

Ballroom Dance: Linking Serious Leisure to Successful Aging

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Abstract

Objective: This study explored ballroom dance as serious leisure and successful aging in a sample of community-dwelling older adults.

Methods: Qualitative procedures were used to explore stories of ballroom dance and successful aging.

Results: Participants described positive successful aging and active leisure engagement. Three themes emerged from thematic analyses: (a) Ballroom Dance as Serious Leisure: Its Dimensions; (b) Ballroom Dance: Its Link to Successful Aging; (c) The Affinity: We Love to Dance!.

Conclusion: The participants' ballroom dance revealed serious leisure characteristics in conjunction with their successful aging. They loved to dance, self-identified as ballroom dancers, and orchestrated their dance activities within its social world. Future research should examine the relation of successful aging to the social world of ballroom dance.

Keywords

successful aging, serious leisure, ballroom dance, physical activity, engagement with life

Ballroom dance can enhance overall successful aging by promoting longstanding participation in physical and social activities. Ballroom dance is an enjoyable and shared experience in which couples engage in a series of coordinated dance

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movement patterns. These dances include the fox trot, waltz, swing, tango, rumba, samba, cha-cha, and other Latin dances. Ballroom dance as serious leisure is a core leisure activity that is so gratifying that its participants orchestrate a set of activities that progressively increase their knowledge, skills, and overall participation in the activity (Stebbins, 2007). Such gratification perpetuates continued participation in an activity that can foster successful aging by promoting well-being and function (Stevens-Ratchford, 2011).

Ballroom dance encompasses many of the qualities that are linked to successful aging (Bowling, 2007). Successful aging is a combination of health, well-being, and high function (Ferri, James, & Pruchno, 2009; Rowe & Kahn, 1999; Stevens-Ratchford, 2011) as well as active engagement in social and leisure activities (Menec, 2003). Dance demands high cognitive and physical capacities. The world of dance offers many social activities that build social connectedness. Their perceived value of dance can motivate continued participation (Kielhofner, Forsyth, Kramer, Melton, & Dobson, 2009). Ballroom dance as serious leisure offers older adults excellent opportunities to participate in physical and social activities that contribute to their successful aging.

Literature Review

Occupational Engagement in Relation to Well-Being and Successful Aging

Wilcock (2006) and Christiansen and Baum (2005) emphasized the association of occupational engagement with both health and well-being. Wilcock stressed that doing is a dimension of engagement and suggested that doing is an essential part of health. She argued that individuals need to be engaged in meaningful occupations that support their health and well-being. Additionally, Wilcock described occupation as a transformative process of doing, being, and becoming through which people achieve self-actualization. She further linked engagement in meaningful occupations to the notion of becoming, implying that individuals establish role identities in relation to their occupations. This occupational transformative process can be applied to older adults and their longstanding occupations. Over their life courses, older adults have participated in a variety of occupations and become teachers, golfers, weavers, artists, ballroom dancers and developed role identities associated with their occupations. Through continued engagement in occupations like ballroom dance, older adults are becoming—achieving—their potential (Wilcock, 2006). In relation to ballroom dance as serious leisure, this means becoming a dancer: gaining more knowledge, expanding the social dimensions of ballroom dance, as well as deriving a sense of well-being from the world of dance. These physical and psychosocial dimensions of dance that foster physical function and emotional well-being can be linked to successful aging.

Rowe and Kahn (1999) described a model of successful aging that stressed high function as a component of successful aging and argued that high function can be maximized by an active lifestyle. Other investigators have emphasized more multidimensional models of successful aging (Eaton et al., 2012; Parslow, Lewis, & Nay, 2011). Eaton et al. (2012) described a model that emphasized personality, genetics, and environmental factors of successful aging, while Iwamasa and Iwasaki (2011) and Parslow et al. (2011) emphasized the well-being and physical aspects of successful aging. They reported that physical exercise, health behaviors, and overall physical health and well-being were significantly related to successful aging.

