance participants as they get ready for performances. Coming together as a unified team is a complex process involving the ability to adapt to multitudes of individualized perspectives, themes and agendas and assign priorities to group-based goals. Goffman (1959) states how necessary it is for the team to establish notions of unity in order to succeed in influencing situational definitions. In dance events, performers were observed to negotiate with audiences and judges to influence their perceptions of the group, attempting to convince these others of their authenticity as dancers and their subsequent worthiness of praise and rewards. This thesis explored various tactics used to engage in this type of negotiation. Such images included the expression of highly stylized and “flashy” routines and costumes as well as the importance of maintaining composure in the face of nervousness.

Notions of coordinated activity and cooperation were observed to be integral aspects of collective events. All members of the team adhered to impression management

efforts. Otherwise they risked being identified as fraudulent or unconvincing. This is where the notions of conformity and submission, synonymous with public images of the dance industry, have relevance (see Dietz, 1994). Conformity and adherence to group goals, as opposed to individualized objectives, is necessary for keeping team members focused. It also helps in perpetuating the goals of their unit while interacting with outsiders. Studio personnel encouraged this kind of unity and commitment to the group in a variety of ways. They encouraged notions of inclusion by drawing attention to the “other”, either competing studios or other group outsiders. By bonding over their mutual participation in dance, participants may be more likely to show allegiance to their group and adhere to group-based objectives.

Coordinated activities and collective events are integral aspects of understanding group life. If we are to subscribe to the interactionist notion that individualized human experience emerges from group contexts, the ways that these groups forge common ground and engage in cooperation become important points for analysis. All groups may not participate in such overt and direct events as dancers do with their performances, but some level of cooperative interaction must exist in all group affiliations for these interactions to continue. Individuals come together in their groups to pursue certain activities, such as it is in amateur dance, and subsequently work out definitions of their situations according to what activities are being performed and how they are to participate.

Engaging in social activity can occur spontaneously or at random, though it rarely does; it usually involves some level of premeditated planning and organization. In this thesis, this was observed to be even more deliberate than it may be in other groups as

performance coordination and participation included extensive group-based reflection, interaction and organization. Examples of the various subprocesses mentioned in this thesis, such as becoming involved, coordinating and sustaining events and making sense of/becoming caught up in collective events (Prus, 1997) are echoed in other groups with regard to their focal activities. Evidence of coordinated activity is found in Fine's (1987, 2001) research on Little League baseball teams and high school debate teams as they prepare to meet their opponents, and Prus and Frisby's (1990) dealers, hostesses and guests coming together in the home party setting. Similarly, Westlake-Chester discusses the process of coordinating a wedding, the multiple parties involved and the ways they are able to work out agendas so that the event may occur. This is not unlike the various subgroups of dance (owners/personnel, instructors, parents and dancers) coming together in the studio setting to develop common goals relating to teamwork and a successful performance season. Further, MacLeod (1993) provides insight to a group that, like amateur dance, is built upon providing and consuming entertainment in his study on club date musicians.

Wolf's (1991) study on The Rebels outlaw biker gang draws very striking similarities to amateur dance participants when it comes to engaging in collective events, highlighting the generic quality of Prus' (1997) conceptual model and its applicability to various kinds of ethnographic study. In his research, Wolf addresses how individuals get involved with biker gangs and subsequent "club runs" as the focal events of involvement. Further, he considers how participants spend the winter months bonding and partying in the club house setting, preparing for the summer riding season, not unlike members of dance groups convening within the studio in the fall and winter months to prepare for the

spring performance season. Further, he goes on to highlight the extensive administrative component of coordinating and sustaining club runs, such as developing rules and requirements for participants, handling deviants and insider conflict, establishing plans of action and itineraries and securing funding so that everyone can participate. This is comparable to the ways that studio personnel book venues, provide instructions and manage disagreements within the studio before the main event, so as to avoid any distractions when it comes to participation. When it comes to the actual day of the club run, Wolf discusses notions bonding and establishing definitions of validity and authenticity in the biker role, again so closely related to engaging in dance performances and Prus' (1997) model of participating in collective events.

