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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

REFLECTION, CREATION, TRANSFORMATION: FOSTERING A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE IN FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL DANCERS THROUGH A CREATIVE CHOREOGRAPHY CURRICULUM

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Kelly Culver

College of Performing and Visual Arts
School of Theatre Arts and Dance
Dance Education

December 2021

This Thesis by: Kelly Culver

Entitled: *Reflection, Creation, Transformation: Fostering a Positive Body Image in Female High School Dancers through a Creative Choreography Curriculum*

has been approved as meeting the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the College of Performing and Visual Arts in the School of Theatre Arts and Dance, Program of Dance Education

Accepted by the Thesis Committee:

_____

Sandra L. Minton, Ph.D., Chair, Advisor

_____

Christy O'Connell-Black, M.A., Committee Member

Accepted by the Graduate School:

_____

Jeri-Anne Lyons, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School
Associate Vice President for Research

ABSTRACT

Culver, Kelly. *Reflection, Creation, Transformation: Fostering a Positive Body Image in Female High School Dancers through a Creative Choreography Curriculum.* Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2021.

The purpose of this study was to explore whether a choreography curriculum based on body image for high school female dancers would help students increase their positive body image and find a new appreciation for their bodies. This study also focused on the impact that reflection and creation have in this transformative curriculum design, along with instructional strategies that could foster a more positive body image culture in the dance classroom. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to answer the four essential questions of this study.

Q1 How can choreography be used as a transformative process to help female high school dancers increase their positive body image?

Q2 To what extent does reflection and creation help in the transformation of high school female dancers' body image?

Q3 What other instructional practices influence students' body image in the dance classroom?

Q4 What changes occurred in the students' perception of their own body image from the start of the curriculum to its end?

The research instruments included a pre- and post-test survey, weekly journal prompts, and an exit questionnaire. Twenty-two high school female dancers participated in this research, which took place over the course of eight weeks. The researcher guided participants through a choreography curriculum that included meditation, improvisation, journaling, and creation. Throughout the duration of the study, the researcher covered up the mirrors in the dance studio to

encourage the participants to focus on how the movement felt in their bodies instead of how it looked in the mirror.

Using the choreographic method of theme and variation, each participant choreographed their own solo inspired by a body part that made them feel insecure. The researcher spoke in depth about the process of building a more positive relationship with our bodies, and prompted the students to create variations of their theme phrase based on the topics of discovery, appreciation and acceptance, trust, and finally love and kindness.

There were some limitations to this study, including the small sample size of participants and potential researcher bias. The research instruments were designed by the researcher and not tested for validity and reliability, which is another limitation of this study.

Findings suggested that the choreography curriculum used in this study, in conjunction with the instructional practices used, can positively influence an individual's body image and lead to an increase in self-confidence. When careful consideration is used in terms of classroom environment and curriculum design, the dance classroom can be a space that fosters positive body image, promotes appreciation of our bodies, and inspires healthy self-talk amongst student dancers. Further research should be done on this subject to limit biases and determine consistency of the findings across different populations.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Goal of Thesis

Dance critic Walter Terry famously quoted, "No paints nor brushes, marbles nor chisels, pianos or violins are needed to make this art, for we are the stuff that dance is made of. It is born in our body, exists in our body and dies in our body. Dance, then, is the most personal of all the arts…it springs from the very breath of life" (qtd. in Bodensteiner). The human body is the instrument for dance movement, so it is only natural that there is an emphasis on the way it looks in space when learning how to dance. Alignment, posture, shape, and uniformity between dancers are just a few of the elements that dancers learn are important to achieving movement success. However, this emphasis on the body and the way it looks in the mirror can sometimes overtake the mind of a developing, pubescent teenage girl, especially in the age of social media, resulting in negative effects on her body image and on her movement experiences.

Body image is a multidimensional concept defined by the National Eating Disorders Collaboration as "…the perception that a person has of their physical self, but more importantly the thoughts and feelings the person experiences as a result of that perception. It is important to understand that these feelings can be positive, negative or a combination of both and are influenced by individual and environmental factors" ("Fact Sheet - Body Image"). Body image is even further broken down into four aspects: perceptual, affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Perceptual body image is the way you *see* yourself, which is not always a correct representation of what you actually look like. Affective body image is the way you *feel* about the way you look.

This includes feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in relation to your appearance, weight, shape, and body parts. Cognitive body image describes the way you *think* about your body. For example, some people *think* they will feel better if they are thinner or *think* they will look better if they had more muscle. The last aspect of body image that the National Eating Disorders Collaboration described is behavioral body image. It is defined as the things you *do* in relation to the way you look and the behaviors you engage in as a result of your body image ("Fact Sheet - Body Image").

"Body images or schema are mental representations that shape one's physical identity. It governs experience of the body; how people think they look, alignment, tension, breath, and movement patterns" (Minton and Faber 113). The body is a dancer's tool, and while it can be the beautiful device that helps an individual create movement, it can also cause stress to dancers due to "…the lack of separation that exists between the creator and the material of the creation – the body" (Walter and Yanko 3).

A wide variety of research finds a negative correlation between dancers and body image, but there have also been findings that indicate a positive correlation between the two. Some studies imply that dancers are at a greater risk for developing a negative body image or eating disorders than are non-dancers, while other research found that dance sometimes increases a dancer's positive body image and does not have a correlation with such disorders.

The wide range of results and findings suggested that body image in dance education is a topic needing further study and development. The consideration that dance educators, psychologists, therapists, and researchers alike all see a continuous need for research on this topic, implied that these professionals are experiencing concerning signs in their interactions with dancers that prompt them to want to find answers, explanations, correlations, and preventive

tools. In this thesis project the researcher hoped to continue that search for answers by developing a curriculum that could lead to creating a more positive relationship between female high school dancers and their body image.

A range of body and social changes take place during adolescent girls' pre-teen and teenage years that strongly influence their body image. Wertheim and Paxton discussed the developmental challenges of puberty for adolescent girls and explained that these "…changes can also symbolize for some girls the lack of control she has over her body and self. A shift in girls' images of who they are physically and developmentally needs to take place as they mature" (79). Many adolescent girls around the world participate in dance, and for a dancer, this "lack of control" is the complete opposite of what they strive for in the studio. Movements that female dancers were previously able to perform at a younger age may seem more difficult now or may not look the same as they did on their pre-pubescent bodies, due to the developmental changes in the female body during puberty. This thesis project was designed specifically to target that necessary shift in image perspective that adolescent girls need to adopt by allowing them to take back control of their own body and its movements.

A choreography curriculum that allows students to create their own movement based on a personal story or inspiration could provide students with this control. In such a curriculum, students choose their source material, their movement patterns, sequences, and body shapes, along with the timing of their movements, and all other aspects of their choreography that best suits their body and their personal preferences. In contrast, in a technique dance class, "…the learning happens through mimesis and repetition, focusing on achieving the ideal form expected by the master-teacher. This inherent pedagogy within dance education identifies the prevalence of a teaching approach which 'gives power to the teacher to manipulate students' bodies'"

(Petsilas et al. 22). In self-choreographed works, the need to strive for achieving an ideal body shape or form is eliminated and power is returned to the student. Through the process of choreography and personal reflection, students can create a work of art which personally suits their mind, body and spirit.

The goal of this thesis was to explore whether a choreography curriculum focused on reflection and creation could help foster a positive body image in high school female dancers. The essential questions in this study were:

Q1 How can choreography be used as a transformative process to help female high school dancers increase their positive body image?

Q2 To what extent does reflection and creation help in the transformation of high school female dancers' body image?

Q3 What other instructional practices influence students' body image in the dance classroom?

Q4 What changes occurred in the students' perception of their own body image from the start of the curriculum to its end?

By combining insights about the tools used to help foster a positive body image and the benefits of the choreographic process, this project could highlight the extent to which a choreography curriculum can be an effective means of fostering a positive body image in dance students.

Purpose of Study

The researcher intended to develop this curriculum because of the ongoing need for dance education to address the issue of body image in the dance classroom. Wendy Oliver stressed the idea that "…dance educators can and should help their dancers develop and maintain a positive body image" (18). We are living in a progressive time in the dance world where acceptance of different body shapes, sizes, and colors is gaining momentum, but we need to keep

that momentum moving. In the dance industry, many dance educators have personally experienced body prejudice or a negative body image when they were adolescents, which is a reason why the cycle is beginning to shift – dance educators want to do better for their students and want to provide a healthier environment than they received growing up as dancers themselves. Oliver added:

> As dance educators, we need to help students reject the idea of the 'ideal body for dance,' or more generally, the ideal body. We need to model a positive self-image for our students and accept them in whatever shape or size they are in, while still encouraging excellence…. By listening and responding to student concerns, and by being open to changing our pedagogical methods, we can create an environment in which a positive body image is more readily attainable. (25)

While there has been a lot of research focused on body image and self-esteem in dancers, the results vary on whether or not dance has a positive or negative effect on a dancer's body image. Very little of the existing research looks at finding ways to address this problem by developing a curriculum that dance educators can implement in their own classes to help their student dancers develop an improved body image.

Previous research primarily focused on the dance technique class, whereas this study emphasized the choreographic process and the effect that dance making can have on fostering a more positive body image and lessen negative self-talk, specifically in female high school dancers. Based on her research and own experiences, Dorothy Coe believed that "…student dancers become involved with the dance for a specific purpose and will only take from the dance experience what has personal meaning" (Coe 42). When dancers and choreographers have a personal connection to the meaning or message of a dance or the song and movement, they

experience an emotional release that cannot be explained. It is like a catharsis of emotion that is therapy for the body. This study was meant to be personal and meaningful to each individual participant in order to create a unique experience and produce a positive shift in the students' body image perspectives.

This thesis project also involved journal prompts to help guide students in reflecting on their choreographic process and personal journey with their body image. Coe talked about the power of written reflections in the dance classroom:

> …written reflections give evidence of the value of students being engaged both 'inside and outside' the dance experience. This means that students become involved in the dance – dancing, creating, working artistically and exploring personal interpretation. At the conclusion of the dance experience, students will reflect on the dance work in progress…stepping back 'outside' of the experience to judge the effectiveness of their choreographic intention. (44)

In her thesis study exploring how writing prompts aid in the choreographic process, Yvette Bennett explained, "Writing and choreography go hand in hand, as they are both used as a way to express, require a sense of creativity, and use a process in coming together for a final product" (8). Using reflection to aid in the choreographic process allows students to have a personal connection to their choreography and journey with body image, reflect on that connection, and create a meaningful piece of work inspired from that connection.

In addition to helping students during the choreographic process, the journal prompts in this study were also used to help students digest, process, and reflect on their own journey with their body image as the curriculum developed. Professional therapist Amy Harman, who specializes in body image therapy, noted, "The journey to healing your body image requires

introspection" (VIII). By adding reflection into the process, it helps make the dance making process more personal to the students and their own journeys with their bodies. It serves as an emotional outlet of expression from which their choreography can be inspired.

The hope was also that the students' journal prompted reflections would guide the researcher in seeing any areas of growth, need, or concern that required more attention and discussion with the students as a whole or individually. Coe emphasized the need for dance educators not only to include reflection in their pedagogical practices, but also to carefully take time and energy to listen to student reflections. She wrote:

> In summary, I see that as a dance educator, reading *reflections* allows me to 'step outside' of my teaching practice and *perceive* and *contemplate* key issues that relate to my teaching. However, a key point still has to be raised. Student reflections on experiencing dance are only valuable to an effective pedagogy if teachers are prepared to listen to what student voices are trying to say and to re-align their pedagogical vision and action as a result. (44)

Thus, student reflections would guide the researcher in adjusting the curriculum as needed to fit student needs and better understand those needs.

Class lessons and journal prompts should also help the student dancers find source material for their choreographed solo at the conclusion of this project. Rather than just focusing on alignment, posture, and body shapes, the curriculum used in this study was designed to encourage dancers to focus on using their body not as the outcome of an objective but as the source material. If a young dancer can understand and appreciate their body for all the good it can do, they should begin to stop analyzing every imperfection in the mirror and instead perform movement that kinesthetically feels good in their body. They will begin to honor and take care of

their bodies for the athleticism it takes to perform and execute this art. “Dancers rely on a healthy body as an efficient tool as well as an aesthetic instrument. The dancer becomes the dance through the body” (Minton and Faber 115). When dancers begin to make this shift in image perspective, they should be able to have a healthier physical, mental, and emotional connection to their bodies, which will hopefully, in turn, positively affect their relationship to dance movement.

The researcher also limited the use of mirrors in this thesis study so students could focus on the meaning and feeling of the movement they were creating rather than how those movements looked. Too often students are concerned with the way a movement *looks* versus how it *feels*, a perspective which inhibits the choreographic process. “The body is the central location of the dancer’s experience and is reflected in a large mirror covering an entire wall. While moving in the space of a studio, the dancer’s body looks out upon her, so that during dance lessons, each adolescent girl practices, exercises, and dances to the image of her body…” (Walter and Yanko 5). Removing the mirror is another management tool that dance educators should consider and think about in their teaching practices. Amy Harman indicated:

> Imagine a world without mirrors. Only in relatively recent human history have mirrors become a regular, or even necessary, part of our daily routine. With the invention of mirrors came the ability to see ourselves – and in great detail. And now, more than ever, we live in an image-based society in which we are constantly seeing images of ourselves on social media, professional websites, video conferencing, and more. Welcome to a world in which “body image” is everywhere. This world can create problems if we don’t have the right management tools. (Harman 2)

Mirrors and images of ourselves are everywhere we look in all aspects of our lives. Choreography is meant to be a personal and reflective process about creating a meaningful work of art, which portrays a message, not an ideal look. The importance of communicating meaning in a dance illustrates why there is great importance for dance educators to provide their students with an experience in the dance classroom that removes the emphasis on mirrors and instead returns the focus of studying dance and dance making on the kinesthetic experience. The researcher's goal was that by combining this kinesthetic experience with journal reflections and a positive class environment, students could create their own original works that celebrated their bodies and transformed their body image and self-talk in a positive direction.

Significance of Study

Harman stated, "A positive body image means having a positive relationship with your body that is based on respect, appreciation, acceptance, trust, and kindness" (6). When these relationships are fostered in the dance studio through personal choreographic projects, a student could learn to build positive relationships with their mind, body, and spirit through the art of dance. Helping high school female dancers develop a healthier and more positive body image through dance making was a critical objective for this study.

Another important objective for this study was to encourage dance educators to implement successful pedagogical practices that foster a positive environment in the dance studio, specifically relating to body image. Such pedagogical practices included the use of careful word choices, meditation, reflection, choreography, and the limited use of the mirror.

The findings of this research could be important for dance educators to consider because instructors often play a vital role in their students' lives, and the choices they make in the classroom have a lasting impact on their students. Concepts such as limiting the use or emphasis

on the mirror in the dance studio and conscious word choices during instruction can have an effect on the way students see and perceive their bodies. “Schools are a powerful environment in which a positive body image can be promoted since a student’s self-concept affects their performance and social interaction in the classroom” (Minton and Faber 114). If dance educators work hard to foster a positive environment in the studio, students’ self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-concept will transcend the walls of the dance studio and permeate their everyday lives with positive relationships and healthy habits.

In addition, this research might help students at a vulnerable time in their life to find an outlet through dance and choreography. In her thesis study about the power of dance and its effects on the mental and emotional health and self-confidence in young adults, Amber Salo found that at the end of the study, her participants experienced many deep emotional benefits:

> They expressed themselves in ways that words cannot and in ways they may have never experienced otherwise. Through expressing themselves, it was observed that the participants connected to themselves on an intrapersonal level, with classmates, and with the powerful art of dance. This connection created a joyful energy that allowed the participants to thoroughly enjoy the process. (37)

Many other researchers also found the same emotional benefits of participating in dance at a young age, but when combined with the dance making process, it can be argued that the benefits are amplified because of the personal connection with the movements being created. Amy Howton wrote, “Every dancer should explore choreography as a means of finding his or her individual ‘voice’” (qtd. in Bennett 2). By allowing students to use their own voice, they find ownership in the movement and have a personal investment in the finished product.

This thesis project could contribute a valuable curriculum that dance educators can adapt and use in their own teaching to help benefit a large population of our adolescent dancers. Body image, self-confidence, self-talk, and self-esteem are topics constantly at the top of the priority list as areas of concern in high schools and dance studios around the country, let alone in the world. Beyond body image, the scope of this curriculum could be expanded to help students foster healthier relationships in other areas of their lives, increasing their overall mental, physical, and spiritual health. The same ideas, concepts, and pedagogical practices could be adapted to other areas of study and used as a framework to help females become stronger, more confident young women as they enter adulthood.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this study was to explore whether a choreography curriculum based on body image in high school female dancers would help students increase their positive body image and find a new appreciation for their bodies. Body image has been investigated and researched by many professionals in a variety of disciplines. This chapter will define and discuss body image in relation to past research, including findings on female versus male body image and adolescent body image, as well as body image specifically in the field of dance education. There has also been important previous research about the power of choreography and dance making, and the healing power of journaling in the transformative process. This research will highlight the continued need for research development on successful educational practices and curriculums that foster a more positive body image for female adolescent dancers.

Defining Body Image

It is easy to discuss body image in every day conversations with friends, family, students, and colleagues, but most often each individual has a separate understanding of what the term "body image" actually means. Although each person will have their own unique experience with body image, it is important to gain a universal understanding of the term itself.

In the book, *Perfectly Imperfect: Compassionate Strategies to Cultivate a Positive Body Image,* therapist Amy Harman emphasized the importance of discussing the term with her patients before any attempt at healing a negative body image is made. She stated, "In the strictest sense, 'body image' indicates the 'image' of your body that you see in your mind" (3). To

provide a broader definition, she quoted Thomas F. Cash, PhD. who stated, "…body image consists of your personal relationship with your body – encompassing your perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and actions that pertain to your physical appearance" (3). In this book, the author emphasized the importance of realizing that body image is a relationship between yourself and your body, and like any relationship, it requires intentional care, maintenance, hard work, and conversation.

Cash and Smolak date the beginning of the body image construct back to the early 1900s, where "…neurologists studying and treating brain injuries sought to make sense of a variety of unusual forms of body perception and experience reported by their patients" (4). Much of the early research focused on neurological and psychodynamic views of body image in psychiatric and medical patients, amputees, and what they used to call "normal" patients. Later in 1969, Franklin Shontz was "…a pioneer in directing body image research away from the domination of a psychodynamic paradigm" and noted the importance of viewing body image as "…a projection screen for emotional learning and experience" (Cash and Smolak 4-5).