Cho, Martin, and Poon (2015) integrated successful aging and developmental models to examine distal and proximal influences on subjective well-being in oldest-old adults. Distal influences included education and past life experiences, while proximal influences included physical and cognitive functioning, physical health impairment, social resources, and perceived economic status as they affect subjective well-being. These notions provide a foundation for understanding continuity of participation across the life course and longstanding ballroom dance.

Continuity of Participation and Successful Aging

The continuity of activity participation has also been related to successful aging. Levasseur, Desrosiers, and Noreau (2004) emphasized that older adults with better health and quality of life were more satisfied with their ongoing activities participation. Agahi, Ahacic, and Parker (2006) found that engagement in an activity early in life was a strong predictor of engagement in the same activity later in life. Stevens-Ratchford (2008) reported that longstanding social participation was linked to successful aging and quality of life. Stevens-Ratchford & Cebulak (2004) and Stevens-Ratchford & Lookingbill (2004) argued that longstanding leisure occupations and shared experiences promoted health and well-being by encouraging more physical activity and social connectedness and concluded that being involved in ongoing activity participation fostered successful aging.

Ballroom Dance as Serious Leisure and Successful Aging

Several investigators have examined dance attributes that can be linked to successful aging (Keogh, Kilding, Pidgeon, Ashely, & Gillis, 2009; Kim et al., 2011; Kimura & Hozumi, 2012; Lima & Vieira, 2007). Kim et al. (2011) found that 6 months of dance improved cognitive function, while Kimura and Hozumi (2012) found that dancing promoted both physical and cognitive function. Keogh et al. (2009) found that dancing can improve older adults' overall physical function, health, and well-being.

In addition, Lima and Vieira (2007) examined ballroom dancing in a sample of older adults living in Brazil and found that ballroom dance promoted flexibility, balance, and coordination. Lima and Vieira suggested that ballroom dancing created a social culture of inclusiveness that promoted well-being and quality of life. Their findings revealed that ballroom dance engendered rich and varied meanings that included perceived health, social well-being, and activity factors that can be related to successful aging.

Ballroom dance as serious leisure involves ongoing acquisition and expression of dance skills and knowledge. In particular, the social world of the activity provides a sense of belonging and an opportunity to interact within a common interest (Stebbins, 2007). More specifically, Stebbins identified several characteristics of serious leisure that can be related to longstanding ballroom dance. These characteristics include perseverance, effort, benefits of achievement, self-actualization, self-expression, and self-enrichment, a social world and social culture of belief, and self-identity as a dancer. Stebbins argued that core activities, like ballroom dance, allow self-expression through interpretation and exhibition of dances; such dance productions can engender feelings of accomplishment. The acquisition of new dances and ongoing development of more complex dance skills can enrich participants' lives and promote their self-worth, as well as their overall well-being.

Several researchers have linked serious leisure to successful aging. Siegenthaler and O'Dell (2003) examined the link between serious leisure and successful aging in a sample of older golfers and found that serious leisure required continued use of physical and cognitive skills. Brown, McGuire, and Voelkl (2008) examined shag dance as serious leisure and found that shag dancing was associated with learning, skill development, and overall successful aging. Brown et al. argued that as serious leisure, shag dancing fostered the participants' self-image, self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-gratification, and self-expression, as well as their sense of social connectedness. Their findings indicated that shag dancing was an opportunity for learning and for staying active. Brown et al. concluded that serious leisure activities can be a tool for successful aging since serious leisure can foster function and continued participation.

Significance and Need

Understanding serious leisure is important because some kinds of serious leisure might more readily promote older adults' well-being and motivate greater engagement with life. When leisure is perceived as both highly valued and as serious leisure, its intrinsic meaning may have increased potential to promote continuity of participation. Additionally, when such serious leisure encompasses cognitive and physical features along with meaningful shared experiences, such

leisure may perpetuate and expand older adults' engagement with life and overall successful aging. There is a need to explore ballroom dance as serious leisure because it possesses physical, cognitive, and social qualities that can promote continuity of participation, well-being, and successful aging. Hence, there is a need to examine ballroom dance as serious leisure and its link to successful aging.