Thus, the process of participating in collective events is a useful analytical tool when researching human group life. It allows points of comparison between such seemingly different groups as amateur dance studios and outlaw biker gangs. These concepts provide a tool for bridging the gap between understandings of diverse activities and involvements, and creating a more common conceptual understanding of human group life on more general terms. Although the various collective events under study may differ in detail, some may be considered positive and some negative, some mainstream and some deviant, some extensively pre-planned and others more spontaneous, they are somehow present in group life. All groups have to find a way to come together around the common activity at hand and engage in some form of coordinated action in order to sustain themselves. Based on these conclusions, I find Prus' (1997:135) model of participating in collective events a useful tool in studying of group life in a more generic way.

Contributions to Scholarship

Symbolic interactionism is premised on the necessity that social scientists study human lived experience before any extensive conceptualization can occur. This thesis has adhered to this notion of studying human group life “in the making”. While I did invoke Prus' (1997) model of participating in collective events as the center of conceptual development for this thesis, the data itself was grounded in the lived experiences of those involved in the amateur dance community. Using the model as a general guideline, I explored how its various themes and subthemes apply to amateur dance and in turn evaluated its validity for use in the field. Further, this study contributes to Prus' (1997) model by providing group-based examples of its more general concepts and in turn provides comparison points for future research on group life and other collective events.

While Prus' (1997) model of collective events provides the predominant analytical structure for this thesis, this study also confirms the validity of interactionist conceptualizations such as the "team" and "teamwork" by considering notions of cooperation among the various individuals and their roles within the dance studio. While cooperation is an integral aspect of the team, this thesis also addresses notions of animosity and competition within groups, and subsequent group-based methods for encouraging cooperation. Considering cooperation and animosity as differing parts of a similar interactional process draws attention to the ambiguity of pursuing collective events, as well as the multiperspectival nature of group life.

The notion of the *subculture* is a salient feature within this thesis, as I have considered dance as one of many potential group-based involvements in an individual's life. This thesis provides insight into notions of the subcultural mosaic (Prus, 1997) by

comparing data with findings from other subcultural studies (Wolf, 1991; MacLeod, 1993; etc.). Further, it draws attention to the many roles and identities within groups by exploring the notion of subcultures within subcultures. Similar to the hotel community (Prus & Irini, 1980), party planning (Prus & Frisby), sports teams (Fine, 1987; Scott, 1981) and the taxi-dance hall community (Cressey, 1932), this thesis contributes to interactionist literature by considering the complexity with which subcultural parameters are defined. Rather than focusing on each of the predominant dance-related roles (instructors, dancers, parents) this thesis has centered on dance activities and dance events. This allowed all perspectives to be addressed and thus a more thorough understanding of the subculture.

Although not the predominant focus of study, this thesis also considered the interactionist concepts of career contingencies and generic social processes. While I was not able to provide a detailed analysis of these concepts, I highlighted instances of getting involved, developing relationships, experiencing emotionality, doing activity and acquiring perspectives in the context of amateur dance. In turn, this thesis can be used for comparison purposes in conjunction with data from other groups with regard to these features of human group life.

Adhering to Blumer's (1969) understanding of symbolic interactionism, a salient feature of this thesis has been its analysis of meaning and, more specifically, the ways in which various members of dance studios develop awareness of the activities and their roles within them. As such, the notion of human group life as reflective is a common theme throughout the chapters of this thesis, as I have provided numerous examples of individuals actively contemplating plans of action and adapting these plans over time as

they work toward the performance season.

Because interactionist theory is based within the world of human lived experience, as opposed to attempts at more objective and abstract ideas, providing examples and instances assists in the advancement of interactionist theory. Thus, interactionist concepts become more detailed and valid as more studies on group life are conducted. This thesis provides fresh comparisons and transcontextual venues through which further conceptual articulations can occur.

Finally, this thesis contributes to existing sociological research on dance. While Dietz (1994) and Nelson (2001) provide intriguing interactionist perspectives on dance involvements, the majority of sociological research conducted on the theme of dance has focused on such topics as gender (Gard, 2008; Wellard, Pickard & Bailey, 2007), race and ethnicity (Atencio & Wright, 2009; Hancock, 2007 & 2008), and sociology of the body/eating disorders (Wainwright, Williams & Turner, 2006; Gvion, 2008). There is very little research on dance competitions and recitals as examples of collective venture and cooperative activity, and so this thesis contributes to the sociology of dance by providing insight to the inner-workings of the studio and the dance life, from the perspectives of varied group members as they prepare for these events.

