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## **Impact of Appearance-Related Language on Dancers' Body Image**

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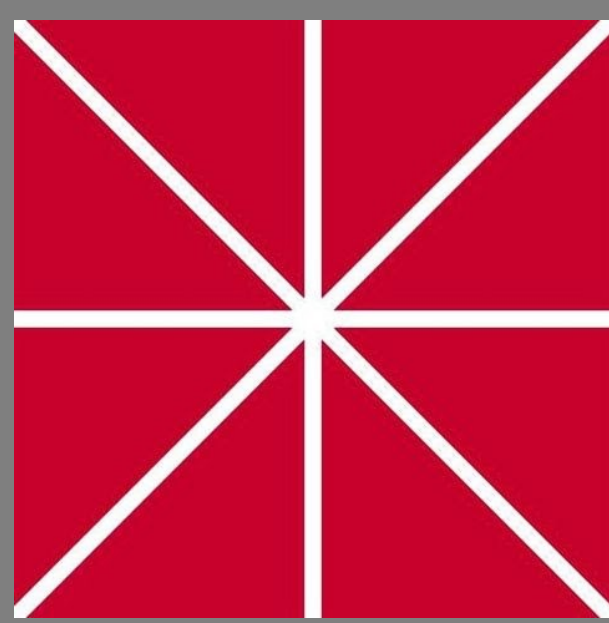
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# Impact of Appearance-Related Language on Dancers' Body Image

Madeline Bertoy  
Chapman University, PSY-497 Senior Thesis  
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## Introduction

- Dancers are at an increased risk of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating (Anshel, 2004).
- The types of cues that instructors give when correcting dancers may contribute to body image disturbance.
- Appearance body-related talk is associated with decreased body appreciation, whereas exercise-related talk is associated with increased body appreciation (Wasylikiw & Butler, 2014).
- Research indicates that focusing on body functionality in writing assignments improves body image (Alleva et al., 2018).
- A preoccupation with body appearance is associated with decreased motor performance (Frederickson & Harris, 2005).
- Experience in ballet is associated with lower body appreciation than modern dance (Swami & Harris).

## Methods and Materials

- Participants were 15 undergraduate students from Chapman University ages 18-21 ( $M = 19.8$ ). 86.7% female, 6.7% male, and 6.7% identified as "other group not listed."
- All participants were majoring or minoring in dance and/or enrolled in a dance course.
- Participants completed an online survey in which they were told to read instructions for a simple dance exercise and then perform the exercise once.
- **Appearance-related cues** and **function-related cues** were included in the instructions depending on assigned condition. The control group had no additional cues.
- Participants completed the Body Image States Scale (Cash et al., 2002), rated their performance level, and reported their dancer identity (ballet, modern/contemporary, jazz, or "other dancer identity").

## Hypotheses

1. Appearance-related language worsens dancers' body image.
2. Function-related language improves dancers' body image.
3. Appearance-related language decreases dancers' performance levels.
4. Ballet dancers have poorer body image than dancers of other styles.

## Appearance-Related vs. Function-Related Cues in Dance

Suck in your stomach.

Engage your abdominal muscles.

Keep your back straight.

Lengthen your back.

## Results

- A  $t$ -test revealed that there was not a significant difference between the appearance-related language group and control group in terms of body image scores ( $p = .432$ ).
- A  $t$ -test revealed that there was not a significant difference between the function-related language group and control group in terms of body image scores ( $p = .704$ ).
- A  $t$ -test revealed that there was not a significant difference between the appearance-related language group and control group in terms of performance scores ( $p = .749$ ).
- An analysis of variance showed that there was not a significant effect of dancer identity on body image scores ( $p = .887$ ).

## Conclusion

- There was no impact of language-type or dancer identity on body image scores or on performance levels.
- Factors to consider:
  - **Environment:** performing an exercise in private compared to the typical dance setting with mirrors, fitted dance attire, and dance peers.
  - **Reading vs. hearing cues:** dancers normally receive feedback and corrections verbally rather than written.
  - **Exercise difficulty:** the dance exercise given may have been too simple and easy.
  - **Strength of cues:** comments on appearance that are familiar and impersonal may not be impactful.
- Future Research:
  - Live dance classes in which instructors give cues to individual students verbally to better understand the impact of language in dance pedagogy.

## References

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