Body image research really flourished in the 1990s and 2000s, when researchers began to focus on conceptual, psychometric, and psychotherapeutic developments, exploring body image in more than just medical patients but instead in the wider population where diverse implications like race, gender, and culture impact body image. Research also expanded "…to develop better assessments of body image as a multidimensional construct and to evaluate interventions to treat and prevent body image problems" (Cash and Smolak 6). Cash and Smolak stressed the fact that the, "…body image transcends a singular experience. It is complex and multidimensional. It is gendered. It is ethnic and cultural. It is age dependent. It depends on the state of the body and the state of the mind. Much has been learned since…2002. Much remains to be learned" (10).

Four Aspects of Body Image

The National Eating Disorders Collaboration described body image as being broken down into four aspects: perceptual, affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Though described separately, these four types of body image are interconnected. Often, when a person is dealing with body image issues, they may find themselves struggling with more than one aspect. Although not all research specifically uses these terms to define and discuss body image, the same ideas and descriptions are widely used when talking about the different characteristics and types of body image.

Perceptual

Perceptual body image is the way you *see* yourself. The National Eating Disorders Collaboration emphasized, "The way you see your body is not always a correct representation of what you actually look like. For example, a person may perceive themselves to be fat when in reality they are underweight. How a person sees themselves is their perceptual body image" ("Fact Sheet - Body Image").

When self-evaluating, there is a high tendency for people to over-emphasize the impact that body weight has on their own self-worth. This hyper focus on body weight, coupled with a person's inability to correctly assess their own body size based on how they perceive themselves to look, is described as a perceptual distortion of body image. Unfortunately, this often leads to dangerous eating disorders and habits (Pallotti et al. 1116). The perceptual component of body distortion or body image disturbance "…denotes issues in estimating one's own body size and dimensions, with evidence that, at a group level, eating disorder patients typically overestimate the size of their own body significantly more than healthy individuals" (Carey and Preston 2).

Thus, the way one *sees* themselves can have a large impact on their affective, cognitive, and behavioral body image.

Affective

Affective body image is the way you *feel* about the way you look. The National Eating Disorders Collaboration stated, “There are things a person may like or dislike about the way they look. Your feelings about your body, especially the amount of satisfaction or dissatisfaction you experience in relation to your appearance, weight, shape and body parts is your affective body image” (“Fact Sheet - Body Image”).

For those who struggle with body image, this affective component is often associated with negative attitudes towards one’s own body, commonly displayed by extreme feelings of body dissatisfaction. According to Carey and Preston, research has suggested that these individuals also lack a self-serving body image bias that is typically observed in the healthy population (2). Affective body image is often widely researched in body image treatment or therapy plans.

Cognitive

Cognitive body image refers to the *thoughts* and *beliefs* you have when thinking about your body. For example, you think you will feel better about yourself if you were thinner. It is important to note that cognitive body image is not always accurate or true. These thoughts and beliefs regularly lead to people taking extreme measures to achieve a desired look, but often the true change needed is not in the physical body itself but in the mental perception of one’s own thoughts and beliefs about their body.

Cognitive and affective body image are typically linked in research and referred to as the “cognitive-affective” component of body image. Cary and Preston add:

> Historically, research has predominantly focused on the cognitive-affective component of body image disturbances…with treatment programs commonly targeting dysfunctional cognitions and emotions relating to the body. However, more recent research suggests that such distorted cognitions may be influenced by an inaccurate perceptual experience of the body…. (2)

Thus, the different aspects of body image continue to be interwoven when evaluating an individual's body image.

Behavioral

Behavioral body image describes the things you *do* in relation to the way you look. The National Eating Disorders Collaboration indicated:

> When a person is dissatisfied with the way they look, they may employ destructive behaviors such as excessive exercising or disordered eating as a means to change appearance. Some people may isolate themselves because they feel bad about the way they look. Behaviors in which you engage as a result of your body image encompasses your behavioral body image. ("Fact Sheet - Body Image")

Behavioral body image is a culmination of one's perceptual, affective, and cognitive body image turned into *action.* This is often discussed in research as someone taking drastic measures to change their appearance, but it can also be described as when someone does *not* participate in an event due to how they feel about their body or appearance.

Negative Body Image

Harman described negative body image as "…a relationship with your body that could be avoidant, one-sided, conflictual, or even abusive" (4). She further detailed, "If you have an avoidant negative body image, you might avoid mirrors, or avoid buying new clothes. You might

also cover or hide the body parts that you don't like" (4). In regard to a one-sided relationship with your body, she stated that "…you might not listen to it when it's telling you that it's hungry because your goal is to be thinner. Or you might not listen when your body is in pain and continue a fitness regimen that you hope will change your body's appearance" (4). If one finds themselves constantly battling their body and telling it to be something it is not, Harman defined that as a conflictual relationship. "You might also experience your body fighting back after dieting or restriction, or you might blame your body for your failures" (Harman 4). The last negative relationship with body image that Harman discussed is abusive:

> If you are in an abusive relationship with your body, you might call your body names, using vulgar or demeaning words that you would never dare say to another person. You might push your body past the limits of starvation, causing harm to your heart, liver, or other parts of your physical body. Most of us would never tolerate verbal or physical abuse toward another person, so why would we allow those same behaviors toward ourselves? (5)

Some people do not realize that they have a negative body image or are on the path to a negative relationship with their body until it is too late. Harman listed warning signs of a negative body image such as avoiding events because you don't like the way you look; constantly checking in the mirror to evaluate your appearance; calling yourself names and participating in negative self-talk; believing that rejections or failures are due to your body; delaying vacations until your body meets a certain standard; over-exercising and not listening to what your body needs; and weighing yourself more than once per week (8).

At first glance, two of these warning signs particularly stand out as being problems in the dance community. More on body image in the dance world will be discussed later in this chapter,

but in relationship to Harman's warning signs, the very nature of the dance classroom setting opens up the door for this negative relationship to be fostered if it is not carefully monitored. For example, constantly checking in the mirror to evaluate your appearance is something dancers do for hours in the studio during almost every class. They analyze their alignment and body shape and compare their body to that of the teacher's or their peers.

The other warning sign that stands out is believing that rejection or failures are due to your body. So often dancers either do not get the part in the audition or are taken out of certain dance sections because of multiple different reasons, but when the body is the main source of evaluation in dance, how are dancers not supposed to think that this rejection is due to their physical appearance or something their body failed to do. This is reason itself for dance educators to be mindful about the environment they create in the studio.

Another term often associated with negative body image is body dissatisfaction. The National Eating Disorders Collaboration described the development of body dissatisfaction as the time when a person has negative thoughts and feelings about his or her own body. They also stated that while body dissatisfaction is an internal process, it can be influenced by several external factors, which can increase the risk of developing a negative body image. Some of these factors include: age, gender, low self-esteem and/or depression, personality traits, teasing, friends and family, and body size ("Body Image").

In regard to age, body image is frequently shaped during late childhood and adolescence, but *body dissatisfaction* can affect people of all ages. While adolescent girls are more prone to body dissatisfaction than adolescent boys, research shows that the rate of body dissatisfaction in males is rapidly catching up to that of females. The National Eating Disorders Collaboration also stated that personality traits have an impact on body dissatisfaction and can lead to a higher risk

of negative body image, such as those with perfectionist tendencies, high achievers, and those who often compare themselves to others.

Those who are teased about appearance and weight, regardless of body type, have an increased risk of body dissatisfaction as well. Friends and family who diet and often talk about their bodies, whether positively or negatively, can increase the chance of a person developing body dissatisfaction and negative self-talk ("Body Talk"). Sadly, in western society, body dissatisfaction and negative body image have become a cultural norm. "The correlation between thinness and youthfulness to attractiveness in Western society is unmistakable…" (Bedford and Johnson 42).

Positive Body Image

On the other hand, a positive body image "…includes body neutrality, loving your body, and everything in between…. A positive body image means having a positive relationship with your body that is based on respect, appreciation, acceptance, trust, and kindness" (Harman 6). Respect for your body means understanding and appreciating its mere existence and how valuable it is to life. When we recognize how amazing our bodies are and all the wonderful things they can do, we foster respect towards our body, which leads to appreciation and gratitude. Harman's next sign of a positive body image was acceptance:

> If you truly accept your body, you will be able to perceive your body accurately. You should be able to look in the mirror and appreciate how your body actually looks without relying on societal ideas of what your body 'should' look like. Accepting your body means that you allow it to be how it is, right now, without requiring it to change. (7)

Acceptance of your body leads to trust, meaning that you believe what your body is telling you. For example, when your body is aching or tired you give it rest and if your stomach

is growling and communicating hunger, you feed and nourish your body. All these signs, respect, appreciation, acceptance, and trust, lead to kindness. Harman stated, “Showing kindness for your body manifests in the way you talk to it and how you treat it” (7). This positive self-talk not only leads to a more positive body image, but in turn higher self-esteem and self-confidence.

Factors Influencing Body Image
In the 21st Century

Over the last thirty years, body image issues have increased worldwide and have become one of the top ranked issues of concern for young people. The roles that gender and age play on body image will be discussed later in this chapter, but it is important to note other factors that also influence body image in the 21st century. Levine and Chapman talked about the vulnerability of audiences exposed to media:

> Mass media, including television, magazines, video games, cinema, and the internet, are a major part of the lives of millions of children, adolescents, and adults. These media are saturated with multiple, overlapping, and unhealthy messages about ideal body sizes and shapes in relation to pleasure, morality, gender, attractiveness, self-control, food, weight management, and power. (101)

The National Eating Disorders Collaboration further stated:

> One of the most common external contributors to body dissatisfaction is the media, and more recently social media. People of all ages are bombarded with images through TV, magazines, internet and advertising. These images often promote unrealistic, unobtainable and highly stylized appearance ideas which have been fabricated by stylists, art teams and digital manipulation and cannot be achieved in real life. Those who feel they don’t measure up in comparison to these images, can experience intense body

dissatisfaction which is damaging to their psychological and physical well-being. ("Body Image")

In Wendy Oliver's article "Body Image in the Dance Class", she indicated that "The 'beauty industry' benefits greatly from this image-induced self-criticism by offering products such as makeup, hair dye, or plastic surgery that can mask or remove real or perceived body flaws" (20). This lure of buying products to help consumers achieve an ideal body permeates everything we read and watch. Whether you are looking through a magazine, scrolling on social media, driving by a billboard, or watching a commercial during your favorite television show, emphasis on beauty and the way we look is all around us.

Oliver also discussed a study by Jean Kilbourne in Fiji, in which the researcher looked at the influence of the media before and after the introduction of television. Before television, people in Fiji rarely discussed diets, gaining weight was considered a good thing, and losing weight was a sign of a problem. However, within three years after television was introduced in Fiji, "…the incidence of teenagers at risk for eating disorders more than doubled. Seventy-four percent of teenagers in the study said they felt too big or fat. The girls who watched a significant amount of television were 50 percent more likely to describe themselves as fat than girls who watched less television" (Oliver 20).

While few studies have focused on the internet's effect on body image, Levine and Chapman indicated, "Given the growing number and burgeoning popularity of celebrity and fashion sites, diet websites, and pro-eating disorder websites, it is unlikely the internet has no effect on body image" (106). They estimate there are over four hundred pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia websites currently operating and catering to females between the ages of twelve and twenty-four. On the other hand, there are also various online websites and help groups available

to assist those struggling with eating disorders or negative body image. So, while the internet can be a dangerous place in terms of body image, it "…will [also] be an increasingly important part of prevention, treatment, and support" (107).

With the influx of emphasis on the internet for almost everything we do, including schoolwork, work-from-home jobs, social interactions, and every day browsing, the media will play a pivotal role in changing society's view of body image. We see an increase in positive affirmations on social media, more variety in the body types used in television and advertising, and more acceptance of all races and genders in multiple roles. As more research and information are disseminated about the media's influence on body image, society can begin to adapt and evolve to hopefully spread more body-positive trends.

Female Body Image

To understand female body image, it is important to first look at it from a historical context throughout time since, "… the body has served as a locus of control in women's lives. Current feminist theory contends that women's normative body dissatisfaction is not a function of individual pathology, but a systemic social phenomenon" (McKinley 48).

"Historically, a woman's body was her best survival tool in a world primarily dominated by men. It was the main source of her power" (Ngo 885). Nealie Tan Ngo wrote a graphic memoir exploring the cultural and social factors that influence women's body image and restrict their decisions about their bodies, gathering information from historical and contemporary sources. She noted:

> [In a patriarchal society]…expectations about a woman's size and physical characteristics were dictated 'by male desire and marriageability.' Therefore, a woman's body, appearance, and health were (and still are) heavily influenced by social and cultural

> ideologies, beliefs, and values as well as by technology. In turn, these influences tend to work by restricting the notions of selfhood available to women, forcing women to make decisions to comply with social and cultural demands that they transform their bodies into an idealized shape. An idealized physical body becomes a social body, and, as Deborah Sullivan notes, it 'bears the imprint of the more powerful elements of its cultural context…providing important clues to the mechanics of society.' Historically, bodies closer in appearance to ideal bodies gave some women power. (Ngo 885-886)

This emphasis on the body in society "…creates a context that encourages the construction of women and girls as objects to be watched and evaluated in terms of how their body fits cultural standards" (McKinley 49).

For a moment, think back in history to pictures of women's bodies that society determined were the "ideal" look. Some examples that come to mind are women in the Victorian age who wore corsets to achieve a thin waist, the Marilyn Monroe craze and desire for the hourglass shape, Twiggy's dangerously thin body shape, the "thigh gap" phase where having your thighs not touch was a sign of an ideal body, and today the Kardashian family's influence on body proportions. Historically and even today, women in high power positions often held these as "ideal" looks and therefore, translated the message that if other women wanted to gain more status or power, they too needed to achieve a similar appearance. The media is at great fault for influencing this perception because instead of highlighting these women for what they *did* to climb the social ladder, they focus instead on the way they *look*, what they wear, what facial products they use to achieve the smoother and younger skin, and more.

Traditionally, if women could achieve the ideal body shape, they would be considered more beautiful and more desirable by a husband. This idea and way of life linked beauty to

success. Even today, this seems to be an ongoing topic. In 2019, *Business Insider* published an article titled, "11 Scientific Reasons Why Attractive People are More Successful in Life." They did similar articles in 2012, 2013, and 2018, which were all about why being attractive is considered a benefit and advantage. BBC even published an article in 2016 titled, "Fat People Earn Less and Have a Harder Time Finding Work."

The Dove corporation found in an international survey that more than ninety percent of girls in Japan, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States want to change some aspect of their physical appearance, and fifty-seven percent of American women ages 18 to 64 say that they do not feel beautiful compared to today's beauty ideal (Oliver 20). This ongoing mindset and celebration in the media to be thin and beautiful adds momentum to the dangerous cycle of body ideals that needs to be broken. No wonder our society is still talking about body image struggles and the negative mental and physical effects it has on people of all ages.

More importantly, Ngo explained:

> When social and cultural factors dictate how a woman should look, more than just her self-esteem is damaged. She allows a part of her identity to be overwritten by social standards, causing a deeper type of harm that Hilde Lindemann Nelson terms *infiltrated consciousness*. As Nelson writes in her book, *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*, 'A person's identity is injured when she endorses, as a portion of her self-concept, a dominant group's dismissive or exploitative understanding of her group, and in consequence loses or fails to acquire a sense of herself as worthy of full moral respect.' Accordingly, poor body image is more sinister than just not feeling happy with the way one looks. As discussed earlier, physical bodies are social bodies; beauty is linked to our perceptions of health, wealth, power, and overall success, which affect the range of

> decisions available to women and women's overall views of their capabilities, strengths, and worth. (891-892)

"When one attempts to conform to these social pressures, but is unable to achieve them, the individual may be faced with attitude-behavior discrepancy leading to BID [body image distortion]" (Bedford and Johnson 43).

It is important to note that many males also struggle with body image issues. Although males have a different "body ideal" than females, males do often feel pressure to fit the mold of what their bodies should look like. Oliver stated, "Studies note that the ideal male figure in magazines has become noticeably more lean and muscular than before…. Male eating disorders are also becoming more common…. This problem predictability creates psychological distress and a tendency to rely on products that enhance physical attractiveness" (20).

Similar to how the ideal body is portrayed to give women more power, studies have also found this same correspondence for males. Males are often turning to performance enhancing drugs and steroids to achieve the "ideal male body," which is seen as trim but muscular. The ideal male body, power, and status, are found to connect in today's society. Male body image is less often talked about, which could cause even more areas of concern because males may perceive body image issues as a stigma or have less resources to turn to. Male body image is definitely an area that needs more media coverage and research.

Adolescent Female Body Image

"Adolescence is an important time in an individual's life as it signals a transition from childhood to adulthood. For adolescent girls, a range of body and social changes take place during and following puberty that can strongly influence their body image" (Wertheim & Paxton 76). While body weight and shape are commonly the most talked about areas of concern for

young female girls when it comes to body image, it is important to note that other physical characteristics also contribute to a negative body image in adolescent females. Other concerns are facial characteristics, skin appearance, muscularity, fitness, and strength. When looking at adolescent female body image, it is important to talk about the developmental challenges that all girls experience during puberty.

While most girls embrace puberty as their transition into becoming a woman and adult, it comes with many challenges, both physically and mentally, that they must deal with during what is not only a physically and emotionally challenging time in their life but also socially challenging. During puberty, girls must adjust to a series of dramatic changes in their body. Menstruation, alterations to the size and shape of their body, including increases in fat deposits in areas such as the breasts and hips, additional body hair, and acne are some of the most prominent changes. Not only do girls need to manage and cope with all these changes, but they must also "…adjust their view of self" (Wertheim & Paxton 78). If young girls do not shift their self-image of who they are physically and developmentally as they mature, they are at greater risk of developing a negative body image.

There is also social pressure that develops during puberty for adolescent girls that can have an impact on their self-image and body image. For example, some girls mature sooner than others, which can have an effect on how they see themselves in comparison to their peers. Wertheim and Paxton indicated:

> Puberty-related changes can be particularly concerning for girls who mature at a different rate from their peers. Whether girls are early or late maturers, they may compare themselves to others and worry that they do not match their peers' rate of change. This

> can be especially problematic because adolescence is associated with the need to fit in and be like one's peers. (79)

While some girls see their entrance into adulthood before their peers as an advantage and something to boast about, some studies have suggested that "...girls who begin menstruating earlier than their peers, particularly if they increase their body size before their peers do, may develop greater body dissatisfaction" (Wertheim and Paxton 79).