Methodological Contributions

Symbolic interactionist theory and ethnography are closely intertwined. Using this type of methodology was the most logical option in attempting to achieve Blumer's (1969) *intimate familiarity*. I engaged in observation and open-ended interviews. Both were extremely useful components of data collection. Participant observation is a flexible

notion when conducting field research. Technically, I was not a full participant in the field in that I was not a participating member of any of the dance studios. However, I was present at their gatherings and events and, for ethical reasons, other participants were aware of my research activities. Consequently, there was no possibility for unobtrusive observation. Remaining an outsider, it was difficult to identify how this status may have implicated that data collection process. It is possible that research participants engaged in impression management according to their awareness that I was not “one of them”, and therefore, I may have collected some invalid data that I could have verified had I been a more immersed participant observer. Nevertheless, participant observation was a successful data collection method for several reasons. There was a considerable level of gatekeeping within the dance studio, particularly in the case of studying young children. Some community members, particularly parents, appeared wary of my presence at dance events and were subsequently hesitant to discuss their involvements with me. This may relate to the stigma dance parents often experience associated to negative “stage mom” stereotypes, as well as concerns of exploiting their children. Maintaining a more constant presence within the dance studio and having contacts within the studio was a means of displaying my legitimacy as an acceptable outsider. The more events I attended, the more recognizable I became. This subsequently gave me the opportunity to network and develop contacts for future interviews. Further, I was able to develop my research themes in more detailed ways as I watched events unfold that I had not previously considered as an outsider.

While engaging in participant observation I was able to ask dance studio members about their activities while they were engaging them. This, however, was not always ideal

as dance group members are typically busy engaging in preparatory processes at both rehearsals and performance events and so observational notes were supplemented by the data from open-ended interviews. Generally speaking, participants were very open about their involvements during these interviews and I experienced very few obstacles during this portion of data collection. Some interview subjects appeared to struggle with the open-ended concept and seemed to expect more of a closed-ended series of questions. I found it useful to refer to the interaction not as an interview, but as a discussion. As a result, I was able to garner the more in depth accounts for this thesis that I would have liked.

In terms of recruiting participants and collecting data, this thesis employed two relatively new technology-based methods. Firstly, I made a post on my personal *Facebook* account announcing my research objectives and encouraging anyone with experience to message me privately for more information. Seven of my interview participants were recruited through this *Facebook* technique, and I found it to be a useful tool in effectively communicating with these participants prior to the interviews. While some of these participants were my friends, they were also able to forward the *Facebook* posting to their acquaintances who they thought might be interested in participating, contributing to a snowball sample. Because of the wide popularity of these social networking websites and the large populations with personal accounts, I found *Facebook* an effective tool for communicating information about the content of this ethnographic project and research objectives as well as securing participants and communicating prior to interviews. While this social network is relatively new, I argue that it can be advantageous to ethnographers embarking on future research.

I conducted sixteen open-ended interviews in person while four others were with participants who lived outside of the region, and so they were accomplished using MSN, an online messenger service. Like the use of social networking sites, this type of technology is a relatively new development in ethnographic data collection. It has both advantages and disadvantages. Without MSN, I would not have had the opportunity to converse with these four participants, as each participant lives several hours away. These interviews resulted in thoughtful insights that I feel my thesis would be lacking without. However, because MSN is a text-based messenger tool, as opposed to Skype, iChat and other webcam-based online communication tools, I do feel that these interviews lacked a more personal element from the missing nonverbal component. Thus, while I think MSN is useful to ethnographic research I feel it should be used with caution and the researcher should ensure that participants are comfortable with and accustomed to communicating via text only before attempting to use it.

I found the pairing of participant observation and interviews to be a highly useful combination for exploring the notion of collective events participation and other interactionist concepts, such as becoming involved, developing relationships and engaging in teamwork. While my original intention was to focus almost exclusively on open-ended interviews, deciding to sit in on community events like rehearsals and performances provided a more in depth understanding of the dance world than I would have been able to achieve had I used interviews alone.

