

Movement, music, and connections: Older adults' experiences of community dance

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Purpose: To understand older adults' experiences of participating in community dance. Specifically, experiences related to aging, physical literacy, and embodiment were examined.

Methods: Five older adult participants of the dance class completed semi-structured interviews, sharing their experiences and perspectives of the class.

Results:

Laughter, lightness, and feeling youthful

Participants found class enjoyable and expressed feeling good during and afterwards. Class led to feelings of youthfulness and presented opportunities for playfulness and to make their own movement choices. Laughter was a regular occurrence.

The body comes back to life

Dancing allowed participants to connect to themselves and highlighted their movement abilities. Some participants suggested that dancing supported their cognitive wellness. Participants demonstrated a desire and commitment to dancing, which for some, even led to other opportunities.

Confidence can shine

Dancing seemed to support participants' confidence in their bodies within the dance class and even beyond. Dancing was a physical activity participants found they could engage in, even when other physical activities were no longer feasible.

Key takeaways:

Physical, social, and emotional health, as well as a connection to ones' self can be fostered through community dance.

Classes held within a neighbourhood present opportunities to support older adults, while promoting social connection, and thus positively impacting the community.

Carried away by the music

Moving to music was enjoyable and motivating. Participants appreciated the various types of music in class, especially when music reminded them of other times in their life.

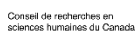
An opportunity to belong

Participants did not just attend the class, they belonged to the group. Class facilitated older adults connecting with others through socializing and moving together. This was missed in the delivery of online classes. Participants were caring, accepting, and encouraging of others in the class.

Contributing to the neighbourhood spirit

The dance class seemed to influence the neighbourhood where the class occurred. Class presented opportunities for participants to see and meet neighbours and may have even supported older adults being physically active beyond class. The class was a community gathering, where participants could share information about their neighbourhood, or discuss their aging experiences.

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