Purpose and Study Definitions

The purpose of this study was to describe longstanding ballroom dance as serious leisure in relation to successful aging in a sample of older adults. Longstanding participation, including participation in dance, was defined as persistent and ongoing engagement in activities over a prolonged period of time. Serious leisure was assumed to entail longstanding participation. Serious leisure was defined as a core activity that is so gratifying and fulfilling that participants are motivated to expand the dimensions of their participation, especially in the areas of learning and skill development (Stebbins, 2011). Ballroom dance was defined as a shared physical activity in which couples engaged in various ballroom dances. In this study, ballroom dance as serious leisure was viewed as dance experiences that demonstrated high degrees of enjoyment, and fulfillment, as well as a strong motivation to participate in ballroom dance activities that involved efforts to learn and to overcome challenges. Additionally, ballroom dance was assumed to evolve along with other activity involvement as part of overall engagement with life.

Successful aging was assumed to embody engagement with life that included longstanding participation in a variety of activities. Successful aging was defined as good health and well-being, continued high cognitive and physical function, and active engagement in social, leisure, and productive activities (Bowling, 2007; Ferri et al., 2009; Stevens-Ratchford, 2011). Furthermore, successful aging was viewed as the manifestation of physical, mental, and social well-being in conjunction with engagement in meaningful activities across the life course (Ferri et al., 2009). Health was defined as mental, physical, and social well-being that was more than the absence of disease (Wilcock, 2006). Well-being was viewed as overall contentment or satisfaction with the physical, mental, and social aspects of life (Christiansen & Baum, 2005). The present study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the experience and meaning of ballroom dance?
2. What are the serious leisure characteristics found in the participant's ballroom dance?
3. How do the participants describe ballroom dance in relation to their successful aging?

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design (Creswell, 2013) was used in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' ballroom dance experiences and its meaning in relation to successful aging. Demographic, observational, and interview data were collected to deepen the understanding of longstanding ballroom dance (Creswell, 2013).

Analysis of narratives and observational qualitative procedures (Creswell, 2013) were used to collect peoples' stories of ballroom dance in order to describe their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008) in relation to ballroom dance. Additionally, the study was guided by the assumption that ballroom dance occurred in the contexts of the participants' overall engagement with life and successful aging. The study also assumed that longstanding and evolved dance participation embodied attributes of serious leisure and successful aging.

Participants

A total of 20 older adults, who were currently participating in ballroom dance activities, were selected to participate in the study. Purposive sampling procedures were used (Creswell, 2013). All participants met the following criteria: (a) aged 60+ years, (b) independently living in the community, (c) ballroom dance participation for 10+ years, (c) current participation in dance classes, and (e) possessed the ability to participate in the interviews. In addition, the majority of participants were retired (15, 75%).

Twelve females and eight males participated in the study. They were retired, community-dwelling, well older adults whose ages ranged from 60 to 84 years with a mean age of 68 years; 19 participants were Caucasian and one was Asian. All participants were high school graduates. The majority of participants' education ranged from some college to college degree with some graduate school (17, 85%); two had graduate degrees, and one had a vocational degree. Fifteen participants were married, two were divorced, and three were widowed. All participants engaged in four or more leisure and productive activities.

All 20 participants exhibited longstanding participation in 16 different productive and leisure occupations in addition to other activities, including meal, home, financial, and health management. Their participation in these activities ranged from 30 to 60 years with a mean of 43.7 years of participation. Additionally, the participants' leisure and productive occupations spanned over the last 15 to 75 years. The participants reported engagement in frequent social activities for the past 30+ years. The participants exhibited longstanding participation in their overall engagement with life, a major component of successful aging.

The 20 participants rated their successful aging 9 to 10 on a 10-point rating scale and reported positive successful aging. Their Successful Aging Profile (SAP) scores ranged from 30 to 44 with a mean score of 38.3. Additionally, they rated their overall well-being 9 to 10 on a 10-point rating scale and reported positive scores on the measurements of well-being including life satisfaction and quality of life.