Limitations of this Research and Recommendations for Future Scholarship

Because of time and resource constraints, this thesis focused almost exclusively on the generic process of participating in collective events in the context of amateur dance. However, there are a multitude of themes and processes at work within this community, including acquiring perspectives, achieving identities and forming and coordinating associations (Prus, 1996). Further, while issues of developing relationships and experiencing emotionality were addressed in this thesis, they were considered only as they relate to preparing for and participating in performances. To develop a more complete understanding amateur dance participation, more detail could be given to these interactionist-based generic social processes and how these compared with instances in other groups.

This thesis has addressed how people become involved in amateur dance competitions and recitals. This is only part of the process of getting involved, however, and more research is required on the relevance of the career contingency model (Prus, 1997) with regard to the varied studio members and their participations. While Mary Lorenz Dietz (1994) discusses how dancers get involved in the activity, it would be similarly interesting to consider how dancers transition into professional and/or teaching roles within the community. Similarly, addressing how participants disinvolve from the dance and the ambiguities and implications this has for their relationships, identities and perspectives would be a useful topic for future research in this area.

While this thesis benefits from the attention paid to collective events and their centrality in human group life, it is similarly limited by it. Considering competitions and recitals as the focal collective events at hand provides an opportunity to discuss the various roles and identities at work within the dance community simultaneously, however

I acknowledge that a more detailed understanding may have been achieved by discussing these roles individually, similar to Prus & Irini's (1980) study of the hotel community. This thesis offers quite general discussions of these various subgroups at the expense of highlighting their uniqueness, their individualized goals and their definitions of involvements. Future research could be centered on these various roles within the community, allowing for a more in depth analysis of not only how they cooperate with one another, but also the various animosities at work within the overarching group that I was only able to touch upon within this thesis.

Similarly, one subgroup is missing in this analysis of amateur dance events: the audience. The omission of their perspective was purposeful, as my intention was to focus on the group itself and how it organizes and mobilizes in the context of performance events. However, the audience members play an integral role as studio outsiders attending these events, and their status as the "other" influences decisions made within the studio regarding these performances. Consequently, Goffman's (1959) conceptualization of front and back regions and notions of secrecy in impression management would similarly be an appropriate avenue for future research on amateur dance, particularly with regard to how studios prepare for performances with the audience in mind, yet in such a way that is hidden from their awareness.

Using Prus' (1997: 135) definition of collective events, and how people participate in them, was useful for identifying common themes in amateur dance experiences. However, I struggled to maintain an interactionist orientation in the field at times, and found it relatively easy to simply identify examples which corresponded with components of the set model rather than critically evaluating it. By this I mean that the

processual model can take on a structural quality: its various processes and subprocesses can become categories that researchers can simply plug data into. Since one of the most basic tenets of interactionism is studying human lived experience as it actually occurs, I have learned the importance of proceeding with caution when using conceptual models. Caution is required so as not to hinder a grounded understanding of group life and to ensure the integrity of the interactionist and ethnographic data. This further encourages conceptual development as opposed to simplistic or presumptuous applicability.

Further, in selecting a Chicago/Blumerian interactionist approach, I am aware of the potential biases resulting from theoretical assumptions associated with this perspective. It would be interesting to consider the dance life using the perspectives of other interactionist schools of thought, particularly the recently developed radical interactionist perspective (Athens, 2009). In terms of future research, I am interested in exploring and acknowledging the role of dominance in popular culture and children's socialization through hobby-based involvements like dance, a concept that traditional Blumerian Chicago-style interactionism is unable to account for.

In preparing this thesis I struggled with the parameters of the study. In studying amateur dance, there were a multitude of potential topics and actors to focus on. In wanting to provide the most amount of information possible I decided to discuss all of the varied roles and perspectives. However I do feel that I could have provide more extensive details if I chose to focus on a certain group of actors as opposed to multiple subgroups. Secondly, I struggled with defining the term "amateur dance" because it encompassed two types of participation: studio-based and school-based. While I focused on studio-based amateur dance it would be interesting to compare these experiences with those that

occur in a school-based setting. I speculate that the lines between student and teacher in school-based settings are more rigidly drawn and the goal of participation is less about performing than it is about receiving strong technical training. Similarly, it would be interesting to consider how these experiences compare to the realm of professional dance where dancers are compensated for their participation in the activity.

