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### Reflections: Battling Body Image as a Dancer

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# REFLECTIONS: BATTLING BODY IMAGE AS A DANCER

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of Fine and Performing Arts Honors College

By

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The Honors College


Fine and Performing Arts Program

East Tennessee State University

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04/08/22

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## **I. Introduction**

*Reflections* is a dance I choreographed and performed on February 25, 2022 in studio 205 Campus Center Building at East Tennessee State University. The dance explores the relationship between a dancer's mind and body and uses mirrors and repetition to express the dancers' perception of their flaws and insecurities. The following thesis, *Reflections: Battling Body Image as a Dancer*, analyzes the artistic elements of the choreographic process, my experiences as a dance student at ETSU from 2018-2022, as well as my training in my youth. My research for this thesis involves exploring the history and craft of choreography including the fundamentals of Laban Movement Analysis. In addition, my research includes a survey concerning body dysmorphia in dancers. In theory and practice, I accepted the challenge of stepping outside my comfort zone to create an emotional and physical dance composition that serves to demonstrate a dancer fighting a battle with body image.

## **II. What is Body Dysmorphia?**

Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is defined as a mental illness involving an obsessive focus on one or more perceived defects in physical appearance. Whether the so called "flaw" is considered major, minor, or nonexistent to others, the thought of this flaw consumes the individual – certainly in a negative way. It is important to note the individuals living with BDD appear completely "normal". While the perceived defect may be noticeable to others, it is more than likely both a standard, day-to-day variant or not as prominent as the sufferer has made it seem. Individuals with BDD tend to become so hyper fixated on his or her appearance that they imagine this is how everyone from the outside views them. For example, have you ever had an insecurity, such as a pimple or scar that you constantly perceive with your skin? Or possibly that

you think your face or body is not completely symmetrical? These are two generic and less specific examples that the average person can relate to. Those suffering from BDD generally have more specific complaints about themselves that they have developed over longer periods of time. With this being said, individuals with BDD tend to repeatedly look in the mirror or use their selfie cameras to attempt to see how “bad” their fixated flaw is.

Some common signs and symptoms of BDD include the following: frequent thoughts about appearance (at least an hour a day), spending a lot of time staring in a mirror or other reflective surfaces, covering up disliked areas (hats, scarves, makeup, body position, posture), repeatedly asking others for reassurance, repeated plastic surgery or dermatologic treatment, compulsive skin picking, avoiding social interactions (public places, work, school), signs of emotional distress or depression, etc. ([bdd.iocdf.org](http://bdd.iocdf.org)). This is where the next question arises - so what is the difference between BDD and just being unhappy with your appearance? In our society today, it seems that there are more people who are dissatisfied with their appearance than those who are content with their appearance. We often hear, “You always want what you do not have,” and smart phones and social media make it so tempting and easy to compare yourself to the supermodels of Instagram and TikTok. A person with BDD spends most of every day (nearly every hour) concerned with their appearance, and their thinking about perceived flaws interferes with day-to-day activities. They also repeat behaviors consistently in response to concerns of appearance. Research also shows that BDD typically begins in adolescence and later childhood (social media’s target audience). It is important to note that concerns related to thinking you are too fat or skinny or not enough of this/that and lead to extreme changes in food consumption may be related to an eating disorder, rather than BDD. It is estimated that about 12% of people with BDD also have anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa (Mufaddel et al.,

2013). In her article, *Body Dysmorphic Disorder and Eating Disorders*, Susan Cowdon (MS) states, "However, it is important to note that not everyone with body dysmorphic disorder has an eating disorder. There are people with body dysmorphic disorder who focus solely on specific body parts (like the shape of their nose). That's different than focusing on weight" (2021). BDD often involves intense fixation with areas of the head or face and may include acne, hair, neck, facial symmetry, etc. Other parts of the body commonly worried about include the stomach, legs, arms, hips, etc. (areas of concern vary by the individual, and any body part or area can be a fixation).

### **III. Reflections**

The name of my dance, *Reflections*, is a correlation to the repetitive process the individual suffering BDD undergoes when they see what they dislike the most about themselves in the mirror. I chose this name in particular because what is the first thing that comes to mind when “dance studio” is mentioned? Even the nondancer could probably picture the wall-length mirrors, a wide-open space, and ballet barres. The mirrors in a dance studio have a purpose, of course. The mirror provides immediate visual feedback to the dancer to improve his or her technique. It also allows us to evaluate the lines, shapes, and posture of our bodies in which we can stretch or contract to correct our placement. In addition to this, the mirror is also helpful in aiding spacing and formation changes of dances. With this being said, the dancer is always taught to never rely on the mirror for these things as it will be taken away once performing.

There is a love-hate relationship between the mirror and dancer. As mentioned above, there are many pros the mirror provides the dancer. However, for a dancer who may have some BDD tendencies, the mirror could be their worst enemy. From personal experience, I have not taken dance classes that use a mirror since my second year of taking classes while in university. Of

course, I have been involved in dances and performances throughout my time here, however, when practicing we have not had a mirror. When I first began dancing without a mirror, I felt lost. I no longer had that instant validation from myself of what I thought looked “good” or correct technique. Overtime I became more and more comfortable dancing without the mirror, with the occasional “I wonder how bad I look right now” thoughts. With that being said, I learned that I appreciate the mirror to improve my dancing but I had an unhealthy obsession for using it to pick out my flaws. Such flaws caught my eye as soon as I walked in the door and saw my bare tights and leotard self. As if what I was insecure about yesterday would change by the next, as mentioned above when I explained BDD symptoms, my eyes would automatically check to see if it was still there.

I knew from my initial plan for my work that I wanted to include mirrors in my performance. Whether they were used as a major or minor focal point of the dance, would be determined later. I wanted the audience to see in my choreography with these mirrors both a visual of realization and acceptance of the dancers.

