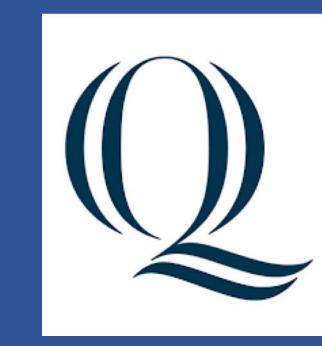


The Influence of Dance Culture on the Development of Body Dysmorphia and Eating Disorders Among Adolescent Dancers



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Introduction

Female adolescent dancers have a higher likelihood of developing an eating disorder as compared to their non-dancing adolescent peers¹.

Body dysmorphia appears to be a precipitating factor in the increased prevalence of eating disorders amongst dancers, which is highly influenced by added pressure from dance teachers^{1,2,3}. Young adolescent dancers look up to their teachers as role models and many dance teachers have stated that they value thinness, resulting in the dancer developing a similar mindset^{4,5}.

There is limited research that qualitatively looks at the impact of dance on the development of body dysmorphia and eating disorders; this study extends prior research by utilizing qualitative measures to examine this relationship, specifically using the method of photovoice.

Study Objectives

The objectives of this study are to

- 1. qualitatively explore current adolescent dancers' perspectives on dance culture, body image, and eating habits via photovoice, and to identify factors that influence these views;
- 2. determine whether adolescent dancers receive education or counseling about healthy eating habits and body image, as well as eating disorders;
- 3. to assess current dance teachers' perspectives on dance culture, body image, and eating habits among dancers;
- 4. make recommendations to the dance program based on the outcomes of the study.

Study Design

Photovoice is a community-based participatory research method that allows individuals to use photographs to provide evidence, knowledge, and their own perspective about a specific topic⁶.

It offers individuals a platform to share their own experiences, begin dialogue with each other, and help bring about positive change within their community.

Adolescents are very in-tune to technology and use photos and videos to tell their stories on social media, so using photovoice is a way to bring research to the adolescents and allow them to share their perspectives and experiences in a creative way they understand.

Methods

Recruitment and Eligibility

- Dancers and teachers were recruited from a non-competitive dance studio in Spokane, WA.
- Dancer eligibility: age between 13 and 17 years old, no previous diagnosis of an eating disorder, and access to a smartphone camera.
- Teacher eligibility: age > 18 years old, experience as an adolescent dancer, and experience teaching adolescent dancers for at least 1 year.

<u>Participants</u>

- Three 15-17-year-old girls who are current dance students at the above studio.
- Five adult dance teachers were recruited at the same studio.

Preliminary Meetings

- Researcher met with each adolescent and their parent:
 - Obtained informed consent
 - Reviewed instructions on how to capture images and ethical photo taking
 - Provided prompts for photovoice
- Participants used smartphone cameras to capture images and emailed them to the researcher prior to focus group