The world of amateur dance, as part of dance in general, has tremendous potential for ongoing sociological inquiry. As mentioned above, there are topics which remain untouched within the scope of interactionist theorizing and ethnographic inquiry. While I am pleased with my decision to focus on the activity of dance activity and performance events, as opposed to the various roles that exist within the community, I am especially interested in future research on how studio owners, instructors and other personnel frame their group-based interactions, and their meanings, as business ventures.

APPENDIX A: Facebook (www.facebook.com) Recruitment Sample

The following will be a note posted on my own facebook profile. The option for commenting directly on the note will be blocked and potential participants will be required to either email me, or message me privately, in order to ensure confidentiality.

Hello Everyone,

I am looking for volunteers to participate in research I am conducting on the dance subculture as a part of my Master's thesis. I am looking for anyone who has connections to the dance community. This includes dancers, former dancers, families/close friends of dancers, instructors, volunteers in the community, administrators and anyone else who has experienced involvement of some sort with regard to dance. I am looking at all genres of dance, including ballet, tap, jazz and multicultural dancing and am open to discussing any other types of dance that you may be involved in.

Participation involves an interview with me, at your convenience. The length of this interview will be determined by your availability. We will be discussing the various aspects of your involvement, such as how you got involved, what types of things you do in dance, and interaction in the context of dance among other things, as well as anything else you might be interested in discussing with regard to your experiences.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please contact me, either through private message or by email at msuljak@artsmail.uwaterloo.ca. When I hear from you, I will send you a more detailed information letter about the study.

This study has been reviewed by, and has received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics, University of Waterloo.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks,

Mary

APPENDIX B: Telephone Recruitment Sample

**Note, similar script will occur when approaching potential candidates in person*

P = Potential Participant; I = Interviewer

I - May I please speak to [name of potential participant]?

P - Hello, [name of potential participant] speaking. How may I help you?

I - My name is Mary Suljak and I am a Masters student in the Sociology department at the University of Waterloo. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Robert Prus on involvement in the dance subculture. As part of my thesis research, I would like to speak with several dancers, (their) family members, instructors, etc. I am looking at all types of involvement processes, such as how individuals came to be involved in dance, how they interact within the context of their dance groups, how they develop relations with other members, and how they develop identities as dancers (or other members of the subculture). Is this a convenient time to give you further information about the interviews?

P - No, could you call back later (agree on a more convenient time to call person back).

OR

P - Yes, could you provide me with some more information regarding the interviews you will be conducting?

I - Background Information:

- I will be undertaking interviews starting this summer.
- The interview would last between an hour and two hours (depending on your availability and interest), and would be arranged for a time convenient to your schedule.
- Involvement in this interview is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study.
- The questions are quite general (for example, “how did you first become interested in dance?”).
- You may decline to answer any of the interview questions you do not wish to answer and may terminate the interview at any time.

- With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis.
- All information you provide will be considered confidential.
- The data collected will be kept in a secure location and disposed of upon completion of the study.
- If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please feel free to contact Dr. Robert Prus at 519-888-4567, Ext. 32105.
- I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005.
- After all of the data have been analyzed, you will receive an executive summary of the research results.

With your permission, I would like to mail/e-mail/fax you an information letter which has all of these details along with contact names and numbers on it to help assist you in making a decision about your participation in this study.

P - No thank you.

OR

P - Sure (get contact information from potential participant i.e., mailing address/e-mail address/fax number).

I - Thank you very much for your time. I will be sending you an information letter shortly. May I call you 2 or 3 days after you receive the information letter to see if you are interested in being interviewed? Once again, if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at me at (519) 497-9614 or msuljak@artsmail.uwaterloo.ca.

P - Good-bye.

I - Good-bye.