#### **IV. Choreography**

##### **a) My vision for this performance**

When I initially began choreographing for this piece, I took a sheet of paper and wrote down single words to describe how this dance would make others and myself feel. Some of these words included: emotional, captivating, provocative, beautiful, vulnerable, and uncomfortable. My greatest concern with this performance was not perfection. If it were perfect that would defeat the entire purpose of my intention. The intention of this dance is to spread awareness of those battling body image, while showing the beautiful and chaotic moments that come with it. I want the performance to be relatable for some and eye-opening to others.

b) Choosing music & its significance

When deciding which songs I would use for this piece, I already had one in mind. In fact, the song, “Body Love” (2013) by Mary Lambert, is one of the reasons why I chose to conduct this research. It is both a song I was already familiar with and could see myself dancing to. When choosing between the original and studio session version of this song, I am glad I decided to go with the studio session. I enjoy the simplicity of the piano and poetical elements of Lambert’s spoken words. I appreciate how raw and full of emotion the artist made this song. There is an overall haunting theme to this song. It is deep and provocative in one way and joyful and celebratory in another way. It explores the hardships and negativity of an individual viewing their body. On the other hand, it acclaims what our bodies are capable of and why we should love it.

When initially listening to this song, I thought it seemed too slow to dance to. Once in the studio improvising for choreography ideas, I found that any movement works with the tempo. Although the song seems slow, I was able to choreograph both to the quick and slow tempos. This song also has many references I wanted to choreograph to in a lyrical sense. To name one, “love your body the way your mother loved your baby feet”, I envisioned the move where we physically grab our foot the first time I danced to this song and knew that was something I would not change later. Although there are many dark indications in the song, there are just as many positive and loving references such as comparing the body to your home.

The second song I chose to choreograph to is “Scars to Your Beautiful (Acoustic Version)” (2016) by Alex G. This song has an opposing mood compared to “Body Love”. This song’s purpose is about learning how to love and embrace yourself regardless of your flaws, as well as accepting these flaws because they are what make you, you.



c) Creating movement for myself & others

I wanted to create movement I had never danced before. I had a general idea of what I wanted these movements to look like, but it took some time for me to truly find what I envisioned. This may be because of the style of dance I have been comfortable doing over the past months/years. Since being on the dance team at ETSU, I have been to performing competitive and quick styles of dance – pom, jazz, and hip-hop. Although I am regularly dancing and going to the studio for improvisation, it can be difficult to switch from competitive styles of dance to more casual studio dancing. With that being said, I spent a lot of time in the studio and my apartment thinking of movements that would make me feel uncomfortable at times. As a classically trained ballet dancer, contemporary dance is fairly new to me, but it is something I have fallen in love with quickly. I enjoy how it feels both natural and unnatural. It is not as strict as ballet, but it has technical elements from it. As mentioned above, I was inspired by the darker elements in the music as well as the spoken words. During my time here as a dance minor at East Tennessee State University, I have taken dance classes where we were asked to improvise to spoken word. Most trained dancers, including myself, squirm at the thought of having to improvise in front of others - as they are used to being given choreography and dancing from there. Improvising to spoken word was one of the few times I did not feel as uncomfortable to improv. Personally, it feels natural to dance to words - as if the author is telling you how to move.

Another factor I had to consider was how these movements would look on others. I have watched the people I chose to perform with dance many styles, but kept in mind that just because a movement felt easy to execute for myself, did not mean that would be the same case for others. With that being said, I took my dancers skill sets into consideration. These skills may include

flexibility, turning, jumping, strength of holding positions, etc. For example, if one of my dancers was a strong turner, but lacked flexibility, I would ask her to turn instead of execute a leg hold. I would never ask my dancers to perform any skills they did not feel confident or incapable of doing, which is why I choreographed this piece based on my dancer's technical abilities.

d) Rehearsal process

The rehearsal process for this work included working with my dancers once a week starting out and progressing to multiple days a week once getting closer to the performance. The first few rehearsals included getting together to try out some of my ideas. As this dance has a lot of partner work, it is often difficult to choreograph without seeing if it works with multiple bodies. The following rehearsals were where I taught the choreography to everyone else and we took the time to narrow down specifics such as head and arm placements, facial expressions, etc. I was aware my dancers were capable at learning choreography quickly, so I was able to teach everything in only a couple rehearsals. I also made a shared album with videos of me breaking down the choreography so my dancers could work on it at home during their own time. The subsequent times we met involved any changes I wanted to make and narrowing down musical cues.

e) Working with others

The dancers I worked with made this entire process a breeze. All of my dancers, including myself, have all danced together previously - some for years and others fairly recent. With that being said, everyone was already comfortable with each other and familiar with how each other's bodies move. In return, this made partner work and improvisation much easier than dancing with someone you just met.

f) Staging/spacing

The staging of the performance was based around the studio space at campus center building 205. It had been a couple years since I had watched a performance there, so I decided to revisit the studio during my choreography process. I wanted to see how much room I had both width and depth-wise for my dancers. This would tell me what I needed to prepare for choreography that may travel, formation changes, etc.

g) Costuming, props, & lighting

The costumes worn in this performance were chosen to mimic nakedness. As suggested above, I wanted the overall theme of the performance to be stripped down, natural, and vulnerable. I also wanted to showcase the different body types with my dancers. The costume I decided on is a nude colored leotard with a mesh dress worn on top. The goal when choosing this costume was to display my intention while making sure my dancers felt comfortable and flattered. As the name of my performance suggests, *Reflections*, we used mirrors as props. There was a full stand up mirror that rolled as well as handheld mirrors for all of the dancers to use. We did not use the handheld mirrors until after the first dance. The mood of this dance was a bit different from the first which is why I decided to save them for “Scars to Your Beautiful”. The mirrors took some practice to get familiar with as we were dancing with only one or no arms at times. For lighting, I wanted a warmer yellow/orange tone that were easy on the eye and flattering on the dancers.

## **V. Laban Movement Analysis**

a) Who is Laban?

Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) was known for many roles: choreographer, dance artist, movement theorist, performer, and architect; however, he was best known for the invention of his Laban Movement Analysis. In general, Laban was entirely interested in the human body and

its capability of movement. Laban was born in Bratislava, Slovakia and grew up in a well-off family. Attempting to follow his father's footsteps, Laban initially attended military school for the career that was planned for him. He eventually found himself enrolled at the Paris École des Beaux Arts by the age of twenty-one. He became fascinated with dance after studying architecture, drama, and stage design. Laban sought out new ways to understand the moving body and spaces without the restrictions of classical ballet.

In 1913, Laban set up his own "dance farm" in Switzerland. Individuals who participated grew their own food, made their own clothes, and danced together in the nude on the hillside. Over the next ten years, he gained a large following of students throughout Europe that were able to allow him establish his own schools. This is when his major career in Germany began. He spent his time running his dance theatre company, a chamber dance theatre company, his own main dance school, wrote articles and books, participated in performances, created his own choreographic works, and retained a "movement laboratory" for his own research. Recognized as a leading force in the dance world of Europe, Laban was requested to choreograph for the opening Olympics of Berlin in 1936. However, the Nazi government disapproved as they found it too focused on individual freedom. Although Laban was not appreciated by some during his time here, it is obvious that his visionary work made him a man before his time.

#### b) Fundamentals of Laban Movement Analysis

Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a widely used method for human movement, originally developed for the performing arts. Developed by Laban, this may involve the description, visualization, or interpretation of human movement. Laban created a system to describe both the function and expression of movement capable of the human body. The LMA

map was created to assist in clarifying and analyzing movement within the categories using the BESS (body, effort, shape, and space) system. “Body” describes the human body parts and their actions responsible for movement. Body is often referred to as the “what” of movement. What parts of our body are moving and how do these parts of our body relate to each other? “Effort” involves the mover’s intent and attitude in executing his or her movements. Effort is the “how” of movement. How are we choosing to move and how is our energy being distributed throughout our body? Effort has four subcategories including: space (direct/indirect), time (quick/sustained), flow (bound/free), and weight (strong/light). “Shape” describes the human’s ability to change the body’s form. Shape is referred to as the “why” of movement. Why are we choosing to move the way we are? How does our body respond to the environment or individuals we are moving with? “Space” is defined as the human’s movement in relation to our own kinesphere, or the area of space around our bodies. Space is the “where” of movement. Where in the space are we moving and how is our body relate to the space we are in? In addition to the BESS System, Laban combined these parts together and created the Eight Efforts. These include the following: wring, press, flick, dab, glide, float, punch, slash. Through the use of Laban Movement Analysis, dance has its own language to describe and construct movements that assist with notating choreography. In addition to this, LMA allows us to further observe, analyze, explore, research, and understand human movement.

Although originally created for the performing arts, LMA has been recognized and applied by other fields that contribute to movement both creatively and cognitively. For example, these fields may involve anatomy, kinesiology, or psychology, as they are a direct link to the human body. In addition to this, LMA is widely used today among dancers, athletes, actors, musicians, and health professionals. Though created for human movement, LMA has evolved

and is being applied to other areas such as robotics, engineering, factor labor, and therapeutic practices.

c) Laban Movement Analysis used in dance today

Laban Movement Analysis is widely valued and used today. In addition to this, LMA is one of the most used methods in dance and movement therapy. As we know, dance is a performing art form that consists of various sequences of movement. These movements may be improvised or choreographed for the dancer. This is when Laban Movement Analysis comes into play. Movement is something we all do – often not thinking about how we are moving or how we will move next. With that being said, movement is often difficult to talk about. Laban created a system that allows us to communicate to others about human movement and solidified concepts in a simpler way. The BESS (body, effort, shape, space) system and eight efforts are very useful tools used among choreographers today. Through the use of experimentation with these systems, the choreographer can create a language to pass to the dancer. LMA also provides the dancer a clear and understandable tool set that allows them to create his or her own movement vocabulary.

d) How Laban is applied and executed in my own choreography

During my own choreography process, I turned to Laban Movement Analysis. I used the eight efforts when notating my choreographing. This made it easier for me to have a better understanding and memory of my choreography to turn back to in between rehearsals. Additionally, the BESS system assisted me while choreographing my performance. There are several factors that make up this system – body, effort, shape, space. With these in mind, they helped me decide which movement should be executed next or which formation should be implemented in following. As movements depict emotion, Laban movement aided in my

decisions of movement in which emotion I wanted to be portrayed. Overall, I single-handedly witnessed the effectiveness using Laban Movement Analysis in my own choreography process.

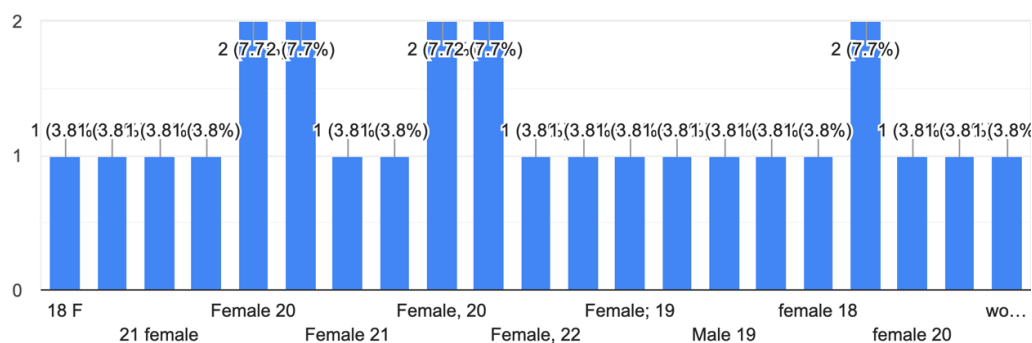
## VI. Survey Results

Body image has been a prevalent theme in the performing arts, especially in dancers. In addition to my research concerning body dysmorphia, I decided to conduct an anonymous survey including dancers from ETSU's dance minors and the dance team. I asked those who participated to answer honestly as I would not know the names of those who decided to answer. In total, twenty-eight individuals identifying as female, male, or non-binary ages 18-26 participated. The survey consisted of fifteen questions, both multiple choice and short response. The goal of these surveys were to bring self-reflection to the dancer answering the survey, as well as bring awareness to how these individuals responded.