Instruments

Interview guide. The Occupation and Successful Aging (OSA) Interview Guide (Stevens-Ratchford, 2008) was modified in order to examine ballroom dance as serious leisure. The Dance Study OSA Interview Guide was used to collect rich descriptions of longstanding ballroom dance. The Dance Study OSA was reviewed by experts in the fields of successful aging, and it was determined to have good content validity. B. Stebbins (personal communication, February 20, 2012) reviewed The Dance Study OSA Interview Guide and determined that it did measure serious leisure qualities in ballroom dance.

Demographic data. The Successful Aging Demographic Questionnaire (SADQ; Stevens-Ratchford, 2008, 2011; Stevens-Ratchford & Cebulak, 2004) was used to gather demographic data to describe the participants' characteristics. Additionally, several instruments were used to describe the factors associated with successful aging. These data were used to support the assumption that participants reported some degree of successful aging and to triangulate with the interview data. The following factors were measured: engagement with life, successful aging, and well-being. The Longstanding Occupation Measure (LSOM; Stevens-Ratchford & Diaz, 2003; Stevens-Ratchford, 2011) assesses the continuity and value of four areas of occupational engagement: life management, productive, leisure, and social occupations. Items included in the measure were reviewed by experts in the field for content validity. The reported internal consistency for the LSOM was $\alpha = 0.84$ and its test-retest reliability was $r = 0.89$; $p \leq .05$ (Stevens-Ratchford, 2011). The LSOM was used to measure longstanding participation.

The Successful Aging Profile (SAP) was used to measure the components of successful aging: good health and well-being, cognitive and physical functioning, and participation in activities (Stevens-Ratchford, 2011). The SAP was a 4-point Likert scale that consisted of 11 self-report items. The SAP had internal consistency of $\alpha = 0.84$ and a test-retest reliability of $r = 0.77$; $p < .05$ (Stevens-Ratchford, 2011). Additionally, two measures were used to describe the participants' well-being: Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Quality of Life Scale (QOLS). The SWLS (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) was used to measure the participants' overall life satisfaction. The scale consisted of five statements concerning basic life satisfaction. Participants rated each item

on a 7-point scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (7) *strongly agree*, with higher ratings indicating more positive life satisfaction. The reported internal reliability for the SWLS is $\alpha = 0.87$ and the test-retest reliability is $r = 0.82$ (Diener et al., 1985). The QOLS (Burckhardt, Woods, Schultz, & Zeibarth, 1989) measured perceived quality of life. The QOLS consists of 16 items that are rated on a 7-point scale, from (1) *terrible* to (7) *delighted* (Burckhardt et al., 1989). The QOLS's internal consistency ranged from $\alpha = 0.82$ to 0.92 ; concurrent validity with the Life Satisfaction Index-Z (LSI-Z) ranged from $r = 0.67$ to 0.75 ; test-retest reliability ranged from $r = 0.78$ to 0.94 (Burckhardt et al., 1989).

Procedures

The study received ethical approval from the institutional review board at Towson University. Participants were oriented to the study procedures and their informed consent was obtained. The participants then were administered the demographic questionnaire and the quantitative measures of well-being, longstanding participation, and successful aging. During the administration of the quantitative measure, the researchers were available to provide assistance as needed. The LSOM was verbally administered and the researcher recorded the participants' answers to ensure the accuracy of the data. All data were identified by participant number and pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.

After completion of the quantitative measures, the study volunteers participated in three 2-hour interviews over a 4-week period. During the interview period, participants were also observed while participating in dance activities. The researchers maintained field notes that described the participants' ballroom dance interactions and participation. The researchers also completed field notes of their interview-related reflections and observations immediately after each interview. The interviews were conducted in naturalistic and familiar settings for the participants. The time between interviews was no more than 1 week. Interviews were transcribed into word documents within 24 hours. Interviews were proofread and reviewed with the participants to verify their accuracy. The interview data were also reviewed for accuracy by the research team.