Social influences on young girls include their parents, peers, siblings, neighbors, schools, the media, and even the shape of dolls that they commonly played with in their youth. These influences encompass their subculture. "The culture or subculture in which one lives has norms about what is considered beautiful and how important a particular body type is considered to be" (Wertheim and Paxton 79). If anything in their subculture differs from their own appearance, adolescent girls will be more likely to internalize those norms and become dissatisfied with their own bodies.

Parents may model behaviors such as crash dieting that their children copy, or they may also frequently comment on their child's body, which can directly influence their daughter's perception of things they may need to change to satisfy their parents. In adolescence, peer groups also become increasingly important and opinions of friends may begin to take precedence over anything else. Wertheim and Paxton explained:

> Friendship groups have been found to share body attitudes. If a girl's peer group places importance on weight and eating, she is more likely to have weight concerns herself. Friends' dieting is associated with early adolescent girls developing increased body concerns over time. One way this may come about is through appearance-related conversations concerning clothing, weight, and dieting, as well as what is known as 'fat

> talk,' in which girls describe themselves as 'fat,' and friends respond and compare themselves to each other. (80)

Many young girls experience appearance-related teasing and receive comments about their physical features, which negatively influences their body image. In addition, Wertheim and Paxton noted, "Pubertal changes can be accompanied by sexual harassment and a girl's body being objectified by others. Sexual harassment can result in girls themselves surveying their own body as an object to be observed and evaluated, which is associated with shame about one's own body" (80). Not only do all these factors lead to a greater risk of adolescent girls developing a negative body image, but they also cause an area of concern for developing eating disorders, depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

Body Image in the Dance World

In her article about body image in the dance class, Oliver stated:

> While some research has shown that dance enhances body image and self-esteem, other research tells us that the study of dance is sometimes related to problematic behaviors and traits, including negative body image. Anecdotal evidence of negative body image among dancers abounds. Body image is not just about maintaining a certain weight; in dance, it can refer to specific perceived 'body flaws,' such as bow legs, elevated shoulders, or a hyperextended back. (18)

Oliver also shared stories of dancers who have had horrible experiences with body image in the dance world. One dancer, Heidi Guenther, shared her story of being asked to lose five pounds while in the Boston Ballet. Her instructor said, "[She]…was looking a little pudgy – her boobs, her hips, her thighs. It's an adolescent thing; it's normal. You see a girl on stage, her butt is going up and down, it's not attractive. It's a visual art. Because it's a visual art, I can advise

what looks good" (Oliver 21). Guenther subsequently developed an eating disorder and unfortunately died from heart failure at age twenty-three, from what experts believe was triggered by her eating disorder. Another dancer, Gelsey Kirkland, wrote an autobiography about her time with George Balanchine at the New York City Ballet, where she recalled, "…he halted class and approached me for a kind of physical inspection. With his knuckles, he thumped on my sternum and down my rib cage, clucking his tongue and remarking, 'must see the bones.' I was less than a hundred pounds even then…. He did not merely say, 'Eat less.' He said repeatedly, 'Eat nothing'" (Oliver 21).

In a dance class, students are constantly under surveillance by their teacher, their peers, and themselves. In a study by Vicario et al., fifteen percent of fifty-three female dancers said that dance made them hate their body (Oliver 22). As Oliver stated, "Even though fifteen percent is a small minority, it is a bad thing if even a few of our students feel that dance makes them hate their body" (22). Some of the leading factors causing dancers to be self-conscious about their bodies in the dance studio include the use of mirrors, tight-fitting dance clothes, feedback from their instructors, and opportunities lost from what dancers perceive to be due to their body shape and ability.

Ofra Walter and Sivan Yanko noted, "Studies have found that female dance students are more preoccupied with their weight, eating habits, perfectionism, and body image than girls in the general population and that they are in greater danger of developing eating disorders" (3). They also emphasized the stress and importance put on dancers' bodies:

> This stress may stem from the lack of separation that exists between the creator and the material of the creation – the body. During a dance lesson, a dancer moves and communicates by means of her body. The body is the central location of the dancer's

> experience and is reflected in a large mirror covering an entire wall. While moving in the space of the studio, the dancer's body looks out upon her, so that during dance lessons each adolescent girl practices, exercises, and dances to the image of her body, in lines and in groups. (Walter and Yanko 5)

In an interesting parallel, scholar Jill Green wrote an analysis of the dance class based on Foucault's notion of the "docile body" in her effort to understand how our physical selves are shaped by society. Foucault wrote about the Western prison system and talked about how prisons have changed from using physical abuse to control inmates to less obvious means of control, specifically surveillance, supervision, training, and correction. Green then adapted this to touch on the similarities to a dance class:

> I contend that dance training is another example of a practice that moves from repressive control to the implementation of a system that requires subjects to be observed and corrected through the ritual of dance technique classes. In the conservatory-style system, student dancers' bodies are docile bodies created to produce efficiency, not only of movement, but also a normalization and standardization of behavior in dance classes. (Oliver 22)

Although a drastic comparison, Green does make a powerful point about the emphasis on surveillance, supervision, training, and correction that occurs in a dance class. So, the question that arises is how do dance educators still enforce the technique and movement quality in the dance classroom but with less emphasis on achieving a certain body ideal.

While there is evidence that supports dance can lead to a negative body image, there is also a good amount of evidence that found a positive correlation between dance and body image. Dance is a personal sport that allows one to get in touch with their body and celebrate all the

beautiful things it can do. Dance has been found not only to highlight the wonderful things the body can achieve but also its positive effect on self-esteem. One dancer, Alana Wallace, has been confined to a wheelchair for several years and spoke about the new freedom and acceptance of her body that dance has provided her. She said, "It helped me finally accept my body. Growing up, I always covered my legs to hide the atrophy. But, when I started dancing, I had to put on tight-fitting unitards and I had to become more comfortable with my image…I've shown myself that I have capabilities that I didn't know were possible" (Oliver 23).

Dance is a competitive sport and the nature of a dance class lends itself to be a competitive environment. Dancers are constantly staring at themselves in a mirror, often wearing tight-fitting clothing, receiving ongoing feedback from their teacher and peers about their body and the way it looks and moves. Oliver quoted J. Sandler in her article about body image and the dance class and suggested that as educators:

> [We must] become aware of our 'own body prejudices, and…learn to see a student's way of moving, not just her bodily appropriateness.' We should be looking carefully at how students dance and give them both positive feedback and corrective comments based on movement rather than body type. She also suggests that we let students work without a mirror at times, focusing on proprioceptive awareness. The mirror should serve as a tool for checking specifics like alignment rather than as a constant companion. (24)

Factors Influencing Body Image in the Dance Class

Barr and Oliver highlighted how dance education has a long history of communicating what a "perfect body" looks like in the dance world. They stated, "The idealized perfect body is not monolithic. Its form is elusive; it is a reflection of the era and its cultural values, and at times a response to the unspoken hierarchies within the art form itself" (99). As noted earlier, many

factors in a dance class can influence a dancer's body image. Some examples include the use of mirrors, tight-fitting dance clothes, commentary from peers, comparison to other dancers and to the instructor, as well as the verbiage and imagery instructors choose to use in the classroom. Another important factor is the use of physical demonstration by instructors, which students are expected to then follow:

> When a teacher visually demonstrates throughout the class, there is an unspoken agreement that s/he is demonstrating the only 'right way' to perform the movement, and that students should strive for this look…. There is a saying that dance teachers often teach as they were taught. The adage highlights how easily teachers can perpetuate, whether knowingly or not, the myth of the perfect body. This unconscious perpetuation also underscores the pedagogical challenges of disarming the myth. (Barr and Oliver 102)

While expectations and perceptions of the "perfect body" in the dance world are ever-changing, there are tools and teaching methods that dance educators can adopt and incorporate into their teaching that hopefully end this idea of the "perfect body" and instead celebrate dance for its movement and artistic expression. The following section will discuss two of the most prominent influences on body image in the dance class and suggest ways in which dance educators can evolve their instructional strategies to hopefully help students put less emphasis on the way their body *looks* and instead focus on how their body in movement *feels*.

Mirrors

If you walk into a dance studio, you will most likely walk into a large room with floor-length mirrors covering at least one full wall of the studio. Oliver referred to the use of mirrors in the dance studio and declared:

> The most obvious contributor to self-surveillance is the mirror. The mirror provides constant feedback about the movement and shape of our bodies. Most people are drawn strongly to visual stimuli, so if a mirror is present, it may overshadow any proprioceptive feedback the dancers might receive. Mirrors are useful for checking that a leg is actually straight, or that the back is not overarched. But unfortunately, they can also become a conduit for negative self-talk. (22)

Although the mirror in a dance studio is important for checking alignment, analyzing shapes formed with the body, and more, it can also be something that dancers put too much emphasis on. Instead of focusing on how the movement feels in their body, dancers often find themselves too concerned with how the movement looks in the mirror, which often leads to body image concerns. Referencing back to Oliver's article where she quoted J. Sandler, "The mirror should serve as a tool…rather than as a constant companion" (24).

"Mirrors invite one to see the self from the outside, to imagine how others perceive this self, and to compare self to the reference group" (Dearborn et al. 116). In the article by Dearborn and her colleagues titled, "Mirror and Phrase Difficulty Influence Dancer Attention and Body Satisfaction," researchers found:

> Objective self-awareness, the ability to see one's self as an object, is a contested site within dance education. Feminist studies suggest this is a primary mechanism for controlling the female body and a major component in the development of eating disorders and negative self-esteem…. The implication is that the mirrors not only help one to see what others in the room are doing in the journey toward learning movement, but that the very presence of the mirrors psychologically influences students to try to move and act like their classmates. (116-117)

At the end of their study, the presence of the mirror revealed two significant main effects on the students. First, the students became more attentive to others, and second, the students perceived others as performing better. “A wall of mirrors facilitates seeing and perceiving the work of others in the room and invites comparison of self to others” (Dearborn et al. 121).

In another study that investigated the impact of the mirror on dancers, Radell shared:

> When I reflect on my own time as a student training in dance I recall a pervasive and nagging voice in my head telling me that I was never thin enough, that I was not sufficiently strong, and that I was not as kinesthetically ‘connected’ and fluid as the other dancers. All the while I was staring at my body in the mirror, critiquing myself and comparing myself to others. One day early in my teaching career, out of curiosity, I asked a group of dance students in an academic classroom to raise their hands if they felt good about their bodies when they saw their reflections in the mirror in a dance technique class. Only one student raised her hand. At that moment, I realized that my own preoccupation with the shortcomings of my body as a dancer was likely widespread, and not peculiar to me alone. (Radell et al. 161-162)

This realization prompted Radell et al. to do a case study of dance students, in which they later concluded, “For dancers taught without mirrors, there was a statistically significant increase in satisfaction with the appearance of different parts of their bodies. The dancers taught with mirrors, on the other hand, experienced significant dissatisfaction with the appearance of their bodies or parts of their bodies” (162). In addition, they found that the students taught with no mirrors also had greater performance levels than the students in the group taught with mirrors (162).

The same researchers repeated this case study a few different times, and in 2011, they included qualitative exit interviews for the participants. Results from the interviews reinforced their notions of the negative aspects of using a mirror:

> Students from the non-mirror class (but who had used mirrors in previous dance classes) indicated that mirrors can be distracting; their opinion was that there was less self-criticism and stress in the studio without the mirrors. Several other students remarked that the absence of a mirror allowed them to 'feel' the movement in their body. One student said, 'I was looking forward to dancing in front of a mirror. However, it [lack of a mirror] does offer more freedom for expression and enjoyment during the class because I'm not self-conscious.' (Radell et al. 163)

To conclude, Radell et al. shared accounts from various dance scholars about their beliefs regarding problems that the mirror might perpetuate, which provided interesting insight. Specifically referencing teenage dancers, dance counsellor Buckroyd commented:

> …that a teenage student who looks in a mirror cannot see an accurate image of herself, nor can she detach herself from the image to the point that she can use the information constructively…. students need to learn to use the mirror constructively in order 'for their sense of themselves from the inside to get stronger,' but teenage students lack the emotional development to do this. (Radell et al. 165)

This conclusion is especially important to consider in this thesis study as the subjects are female teenage dancers.

While the mirror has been proven to perpetuate negative feelings about one's body, it should also be noted that it is still an essential tool used for alignment and position in the dance studio. Although it might not be realistic or helpful to completely remove the mirror altogether in

a dance class, dance educators should be aware of its effects on student dancers and vary their teaching style so the mirror is de-emphasized and/or used sparingly.

Somatics, Kinesthetic Sense, and Mind-Body Connection

Much of the research about mirrors in the dance studio referenced the idea of focusing on how the movement *feels* in one's body rather than how it *looks*. An increasingly popular tool being used more often today in dance education to address this issue is somatics. Oliver stated:

> Somatics is a field of study that looks at the body from 'the inside out, where one is aware of feelings, movements, and intentions, rather than looking objectively from the outside in.' While a negative body image derives from comparing oneself to an idealized external image, somatics focuses on inner sensations, providing an alternative to a visually-driven self-critical stance. (23-24)

Somatics is also commonly paired with the idea of one's kinesthetic sense. Kinesthetic sense is "The ability to know accurately the positions and movements of one's skeletal joints [and placement of body parts]. Kinesthesis refers to sensory input that occurs within the body. Postural and movement information are communicated via sensory systems by tension and compression of muscles in the body" ("Kinesthetic Sense"). Scholar Jill Green emphasized the importance of incorporating somatics and a dancer's kinesthetic sense into dance education:

> [The body]…is a vehicle through which dancers express themselves. In order to effectively move the body, a dancer must not only be aware of the body as a kinesiological instrument but as a living and breathing process. Dancers must become sensitive to the inner messages of the body (i.e., how much tension they are feeling) in order to effectively communicate movement. (qtd. in Oliver)

Oliver summarized, “When dancers pay more attention to bodily sensations than to looking in the mirror, it frees them to develop in a more holistic way” (24).

This type of body awareness also increases the mind-body connection. Mainwaring and Krasnow explained:

> A useful tool in stimulating the mind-body connection is the use of imagery. Imagery, created both by teachers and students, can provide a multi-dimensional perspective and experience of the physical work and can consolidate movement principles. Imagery can enhance alignment and physical expertise, as well as develop expressivity and projection. Allowing students to describe their personal imagery creations with each other serves a twofold purpose: it gives students more tools to explore body awareness, and it reinforces the ideas that the teacher values the students’ ideas, thus building their self-confidence. (19).

They also emphasized that “…taking time in class to explore principles of good alignment is more beneficial than simply adjusting a student’s pelvis during a particular exercise” (17).

The exploration, mind-body connection, and kinesthetic sense of one’s own body in space and in movement is critical for dance students to experience in the classroom not only to enhance their movement ability and quality, but to also enhance their body appreciation and awareness. This approach is similar to techniques used in dance movement psychotherapy, which has been used and found effective in reducing psychological distress in young people with mild depression (Grogan et al. 261).

In the study titled, “Dance and Body Image: Young People’s Experiences of a Dance Movement Psychotherapy Session,” movement psychotherapy sessions were used to attempt “…to facilitate an exploration of body image which focused on feeling, understanding and

appreciating the body, and an increased awareness of the body" (Grogran et al. 262). At the end of the study, researchers found that participants felt a lack of self-consciousness, which "…was linked to increased body acceptance and reduced appearance orientation. Participants said that they felt much freer to be who they chose to be and that the session had reduced the importance they placed on other people's opinions and attitudes towards their bodies" (267). In addition, the dance psychotherapy session seemed to enable participants to feel more positive and accept their bodies (269). Overall, researchers found that participants in their study, with the use of movement exploration, mind-body connection, and the kinesthetic sense, positively experienced an increase in body satisfaction, body image, and body acceptance (270).

These are practical tools that dance educators can incorporate into their teaching to help dancers become more connected to their movement based on how it feels rather than how it looks. Not only can this increase their movement quality, but it hopefully helps them find more confidence in themselves and their abilities. In her article about teaching to the whole dancer, Kathryn Daniels shared:

> In summary, our goal as a field must be to educate dancers who can explore and discover the most effective ways that *their* bodies can dance, fulfilling desired aesthetic goals with the least amount of physical damage. We must change the intent of our dance education from producing obedient tools adept at following external commands to empower self-directed, knowledgeable artists capable of artistic depth and creative collaboration. These goals are served by learner-centered, whole-person education that provides dancers with conceptual, perceptual, and personal tools for continued growth. (10)

The Power of Choreography and Dance Making

Dance making is oftentimes a very personal process in which the choreographer finds an expression and outlet through creation that can sometimes only be fulfilled by movement. Choreography can be used as a tool to express, comment, or explore an idea. Kate Flatt explained:

> The choreographer is a creative artist who captures the essence of an idea in dance. Their craft is the ability to create distinct, sole-authored works that can be abstract, thematic, or narrative. Being a choreographer involves developing the ability to: invent and devise dance movement using imagination, perception, and feeling; shape dance movement in space and time; create stage pictures and non-verbal images; develop a range of strategies to solve problems in the abstract; and use dance to suggest things that words cannot. (18)

Choreography and dance making also have therapeutic benefits. When dancers choreograph their own works, they typically feel a deeper connection and relationship to the movement and meaning of the dance than if they were to perform someone else's choreography. By having this personal connection to what they are dancing, choreographers often feel a unique joy and outlet of expression, which can often lead to positive mental and physical outcomes. Olsen and McHose indicated:

> Dancing and art making are natural doorways to self-discovery. For those who love their bodies, the passion and drive of movement might come without resistance. Yet, dancing requires wholeness – growing all parts of the self. If we stay purely at the physical level, over time the body gets hard and dull. Opening to unknown realms deepens and enlivens creative work. And for those who have a difficult relationship with body – emotional or physical challenges, overload or lack of weight, or a stubbornly intuitive or intellectual

> nature that would rather not be bothered with focusing on body – dance, if allowed, will unfold new dimensions. (8)

In addition, Olsen and McHose suggested that the process of dance making "…builds one's capacity to feel emotions when facing the immensity of life's events" (37-38).

In Coe's article, she referenced Schwartz who believed "…that student dancers become involved with the dance for a specific purpose and will only take from the dance experience what has personal meaning" (42). By using dance making to create a work of art that has meaning, choreographers can experience many benefits that can help transform their personal experiences and views on many of life's circumstances. When paired with written reflections, Coe found that written reflections:

> …give evidence of the value of students being engaged both 'inside and outside' the dance experience. This means that students become more involved in the dance – dancing, creating, working artistically and exploring personal interpretation. At the conclusion of the dance experience, students will reflect on the dance work in progress…stepping back 'outside' of the experience to judge the effectiveness of their choreographic intention. (44)

The Power of Journaling to Aid in the Transformative Process

"Over the past couple of decades, dozens of studies have shown that certain journaling practices can positively impact a variety of outcomes, including happiness, goal attainment, and even some aspects of physical health" (Feldman). According to a 2014 survey, about half of the population have written in a journal at some point in their lives and twenty-one percent of children and young people write in a diary at least once a month (Feldman). However, research suggests that perhaps more people should journal based on the mental, physical, and emotional

benefits it can have in one's life. Feldman stated that journaling helps people "…hack into the brain" and be more mindful of the positive events, feelings, and circumstances in our lives.