The first question asked the individual their age and what gender they identified as. As mentioned above, the ages varied from 18-26, and genders identified as female, male, and nonbinary.

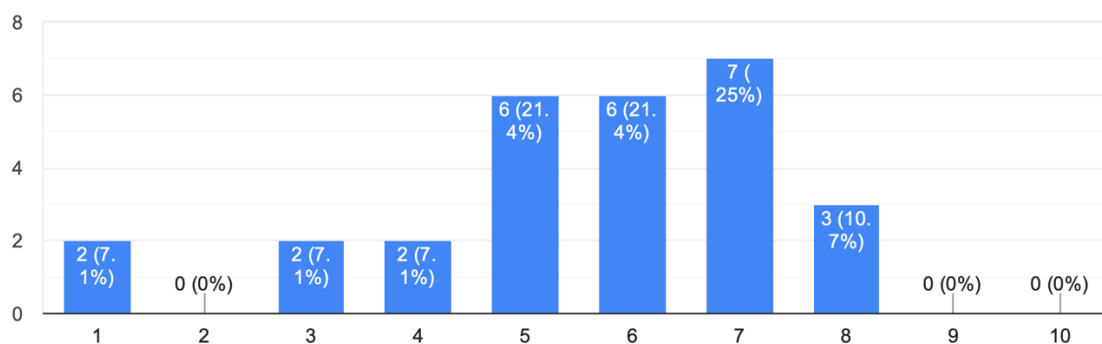
What is your gender & age?

26 responses



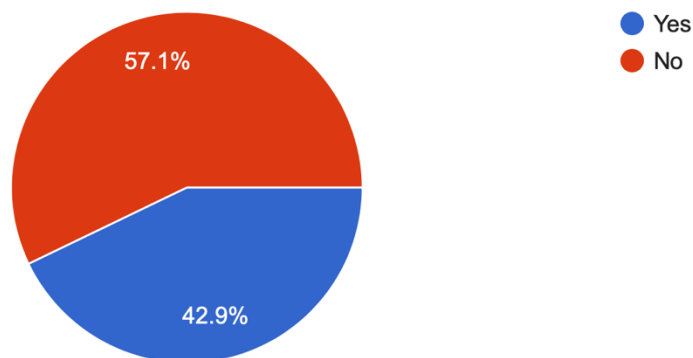
The second question asked, “On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest), how comfortable are you with your own self-image?” Responses are as follows: 7.1% answered “1”, 7.1% answered “3”, 7.1% answered “4”. 21.4% answered “5”, 21.4% answered “6”, 25% answered “7”, and 10.7% answered “8”. May I bring attention to how there were no recorded answers for “9 & 10”.

On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest), how comfortable are you with your own self-image?  
28 responses



The third question asked, “Are you comfortable with the size and shape of your body?” 57.1% answered “No”, while 42.9% answered “Yes”.

Are you comfortable with the size & shape of your body?  
28 responses

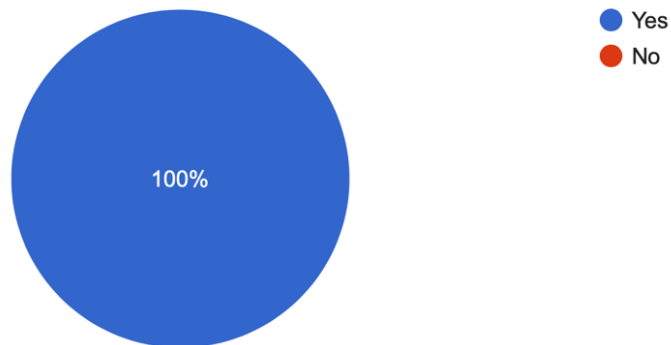




The fourth question asked, “Is there anything about your body or appearance you wish you could change?” This question answered 100% “Yes”.

Is there anything about your body or appearance you wish you could change?

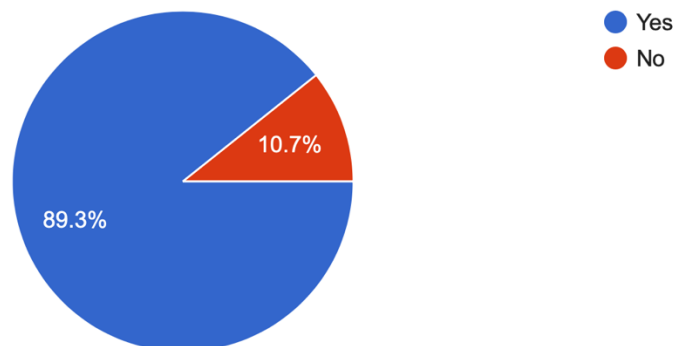
28 responses



The fifth question asked “Do you worry about how others perceive your body?” 89.3% answered “Yes”, while the remaining 10.7% answered “No”.

Do you worry about how others perceive your body?

28 responses

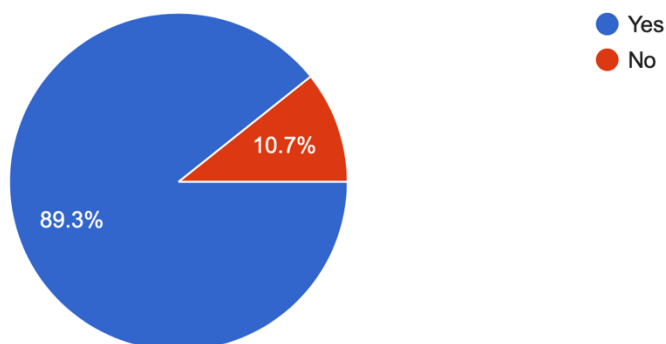


The sixth question asked, “Has social media impacted the way you view your body?”

89.3% answered “Yes”, while 10.7% answered “No”.

