

Body Celebration: A Dance Film Featuring Body Positivity

Significance of the Creative Project: As a choreographer, I have a strong desire to create dances using different types of bodies in order to represent diverse populations. American society carries strong biases toward female bodies that fall outside of ideals of beauty – including body shape and size. These ideals are heavily reinforced by media, such as TV shows, movies, magazines, commercials, and social media. This beauty ideal is usually: a tall, white, slender, young female. As a result, it makes young women insecure about their bodies, which can mislead them, and lead them to unnecessary weight loss and extreme plastic surgery. It is important for us to celebrate the differences of body types and be confident in our bodies; however, current extreme and narrow definitions of female beauty can make it harder for women to express themselves in front of people due to their low self-esteem.

In order to raise awareness of this issue to the public, and to help challenge this beauty ideal for women, my project entails creating a dance film that features diverse body types. The film will feature different types of bodies to support body positivity. It will accomplish this goal by presenting a diverse array of women. The main focus of this project is to celebrate the beauty of our natural bodies.

The medium of dance will be used for participants to express themselves. It will stress dance movement that is accessible to all kinds of individuals. Therefore, being a trained dancer is not necessary. Creating a dance film featuring different types of bodies can help women in our immediate community understand the importance of loving our bodies regardless of what they look like.

Process: This project will begin with interviews of dance students who are performing artists. I will ask dancers about their experiences concerning body images. Villa (2017) explained how

body images affect dancers emotionally and physically. Melissa Sandoval, who danced professionally, ended up being traumatized mentally and leaving a dance company after ‘she was put on a probation for gaining a little weight’ because she felt she ‘could not make the artistic management happy’ (Villa, 2017). This said, I believe that most of dancers have experienced being judged by their body’s shape while performing on the stage. Interviews will be conducted with current students in the MSU Dance Program. However, students in any study field will also be encouraged to participate in this project because its focus does not just about performers. I view it as a public issue that affects many of us.

Each participant will respond to a series of questions that on body positivity. They include:

1. How does your body shape effect your understanding of beauty ideals? (or: do you think your body is beautiful?)
2. How does social media and education affect your perspectives on body images?
3. What should be seen more in the media to break strict beauty standards for women in the United States?

I have already conducted literature reviews on body image on social media, and I will continue to dig deeper in body positivity with a focus on body stereotypes in relationship to culture.

Filming will start after several interviews are completed. I will ask dancers to move on their own or make movements based on words, or sentences that come out of our conversation. Filming dancers takes place not only in the dance studio, but also includes other sites such as other buildings on campus and parks in Mankato, making this topic more familiar to everyone. A videographer will edit the film, combining selected scenes from the interviews and danced segments.

The final version of this dance film will be presented at several venues on campus. Screenings take place in different locations and in different times, so that multiple audiences be given opportunities to view it. Possible venues for screenings include: The Women’s Center; The Earley Center for Performing Arts; the Department of Theatre and Dance’s annual Spring Dance Concert; and in selected classes from different disciplines. In particular the Spring Dance Concert will be a great place to show the film because the audience is not just students on campus, but people within the community. A short discussion about body positivity will follow after each showing. I will start a conversation with the audience, asking about their opinions on the film and also their personal stories. Paper survey based on how this project helped to change perspectives on body images will be collected at the end of sessions (Appendix). Survey results will be used to help creating future projects, and continue my research into body positivity movements using dance.

Anticipated Outcomes: With multiple screenings available to the campus and greater Mankato community, this film will initiate dialogue about, and encourage, body positivity. I hope to see that this project results in consciousness-raising and helps to break rigid body stereotypes.

Budget

Item	Cost
Camera and editing software (Panasonic Lumix G7 \$498 + Adobe Premiere Elements \$99)	\$597
Videographer	\$400
Total	\$997

Timeline

November 4 th – 8 th	Interviews with dancers and students start
November 11 th - 15 th	Video shoot dancers
November 18 th – 22 nd	Recruit non-dancers and start interviewing
November 25 th – 29 th	Video shoot non-dancers
December 2 nd - 6 th	Editing starts
December 20 th	Dance film completion
Early January	First showing of the film followed by discussion

Appendix

Body Celebration Survey

Thank you for coming to the showing of Body Celebration.
Please fill out this survey to let me know how this project helped you.

1. How does this project help you understand the idea of body positivity?
2. Does film make it easier for you to watch dance performance?
3. Any comments about this project or ideas for my future project?

Thank you! The results will be used to create my future project and continue my research into body positivity and dance.

Contact: Mio Yoshizaki
mio.yoshizaki@mnsu.edu

References and Influences

Works Cited

Villa, E. (2017). The New Shift in the Ideal Ballet Body Type. *Dance Major Journal*, 5. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2b1175z4>

Works Consulted

BillMoyers.com (2011, December 7). *Bill T. Jones: Still / Here with Bill Moyers* [video file]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/33288787>

Bock, L., & Squires, C. (2018). Fat Lip Readers Theatre: A recollection in two voices. *Fat Studies*, 8(3), 219–239. doi: 10.1080/21604851.2019.1551029

eGoSolidal. (2012, February 14). *The Cost of Living - DV8 Physical Theatre* [video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NShJJr1ztkM>

Hill, J., Sandford, R., & Enright, E. (2015). 'It has really amazed me what my body can now do': boundary work and the construction of a body-positive dance community. *Sport in Society*, 19(5), 667–679. doi: 10.1080/17430437.2015.1073946

Locurto, T. (2017). "The Body Monologues" promotes body positivity through personal memoirs and dance. *UWIRE Text*. Retrieved from <https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.mnsu.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE|A482174593&v=2.1&u=mnamsuank&it=r&p=PROF&sw=w>