Journaling has been proven to help manage anxiety, reduce stress, and cope with depression. In addition, Watson et al. suggested that it also helps "…control negative symptoms and improve one's mood by: helping you prioritize problems, fears, and concerns; tracking any symptoms day-to-day so that you can recognize triggers and learn ways to better control them; providing an opportunity for positive self-talk and identifying negative thoughts and behaviors." By helping identify some of their most personal thoughts and feelings, journaling provides people with opportunities to get to know themselves better and therefore learn more about their habits and beliefs, and maybe most importantly, cause them to reflect on what they need to live a more fulfilled and happy life.

Conclusion

Body image is an ongoing concern in our society, especially amongst females, teenagers, and dancers. Dance education has an important opportunity to evolve and create new standards in the industry that can help foster a more positive body image experience for its students, especially female teenage dancers who could be the most vulnerable. Through the updated pedagogical approaches, the creative process, and reflection practices, dance has the power to help students value and appreciate their bodies not for what they look like, but rather for what they can do and what they can create, leading to a positive emotional, physical, and mental experience in the studio and beyond.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to explore whether a choreography curriculum based on body image in high school female dancers would help students increase their positive body image and find a new appreciation for their bodies. This study also focused on the impact that reflection and creation have in this transformative curriculum design, along with instructional strategies that could foster a more positive body image culture in the classroom. The following essential questions were used to guide the study and its accompanying research:

Q1 How can choreography be used as a transformative process to help female high school dancers increase their positive body image?

Q2 To what extent does reflection and creation help in the transformation of high school female dancers' body image?

Q3 What other instructional practices influence students' body image in the dance classroom?

Q4 What changes occurred in the students' perception of their own body image from the start of the curriculum to its end?

This chapter will describe the methodology used while designing and conducting this study, as well as details of how the data was collected and analyzed. In order to assess the impact that the choreography curriculum design had on the participants in the study and to answer the four essential questions, the researcher used pre- and post-test surveys, journal prompt reflections, and an exit questionnaire to collect qualitative and quantitative data. This chapter will also provide insight into the specific instruments used to collect data.

Preparation for the Study

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Northern Colorado. A formal narrative, including the purpose, methods, data procedures, risks and benefits of the study, were included in the submission for approval by the IRB. The participant consent forms, pre- and post-test survey questions, journal prompts, and exit questionnaire were also submitted for review. The IRB approval can be viewed in Appendix A.

In addition to approval from the IRB, the researcher also received permission from the Head of School and Assistant Head of School where the research was conducted. A formal letter indicating the purpose, methods, logistics, and benefits of this study was submitted, along with an extended opportunity to ask questions about the research prior to the study. This approval can be viewed in Appendix B.

Research Site and Classroom Settings

This study was conducted at a high school in California. In the Visual and Performing Arts department at this school, there are four different levels of dance classes offered: Introduction to Dance, Dance I/II, Dance III/IV, and Advanced Dance Honors. Approximately 75-100 students are involved in dance at the school each year, either as a student in one of the dance classes or as a member of the competitive athletic dance team. The total school population consists of 750 students, so about 10% of the students at this school are directly involved with dance each year. During the year that this study was conducted, 9% of students were enrolled in a dance class and 4% were members of the dance team. These percentages are displayed in Figure 1 below.

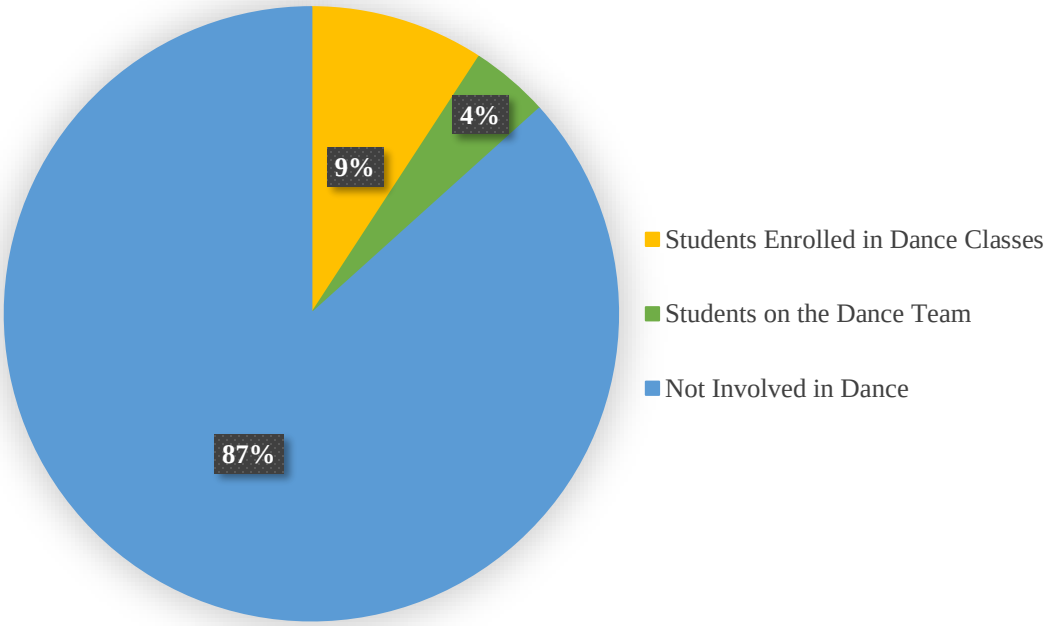

Figure 1: Percent of the School Population Enrolled in a Dance Class, on the Dance Team, or Not Involved in Dance

Students who attend this school are from eighty-two different zip codes around the county, even expanding into the nearby border city of Tijuana, Mexico. About 15% of students live in Mexico and cross the border every day for school. While the school population consists of students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, Hispanic/Latina students make up 40% of the school population, which is the largest percentage amongst ethnic backgrounds. A full breakdown of the school ethnic demographics can be found in Figure 2 below.

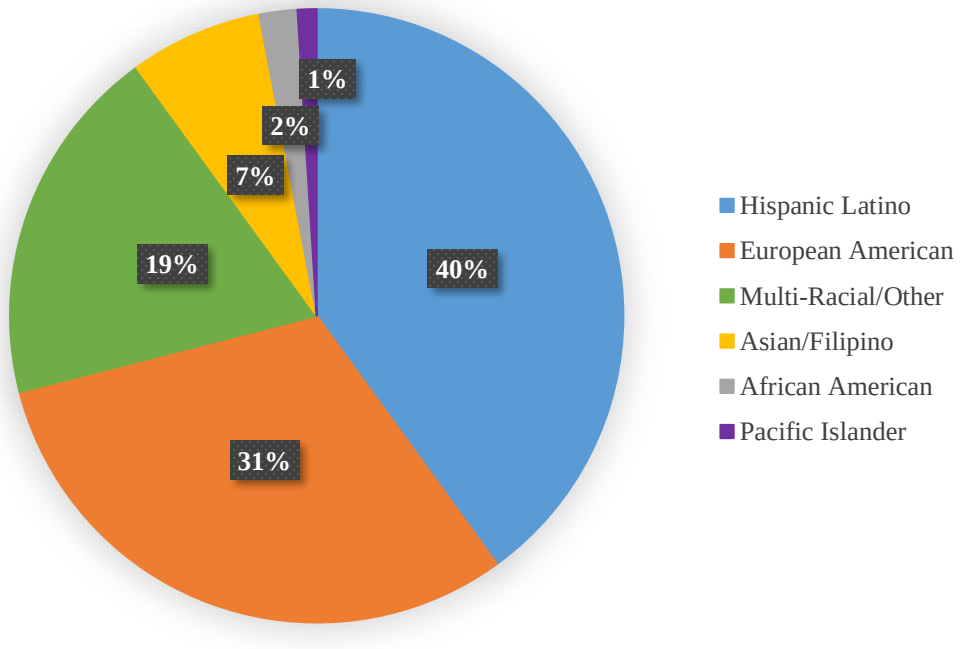

Figure 2: Percentages of Ethnic Backgrounds of the School Population

The study was held in the school dance studio, which is a private room attached to the gym on campus. The mirrors in the dance studio run along the entire length of the front wall, and a combination of windows and a sliding glass door run along the length of the back wall. During this study, the researcher covered up the mirrors for the entire eight weeks using vinyl shower curtains. During the study, it was also emphasized that there was no “front” or “back” of the room, and students were encouraged to use different directional facings at all times within the studio.

Research Participants

Participants in the study were students in the two advanced level dance courses at the school, Dance III/IV and Advanced Dance Honors. Of the 22 participants, 8 were students in the Advanced Dance Honors course and 14 were students enrolled in Dance III/IV. All participants ranged from 14 – 18 years old and students in every grade level were represented in the study. A summary of participant ages is represented in Figure 3 below.

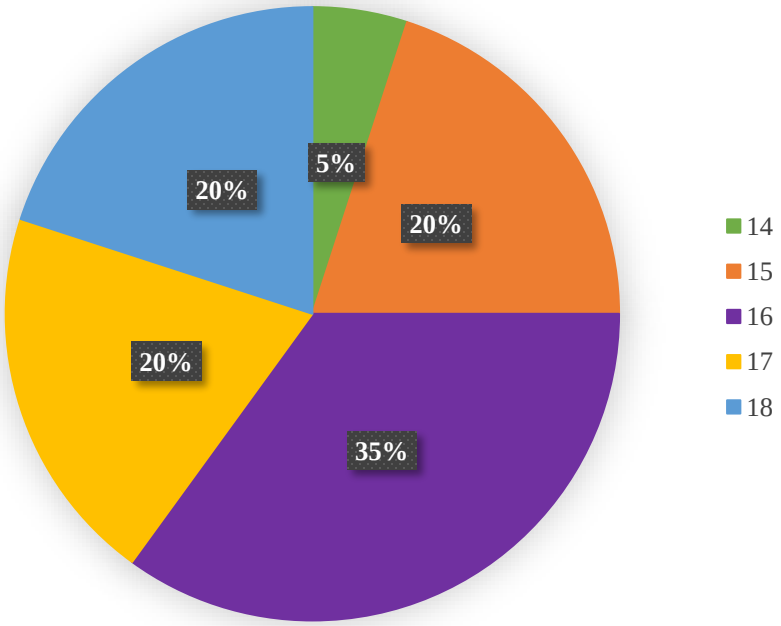

Figure 3: Percentages of Participant Age Levels

The following figure displays the percentage of student participants who were in each high school grade level.

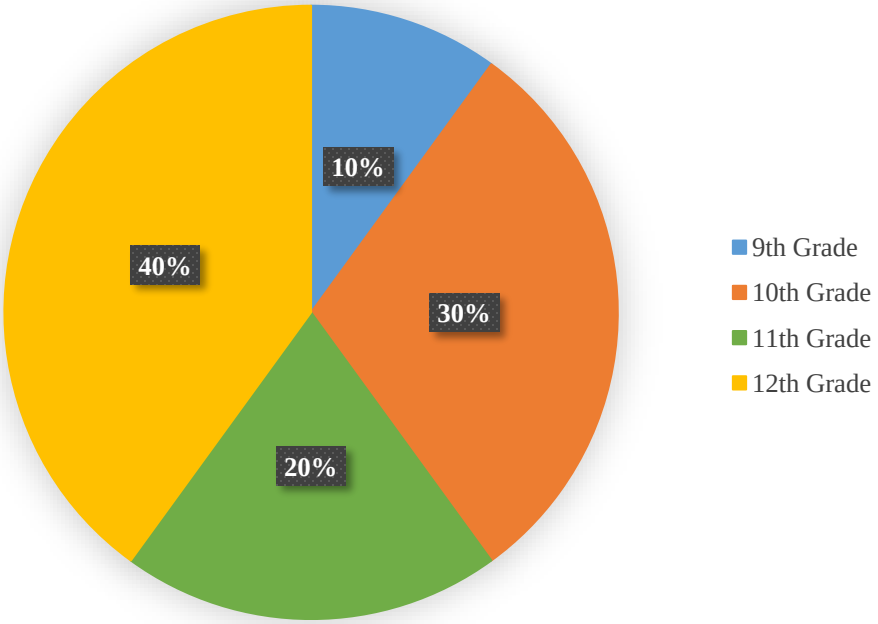

Figure 4: Percentages of Participants from Each Grade Level

Participants were also asked about their previous dance and choreography experience. Sixty percent of participants in this study reported having over ten years of dance experience and thirty-five percent of students ranged from six to ten years of experience. Only five percent of students in this study had less than five years of dance experience. In regard to choreography, all participants had at least some prior experience. Fifteen percent of participants reported having a lot of experience with choreography, thirty percent stated they had a good amount of experience, and fifty-five percent of participants in this study said they had a little, but not too much choreography experience prior to this study. The researcher specifically chose to use students from the advanced level dance courses because choreography had already been introduced to the students in the curriculum prior to this study taking place.

Thirteen of the twenty-two participants identified as being Hispanic or Latina, making up sixty-five percent of participants. Six students identified as White and three students came from an Asian ethnic background.

Consent forms were a vital and mandatory part of implementing this study and all participants were required to submit a signed consent form prior to the start of the research. A standard consent form was issued and collected for every participant who was eighteen years of age. For participants under 18 years of age, a student assent form and parent consent form were issued and collected. Sample copies of the three different consent forms can be found in Appendix C.

Research Instruments Used in the Study

Three research instruments were used to collect data in the study. The instruments used were pre- and post-test surveys, weekly journal prompts throughout the duration of the study, and an exit questionnaire. These instruments were created by the researcher based on the need to

collect the proper data that would contribute to the findings of the study. Copies of the research instruments can be found in Appendix D.

Pre- and Post-Test Surveys

Students were given an electronic pre-test survey prior to engaging in any lesson material of the research study. At the end of the study, students were also provided with an electronic post-test survey with similar questions to aid in comparing their answers. In order to ensure confidentiality, all participants were given a letter code to be used on both pre- and post-test surveys.

The first section of the pre-test survey asked participants about their demographics, including age, grade level, prior dance and choreography experience, and ethnic background. These questions helped the researcher gain insight into the population of participants. The second part of the pre-test survey included questions about how students currently felt about their body image, including questions about various factors that may or may not influence their body image.

Students completed the post-test survey at the end of the study after they had engaged in the eight-week research curriculum. The post-test survey reiterated many questions from the pre-test survey, although slightly different wording was used in order to document any change or growth in the participant's response. Results from the pre- and post-test surveys were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Journal Prompts

At the end of each week of the study, participants were given a journal prompt to help facilitate reflection, growth, and inspiration throughout the study. Students kept an online running document through Google Slides where they wrote their journal entries each week. The researcher read the journal responses every week in order to help aid in curriculum development

and participant support throughout the study. Participants' journal responses were used to collect qualitative data.

Exit Questionnaire

The exit questionnaire was posted on an online platform and consisted of six open-ended questions. Participants submitted their responses privately to the researcher. The various questions asked students to reflect on their overall experience in the study in relation to their challenges, inspirations, and choreographic experience. The final questions asked students to reflect on any changes they saw or felt in their self-talk and body image after having participated in the study. The researcher used the participant responses to gather qualitative data and identify themes that emerged from the student experience.

Designing the Choreography Curriculum

The researcher created the choreography curriculum based on the choreographic structure of theme and variation. During the introductory lesson, the researcher and students engaged in a discussion about body image, and at the conclusion of the lesson, the researcher shared insight from Amy Harman's book *Perfectly Imperfect: Compassionate Strategies to Cultivate a Positive Body Image.* When asked what a positive body image looks like, Harman said, "A positive body image means having a positive relationship with your body that is based on respect, appreciation, acceptance, trust, and kindness" (6). The researcher used this statement as a template to create the guiding topics of the variations within the students' choreographic solos. Through guided meditation, improvisation, and reflective journaling, students were asked to identify one body part that they are particularly insecure about and to create a movement phrase inspired by this body part. This phrase was their theme phrase on which each following variation was built. Table 1 outlines a brief description of the topics for the choreographic structure.

Table 1

Choreographic Structure and Topics Using Theme and Variation

Choreographic Structure	Topics/Focus of Choreography
Theme Phrase	phrase focused on a particular body part
Variation 1: Insecurity	variation focused on feelings of insecurity, using the elements of dance to portray how this body part makes them feel
Variation 2: Discovery	variation focused on discovering this body part and really getting to know what it physically and functionally does for them
Variation 3: Appreciation & Acceptance	variation focused on appreciating all this body part does and then accepting it as is, using the elements of dance to communicate appreciation and acceptance
Variation 4: Trust	variation focused on trusting this body part and using variations of the choreography to demonstrate this idea
Variation 5: Love & Kindness	variation focused on ultimately loving this body part and showing kindness to it, using the elements of dance and variations of the original theme phrase to show this progression

The researcher designed this structure to show the progression from insecurity to love and kindness, expressing the journey on the path to a positive body image.

Throughout the curriculum, journal prompts each week helped students reflect on the topic of the past week and also prepare for the upcoming variation. Students were instructed to use their journal entries as inspiration for movement development to help communicate their ideas. Class discussions were facilitated each week to help guide and support students as needed.

Table 2 shows a summary of the activities included in the choreography curriculum during this study. A more detailed copy of the curriculum and lessons can be found in Appendix E.

Table 2

Outline of Choreography Curriculum

Week	Summary of Activities
Week 1	pre-test survey, introductory discussion about body image, journal prompt #1
Week 2	guest speaker, body awareness meditation, guided improvisation, journal prompt #2
Week 3	body awareness meditation, guided improvisation, reflective journaling, exploration of specific body part, journal prompt #3
Week 4	introduction of theme & variation, introduction of choreographic structure, develop theme, develop variation #1, journal prompt #4
Week 5	review, develop variations #2 and #3, journal prompt #5
Week 6	review, develop variations #4 and #5, journal prompt #6
Week 7	review, revision and editing of choreographic phrase, choreography previews and peer feedback, add in musical component, journal prompt #7
Week 8	perform final choreography solo, journal prompt #8, post-test survey, exit questionnaire

Data Analysis

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data from this study. The quantitative data was collected through the pre- and post-test survey responses. The qualitative data was collected through the students' journal entries, exit questionnaires, and written responses from the pre- and post-test surveys.