Has social media impacted the way you view your body?

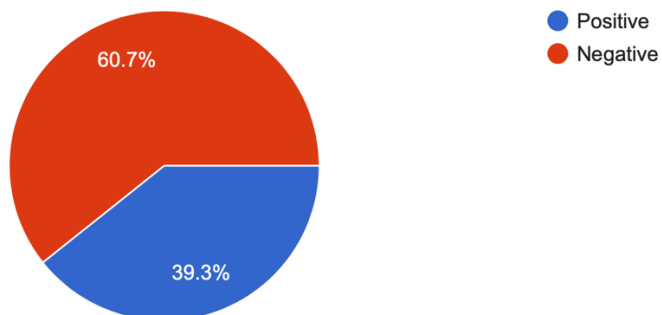
28 responses



The seventh question asked, “Has dancing negatively or positively affected the way you view your body?” 60.7% responded “Yes”, and 39.3% responded “No”.

Has dancing negatively or positively affected the way you view your body?

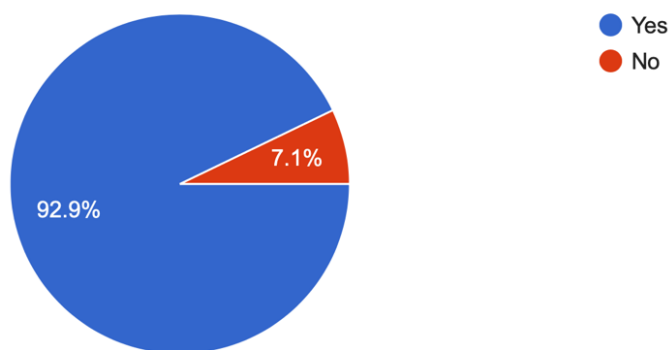
28 responses



The eighth question asked, “Have you ever refrained from eating something before having to wear a costume or uniform because you were afraid of looking bloated or fat?” 92.9% answered “Yes”, and 7.1% said “No”.

Have you ever refrained from eating something before having to wear a costume or uniform because your were afraid of looking bloated or "fat"?

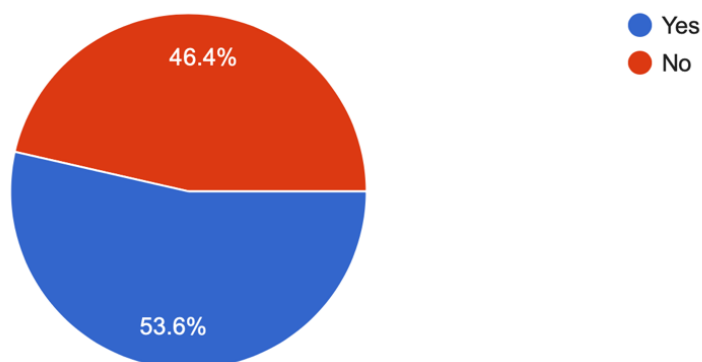
28 responses



The ninth question asked, “Have you ever been scolded from a dance teacher or coach to “watch your figure”?” This question was answered nearly half and half with 53.6% responded “Yes”, and 46.4% responded “No”.

Have you ever been scolded from a dance teacher or coach to "watch your figure"?

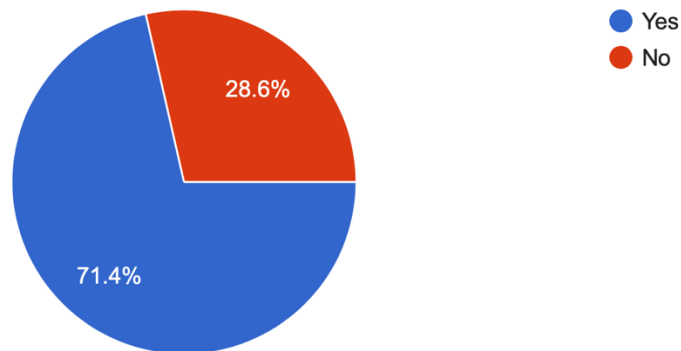
28 responses



The tenth question asked, “Has the way you view your body ever impacted your dancing?” 71.4% responded “Yes”, and 28.6% responded “No”.

Has the way you view your body ever impacted your dancing?

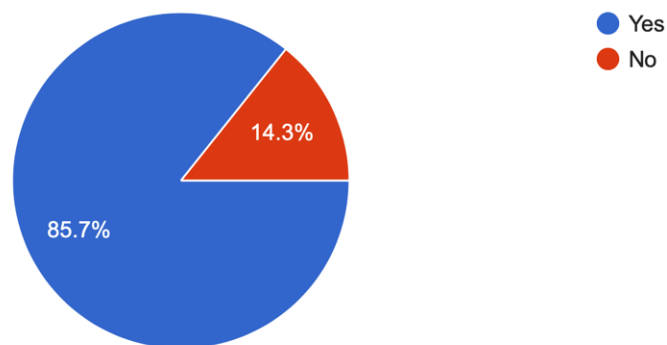
28 responses



Question eleven asked “Have you ever thought you would be a better dancer if your body looked a certain way?” 85.7% answered “Yes”, and 14.3% answered “No”.

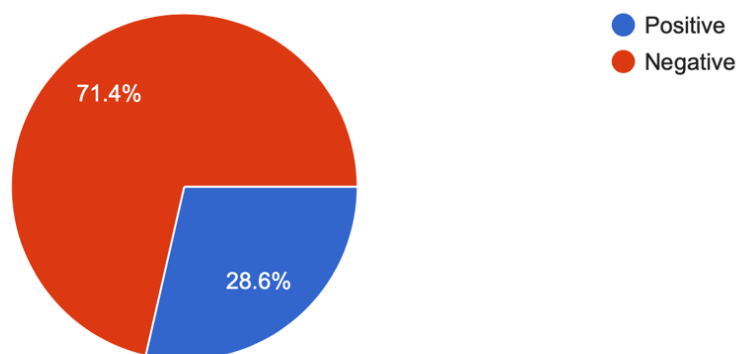
Have you ever thought you would be a better dancer if your body looked a certain way?