During the first interview, the context of the study was clarified, and the topic of ballroom dance was introduced. Participants were asked to tell stories about their ballroom dance and describe their world of dance. During the second interview, participants were asked to further describe the evolution of their ballroom dance. When participants completed their descriptions, they were asked follow-up questions regarding the challenges related to ballroom dance. During the third interview, participants were asked to describe their successful aging in relation to ballroom dance and to add any additional stories or information regarding their ballroom dance experiences. During the third interview, in addition to describing their successful aging, the participants began to recap previously stated stories. Each interview was reviewed to make sure that the data

were answering the research questions. To achieve saturation (Creswell, 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012), data collection continued until no new data was forthcoming.

Data Analysis

Data were organized in relation to the three research questions for data analysis. Quantitative data were coded and entered into PASW files; descriptive analyses were used to obtain descriptive statistics to describe sample characteristics. Serious leisure and successful aging theoretical lens were used to reduce qualitative data into pertinent information for describing the experiences and meaning of ballroom dance in relation to successful aging. ATLAS.ti (Friess, 2014) was used to conduct qualitative narrative procedures to develop categories and themes of ballroom dance, function, and successful aging. The qualitative analyses of narratives (Creswell, 2013) were used to analyze ballroom dance (Riessman, 2008).

Several qualitative procedures (Creswell, 2013) were used to analyze participants' narratives in order to describe the participants' experiences and meaning of ballroom dance. Open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) was used to reduce each participant's interview data into categories related to ballroom dance. These open categories for each participant were integrated into categories related to serious leisure and successful aging. Thematic analysis (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008) was used to reiteratively examine the serious leisure and successful aging categories until themes emerged. Themes that were common across the participants' stories were extracted to develop a description of their ballroom dance as serious leisure (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008).

To ensure trustworthiness and qualitative validity (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012), the following strategies were used. These themes were then linked to the participants' common stories of successful aging. The final themes were triangulated with the participants' quantitative descriptions of their ballroom dance and successful aging. Next, the themes were reviewed and verified during peer debriefing by the coinvestigators and through member checks with the participants (Creswell, 2013). Finally, the themes were reviewed for coherence and organized into a logical presentation of the participants' description of their ballroom dance as serious leisure in the context of their successful aging. An audit trail (Creswell, 2013) was maintained throughout the data analysis process.

Results

The study sought to explore longstanding ballroom dance as serious leisure. Ballroom dance was viewed as a part of overall engagement with life. The participants' dance evolved in conjunction with their life management, productive,

and leisure activities. Additionally, successful aging and well-being were viewed as important factors in older adulthood and were examined along with ballroom dance because the literature has linked dance to both successful aging and well-being. Serious leisure and successful aging frameworks provided structures for reconfiguring and restoring narratives (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008) into the context of older persons' ballroom dance. Depictions of their longstanding participation, successful aging, and well-being are provided to enrich the description of the participants.

All participants reported that ballroom dance was a meaningful occupation that included regular dance routines. Furthermore, all of the participants rated their dance gratification and fulfillment 9 to 10 on 10-point rating scale. They identified themselves as dancers and rated dance as a very important activity. The participants' years of dancing ranged from 10 to 65 years with a mean of 38 years of dancing. All participants engaged in ballroom dancing including performing the waltz, fox trot, swing, tango, rumba, samba, salsa, and cha-cha. Five of them engaged in three to four dance classes each week. They took classes in waltz, tango, foxtrot, swing, cha-cha, rumba, and salsa. In addition, the majority of participants were involved in two to six dance activities that required 7 to 12 hours of their time weekly. They rated the value of ballroom dance 9 to 10 on a 10-point scale. Their gratification with and extensive participation in ballroom dance reflects characteristics of serious leisure, indicating that, for these participants, ballroom dance was serious leisure.

Narrative thematic analysis revealed an account of ballroom dance that included the following themes: (a) Ballroom Dance as Serious Leisure: Its Dimensions; (b) Ballroom Dance: Its Link to Successful Aging; and (c) The Affinity: We Love to Dance!