Quantitative Analysis

In order to understand if any growth was achieved after the choreography curriculum, the researcher compared the responses from the pre-test survey to those of the post-test survey. The researcher looked for overall improvements in responses and changes in reported body image, behaviors, and feelings of confidence and self-esteem.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis was based on analysis of participants' journal entries, responses to the exit questionnaire, and written responses to the open-ended questions in the pre- and post-test surveys. Responses were all recorded electronically in writing.

The responses from the open-ended questions in the post-test survey were analyzed and compared to the responses from the open-ended questions in the pre-test survey, which helped the researcher identify any themes that indicated a change in the participants' body image after they participated in the choreography curriculum. The responses from the journal entries and exit questionnaires were compared to find similarities in ideas and feelings, as well as common themes in responses amongst participants.

Summary

At the culmination of the study, the researcher used the quantitative and qualitative data as evidence to answer the research questions. A more detailed analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The goal of this thesis study was to explore whether a choreography curriculum focused on reflection and creation could help foster a positive body image in high school female dancers. The quantitative and qualitative data from this study provided the researcher with insight into the impact that this choreography curriculum, along with intentional teaching strategies, had on the participants in this study, in particular the impact on their body image, self-confidence, and self-esteem. This chapter is organized by the three types of data collection used: pre- and post-test surveys, student responses to journal prompts, and student responses to an exit questionnaire. Students were assigned a letter code to protect for confidentiality. When referencing specific participants, they will be called “Student”, followed by their designated letter code.

Pre- and Post-Test Survey

The researcher administered a pre-test survey to all participants on the first day of the study to understand the current perspective and experience of students involved. On the last day of the study, a post-test survey was administered with very similar questions, worded slightly differently in order to ask students about progress or change that occurred in regard to body image and confidence since their involvement in the study. Both surveys consisted of 27 questions. The first six questions asked students about demographics, and answers to these questions were shared in the Methodology chapter. Discussed below are the quantitative and

qualitative analyses of student responses to the other questions in the survey, which related to student body image, confidence, and factors influencing their body image.

Quantitative Analysis

The researcher created bar graphs to depict and show changes in the students' responses between the pre- and post-test survey. Figure 5 displays a comparison of student responses to question 8, which asked students how confident they felt with the size and/or shape of their body.

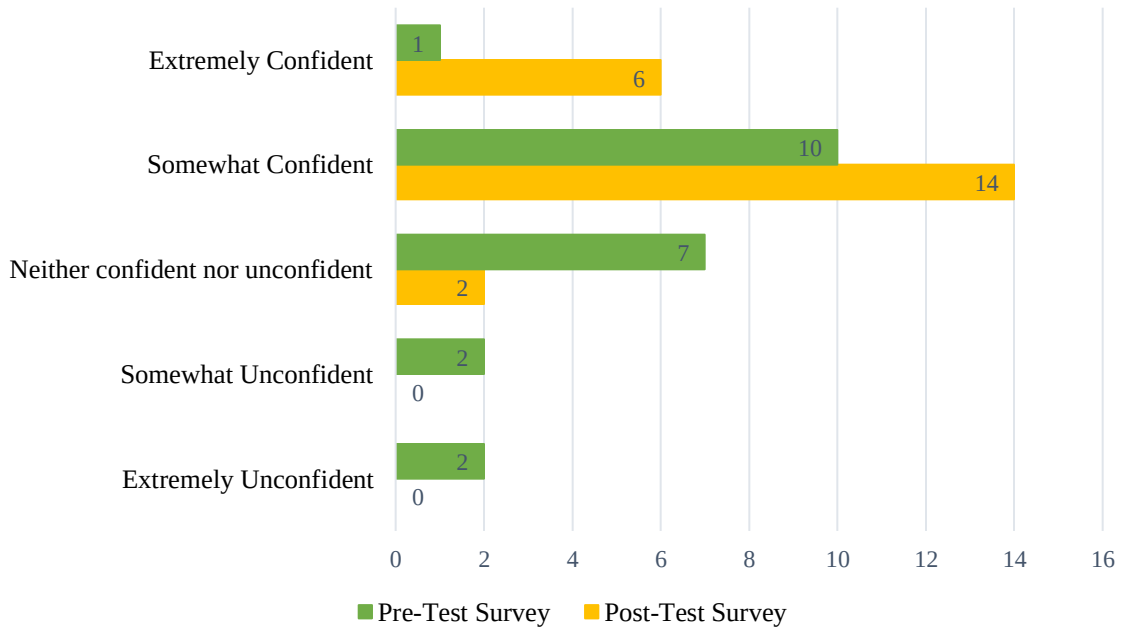

Figure 5: Student Responses When Asked How Confident They Feel with the Size and/or Shape of Their Body

On the pre-test survey, two students answered that they were extremely unconfident with the size and/or shape of their body and two students answered somewhat unconfident. On the post-test survey, no students answered in either of these categories and instead shifted to being more confident with their bodies. On the pre-test survey, only one student answered that they were extremely confident with the size and/or shape of their body, but on the post-test survey,

this number grew to six students answering that they were extremely confident. This data shows the shift in student confidence with their bodies after participating in the study.

Figure 6 below shows a comparison of student responses to question 13 on the pre- and post-test survey. On the pre-test survey, twenty out of the twenty-two student participants answered “yes”, indicating that they worry about how others perceive their body. On the post-test survey, only fourteen students said they worried about how others perceive their body and six students who previously answered “yes” on the pre-test survey now answered “no” on the post-test survey.

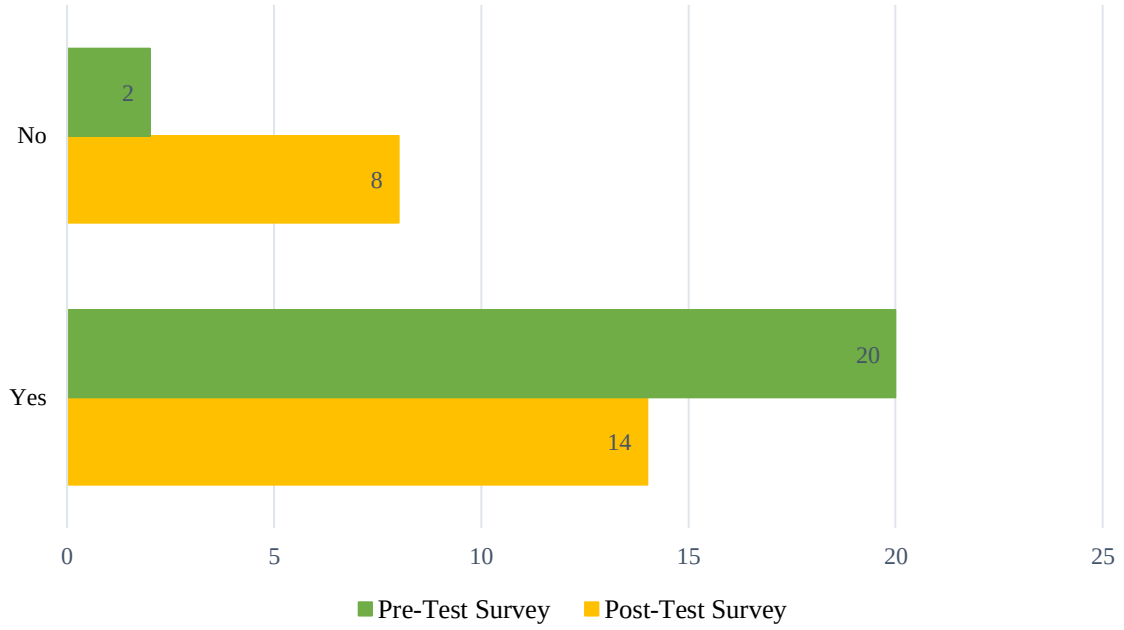

Figure 6: Student Responses When Asked if They Worry about How Others Perceive Their Body

Student responses to questions 14, 17, 19, and 20 are displayed in Figure 7, showing the differences in responses on the pre- and post-test survey. In all four questions, there was a shift in student perspective when comparing the pre-test survey results to the post-test survey results. These differences are discussed below.

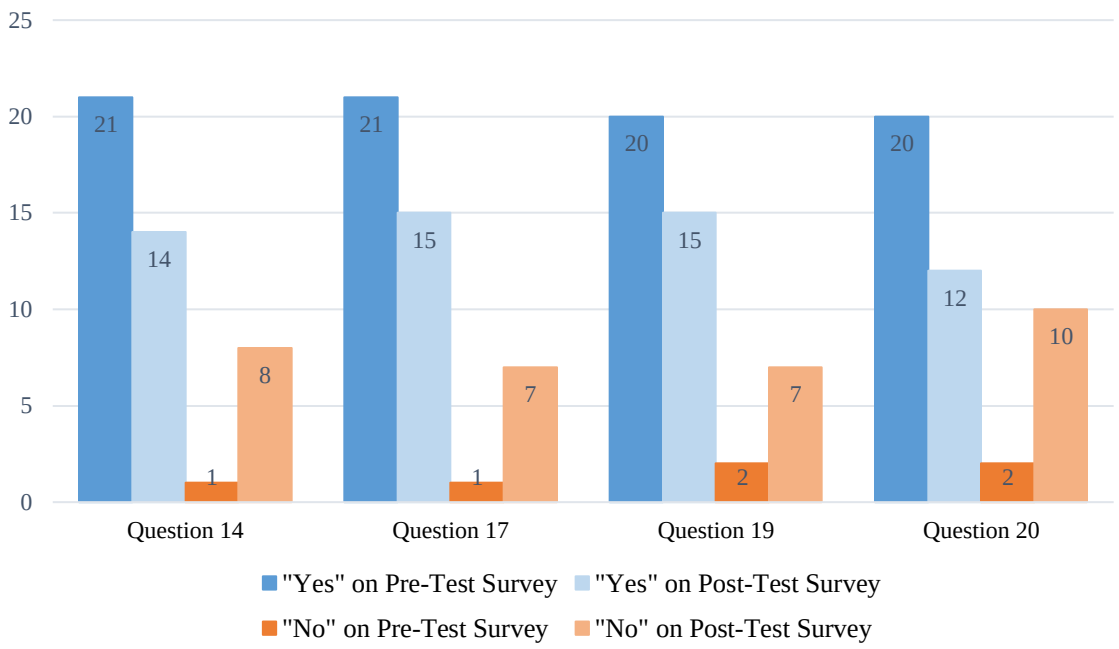

Figure 7: Student Responses on Pre-Test Survey to Questions 14, 17, 19, and 20.

On the pre-test survey, question 14 asked students, “Has the media ever negatively influenced how you feel about yourself?” and twenty-one of the twenty-two participants answered “yes.” On the post-test survey, the question was stated slightly differently and asked, “Does the media negatively influence how you feel about yourself?” Fourteen students answered “yes” on the post-test survey and eight students answered “no,” which indicated a decrease in the negative influence that the media had on the students after they participated in the study.

Question 17 on the pre-test survey asked students, “Has being a dancer ever affected the way you see your body?” Twenty-one students answered “yes” and one student answered “no.” On the post-test survey, the question asked, “Does being a dancer affect the way you see your body?” where fifteen students answered “yes” and seven students answered “no,” which means that six students changed their answer from “yes” to “no.”

On the pre-test survey, question 19 asked students, “Have you ever felt pressure in dance to ‘look’ a certain way?” Twenty students answered “yes” and two students answered “no.” On

the post-test survey, question 19 asked students, “Do you feel pressure in dance to ‘look’ a certain way?” where fifteen students answered “yes” and seven students answered “no.” These results show there were five students who responded differently after participating in the study, indicating that while they previously felt pressure in dance to “look” a certain way, they did not feel that pressure after participating in the study.

Question 20 was worded the same on both the pre- and post-test surveys and asked students, “Does the way you feel about yourself affect your mood?” Twenty students answered “yes” on the pre-test survey and twelve answered “yes” on the post-test survey. This means eight students answered differently on the post-test survey.

Figure 8 below shows student responses on the pre- and post-test survey when asked about their confidence level when they look in the mirror. On the pre-test survey, students were asked if they have ever looked in the mirror and felt extremely confident, to which twenty students answered “yes” and two students answered “no.” On the post-test survey, the question asked if students ever look in the mirror *now* and feel extremely confident, to which the two students who previously answered “no" now answered “yes.” This data indicated to the researcher that after participating in the study, the two students who changed their answer from the pre-test survey can now say that they are able to look in the mirror and feel confident.

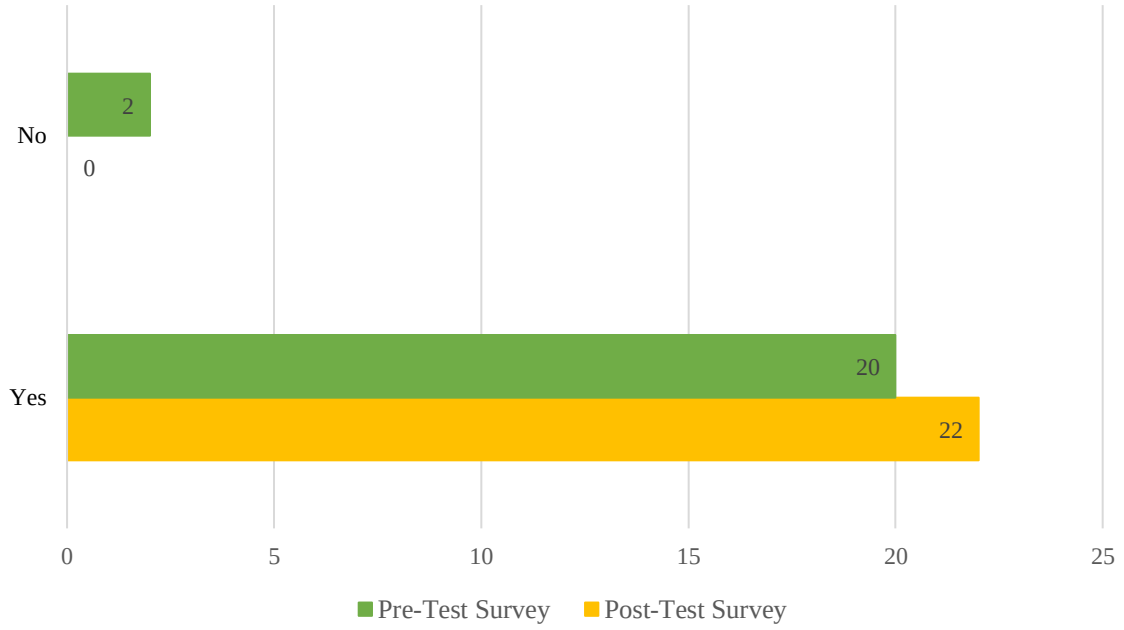

Figure 8: Student Responses When Asked about Confidence Level When They Look in the Mirror

The last multiple-choice question on the survey asked students, “Have you found any successful ways to help get rid of or overcome negative thoughts about your body?” On the pre-test survey, ten students answered “no” and twelve students answered “yes.” When asked the same question on the post-test survey, nineteen students now answered that yes, they have found successful ways to help get rid of or overcome negative thoughts about their body. While three students still answered that they have not found successful tools to help overcome their negative thoughts about their body, seven students now answered “yes” who previously answered “no,” which indicates a positive change after participating in the study. This data is represented in Figure 9.

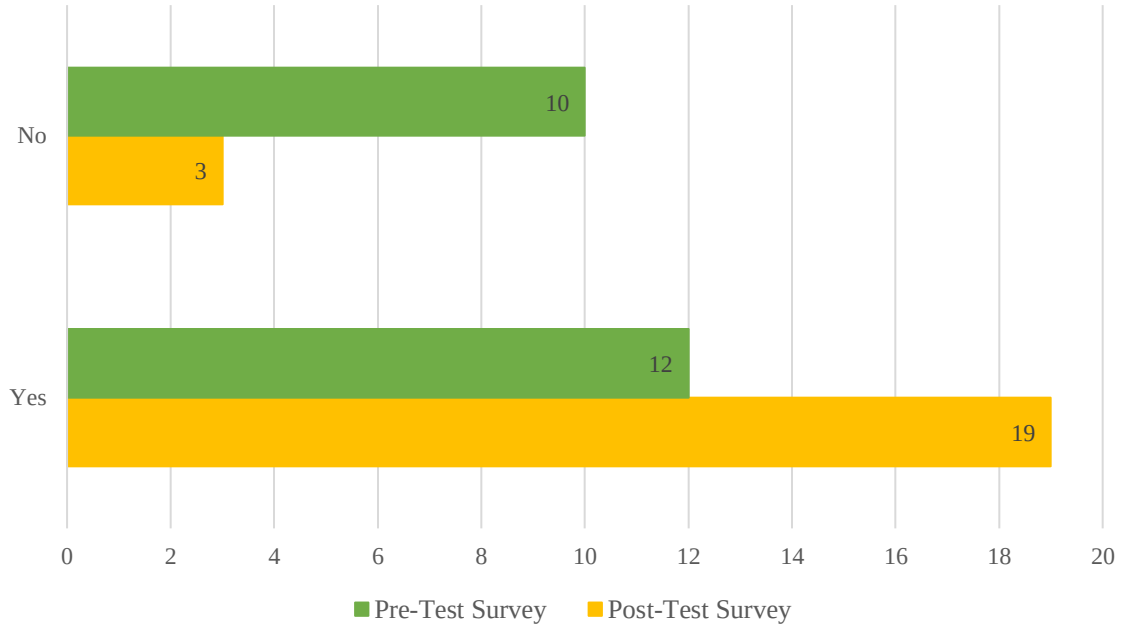

Figure 9: Student Responses When Asked if They Have Found Any Successful Ways to Help Get Rid of or Overcome Negative Thoughts about Their Body

The quantitative data explained above from the pre- and post-test survey helped the researcher describe important changes in student perspectives after participating in the study. A qualitative analysis of student responses to the open-ended questions in the surveys is presented below.

Qualitative Analysis

In addition to the multiple-choice questions on the pre- and post-test surveys, the researcher asked the participants various open-ended questions to gain deeper insight into their perspectives and experiences. By comparing these student responses from the pre- and post-test surveys, the researcher was able to identify notable areas of growth after the students participated in the study. The sections below are organized by four of the key open-ended questions.