28 responses



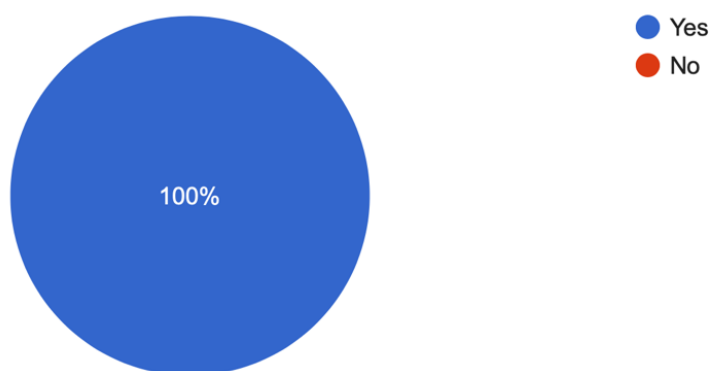
Question twelve asked, “Do the mirrors in a dance studio positively or negatively impact the way you view your body?” 71.4% said the mirrors negatively impact the way they view their body, while 28.6% said the mirrors positively impact the way they view their body.

Do the mirrors in a dance studio positively or negatively impact the way you view your body?  
28 responses



Question thirteen asked “Do you ever find yourself comparing your body to other dancer’s bodies?” 100% of responders said “Yes”.

Do you ever find yourself comparing your body to other dancer's bodies?  
28 responses



Questions fourteen and fifteen were short response questions. Question fourteen asked, “what do you dislike the most about your body?” A few short responses included: “my stomach, arms, love handles, thighs, lack of curves, rolls on my side, hips, face, chest, acne, broad shoulders” and more. Lengthier responses included: “practicing vulnerability here because you deserve these honest answers. I have struggled with myself for as long as I can remember and have so many unhealed wounds. It’s hard to put it simply, but overall I hate the entire shape of my body – the fact that I am short but not thin, my stomach, my legs, my face, and my posture.”; “It reads as feminine to casting teams.”; “This varies from day to day, but the stomach area I feel is a common area to be insecure about. I also struggle with the more feminine aspects of my body on certain days.” Question fifteen asked, “what do you love the most about your body?” Some short responses included: “legs, my booty, my muscles, long legs, calves, shoulders, eyes, my height, face, and hair”. Longer responses included the following: “I love my overall figure, I have a pretty hourglass figure and love the look of my waist and wider hips.”; “It allows me to dance.”; “I hate to be pessimistic, but if we’re keeping with what I previously said about honesty, I honestly can’t find anything I actually like. I can tolerate my body most days, but the only thing I can love is what it can do despite what it looks like.”; “I love that my body is strong and flexible even though I am the size that I am.”

I knew from the beginning I wanted to include these surveys in my research, however, I did not realize how much of an impact they would have on both my choreography and mentality. When creating the questions I knew it could go one of two ways. I took the survey myself before sending it to respondents. With that being said, the questions with higher percentages or 100% responses, sadly did not surprise me. As someone who has grown up

dancing and performing from a very young age, I have seen these attitudes towards self-image nearly my whole life. In addition to this, I have been teaching dance to children for several years now. Nothing is truly more heartbreaking than seeing a middle schooler look in the mirror complaining how she does not like how she looks in her recital tutu. What is even worse is how I remember feeling the same way when I was her age. It is known that most dancers are their hardest critic, but when does it end?

## **VII. Conclusion**

### **a) End Results**

On the evening of February 25<sup>th</sup>, we performed *Reflections* at Campus Center Building: Studio 205. This performance was so special for me, and something I will always treasure from my college career. In addition to this, the venue was unlike anywhere I had ever performed. We chose the black box studio to provide an intimate setting to both the dancer and audience. This was due to the space in the black box studio. There is no stage but rather a studio space where the audience is sitting right on the dancer's level. This allows the audience to view the raw elements of the individual or group's dancing, such as a close up view of their emotions and physique and/or hearing the dancer breathe. Another consideration for the studio space was how many guests we were able to have due to seating. Fortunately, I was able to invite my closest friends and family, as well as other mentors whom have impacted my dancing. These mentors included two of my dance teachers from my home studio where I grew up and danced at for nearly fourteen years, as well as my college dance team coach who has been a big part of my life these past four years. I was extremely thankful these people were able to support me my attending this event.

Preceding my performance, I realized how much I had learned about myself both as an individual and artist during this experience. I recognized how my brain works and comprehended my own choreographic style. I came to the conclusion that I am a planner and use logic when choreographing. I would consider the body's anatomy and which formation I wanted the dance to shift to next while I was creating movement. I also realized that I would rather perfect my choreography before teaching to others to ensure that I do not change my mind later. A lot of these habits I have formed as a choreographer are a result of personal experiences as a dancer. As mentioned before, this was the first time I had choreographed for others with the exception of younger age groups. Most of the times I have been asked to choreograph, it has solely been for myself. I am at ease when choreographing for myself, because I am aware of what I am comfortable executing technique wise. I also know the way my body enjoys moving. These are factors to consider when choreographing for others. Every dancer and body is different – that is what makes it so beautiful to join dancers together and work to dance in unison. With this being said, I enjoyed working with my dancers the most during this process. There were times I felt insecure about my choreography and found myself questioning myself, but then I would see everything come together once we started dancing. This experience definitely pushed me to limits I never faced as a choreographer.

b) Audience Response

The audience responded in a few different ways to my performance. I was able to watch some of these responses while we were dancing. In addition to observing the audience's emotions, they also verbalized how the dance made them feel following our performance. The following are words I would use to describe these responses: engaged, sad, happy,



empathetic, concerned, hurt, and proud. These are all valid in relation to the subject matter. In fact, these were the exact emotions I strived to provoke with my performance.