Ballroom Dance as Serious Leisure: Its Dimensions

The progression and evolution of the participants' ballroom dance; their self-identity as dancers; together with their efforts to overcome challenges and become better dancers, serve as further indications of the participants' ballroom dance as serious leisure. These self-identified dancers demonstrated a strong motivation to develop their knowledge and skills, as well as perseverance to expand their world of dance. As indicated previously, the participants' ballroom dance experiences had evolved over time, and they had come to view themselves as ballroom dancers. They found meaning in improving their dance and in their social world of dance. Their interest and dedication to dance had grown over time to become a prominent part of their lives. Nina described the progression and evolution of her dance in relation to her expanded participation.

In the beginning . . . we did not do that much . . . Eventually, we started looking in the paper and finding out where there were places [to dance]. Sometimes, we would

be out three to four nights a week dancing, and just becoming more and more interested in it, and eager to learn more steps; over the years that has continued. We are all dancers.

As these dancers learned new skills and devoted significant effort and time to ballroom dance, they developed self-identities as dancers. Steve explained this self-identity: “This dancing is to improve, to become a better dancer. This is dancing, not stepping. We are at the point where we understand that and we are becoming dancers. We are dancers.”

These ballroom dancers described much effort and perseverance in overcoming challenges related to their dancing. Although these dancers experienced obstacles that challenged their participation, they were motivated to continue to dance. They were driven by their passion to dance and to become better ballroom dancers. Dino described overcoming physical challenges.

And even when my arthritis flares up, and I cannot dance as much as I want, I still go to the dances and I do what I can. So probably at this point, I dance about every third dance, and my husband dances about every dance . . . I dance just because it is so enjoyable . . . Sometimes when I dance, my husband has to help me off the floor because I am in so much pain but when I am dancing, I do not feel the pain.

Other dancers experienced challenges that required persistence in their learning and in their skill development. Nina strived to become a better dancer, explaining “we are not anywhere as good as they are, but that does not stop us from doing it. We recognize that everyone has to go at their own speed, and so we keep dancing.” Ann expressed exhilaration at overcoming challenges: “Sometimes you feel really down because you cannot master something or you do not understand the technique . . . Then when you get it and when you do it well, you feel on top of the world!”

These dancers emphasized the need for lessons in order to develop their skills. They stressed the amount of skill and practice necessary to become better dancers. Dino described her efforts to become a better dancer.

We are dancing regularly—at least three times and sometimes four times a week we were practicing—and in between that, we are doing a lot of other things too . . . I still have a notebook and write down all the stuff and we practice, and we are constantly gaining new skills . . . we are becoming better dancers.

Although Liz teaches dance and has danced for the majority of her life, her learning had continued:

I take lessons. I constantly take lessons to improve . . . I continued my learning of dance through my teaching . . . I would be dancing and my girlfriend would

do a cha-cha pattern, and I would say, 'Oh! Teach me that pattern'; so, she would. Expanding my knowledge has come through friends rather than professionally through studios.

Ann's account also reflects efforts to develop skills: "I am always struggling to reach the next level. That is the motivation of it, to do better and better, which makes it meaningful."

In addition to their lessons and practice, these dancers orchestrated their dance activities within a social world of dance that extended beyond the dance floor and into their everyday lives. Their dance provided shared experiences and opportunities to interact with others, who shared their common interests. They found enjoyment and meaning in their interactions with other dancers. Mona described this enjoyment.

I enjoy the social aspect of ballroom dance, getting to know more people; when we went dancing the other night, I met some new people, who really found [that dancing] was fun. We had something in common. So, it was fun; these were people I probably would not have met otherwise.

Another dancer, Liz, derived similar enjoyment from her dancing, "I go out every Wednesday night to dance... I have been doing this since my husband died... It is socialization. In dancing, I do not make acquaintances; I make friends." These ballroom dancers described a social world in which they orchestrated their leisure to include dance and social activities with other dancers. Their accounts of their social world of ballroom dance provided additional indication of their ballroom dance as serious leisure.