APPENDIX C: Information Letter (Adult)

University of Waterloo

Dear _____:

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Master's degree in the Department of Sociology at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Robert Prus. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

With this study, I am exploring my interest in the involvement processes that occur as a part of everyday life. More specifically, I am interested in how people become involved and participate in the entertainment sphere, both as contributors and consumers in terms of leisure activity as well as in their careers. Particularly, my interest lies in dance, and with this study I am looking to explore how people come to be involved in dance as dancers, instructors, support systems and technicians (both professionally and as hobbies). Involvement includes how people become involved in dance, how they sustain this involvement, and the various processes that occur along with this participation, such as the formation of relationships, the experience of conflict and other emotional instances, the management of nervousness and the overcoming of reservations, among other topics that may be addressed. This research will contribute to an overall understanding of the ways in which people participate in the various aspects of their everyday lives.

The issues that will be covered in this study are varied. It will address how people come to be involved, what keeps them involved, and how they come to disinvolve from the activity. Further, relational issues, conflict/coming to understandings, time management, identity work and negotiation will be discussed, as well as any other issues the participant might want to address with regard to their involvement in dance.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately sixty minutes in length (dependent on the participant's availability) to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for the duration of the study in a locked file cabinet. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (519) 497-9614 or by email at msuljak@artsmail.uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Robert Prus at (519) 888-4567 ext. 32105 or email prus@uwaterloo.ca.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at (519) 888-4567 Ext. 36005.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Mary Suljak
Student Investigator

APPENDIX D: Consent Form (Adult)

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Mary Suljak of the Department of Sociology at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be tape recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

- YES
- NO

I agree to have my interview tape recorded.

- YES
- NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

- YES
- NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E: Information Letter (Child)

Your parents have allowed me to talk to you about a project that I am working on with a couple of other people. The project is on dancers and the dance community. I am going to spend a few minutes telling you about our project, and then I am going to ask you if you are interested in taking part in the project.

Who are we?

My name is Mary Suljak and I am a graduate student at the University of Waterloo. I work in the Department of Sociology.

Why are we meeting with you?

We want to tell you about a study that involves dancers like yourself. We want to see if you would like to be in this study too.

Why are we doing this study?

We want to learn about what it's like to be a part of the dance community, how you became involved and the types of things you do as a dancer.

What will happen to you if you are in the study?

If you decide to take part in this study you will be interviewed by me. I will ask you some questions about what dance is like. If you don't want to answer a certain question, you don't have to. We can discuss anything you would like to talk about involving dance.

Are there good things and bad things about the study?

Being in this study will not hurt you and it will not make you feel bad. Other than me, no one will know your answers or the things we discuss in the interview. You will help me to understand more about dance and being a dancer, and although no one will know what answers you gave or what we discussed, this project will help others learn about dance too.

Will you have to answer all questions and do everything you are asked to do?

If we ask you questions that you do not want to answer then tell us you do not want to answer those questions.

Who will know that you are in the study?

The things you say and any information we write about you will not have your name with it, so no one will know they are your answers.

The researchers will not let anyone other than themselves see your answers or any other information about you. Your instructors, parents or friends will never see the answers you gave or the information we wrote about you.

Do you have to be in the study?

You do not have to be in the study. No one will get angry or upset with you if you don't want to do this. Just tell us if you don't want to be in the study. And remember, if you decide to be in the study but later you change your mind, then you can tell us you do not want to be in the study anymore.

Do you have any questions?

You can ask questions at any time. You can ask now or you can ask later. You can talk to me or you can talk to someone else at any time during the study. Here are the telephone numbers to reach us.

Mary Suljak, Department of Sociology, (519) 497-9714 **OR** msuljak@artsmail.uwaterloo.ca

IF YOU WANT TO BE IN THE STUDY, SIGN YOUR NAME ON THE LINE BELOW:

Child's name, printed: _____

Date: _____

Signature of the Doctor/Professor/Student: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX F: Consent Form (Child)

Consent Form for Research with Minors

I have read the information letter concerning the research project entitled the Performing Arts: Dance as a Collectively Engaged Process conducted by Mary Suljak of the Department of Sociology at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and receive any additional details I wanted about the study.

I acknowledge that all information gathered on this project will be used for research purposes only and will be considered confidential. I am aware that permission may be withdrawn at any time without penalty by advising the researchers.

I realize that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo, and that I may contact this office if I have any comments or concerns about my son's or daughter's involvement in this study.

Child(ren)'s Name(s): _____

Permission Decision: ____ Yes - I would like my child to participate in this study

____ No - I would not like my child to participate in this study

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Date: _____

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