Question 16

Question 16 asked students who responded “yes” to question 15 to further explain their answer. Question 15 asked students if the size and/or shape of their body has ever prevented them from doing something they wanted to do. Ten students answered “yes” to this question on the pre-survey and explained this answer further in their response to question 16. The main themes present in student responses on the pre-test survey were that the size and/or shape of their body has prevented them from going to the pool or beach, wearing certain items of clothing, or eating food in front of other people. On the post-test survey, while only six students answered “yes” and explained their answer, the responses generally acknowledged the same topics: going to the pool or beach, wearing certain clothing items, or eating specific foods. However, one notable response from Student R showed growth in this area. Student R said, “I used to not wear tank tops, but now I do because I am less scared to show my arms.”

Question 18

Question 18 asked students who responded “yes” to question 17 to further explain their answer. Question 17 asked students if being a dancer affects the way they see their body, and in question 18, those students who said “yes” were asked to explain what aspect of being a dancer has an effect on the way they see their body. This question provided the researcher with a lot of insight into the student perspective on how much dance impacts their body image on a daily basis. All but one participant answered “yes” and explained their reasoning. The main themes in student responses were that costumes, mirrors, corrections and teacher comments, and comparison to other dancers impacted their body image.

On the pre-test survey, Student N shared, “Aspects like looking in the mirror for hours each week, getting corrections that I feel I cannot change because of my body, and feeling

unhealthy when I dance all have had an effect on me." Similarly, Student R said, "…looking at a mirror like every day for long periods of time each day really damages my mental health sometimes. The people in my dance company would also make us attend diet workshops." On the post-test survey, while Student R still answered that being a dancer has an effect on her body image, she showed growth in her response after participating in the study. She shared, "Looking in the mirror has become more of a chore because of dance, and I just always seem to be judging myself when I do look at my body. But it has gotten so much better, and I have learned to love my body a lot."

Student K stated on the pre-test survey that certain movements "…just don't always look the way I would want them to look." However, on the post-test survey, she said, "…through this project, I found that I actually really liked how the final dance looked and how I looked while performing it." Throughout the study, this student was not able to criticize and evaluate their movements in the mirror because it was covered up for the duration of the study. Instead, the student had to choreograph based on how the movement *felt* in her body. Through her response on the post-test survey, the researcher gathered that the student finally enjoyed watching the movement of her body at the end of the class because she did not have the chance to criticize the movement throughout the process.

Question 25

Question 25 asked students, "When you are feeling down or upset about the way you look, what do you do?" On the pre-test survey, the main response from students was that they try to distract themselves in some way. The main methods of distraction that emerged from the responses were working out, hanging out with friends, reading, sleeping, or listening to music. Students also expressed two polar opposite coping mechanisms: binge eating or being extremely

cautious about what they ate and barely eating at all. In another response, Student I noted that "[I] try and hide my body as much as I can."

On the post-test survey, the responses were generally more positive. While students still expressed a need for distraction, the researcher noticed a positive shift in the tone of their responses. Student G shared, "Even though I still have my lows, I am much better at being aware of my feelings and how I talk to myself. I say to myself that this is the body that God gave me, and I don't want to spend my life hating on it. I should nourish it with love and kindness so it will give that back to me." Student H said, "Sometimes I just get sad and get in my feel[ings]s but more recently I've been saying positive things to myself and pulling myself out of those thoughts." Another student, Student P, expressed appreciation for her body and stated, "When I feel down or upset about the way I look, I try to remind myself of how my body allows me to do everything in dance, and how I wouldn't be able to do what I love (dance) without it."

Question 27

Similar to Question 25, the last free response question on the pre- and post-test survey asked students to explain what has helped them overcome negative thoughts about their body. Responses on the pre-test survey again centered on the topics of distraction, but also included journaling and engaging in positive self-talk. On the post-test survey, an overwhelming number of responses included comments about the positive self-talk and appreciation towards their bodies that they now engage in after partaking in the study. Below are a variety of responses from students.

Student D reflected, "Whenever I am starting to have negative thoughts about my body, I remember how different everyone's body is and no one has the exact same body as someone else. I also remember how much my body does for me and how it allows me to live and how

lucky I am to have every single body part." Student W shared, "I now take a moment to realize that my body has not given up on me. It's gotten me through car crashes, through over 35 shows, and through 17 years." Another participant, Student C, expressed, "For me, it helps to appreciate all that my body does for me, not just what it looks like." These responses represent only three students' perspectives, but out of the nineteen responses to this question, all of them spoke about positive self-talk and coping mechanisms.

Summary of Pre- and Post-
Test Survey Data
Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative data from the pre- and post-test survey allowed the researcher to identify areas of growth in student confidence with their bodies and an increase in positive responses to the open-ended survey questions.

Journal Responses

At the end of each week of the study, participants were given a journal prompt to help facilitate reflection, growth, and inspiration throughout the study. The researcher used the students' journal responses to collect additional qualitative data and identify common themes throughout these responses. These findings are discussed below and organized by the week they were asked in the study.

Week 1

Journal prompt #1 asked students, "What has been your journey with body image up to this point in your life? Discuss any struggles, successes, or feelings about your body that you may have experienced in the past or currently experience." The researcher wanted to gain insight into each student's journey with body image and identify any common themes throughout the responses.

Most students shared that their journey with their body image has been a struggle for awhile now, but a few students expressed that they have had a really good relationship with their body and feel confident most of the time. Regardless of whether their journey had been easy or rough, a common thread throughout responses were the influence of friends and families on how they felt about their bodies.

Another theme that emerged from the journal responses were that those who struggled with body image said that their hardships began in middle school. Every student said that they noticed this shift in fifth, sixth, seventh, or eighth grade.

The last common influence that the researcher gathered from this journal prompt was the impact that dance, particularly ballet, and dance teachers had on how they viewed their bodies. Three students specifically noted that their ballet studios would hold annual diet and nutrition workshops, adding to their already heightened awareness about how their body looked. Student C explained, "I also started to compare my body to the other dancers at ballet class, noticing that my thighs were bigger than most of theirs or that my stomach stuck out a little over the line where my tights ended." Another student said that the college application for the musical theatre program she was applying to asked for her weight. This student added, "So the additional stress of possibly not getting a spot in a program because of how much I weigh is making this 'positive body image' thing very hard."

In regard to teacher influence, Student M talked about her experience with a past dance teacher and said, "There was this dance teacher I used to have and she made us try on our competition costumes for the first time. She saw them on us and said, 'You guys need to lose some weight so these costumes can actually look good on you.' That comment made me hate my body even more, and it stuck with me for a while." Although this student indicated that this

encounter was years ago, she emphasized how much it still stays with her today. She did acknowledge that her body image is not always negative, but something that fluctuates on a day-to-day basis. She finished by saying, “It’s hard not to cry about it for hours, it’s hard not to try and prevent yourself from eating, but I’m trying, I’m still working on it, and I’m growing and maturing. I know that if I remember to love myself, I’ll slowly get back to the place I was when I was 10 where I truly loved myself. It just takes time.”

These journal responses provided background information to the researcher in regard to where the participants were on their journey with body image and what situations they have experienced in the past. It also helped guide the researcher in regard to instructional strategies and being aware of the language and commentary used in the classroom.

Week 2

The second week of the study began with students taking part in a body awareness meditation. Each day this week, the students started class with the same meditation, and the journal prompt at the end of the week asked students to reflect on this experience. Every student commented that they had never taken the time before to just sit and focus solely on their body. Student L wrote in her journal:

> The guided meditation made me more aware of my body. Once the meditation started, it brought me into a world of peace and acceptance with my body. It mentally made me appreciate body parts that I never see or appreciate. Physically touching my body made me think of every small move I make and the contribution each body part makes in order for my body to move. Emotionally feeling every inch of my body made me realize how perfectly imperfect my body is…. It was a meditation that I never knew I would need; it brought me to peace with myself and my body.

Week 3

During the third week of the study, students engaged in an exercise that asked them to identify a body part that they were particularly insecure with, and then the researcher led students through a guided improvisation inspired by and focused on this body part. The journal prompt for week three asked students to reflect on this experience: "What feelings came up for you during these exercises? What did you notice?" The main theme in student responses was newfound appreciation. Students realized how much their least favorite body part helped them move and do what they love most. Student G revealed:

> I truly became more aware of what my legs actually allow me to do…. I was able to gain consciousness of how my legs allow me to move from one space to the other, how they allow me to glide across the floor, extend my legs, and just move with the music. It reminded me that without my legs, I would not be the dancer I am. Even though my legs are my biggest insecurity, I am slowly learning how to love them more and more, and starting to focus on what they do for me, instead of how they look.

Another theme that emerged from student responses to the third journal prompt was how safe they felt in the classroom environment and to be vulnerable while exploring movement. Student M wrote in her journal, "Just being able to express myself with no judgement really does make dancing feel better in so many ways. I didn't have to worry about my technique or performance. It was like a huge relief was washed upon me."

Student N beautifully summarized both themes of appreciation and safety in her response:

> Having the prompt of improvising initiating from just my legs helped me gain a new sense of appreciation and trust in my legs. Especially while dancing with my eyes closed,

> I was able to feel calm and know that in any circumstance, my body knows what it's doing. I did not have to worry about looking good; I could just move. That sort of certainty in my movement doesn't really come easily to me. It almost felt like literally dancing in my room by myself late at night. I felt able to experiment any way that I want, free of judgement. Overall, class this week made me feel comfortable in my own body and encouraged me to experiment with and experience parts of my body I did not appreciate before.

Week 4

A key method in fostering a positive body image during this study was having students really *discover* parts of their body with the hope to then appreciate them more. In order to begin this discovery process, journal prompt #4 instructed students to take some time to observe how other people use the body part about which they have identified as being their most insecure. The researcher then asked, "What do you notice about this body part and how [other people] use it? Are there any emotions or certain circumstances tied to its movements?" Students were instructed to write down at least ten observations, being as descriptive as possible. Below are some of the student responses and key takeaways. Similar to the journal responses in week three, students expressed a new appreciation for their body that they had not previously realized.

Student R's most insecure body part was her stomach, which she mostly referred to as her "belly." While observing other people use this body part, some of the observations she made were:

> 1) The space in my stomach allows me to eat foods I like. Same with my parents. Like my belly fat reminds me that I have the ability to eat. 2) Belly fat protects my stomach, intestines, and other organs. 3) I mean our uterus is protected with our belly so I guess it

> is a great part of the body because it protects something super important: reproduction and the ability to be childbearing and have a family in the future.

Student R realized all the functional, amazing things her stomach or "belly" does for her on a daily basis, and it also made her appreciate that it is a privilege to even have food to satisfy her stomach's cravings.

Student L expressed a "turning point" in her journey with her body image after participating in this journal exercise and shared her epiphany:

> As Albert Einstein said, "Legs are the wheels of creativity." This quote stood out to me because as a dancer, my legs allow me to move in every direction. They take me places without me noticing where I am heading. During dance class, I love to see the different ways legs are used. Every single one of my classmates uses them differently and in a unique way. When I do flamenco, I need strength and power in order to make my heels sound loud. My legs take me everywhere, I use them to drive, walk, and dance…. During my trip, I had a guide that was in a wheelchair and it made me realize that I need to be grateful for my legs. He was a good example of "Nothing is impossible." Whenever he got stuck or needed "help," he took his time and got through it. He didn't want any help because he said that if people help him get through those challenges, he'll never learn how to do it. This man has been the best gift along my trip. Although he doesn't have legs, he has a big heart and a wheelchair that takes him anywhere. Day after day, I realize how crucial our legs are: big, small, short or long, they allow us to move. I see myself not criticizing them as I used to because of people like my guide that set an example for others.

This student realized that not everyone is lucky enough to even have legs that allow them to do a basic task like walking, and while this student criticizes their legs every day, at least she has legs. Similar to Student R, Student L found a new appreciation for her least favorite body part and also realized the privilege it is to have functioning body parts that help us live and go about our daily lives.

Week 5

By this point in the study, students had completed their choreography through the third variation of their theme, and week five specifically focused on discovery, appreciation, and acceptance. The researcher asked, "How has your view of yourself shifted over the last five weeks? Have you noticed any change in your self-talk, mindset, behaviors, or feelings towards your body image or self in general?" The researcher hoped to gain insight into the progress of students' mindset or feelings towards their bodies at this point in the study. The responses below share some insight into the student perspective.

At this point in the study, all of the students expressed a difference in how they see their body. Instead of focusing on how it looks, they noticed that they now focus on what it does for them and how strong and healthy it is. Their self-talk improved and their relationship with their body became more positive. They no longer criticized their bodies as often as they used to, and they also reported that they compared themselves to other students less often.

Student N wrote a profound reflection, and with her permission, the researcher confidentially shared her journal response with the other student participants as a source of inspiration. She wrote:

> The main change I have noticed in the past few weeks is irritation. I think that going through all of these little discoveries is almost calling out how stupidly negative my self-

talk can be sometimes. I see that it's sort of ironic to talk negatively about my negative self-talk, but it is still frustrating. The past few weeks have shown me that I spend and waste so much of my time hating myself or hating my body that it blinds me from all of the things I do love. I could go a whole ballet class feeling absolutely crappy, for lack of better word, because I think I look fat that day or something, that I forget why I even dance in the first place. I forget that joy is associated with my movement and that stunts my progress as well. It makes me even more mad when I try to get to the root of such self-critical thoughts and cannot find a valid reason. It's almost suffocating to know that I can walk through a perfectly good day clouded by the idea that I am not good enough, and not because someone hurt me or anything, but because my brain decided to hate myself that day. I find that so insanely ridiculous. It gets even more annoying because I know in my heart that if anyone around me or anyone other than me that I loved felt that way, I would disagree right away. So, why can't I treat myself the same way all of the time? Other than that blatant frustration, I feel that being aware of and reflecting on such thoughts will help me grow as a person in the future.

Week 7

During week seven of the study, students were refining and editing their choreography in preparation for the final performance of their solo. Students were paired in groups of two and asked to perform their dance piece for their peers and engage in a conversation about their process and inspiration for their solo. Peers also provided feedback to one another and were given time to workshop together. Journal prompt #7 asked students to reflect on this time with their peers: "After watching your peers show previews of their choreography today and talking

about their inspiration and process, what did you notice? What feelings came up for you? Did you make any connections to your own process and choreography?"

Many of the students expressed how comforting it was to see that other dancers experienced insecurities about their bodies as well, and oftentimes they were surprised about what their peers were insecure about. Student N was paired up with Student P and shared in her reflection:

> …my partner inspired me in different ways this week. It's seems odd to admit, but I have looked up to and been sort of intimidated by [Student P] for the majority of this year. In fact, I feel that way about a lot of my peers at school, but as a dancer, she has been a large role model for me. Even if she is the same age as me, I have always been in awe of her dancing and mentally categorized her as one of those "perfect people" in my life. That group of people to me have always been flawless and supernaturally good at their respective area, but going on this body image journey with a some of those "perfect people" makes me begin to realize that my peers are still human. To me, [Student P]'s leg extensions look amazing, but it never occurred to me that to her, her legs are one of her insecurities. It was sort of another epiphany I have had in these past few weeks, that even the people that seem so put together are not immune to feeling negatively about themselves. This concept was a comforting reminder that I am not alone when it comes to the bitterness or hurt I feel about myself, and that my definition of perfection may be very different from someone else's.

Student K commented on how much she enjoyed watching her peers perform and said, "It was really interesting to see that such beauty could come from insecurities. I think that usually the perspective is that whatever we are insecure about is our downfall, but through this

choreography, I saw that it was the exact opposite, and the use of these body parts made for gorgeous choreography." Many students expressed that they saw so much beauty emerge from their peers' insecurities. They not only talked about how much their appreciation for their bodies grew, but also how much their connection with and understanding of their peers grew deeper throughout this process.

Week 8

The final journal prompt in the study asked students to create their own "Body Peace Mantra." The researcher emphasized that this mantra should be an authentic, individualized expression and declarative statement that resembles what students want to attract as part of their reality. Below are some student responses.

"My body allows me to make the art I was born to make. I will forever be thankful for that" (Student W). Student C's mantra was, "My body is not just what it looks like, but what it allows me to do." Student K shared, "These feelings will pass, and you will love yourself. Make something beautiful and grow from the stress, insecurities, and hatred." Another student disclosed, "Inner peace begins with self-love towards my body" (Student F).

Lastly, Student G wrote, "My body is one of the biggest gifts I have." She also added a note about her body that read, "Thanks to you I can walk, I can dance, I can exercise, and I can live. You are beautiful, you are unique, and you will accompany me through my entire life. I will nourish you with positivity and love because it is what you deserve. You are perfectly imperfect and that is why I love you."

Summary of Data Analysis
from Journal Responses

The participants' responses to the weekly journal prompts provided the researcher with deep insight into the progressive journey that the students were on throughout the study. This

qualitative data identified common areas of growth and newfound appreciations that students discovered throughout the choreography process.

Responses to the Exit Questionnaire

At the end of the study, students were asked to answer six open-ended questions on an exit questionnaire. These questions asked students to reflect on their overall experience in the study in relation to their challenges, inspirations, and choreographic experience. The researcher used student responses to gather qualitative analysis and identify common themes. This data is shared below, organized by each question.

Question 1

The first question on the exit questionnaire asked students, “What was the most challenging aspect of this process?” Two themes emerged from student responses to this question. The first theme focused on difficulty with choreographic ideas, and the second theme centered around the concept of focusing on an insecurity for an extended period of time.

A handful of students noted that what they found most challenging was coming up with new ideas for their solo. Students found it difficult to continue to find new movements inspired by the one body part they were focusing on. This was especially true for the beginning few weeks, but many students commented that as they began to discover their body part more and participate in the journal entries; they found it easier to come up with new movements because they felt more comfortable with their body part and had more inspiration on which to base their movement. In addition, Student P said, “I think the most challenging aspect of this process was choreographing based on how things felt, not on how they looked.” She stated that choreographing without a mirror was such a new concept to her and she found it extremely

difficult to try and focus on the feeling of the movement verses the image it projected in the mirror.

Students also voiced that focusing on their insecurity was difficult during this process. Student J shared, “I think the most challenging aspect in this process was actually focusing on my insecurities. Normally I would just try to forget about them, cover them up, and hope that no one else was looking at my biggest insecurity.” Student L disclosed, “The most challenging part of this process was showing everyone what my biggest insecurity was. Talking about it made me feel uncomfortable and freeing at the same time.” Student M said that the most challenging aspect for her was that she truly had to look at the body part she hated most and “…overcome the fear of showing it off and learn to love it no matter what.”

Question 2

The researcher then asked the participants, “What was the most inspiring or rewarding aspect of this process?” One clear theme was present in almost all of the student responses: a sense of community and belonging. The students felt a connection to their peers as they all embarked on this journey together, and they found comfort in knowing that they were not alone.