Ballroom Dance: Its Link to Successful Aging and Well-being

As noted in the description of the sample, the participants reported positive successful aging. They demonstrated several aspects of successful aging including high function and positive well-being. They told stories about the demands for high cognitive function in ballroom dance. They stated that ballroom dance was mentally stimulating, especially the memorization of routines and techniques. Liz stated that, "... dancing does a lot to stimulate your mind." Steve described the cognitive challenge and satisfaction associated with learning a new routine:

I have a difficult time memorizing a whole routine and keeping it there, but the formation that we did last year [included] 80 different [steps] and we did it. I think I could do it today because we practiced it so much. We memorized it.

Nina also described positive mental well-being in relation to memorizing challenging routines.

One of the big things for us is memory issues. We have learned that as we get older, we forget things quickly unless we do them a lot . . . we know how important it is to remember and practice and keep our minds active. Learning steps is good for the memory. Dance is mentally stimulating.

Field observations and the participants' stories of the physical aspects of ballroom dance provide further indication of their successful aging in terms of their high physical function. The participants stated that dance provided opportunities to stay physically active and to promote their functional and physical health in their older adulthood. Steve emphasized staying active: "If you stop being active, you decline. So you cannot quit. You have to keep going. If you want to enjoy life, you got to keep going." Dino expressed that dancing on a regular basis promoted her everyday mobility, "dancing regularly . . . is part of staying active . . ." All the dancers held a common value of remaining physically and mentally active as they aged and that their ballroom dancing activities supported their successful aging with regard to their health and well-being. Ann commented that dance influenced her perspective on her aging process, "Aging, whether you like it or not, it is coming, so you may as well age gracefully but it is difficult. Dancing keeps you feeling young. And also your body stays young, hopefully." As these dancers valued the importance of staying active, they stressed that dancing promoted their health and well-being. The dancers indicated that ballroom dance stimulated their minds and engendered positive feelings. They found meaning in the functional benefits of ballroom dance.

In addition to high function, participants reported positive well-being, another indication of their successful aging. They expressed a contentment related to their dance routines; they described satisfaction associated with their skill development. These dancers expressed self-esteem and enjoyment as they related their dance stories. Mona noted the self-esteem: "The way I feel when I dance, it gives me feelings of self-worth and good health and just enjoyment." Similarly, Nina stated that "because dancing is joyful to me, [it] promotes . . . emotional and mental well-being." Dino described how various types of dances made her feel good about herself:

I feel elegant, graceful, and attractive when I am dancing. It is a nice feeling to dance . . . Especially some dances, the waltz just makes me feel like a queen or something. I feel so elegant and refined . . . The tango makes me feel sexy and hot. I would say swing and cha-cha make you feel joyful . . . I cannot think of a single kind of dance that makes me feel bad about myself. Dancing makes me feel good.

The Affinity: We Love to Dance!

Finally, these dancers all shared a deep passion for and enjoyment of ballroom dance. Even though each individual described different dance experiences, their value and their enjoyment of ballroom dance were evident. These participants described positive self-esteem, as well as gratification when they achieved a specific step or dance routine. They expressed their joy and pleasure in dance and stated that dance allowed them to move outside their daily lives and to concentrate, for a short time, on something that they really loved. Liz expressed her love of dance in the following manner, "I tell my daughter: If I die on the dance floor, do not be sad, [laughs] you know I will have died happy . . . that is my future. To continue as long as my body lets me do it." Dino explained that dancing wiped away any difficulties she experienced:

It sort of like transports you somewhere else, you are like floating along . . . [laughs] I do not know how to describe it. The activity itself brings so much pleasure that it can obscure all sorts of stress and pain and whatever; it is just thoroughly enjoyable. I love to dance.

Nina described the complete happiness dance brings to her and how essential it is when living a stressful life.

Well, it is a totally joyful experience. I think that is a good thing to have. Life is tough, and I think it is important to try and have one, for sure, one part of your life that is absolutely joyful where there are no stresses, no complications. You are not worried about hurting somebody's feelings. You just . . . dance.

Ann also stated how dancing makes her feel, "I like whenever we dance well, I like those days and we feel very happy." Mona also described this happy feeling as she expressed a similar emotional benefit.