I enjoyed the question and answer portion following the performance. It gave me the chance to elaborate on any further questions or those who wanted clarity on the subject matter. I was able to explain to the audience why I decided to create a dance concerning this subject matter as well as some things that inspired me. They asked me about some specific things I chose to include in my choreography and why, the significance of the costuming and props, and what my rehearsal process looked like.

c) Performance Evaluation

In conclusion, I was very pleased with my performance. In addition to this, I was very proud of my dancers and thankful for all the time they devoted to participate in this performance with me. As I had mentioned above, everyone in my performance have been dancing anywhere from one to four years together. This made a great difference in how comfortable we were dancing together, as well as the ability to dance in unison. I feel that my dancers and I did a great job executing technical movements and articulating personal forms of expression during the performance. With that being said, the performance was everything I could have asked it to be.

To view the performance, click here:

[Reflections: Battling Body Image as a Dancer](#)



Dancers from left to right: Shaina Reins, Makyiah Goodwin, Katerina Greene, Myself, Kentley Jane Nelson, and Paige Blizzard

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Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who have supported me with their love and encouragement during this process. In addition to this, I am extremely thankful for those who were able to attend my performance.

## Appendix

Below are the photos of my choreography notes and the performance program:

army crawl, split to feet in front, up & over, turn

Crawl up, penche to forward roll

### Body Love

\* start in a clamp

lift 1 girl, all fall to the direction they need to go

"I know girls"

- walk with right hand reaching
- R, L jump to 2nd arms in high 5m, pop R foot lean to the L, L arm comes down to middle
- step R passe jump arms push down hug to the corner "last's years prom dress"
- step ronde jump right leg arms swim to corner step pencil turn arms raise come to level R foot grab skirt & bounce 2x R/L ball change kick w/ hands covering mouth
- step to parallel head down facing R corner left arm come up <sup>lean to head 2/R partner</sup> leg people tilt R while others stand down with arms wrapped around stomach head
- ~~go into bug shoot out into plank up down into fetal position roll onto back~~
- step right saute en tournant and fling body on "Fling Bomb" bug down and <sup>in</sup> ~~direction~~ shoot to <sup>to speakers</sup> ~~plank up down~~ <sup>into fetal</sup> ~~the back~~ <sup>plank up down</sup> ~~up contract to fetal~~
- ~~shoot out body to stage in fetal position~~ <sup>head goes</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>opposite of</sup> ~~body~~

"Russian roulette" "Gun to girl?"



*Yogi Berra*

~~switch~~ switch body position and roll up

Get on knees, reach back, head down  
hands on knees and roll up shaking head NO  
with R forearm on head

\* split from the center OR front line  
goes 1 way back goes another \*

"Where do we draw the line"

use head to lead you walking to new form.

← X X X  
X X X →

X X  
X X  
X X  
X X

and grab fist \* make diagonal/body

arms reach to blades overhead to an angle  
45° pull into passe "stabbing fist"

"knife hits the skin"

~~Rolling back~~

throw in different  
ways

turn to the back calypso to the R  
hands down to the ground

hands on thigh looking  
down

- attitude swing L left front/back

L arm up

R arm to side

jump up in place feet kicking booty

jump out to lung R foot in front

L foot passe arms in diagonal (L up)

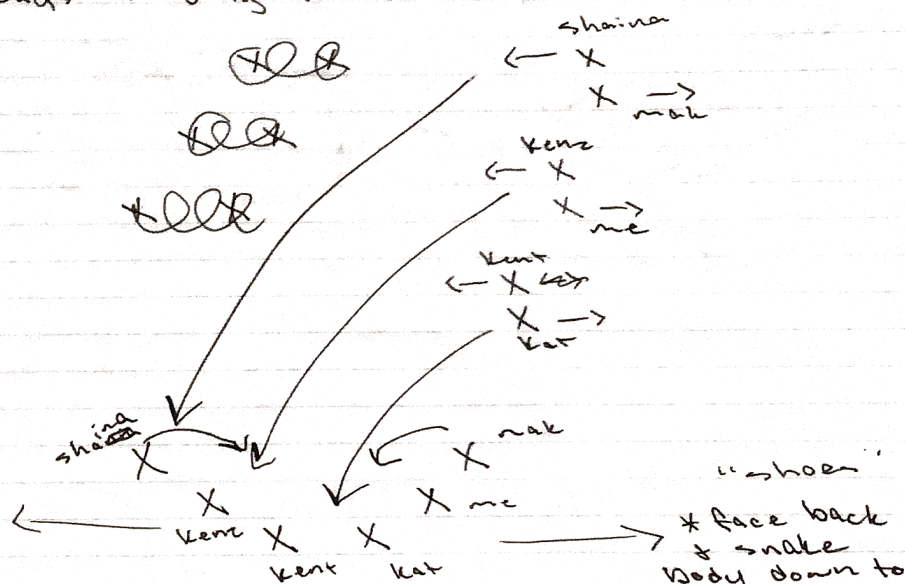
throw forward & breathe looking up

reach to pectoral girdle lift then face each

other and fall off L will backbend sliding down  
to floor

Person on back roll over onto child's pose  
 & other person will step onto back  
 to other side come around to back  
 and reach under arms to help them up  
 and ~~way~~

- going opposite ways, reach both  
 ways & drag to new formation



Step 1: Clap down sweeping heel toe heel up  
 Step 2: Sweeping arms up body "hand  
 Flicking L knee up ~~step 1~~ prepare  
 double coupe R arm up and close "bags"  
 step 1: back and reach "girls"  
 reach to heart look  
 Step 2: out second parallel roll wrist in  
 & head circle right "scaves"  
 Step 3: left foot R and swing arms bring  
 to drag to a line into circle  
 Step 4: up



"Love your body the way.... baby feet"

- walk in circle w/ flinging wrists to straight line, peel off body roll w/ pockets to reach foot grab bottom & release arms above head
- passe R (step) and arm comes to shoulder lean over on person in front of you
- left foot steps to R 1st position, interlock arms every other person developpe leg back bend to audience others squat
- come back to parallel slide R foot out L leg bent R arm up lean to make diagonal
- twist to L standing leg R leg back Attitude
- twist to front step R reach "waistline"
- 2 slow turns in place, 2 fast turns going forward jump leg go out

Ken's penche not actual?