Student D shared, “The most inspiring or rewarding aspect of this process was seeing everyone grow their choreography and confidence as the weeks progressed. It was inspiring to see that I was not alone in this process of trying to love myself and my body.” Another student added, “Just sharing our insecurities and knowing that we all go through struggles really inspired me to push through and keep finding love for myself” (Student G).

Question 3

The third question on the exit questionnaire instructed students to describe what it felt like to choreograph their own original work about something so personal to them. Responses

varied from students having a hard time choreographing something so personal to them to other students really enjoying the process and opportunity to create a dance all about them.

Student M had mixed feelings and although she concluded that it was a very freeing process for her, it was not her favorite. She typically likes to dance to forget about her stresses, insecurities, and worries, but this project made her focus on those things instead.

On the other hand, many students voiced how much they enjoyed the chance to finally perform a dance that was about them and about their own story. Student T said, "…it felt like I had control. I felt like I was able to make my insecurity not feel so much like an insecurity anymore." Another student mentioned that "…it was a lot easier to have an emotional connection to the choreography because it was so personal to me and I knew exactly what I was dancing about" (Student P).

Student N eloquently responded to this question and shared:

> My choreography felt like a diary. It seemed so intimate and my little secret that I could cherish. During the week we cleaned and made final decisions on choreography, every night I would change something. I am sure it definitely strayed from my theme, but during those night sessions I told myself to value my story more than a pretty line. It was like a conversation with myself, being a mentor to myself, and it had this sort of safe feeling. I have been choreographing a lot of little pieces and combos this year, but this was the first time that it felt completely me, and not a stolen storyline from a song.

Question 4

Next, the researcher inquired, "Did you notice a change in your *self-talk* throughout this process? If yes, describe theses changes in your self-talk." All students noted that they did notice a positive change in their self-talk after participating in this study. They also said that while their

negative self-talk did not disappear, they would now *notice* when negative thoughts and self-talk appeared and then use positive self-talk to help them combat those negative feelings. Awareness of negative self-talk and having the tools to then say something positive to themselves was a common theme throughout the responses. Student G disclosed:

> I honestly did feel a big difference in how I talk to myself. Even though I have always considered myself a person who has high self-esteem and advocates that self-love is the most important type of love, there are obviously some times when I am way too hard on myself. I used to feel really self-conscious about my body sometimes, and would always feel extremely guilty when I "overate" or simply didn't feel my best, but now I've learned to control that and be more conscious of what goes through my mind, and what words I fuel my body with. I have changed my mindset to working *with* and *for* my body, rather than against it.

Question 5

The researcher then asked the students to describe any successes or growths that came up for them during the process, specifically related to *dance* and *choreography*. Most students shared that they found new ways of moving that they would have never necessarily tried before, and that it pushed them outside of their comfort zone when it came to choreographic choices. They also felt a deeper connection to their bodies because they felt as though they really *knew* their bodies now and how it *felt* in movement, when before it was based more on how they looked while dancing. Students also noted that they compared themselves to other dancers around them less often.

One student stated that she normally criticizes herself when she watches videos of herself dancing, but when she watched the recording of the final performance of her solo, she realized

how beautiful her own body could look while dancing. She added, “I saw my body differently. I saw my body as it is, and saw it dancing with vulnerability, transparency, and love” (Student G).

Question 6

In the last question of the exit questionnaire, the researcher hoped that students would summarize how their overall body image changed or did not change after taking part in this study. Responses to this question helped the researcher gather data to answer the last essential question, which asked students, “What changes occurred in the students’ perception of their own body image from the start of the curriculum to its end?” Overall, students expressed a positive shift in their body image and noticed increased self-confidence. Some of the responses to this question are shared below.

Students P spoke about her increased self-confidence:

> At the beginning of this process, I think I was *comfortable* in my body. But now I would definitely say that I am comfortable *and* starting to gain more *confidence* with my body. I think one of my favorite parts about the process was how the mirrors were covered because this had a huge impact on the change in my body image. I was able to dance and enjoy class without worrying about how my body looked, or if the way I did something looked the exact same to how someone else did something. Overall, I would say that after this process, I am just a lot more confident and accepting of myself, and not as worried about what others might think of my body or my dancing.

Students G and U had profound takeaways and showed a lot of growth through their responses. They both emphasized the realization that body image is one’s *relationship* to their body. This was something the researcher stressed often during the study. Student G shared:

> I have noticed a big difference between my relationship with my body at the beginning of the study and now. There are obviously days when I still catch myself being too hard on myself because of my appearance…but that's the difference right there: I catch myself now. The main thing I have learned throughout this process is that there is no "perfect relationship" with your body, just as there isn't a perfect relationship with couples. How this works is that you have to find the relationship that works FOR YOU, and that is exactly what I have done. I have accepted the fact that I am perfectly imperfect, that there are things about myself that I can work on, and there are things about myself that I am going to have to learn to love as they are. With this mentality, I am able to love myself as I am, while still taking care of myself and working on improving myself in any way that I can to feel happier, healthier, and filled with love.

Similarly, Student U disclosed:

> …I feel like I am best friends with my insecurity now. I love the idea that you should treat your body like you are in a relationship with it. Relationships have ups and downs but as long as you always know [that] you love them and that they will have your back, everything will be okay. My insecurities are my strengths, they lift me up, and they will always be there for me.

Summary

This chapter presented quantitative data collected from the pre- and post-test surveys, in addition to qualitative data gathered from responses to the open-ended questions in the pre- and post-test surveys, weekly journal prompts, and exit questionnaire. This data was used to answer the essential questions of this research study and also gauge student growth in regard to body image, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore whether a choreography curriculum based on body image for high school female dancers would help students increase their positive body image and find a new appreciation for their bodies. This study also focused on the impact that reflection and creation have in this transformative curriculum design, along with instructional strategies that could foster a more positive body image culture in the classroom. The research involved twenty-two high school female participants who were enrolled in advanced level dance courses. The data from the study was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This data was collected using results from a pre- and post-test survey, weekly journal reflections, and responses to an exit questionnaire. The goal of this study was to answer four essential questions:

Q1 How can choreography be used as a transformative process to help female high school dancers increase their positive body image?

Q2 To what extent does reflection and creation help in the transformation of high school female dancers' body image?

Q3 What other instructional practices influence students' body image in the dance classroom?

Q4 What changes occurred in the students' perception of their own body image from the start of the curriculum to its end?

Implications of the Study

The study showed that there was a positive correlation between students participating in the choreography curriculum and their reported body image. All the students' post-test survey

responses demonstrated an increased confidence in body image at some level when compared to the responses on the pre-test survey. The students' weekly responses to the journal prompts expressed a newfound appreciation for their bodies, leading to increased body image, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Many students also shared that they now see their relationship with their body as just that – a *relationship* that requires care, understanding, kindness, and love. In the exit questionnaire, students collectively stated that the choreography project was transformative in helping them connect with their peers and ultimately themselves, gaining a deeper connection and appreciation for their bodies.

The researcher also wanted to gain more insight into what instructional practices may influence students' body image in the dance classroom. From student responses on the pre-test survey, the researcher learned that students' views of themselves and their bodies were heavily influenced by their dance teacher's critiques and commentary in the classroom. The researcher took careful note of this throughout the study and intentionally used positive affirmations during instruction, as well as kinesthetic imagery when exploring movement. Another impact on students' body image in the dance classroom was the use of the mirror, so the researcher removed this element from the classroom for the duration of the study and found a positive response from all students. While students admitted it was difficult at first, they ultimately shared that it allowed them to explore how movement *felt* in their bodies, which is something they did not often think about before the study. Students reported that they felt more in-tune with their bodies and ultimately more deeply connected with their movement.

Limitations to the Study

Although the outcome of this study demonstrated a positive relationship between students participating in the choreography curriculum and body image, it is important to note some

limitations. All the research instruments were created by the researcher, who was also the instructor, and while the researcher attempted to create questions without bias, the survey questions, exit questionnaire, and journal prompts were not tested for validity and reliability. Other limitations included the small sample size of participants and potential research bias of the researcher.

Connections to Earlier Studies

The researcher found similar findings in this study in comparison to past studies focusing on body image in the dance environment. Wendy Oliver focused on body image in the dance classroom in much of her research, and stated that some of the leading factors causing dancers to be self-conscious about their bodies in the dance studio included the use of mirrors, feedback from their instructors, and opportunities lost from what dancers perceive to be due to their body shape and ability (22). Student responses on the pre-test survey in this study reiterated these same leading factors, and the researcher made conscious choices to actively combat these factors during the study.

Oliver also emphasized that the use of the mirror becomes "…a conduit for negative self-talk" (22). Students in this study reported an increase in positive self-talk and said that they were able to find new ways to help them get rid of negative thoughts about their body after participating in this study. The researcher suggests that the removal of the mirror and focus on how the body felt in movement verses how it looked in the mirror could have been a leading factor in this mindset shift. In addition, without the use of the mirror, students were not able to compare themselves to other dancers in the room, which helped increase their confidence and self-esteem in the studio. Radell et al. also found similar findings in their study, reporting that

there was a significant increase in dancer satisfaction in regard to the appearance of different parts of their bodies when the mirror was removed (162).

This thesis study also focused heavily on students understanding and appreciating their bodies, which Grogran et al. emphasized in their dance movement psychotherapy research. Similar to the findings in their research, this study found that students felt a lack of self-consciousness and an increase in body acceptance when the mind-body connection and the kinesthetic sense were woven into the teaching methods and instructional strategies of the lessons.

Another important strategy in this study was the use of journaling and dance making to help students find a deeper connection to their bodies that could help influence their movement choices. Coe found in her research that when choreography and written reflections were paired together in the dance making process, students were "…engaged both 'inside and outside' of the dance experience" (44). After analyzing the qualitative data in this study from student journal entries and the exit questionnaire, the researcher inferred a similar result and found that journaling and dance making help enhance the student experience and transformative process.

The findings of this study combined with the findings of past studies is more evidence that body image in the dance world is a topic that needs ongoing research, development, and attention to hopefully begin to make a change in a positive direction for dance students of generations to come.

Recommendations for Further Research

Evidence from this study suggests that the carefully designed choreography curriculum used in this study, in conjunction with reflective journaling and intentional teaching strategies, has a positive impact on female high school dancers' body image, self-confidence, and self-

esteem. Further research should be conducted to determine if students' increased body image and self-confidence continues past the duration of the study. The researcher is also compelled to conduct additional research in the future with a higher number of participants and perhaps adapt the curriculum to be age appropriate for female middle school students. The researcher also recommends researching further into the impact that race, ethnicity, and/or cultural environment may play in body image.

Final Thoughts

The research suggested that the choreography curriculum and instructional strategies used in this study can help foster positive body image in female high school dancers. This study was inspired by the researcher's personal experience with body image in the dance industry and her experience working with female teenage dancers. Before this study, the researcher noticed a negative pattern between female adolescent dancers and body image and hoped to find methods to help foster a more positive body image in the dance environment. The study successfully helped identify key curriculum and instructional strategies that could be adapted and used in a variety of dance class settings, including the choreography curriculum itself and the removal of the mirror as a staple in the dance classroom. The researcher hopes that dance educators can use the tools and methods from this study in their own classrooms and help more dancers gain confidence in their own skin.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

Date:	11/10/2020
Principal Investigator:	Kelly Marshall
Committee Action:	**IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION – New Protocol**
Action Date:	11/10/2020
Protocol Number:	2010011975
Protocol Title:	Reflection, Creation, Transformation: Fostering a Positive Body Image in Female High School Dancers through a Creative Choreography Curriculum
Expiration Date:	

2010011975

The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol and determined your project to be exempt under 45 CFR 46.104(d)(701) for research involving

Category 1 (2018): RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS. Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

You may begin conducting your research as outlined in your protocol. Your study does not require further review from the IRB, unless changes need to be made to your approved protocol.

As the Principal Investigator (PI), you are still responsible for contacting the UNC IRB office if and when:

- You wish to deviate from the described protocol and would like to formally submit a modification request. Prior IRB approval must be obtained before any changes can be implemented (except to eliminate an immediate hazard to research participants).
- You make changes to the research personnel working on this study (add or drop research staff on this protocol).

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Institutional Review Board

- At the end of the study or before you leave The University of Northern Colorado and are no longer a student or employee, to request your protocol be closed. *You cannot continue to reference UNC on any documents (including the informed consent form) or conduct the study under the auspices of UNC if you are no longer a student/employee of this university.
- You have received or have been made aware of any complaints, problems, or adverse events that are related or possibly related to participation in the research.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Compliance Manager, Nicole Morse, at 970-351-1910 or via e-mail at nicole.morse@unco.edu. Additional information concerning the requirements for the protection of human subjects may be found at the Office of Human Research Protection website - http://hhs.gov/ohrp/ and https://www.unco.edu/research/research-integrity-and-compliance/institutional-review-board/.

Sincerely,

Nicole Morse
Research Compliance Manager

University of Northern Colorado: FWA00000784

2010011975

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APPENDIX B

APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL AND ASSISTANT HEAD OF SCHOOL

October 2, 2020
Re: Permission to Conduct Research

To Whom It May Concern,

We, and , the Head of School and Assistant Head of School of , grant Kelly Marshall permission to conduct her thesis study at . We are aware of the research procedures and potential risks for the study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Head of School

Assistant Head of School

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORMS

PARENT CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Reflection, Creation, Transformation: Fostering a Positive Body Image in Female High School Dancers through a Creative Choreography Curriculum
Researcher: Mrs. Kelly Culver (Marshall)
Email: mars6530@bears.unco.edu
Advisor: Sandra Minton
Advisor Contact Information: Sandra.Minton@unco.edu

I am sending this letter home with your daughter to let you know that as a graduate student at the University of Northern Colorado pursuing a Master's in Dance Education, I am conducting a research study in your daughter's Advanced Dance III/IV or Advanced Dance Honors class for my thesis. The study will evaluate the effects of a carefully designed choreography curriculum on body image in female high school dancers. As a female dancer myself who personally struggled with body image in high school, I see a specific need to address this issue with our youth and am hoping that through this study, I will be able to design a successful choreography curriculum that fosters a positive body image in young female dancers. If you grant permission and if your daughter indicates a willingness to participate, I will be conducting this research during your daughter's regularly scheduled dance class. The research will involve participating in several dance choreography classes, including reflection, improvisation, choreography, performance, and peer-reviews. In addition, a talk on body image with a qualified professional, a self-analysis pre- and post-survey, weekly journal reflections, and a post questionnaire will also be included. All research instruments will be administered during regular class time, with the exception of the journaling, and students will be expected to do some choreography work outside of class time as homework assignments.

The study will culminate with each student choreographing their own original solo work based on their personal journey with body image, specifically designed around appreciating and celebrating one aspect of their body. The curriculum will be engaging, reflective, supportive, and hopefully transformative for your daughter.

I foresee some minimal risks to participants beyond those that are normally encountered with the physical aspects of a dance class. One risk in this class will involve creating and sharing, which can make students feel vulnerable at times. I want to assure you that this class will be led in a way that promotes an encouraging and positive environment where participants will support and encourage one another. Positive reinforcement will also be used to motivate students to gain confidence and take risks without judgment. As stated in my title of this thesis project, my choreography curriculum is designed to *foster* a *positive* body image in female dance students and the study will be conducted in this same manner.

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In any published research, participants' identities will be kept confidential and will only be identified by an assigned alphabetical code. The coded list will be password protected, and only accessible by myself. Completed consent forms will be stored in Crabbe Hall, room 308, the office of Christy O'Connell-Black, Dance Education MA co-coordinator. Forms will either be mailed via FedEx or brought directly to Christy O'Connell-Black's office in Summer 2021. All data & consent forms will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about this research. Please also retain a copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me with my research and considering your daughter's participation.

Sincerely,

Kelly Culver (Marshall)

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to have my daughter take part in the study.

_____	_____
Child's Full Name (please print)	Child's Birth Date (month/day/year)
_____	_____
Parent/Guardian's Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

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STUDENT CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Reflection, Creation, Transformation: Fostering a Positive Body Image in Female High School Dancers through a Creative Choreography Curriculum
Researcher: Mrs. Kelly Culver (Marshall)
Email: mars6530@bears.unco.edu
Advisor: Sandra Minton
Advisor Contact Information: Sandra.Minton@unco.edu

Hello students! I am currently in graduate school at the University of Northern Colorado pursuing my Master's in Dance Education. As part of my Master's Thesis, I am conducting a research study in your Advanced Dance III/IV or Advanced Dance Honors class. The study will evaluate the effects of a choreography curriculum on body image in female high school dancers. As a female dancer myself who personally struggled with body image in high school, I see a specific need to address this issue with young dancers and am hoping that through this study, I will be able to design a successful choreography project that fosters positive body image in young female dancers like yourself. If you are willing to participate, the study will take place during your regularly scheduled class.

Class will look and feel like a normal dance class and will involve participating in several choreography workshops, including reflection, improvisation, dance making, performance, and peer-reviews. In addition, I will also be bringing in a guest speaker to talk with you more about body image. If you agree to participate, I will have you complete a self-analysis pre- and post-test survey, weekly journal reflections, and an exit questionnaire about your experience in the classes. These instruments will help guide my teaching throughout the study and will also help provide me with information at the end of the study to see the impact the curriculum had on you and your body image. All of this will be administered during your regular class time, with the exception of the journaling and some choreography work, which will be assigned outside of class time as homework assignments.

The study will culminate with you choreographing your own original solo based on your personal journey with body image, specifically designed around appreciating and celebrating one aspect of your body. I will walk you through all the steps and guide you in the process of creating your work. The curriculum will be engaging, reflective, supportive, and hopefully transformative for you.

Beyond the normal risks that are commonly encountered with the physical aspects of a dance class, I do see some additional risks that may affect you in this study. One risk in this class may involve creating and sharing, which can make students feel vulnerable at times. I want to assure you that this class will be led in a way that promotes a positive environment where we will all support and encourage one another. We will all engage in positive reinforcement to help motivate each other to gain confidence and take risks without judgment. As stated in the title of my thesis project, this choreography curriculum is designed to *foster* a *positive* body image in female dance students and the study will be conducted in this same manner.

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In any published research, your name and identity will be kept confidential and you will only be identified by an assigned alphabetical code. Only you and I will know your specific code. The complete coded list will be password protected, and only accessible by myself.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this research and I would be more than happy to answer them. If you would like to participate in this study, please sign below.