[Dancing] really lifts your spirits and kind of carries you through the rest of the day . . . It is a certain high that you get, the feeling of self-worth and self-esteem, spontaneity of gracefulness, [it's] worthwhile. It is just a pleasurable feeling of enjoyment, that you look good and you are enjoying yourself.

Steve commented on his emotions after dancing well, "I dance with somebody who is fairly well accomplished and so we are similar, I feel really great." Nina explained how dancing is an outlet for her, a way to escape the stresses of everyday life, "When we are dancing, I do not think about other things that might be a worry. It is an escape." These dancers found meaning in their ongoing participation in their dance routines. They have established a culture that surrounds their dance; they have developed a philosophical orientation and

social world of dance. These dancers valued their social world and loved to dance. Nina summed up this affinity of dance when she expressed her gratification and fulfillment with ballroom dance, when she described her internal satisfaction associated with this engagement.

I like the movement. I love music. Dancing is an expression of that, of movement. It makes me feel happy. It is total escape . . . I can just escape into the music and the movement and I love it . . . I do not really know what we look like. I know what I feel like. I love to dance.

Limitations

The study was limited because the sample lacked diversity and because the sample was highly educated. Since the participants were informed of the study's purpose and given the interview questions prior to their interviews, observer effect may have occurred (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the participants may have inadvertently answered questions in order to please the researchers and meet their study purpose. Additionally, since the study relied on self-report instruments, the participants' recollections and accounts may not have always been accurate.

Discussion

Ballroom dance can be viewed as serious leisure for these participants. Their ballroom dance was part of a lifestyle that reflected successful aging including health, positive well-being, high function, and active engagement with life. Furthermore, the participants identified themselves as ballroom dancers and orchestrated their activities within a social world of dance. These participants' ballroom dance revealed several characteristics of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007). They devoted time and effort to develop their ballroom dance knowledge and skill. They also expressed a love of dance and a desire to expand their ballroom dance activities.

The results of this study supported prior findings that physical activities, like ballroom dance, foster successful aging (Baker, Meisner, Logan, Kungl, & Weir, 2009; Brown et al., 2008). These findings support Baker et al.'s (2009) notion that physical activity promoted both high cognitive and physical function, since the participants' longstanding ballroom dance coexisted with their demonstrated good health, positive well-being, and high cognitive and physical function. Additionally, the study findings support Brown et al.'s (2008) notion that physical activity that was serious leisure motivated continued participation in activities that fostered not only high function but also promoted health and well-being along with social connectedness. The study participants described their

motivations for ongoing participation, and they valued the social aspects of ballroom dance. Paganini-Hill, Kawas, and Corrada (2011) also reported that engagement in serious leisure dance promoted physical health and well-being, as well as socialization and progressive participation. The study participants linked this socialization and progressive participation to their health, well-being, and overall successful aging.

Clinical Implications

These findings indicated several implications that can be applied in clinical practice. Practitioners should ask clients about their interests in longstanding and serious leisure activities. They should consider organizing activities in a manner that allows older adults to develop ongoing knowledge and skills related to particular activities. Older adult activity programs can consider strategies for helping their participants continue their longstanding occupations. Including dance activities in activity programs may provide additional opportunities for men and women to continue or to experience new and rewarding activities. Health-care providers should encourage well older adults to engage in physical activities like ballroom dance to promote their health, well-being, and successful aging.

Conclusion

This study aimed to describe ballroom dance as serious leisure in relation to successful aging. The participants identified themselves as dancers, and their longstanding ballroom dance revealed qualities of serious leisure. The participants derived a sense of accomplishment and much gratification from the dance accomplishments. Although their dancing was physically and cognitively demanding, these dancers were motivated to continue to learn and to develop their skills. For these older adults, ballroom dance was a physical activity that not only promoted their physical function but also fostered their well-being and engendered feelings of positive self-worth. The findings of this study indicated that ballroom dance as serious leisure occurred in conjunction with other longstanding participation and the participants' reports of successful aging and positive well-being. Future research should examine ballroom dance and successful aging in larger and more diverse samples. Further research also should examine the specific qualities of serious leisure and their relation to well-being and successful aging.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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