~~Run to a diagonal starting up left  
\* go to mirror reaching with others  
Pulling back "when I am wanted"~~

~~\* go to bowling pin~~

~~xxxxx~~    ~~xxxx~~    ~~xxxx~~    ~~xxxx~~    ~~xxxx~~

run to diagonal others pulling back  
straight line

\* lift \* → move to ~~bowling pin~~  
roll up after setting down  
all push from the back forward  
L foot forward, front person wrap  
head, peel off front to back  
step left foot back arms grow out  
to T, saute en tournant to bowling  
pin, hands R, L to heart on the last  
"I am"    |  
              "because" "I said"

~~"My body is home" 2-00 - 2-26~~

\* heels flexed \*

dip R, L, passe to fourth, slice arm to  
R corner, turn front & hug, walk to  
new formation

3 peel off

step R flick jump roll to the back,  
turn completely to R side ~~in the~~ hugging  
in, lay flat, legs swing over R/L, bridge  
with R leg devlope, rebound flex, turn to back →

X X X  
X X X

## Scars to Your Beautiful

~~1:44~~ to :44 sec

duet

Chorus will repeat later

:45 - 1:07

Feed following head, step to L parallel  
look at mirror straight in front of you to R  
corner, step R under yourself to look down  
kick L, ~~step off up~~ step to back corner  
w/ mirror in R hand looking down, double  
attitude turn to the front, roll up (keep  
R arm w/ mirror up when rolling), diag. pencil  
coupe turn to back, sun sun grand jete →

Soloist  
1:08 - 8 slow counts of 8  
overlapping solos

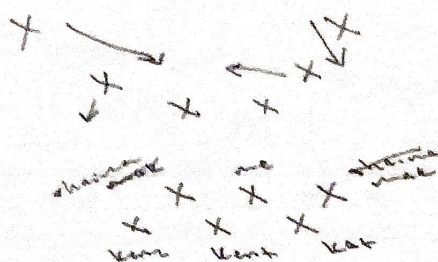
\* chorus repeats \* 1:50 - 2:12 ←

\* needs to be cut and 3:44 added to



face back

"shoes"  
"handbags"  
"scarves"



"girls" All look into partner

step prepare pencil into parze air up

land w/ L popped lean "bally mark"  
wipe arms R, L

jump together parallel to the corner  
step chug w/ pocket step L arabesque  
throw hand on thigh

~~walk to new spots~~

step to back corner throw arms

step parze chug 2x throwing arms to <sup>and throwing head down</sup>  
new spots turn to front & melt "out bodies"  
1 person do a kick w/ arms back in a T  
w/ head back \*chaina?

~~step~~ step to R corner throw R, L <sup>in front</sup>  
<sup>down</sup>  
R to the back

throw L arm lung L with R in  
front double bounce turn to the R  
spinning in plie w/ arms in T

reach down to donkey kick L, R stand  
up to reach back w/ heel \* one person  
penche out

Know I am"

\* bowing pin - move different ways

roll down ~~up~~ on "I know I am"

roll down "because I said"

roll up "I am"

right arm followed by left

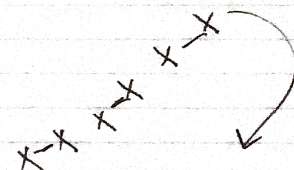
~~roll down~~

hands flat palms up. flip palms down

x love ... baby feet 2:30 -

waistline - 2:45

2:50 - "labor" 3:25



sit up to side, swing legs to back,  
swing them straight to audience, sway  
R, L, hands go up to head, head looks  
up, "bumpy legs" into legs, bend L leg  
in stand up w/ R, go to hug partner &  
~~roll~~ roll to the L to stand up

go to straight line flinging wrists

"baby feet"



## East Tennessee State University

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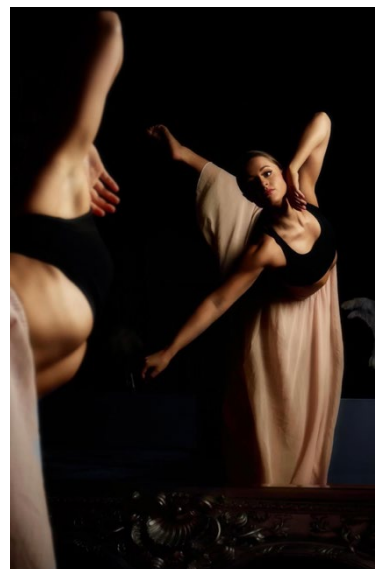
### ***Reflections: Battling Body Image as a Dancer***

by Erika Shaffer

**Music:** *Body Love* (Live Billboard Studio Session) by Mary Lambert; *Scars to Your Beautiful* (Acoustic Cover) by Alex G

**Dancers:** Beth Blizzard, Makyiah Goodwin, Katerina Greene, Kentley Nelson, Shaina Reins, Erika Shaffer

*Reflections* explores the relationship between a dancer's mind and body and uses mirrors and repetition to express the dancers' perception of their flaws and insecurities.



### ***Steadfast***

by Lily McKenzie

**Music:** *Man of Your Word* by Maverick City Music; *Steadfast* by Gateway Worship; *Come and Tear Down the Walls* by David & Nicole Binion, Lee University Singers, and Revere; *No Doubt About It* by We the Kingdom; *Child of Love* by We the Kingdom

**Dancers:** Olivia Campbell, Darian Chancellor, Paige Gleason, Katie Greene, Olivia Jones, Lily McKenzie, Ella McKenzie

*Steadfast* is an expression of dance as an emotional and spiritual experience, as well as an exploration of the deep connections that may be fostered through the art form of dance. It is the act of remaining ***steadfast***: *firm in belief, determination, or adherence* (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) while under trial that gets you to the other side.