Thank you for considering to help me in my research!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Kelly Culver (Marshall)

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

_____	_____
Student's Full Name (please print)	Student's Birth Date (month/day/year)
_____	_____
Student's Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

Completed consent forms will be stored in Crabbe Hall, room 308, the office of Christy O'Connell-Black, Dance Education MA co-coordinator. Forms will either be mailed via FedEx or brought directly to Christy O'Connell-Black's office in Summer 2021. All data & consent forms will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study.

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

STUDENT ASSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Reflection, Creation, Transformation: Fostering a Positive Body Image in Female High School Dancers through a Creative Choreography Curriculum
Researcher: Mrs. Kelly Culver (Marshall)
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Hello students! I am currently in graduate school at the University of Northern Colorado pursuing my Master's in Dance Education. As part of my Master's Thesis, I am conducting a research study in your Advanced Dance III/IV or Advanced Dance Honors class. The study will evaluate the effects of a choreography curriculum on body image in female high school dancers. As a female dancer myself who personally struggled with body image in high school, I see a specific need to address this issue with young dancers and am hoping that through this study, I will be able to design a successful choreography project that fosters positive body image in young female dancers like yourself. If you are willing to participate in the study and if your parents also grant permission for you to participate, the study will take place during your regularly scheduled class.

Class will look and feel like a normal dance class and will involve participating in several choreography workshops, including reflection, improvisation, dance making, performance, and peer-reviews. In addition, I will also be bringing in a guest speaker to talk with you more about body image. If you agree to participate, I will have you complete a self-analysis pre- and post-test survey, weekly journal reflections, and an exit questionnaire about your experience in the classes. These instruments will help guide my teaching throughout the study and will also help provide me with information at the end of the study to see the impact the curriculum had on you and your body image. All of this will be administered during your regular class time, with the exception of the journaling and some choreography work, which will be assigned outside of class time as homework assignments.

The study will culminate with you choreographing your own original solo based on your personal journey with body image, specifically designed around appreciating and celebrating one aspect of your body. I will walk you through all the steps and guide you in the process of creating your work. The curriculum will be engaging, reflective, supportive, and hopefully transformative for you.

Beyond the normal risks that are commonly encountered with the physical aspects of a dance class, I do see some additional risks that may affect you in this study. One risk in this class may involve creating and sharing, which can make students feel vulnerable at times. I want to assure you that this class will be led in a way that promotes a positive environment where we will all support and encourage one another. We will all engage in positive reinforcement to help motivate each other to gain confidence and take risks without judgment. As stated in the title of my thesis project, this choreography curriculum is designed to *foster* a *positive* body image in female dance students and the study will be conducted in this same manner.

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In any published research, your name and identity will be kept confidential and you will only be identified by an assigned alphabetical code. Only you and I will know your specific code. The complete coded list will be password protected, and only accessible by myself.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this research and I would be more than happy to answer them. If you would like to participate in this study, I will first need permission from your parent/guardian. If they grant you permission to participate, please make sure they submit the separate Parent Consent Form in addition to your signed assent below.

Thank you for considering to help me in my research!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Kelly Culver (Marshall)

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

_____	_____
Student's Full Name (please print)	Student's Birth Date (month/day/year)
_____	_____
Student's Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

Completed consent forms will be stored in Crabbe Hall, room 308, the office of Christy O'Connell-Black, Dance Education MA co-coordinator. Forms will either be mailed via FedEx or brought directly to Christy O'Connell-Black's office in Summer 2021. All data & consent forms will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study.

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Pre-Test Survey

Demographics

Please type below your assigned Letter Code:

How old are you?

- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18

What grade level are you currently in?

- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade

How many years of dance experience do you have?

- ○ 0-5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ More than 10 years

Do you have any previous choreography experience?

- ○ None.
- ○ A little, but not too much.
- ○ A good amount.
- ○ A lot of experience.

What is your ethnicity? Select all that apply.

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I choose not to identify.

Self-Analysis - Please select the answer that relates to you the most.

How comfortable do you feel with the size and/or shape of your body?

- ○ Extremely comfortable
- ○ Somewhat comfortable
- ○ Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable

- ○ Somewhat uncomfortable
- ○ Extremely uncomfortable

How confident do you feel with the size and/or shape of your body?

- ○ Extremely confident
- ○ Somewhat confident
- ○ Neither confident nor unconfident
- ○ Somewhat unconfident
- ○ Extremely unconfident

Have you ever wanted to change your body purely for cosmetic or aesthetic reasons?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you could modify your body (ie. lose weight, gain muscle, change the size/shape of specific body parts), would you?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you answered 'yes' to the question above, how much would you want to modify your body?

	I would NOT want to modify my body in this way.	I would like SOME modifications to my body in this way.	I would like A LOT of modifications to my body in this way.
Lose weight	○	○	○
Gain muscle	○	○	○

	I would NOT want to modify my body in this way.	I would like SOME modifications to my body in this way.	I would like A LOT of modifications to my body in this way.
Change the size/shape of a specific body part	○	○	○

Rank the following body features in the order that you would MOST want to change them. To rank the choices, simply **drag** them up or down the list.

- 1 will be the body part you would like to change/modify the MOST & will appear at the top of your list.
- 8 will be the body part you would like to change/modify the LEAST & will appear on the bottom of your list.

Facial Features

Arms/Shoulders

Chest

Stomach

Hips/Glutes

Thighs/Legs

Feet/Hands

Other [ ]

Do you worry about how others perceive your body?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Has the media ever negatively influenced how you feel about yourself?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Has the size and/or shape of your body ever prevented you from doing something you wanted to do?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you answered 'yes' to the above question, please explain what it prevented you from doing.

Has being a dancer ever affected the way you see your body?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you answered 'yes' to the question above, please explain what aspect of being a dancer has had an effect on the way you see your body (i.e. looking in a mirror, alignment, costumes, etc.).

Have you ever felt pressure in dance to "look" a certain way?

- Yes
- No

Does the way you feel about yourself affect your mood?

- Yes
- No

If you answered 'yes' to the above question, please explain how often it affects your mood.

- On a daily basis
- 1-2 times a week
- A few times a month
- Rarely

Have you ever looked in the mirror and felt extremely confident?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever looked in the mirror and had negative thoughts about your self-worth based on how you look?

- Yes
- No

How much impact have the following factors had on you in regards to how you feel about your body?

	No impact on how I feel about my body	Some impact on how I feel about my body	Large impact on how I feel about my body
Internal thoughts and/or pressure I put on myself	○	○	○
Peer pressure/social interactions with friends	○	○	○
Family pressures and/or expectations	○	○	○
Dance pressures and/or expectations	○	○	○
The media	○	○	○

When you are feeling down or upset about the way you look, what do you do?

Have you found any successful ways to help get rid of or overcome negative thoughts about your body?

○ Yes

○ No

If you answered 'yes' to the question above, please explain what has helped you overcome negative thoughts about your body.

Powered by Qualtrics

Post-Test Survey

Demographics

Please type below your assigned Letter Code:

How old are you?

- ○ 13
- ○ 14
- ○ 15
- ○ 16
- ○ 17
- ○ 18

What grade level are you currently in?

- ○ 9th grade
- ○ 10th grade
- ○ 11th grade
- ○ 12th grade

How many years of dance experience do you have?

- ○ 0-5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ More than 10 years

Do you have any previous choreography experience?

- ○ None.
- ○ A little, but not too much.
- ○ A good amount.
- ○ A lot of experience.

What is your ethnicity? Select all that apply.

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I choose not to identify.

Self-Analysis - Please select the answer that relates to you the most.

How comfortable do you feel with the size and/or shape of your body?

- ○ Extremely comfortable
- ○ Somewhat comfortable
- ○ Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable

- ○ Somewhat uncomfortable
- ○ Extremely uncomfortable

How confident do you feel with the size and/or shape of your body?

- ○ Extremely confident
- ○ Somewhat confident
- ○ Neither confident nor unconfident
- ○ Somewhat unconfident
- ○ Extremely unconfident

Do you want to change your body purely for cosmetic or aesthetic reasons?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you could modify your body (ie. lose weight, gain muscle, change the size/shape of specific body parts), would you?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you answered 'yes' to the question above, how much would you want to modify your body?

	I would NOT want to modify my body in this way.	I would like SOME modifications to my body in this way.	I would like A LOT of modifications to my body in this way.
Lose weight	○	○	○
Gain muscle	○	○	○
Change the size/shape of a specific body part	○	○	○

Rank the following body features in the order that you would MOST want to change them. To rank the choices, simply **drag** them up or down the list.

- 1 will be the body part you would like to change/modify the MOST & will appear at the top of your list.
- 8 will be the body part you would like to change/modify the LEAST & will appear on the bottom of your list.

Facial Features

Arms/Shoulders

Chest

Stomach

Hips/Glutes

Thighs/Legs

Feet/Hands

Other

Do you worry about how others perceive your body?

○ Yes
○ No

Does the media negatively influence how you feel about yourself?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Does the size and/or shape of your body prevent you from doing something you wanted to do?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you answered 'yes' to the above question, please explain what it prevents you from doing.

Does being a dancer affect the way you see your body?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you answered 'yes' to the question above, please explain what aspect of being a dancer has an effect on the way you see your body (i.e. looking in a mirror, alignment, costumes, etc.).

Do you feel pressure in dance to "look" a certain way?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Does the way you feel about yourself affect your mood?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you answered 'yes' to the above question, please explain how often it affects your mood.

- ○ On a daily basis
- ○ 1-2 times a week
- ○ A few times a month
- ○ Rarely

Do you ever look in the mirror now and felt extremely confident?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Do you look in the mirror and have negative thoughts about your self-worth based on how you look?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

How much impact have the following factors had on you in regards to how you feel about your body?

	No impact on how I feel about my body	Some impact on how I feel about my body	Large impact on how I feel about my body
Internal thoughts and/or pressure I put on myself	○	○	○
Peer pressure/social interactions with friends	○	○	○
Family pressures and/or expectations	○	○	○

	No impact on how I feel about my body	Some impact on how I feel about my body	Large impact on how I feel about my body
Dance pressures and/or expectations	○	○	○
The media	○	○	○

When you are feeling down or upset about the way you look, what do you do?

Have you found any successful ways to help get rid of or overcome negative thoughts about your body?

○ Yes
○ No

If you answered 'yes' to the question above, please explain what has helped you overcome negative thoughts about your body.

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Written Journal Reflections for Students

One reflection will be given at the end of each week of the study, in the order that they are listed below. The intent of these reflections is to allow space for students to reflect and journal, process the material, and gain insight and inspiration for their choreography.

Week 1 Prompt –What has been your journey with body image up to this point in your life? Discuss any struggles, successes, or feelings about your body that you may have experienced in the past or currently experience.

Week 2 Prompt – 1) What stood out to you from our guest speaker's talk this week? Note anything that resonated with you, what you took away from it, or something you want to remember. 2) Reflect on our guided meditation & improvisation this week:

- Did it make you more aware of your body as a whole? How?
- What did it feel like, either physically, mentally, or emotionally, to take the time to get to know your body & explore it?
- Note any other takeaways you may have experienced.

Week 3 Prompt – In class this week, we identified one body part that you particularly felt insecure about and explored movement guided and inspired by this body part. What feelings came up for you during these exercises? What did you notice?

Week 4 Prompt – Take some time to observe how other people use the body part you have been focusing on as inspiration for your dance. Maybe you observe them outside at the park, during school breaks, walking down the street, your family members in your household making dinner, or even on TV. What do you notice about this body part and how they use it? Are there any emotions or certain circumstances tied to their movements? Write down at least ten observations, being as descriptive as possible. This will hopefully help inspire some of your movement choices next week.

Week 5 Prompt – How has your view of yourself shifted over the last five weeks? Have you noticed any change in your self-talk, mindset, behaviors, or feelings towards your body image or self in general? Honestly describe any changes or moments, if any, that have stood out and/or resonated with you.

Week 6 Prompt – Take some time to review your choreographic choices and/or watch your choreography video from class this week and reflect on your choices. Does your movement stay true to your original inspiration? Do you see areas where you can edit your movement to be more honest and authentic about your intentions? Are there any other choices (timing, spatial, or effort qualities) where you see opportunities for improvement? Note any moments in your reflection and provide possible alternatives you can try in the final editing phases of your choreography. Be prepared to experiment with these next week.

Week 7 Prompt – After watching your peers show previews of their choreography today and talk about their inspiration and process, what did you notice? What feelings came up for you? Did you make any connections to your own process and choreography? Did anyone in particular inspire you?

Week 8 Prompt – Write your own "Body Peace Mantra" that you can say to yourself when you notice negative self-talk about your body begin to develop. These can be the same as or similar to positive affirmations that you may already say to yourself. Think of this as a way to help remind yourself of all the wonderful work we have done so far over the last eight weeks. Your mantra should be an authentic, individualized expression and declarative statement that resembles what you want to attract as part of your reality. This should be short and concise – something that you can quickly say and repeat to yourself when you need it most. For example, "My body allows me to dance, giving me the greatest joy in life. I love, trust, and accept you."

Note to Students: Please remember, I will be reading everything you enter into your journal. Please be as open and honest as you feel comfortable. Your vulnerability and honesty will help you gain the most out of this experience and will truly help you as you develop your choreography. Your journals will be completely private, accessible only by myself, and you will only be identified by your assigned Letter Code in my study. However, please also remember that I am a mandated reporter, which means certain things I am obligated to report if they raise concern for your safety.

Exit Questionnaire

Open-Ended Questions for Students

At the end of the study, students will also answer the following questions, allowing the researcher to gather qualitative data about the study and identify themes that emerged from the student experience.

The following questions will ask you to reflect on your journey in this study over the last eight weeks. Please answer the following open-ended questions as openly and honestly as you can. Your answers to these questions do not need to be written in any formal fashion. Please feel free to share any examples, life experiences, or specific stories that may be relevant. It may also be helpful to look back at some of your past journal entries, especially those from the beginning of the study.

1. What was the most challenging aspect of this process?
2. What was the most inspiring or rewarding aspect of this process?
3. Describe what it felt like to choreograph your own original work about something so personal to you.
4. Did you notice a change in your self-talk throughout this process? If yes, describe these changes in your self-talk.
5. Describe any successes or growths that came up for you during the process, specifically related to dance and choreography.
6. Do you notice a difference between your relationship with your body at the beginning of the study and how you feel now? What do you think has changed or stayed the same? If your body image did change, please describe how it changed and in what ways, or what might have specifically influenced the change.

APPENDIX E

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plans

Reflection, Creation, Transformation:
Fostering a Positive Body Image in Female High School Dancers through a Creative Choreography Curriculum

	Quote of the Week	Lesson Topic & Focus	Activities
Week 1	*Quote of the Week:* "Speak to your body in a loving way. It's the only one you've got, it's your home, and it deserves your respect." ~Iskra Lawrence	**Introduction** - What is Body Image?	1. Introduction of Body Image 2. Discuss Quote of the Week 3. Share Personal Connection to Topic 4. Presentation & Research 5. Group Discussion 6. Set up Online Journal 7. HW: Prompt #1
Week 2	*Quote of the Week:* "Confidence is the only key. I can't think of any better representation of beauty than someone who is unafraid to be herself." ~Emma Stone	**Guest Speaker** - Professional Dietician & Life Coach	1. Guest Speaker Presentation 2. Q & A w/ Guest Speaker 3. Debrief
		Body Awareness Meditation & Improvisation	1. Discuss Quote of the Week 2. Body Awareness Meditation 3. Guided Improvisation 4. HW: Prompt #2
Week 3	*Quote of the Week:* "You can't hate yourself into a version of yourself that you love." ~Grace Pascale	**Continue w/ Body Awareness Meditation & Improvisation** - Add in Reflective Journaling	1. Body Awareness Meditation 2. Guided Improvisation 3. Reflective Journaling 4. Group Discussion
		Exploration w/ Specific Body Part	1. Body Awareness Meditation 2. Guided Improvisation w/ Focus on Specific Body Part 3. Reflective Journaling 4. Group Discussion 5. HW: Prompt #3
Week 4	*Quote of the Week:* "What if we obsessed about the things we LOVE about ourselves?" ~Grace Pascale	**Choreography Begins for Solo Work** - Introduction & Develop Theme	1. Discuss Quote of the Week 2. Introduce Theme & Variation 3. Introduce Overall Idea of Piece 4. Develop Theme Phrase 5. Share w/ Partner
		Develop Variation #1: Insecurity	1. Review Theme Phrase 2. Develop Variation #1: Insecurity 3. Share w/ Partner 4. HW: Prompt #4

Week 5	*Quote of the Week:* "Be in a body you resonate with." ~Grace Pascale	**Develop Variation #2: Discovery**	1. Discuss Quote of the Week 2. Review Theme & Variation #1 3. Develop Variation #2: Discovery 4. Share w/ Partner
		Develop Variation #3: Appreciation & Acceptance	1. Review Theme and Variations #1 & #2 2. Develop Variation #3: Appreciation & Acceptance 3. Share w/ Partner 4. HW: Prompt #5
Week 6	*Quote of the Week:* "Life is too short to spend it at war with yourself." ~Unknown	**Develop Variation #4: Trust**	1. Discuss Quote of the Week 2. Review Theme and Variations #1 - #3 3. Develop Variation #4: Trust 4. Share w/ Partner
		Develop Variation #5: Love & Kindness	1. Review Theme & Variations #1 - #4 2. Develop Variation #5: Love & Kindness 3. Share w/ Partner 4. HW: Prompt #6
Week 7	*Quote of the Week:* "Loving yourself is the greatest revolution" ~Unknown	**Refining & Editing Choreography**	1. Discuss Quote of the Week 2. Refine & Edit Choreography Individually 3. Add in Musical Accompaniment
		Choreography Previews w/ Peers	1. Choreography Previews w/ Partner, Including Engaging Feedback/Conversation 2. Work Time to Finalize Choices 3. HW: Prompt #7
Week 8	*Quote of the Week:* "And I said to my body softly, 'I want to be your friend.' It took a long breath and replied, 'I have been waiting my whole life for this.'" ~Nayyirah Waheed	**Performance Day**	1. Discuss Quote of the Week 2. All Dancers Perform their Solo 3. Time for Feedback 4. Debrief & Class Discussion 5. HW: Prompt #8

Note: When developing variations, focus on how **Space, Time, & Energy** choices can help communicate the new idea of the variation.

For example, for the last variation of love & kindness, ask the students: *When you love someone or something, what type of ENERGY do you project? When you are kind to someone or something, what type of ENERGY do you project? How do you move through SPACE? How does TIME affect your movement?* The space, time, and energy choices in students' variations of love & kindness should be different from the choices in their insecurity variation.