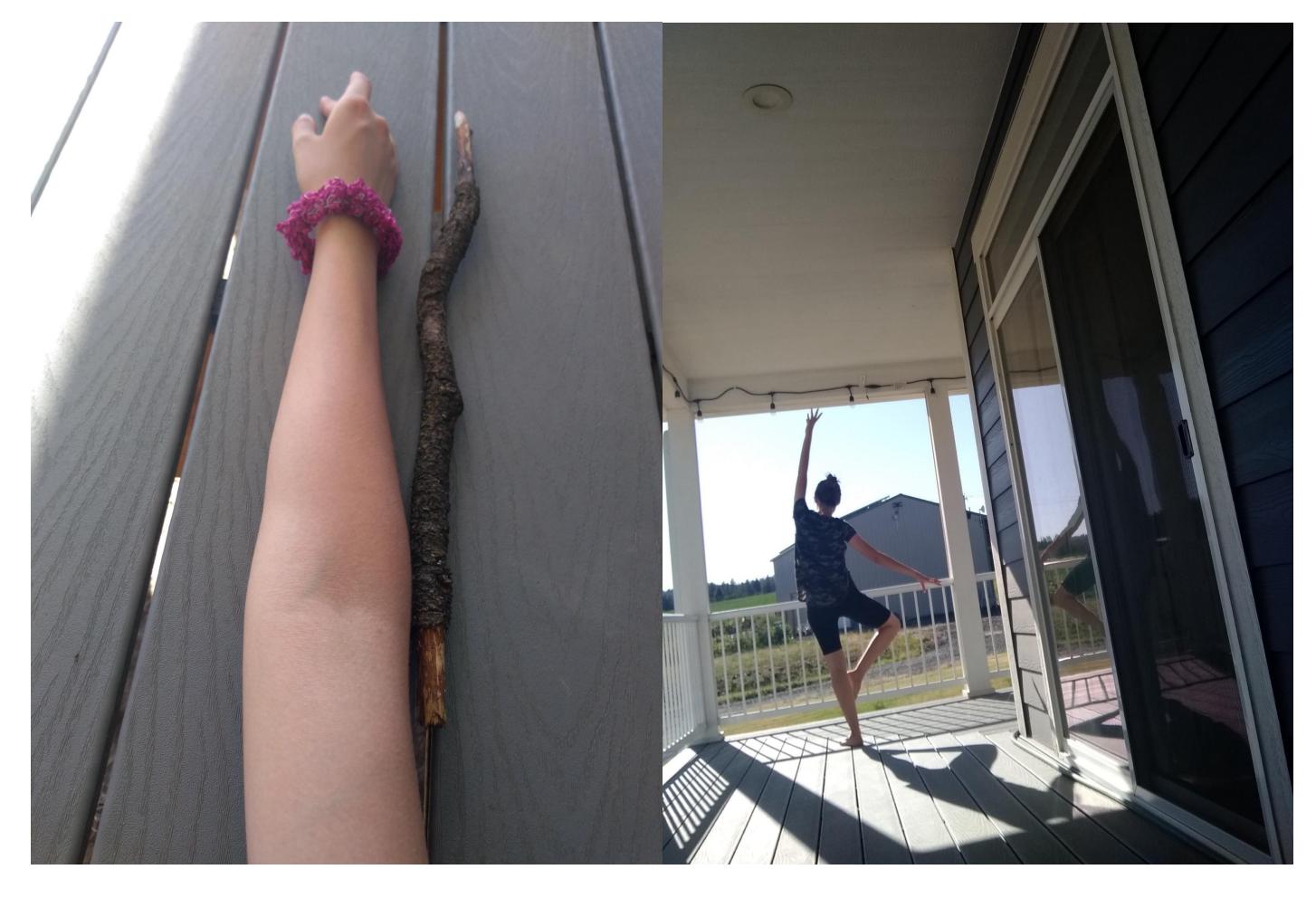
Photovoice Prompts:

- 1. What best represents how you feel about your body when you dance?
- 2. What makes you feel confident, strong, beautiful, and/or powerful?
- 3. What do you enjoy eating or drinking before, during, or after dance?
- 4. What clothes do you wear to dance and what clothes do you wish you could wear to dance?

Focus Groups:

- Semi-structured format, 2 hour sessions
- One with adolescent dancers, one with teachers
- A version of the SHOWED method⁷ was used to analyze photos the participants took
- Open ended questions to facilitate conversation about dance culture, body image, and eating habits
- Audiotaped and transcribed
- Thematic synthesis of data using line-by-line coding strategy

Figure 1. Sample participant photos



Thematic Analysis

Line-by-line coding analysis revealed overarching themes including:

- Body Image and Self-Perception
 - Having negative feelings towards specific parts of their body
- Insecurities and External Perception
 - Comparison to others (specifically regarding body type and dance ability)
 - Struggling with the opinions of others, whether spoken or not
- Food, Diet, and Body Relationship
 - Awareness of how food affects the body leading to avoidance
- Dance and Personal Growth
 - Needing a strong sense of community within dance to feel comfortable
 - Recognizing areas that need to be changed within the dance community
- Clothing and Self-Expression
 - Awareness of how clothing influences physical comfort and self-confidence
- Body Image in Social Contexts
 - Feeling more confident when teachers are supportive

Next Steps

The next steps in this study include:

- Disseminating results into a paper to be submitted for publication
- Create a short educational module or video to help educate dance teachers on this topic

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