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Tracing the impacts of informal dance training: a case study of falling on your feet, a programme for dancers over 65

Jennifer Essex 

This article takes as a case study Helix Art's Falling on Your Feet, a dance and health programme for people aged 65 and above, who are living independently in Teesside. It examines how the programme has traced the social, health, and artistic impacts and effects of informal dance training. Methods used to trace impacts include: i) informal conversations between an artist practitioner and the group within a structured social session, ii) informal interviews led by trained assessors, iii) reflections written by the dance practitioners, iv) photography, and v) light touch interventions such as Timed Up and Go (TUG) testing. Impacts have been captured mainly through qualitative and light touch interventions. This paper examines the reasons qualitative and light touch tracking is necessary, and beneficial, both for the participants, practitioners, partner organizations, and funding bodies.

Keywords: Dance, training, wellbeing, participatory, older adults

About the Falling on Your Feet Programme

Falling on Your Feet is a dance and health programme for people aged 65 and above, who are living independently, developed by Helix Arts. The programme aims to provide social, health, and artistic development to participants. This is provided through weekly or twice weekly 1.5 hour workshops delivered by professional dancers and choreographers. The sessions themselves consist of a mixture of dance and social activities, both formal and informal.

The programme was supported by a 3 year investment (2017–2020) from Dunhill Medical Trust and The Henry Smith Charity to develop 18

Falling on Your Feet groups in communities across the North East. These include groups in West Denton, Wallsend, North Shields, South Shields, Sunderland, Walker, Darlington, Stockton, Pelaw, Newton Aycliffe, and Bishop Auckland.

It received further funding from Arts Council England's 'Celebrating Age', to develop an additional 7 groups across 2018–2021. I worked with them to develop two groups from 2019 to 2020. In this paper I will discuss both my work with the group and the previous research done on the *Falling on Your Feet* project by Bailey et al. (2017).

Why trace the impacts of dance in informal settings for older dancers?

Justine Coupland (2013) writes “many genres of dance, and particularly dance performed for public scrutiny, are strongly associated with youth” (3). One of the reasons for drawing attention to the impacts of dance with older dancers is to ensure that they are included in the body of writing on dance. Coupland also notes that ideological forces bolster the association of dancing with youth. In tracing the impacts of dance with older dancers, we are therefore both furthering the cause of including older dancers within the the canon of writing on dance, as well as providing evidence about the positive impacts that dance has had within this age group in particular, thereby challenging prevailing attitudes towards the association of dance with youth and adding new evidence to support the view that more can be done in this area. The ageist attitude our society has the resulting effect that, at an institutional level, the development of health policies that would benefit older individuals are inhibited (Burnes et al. 2019). Tracking the impacts of dance with older dancers means that there is evidence to support programmes that can have a positive impact with this group.

The benefits of dance are frequently not limited to quantitatively measurable health outcomes. In addition to the physical activity it provides, dance involves emotions, social interaction, sensory stimulation, and motor coordination, yet Lakes et al. note that “there is very little research examining perceived or objectively measured cognitive, social, or emotional improvements associated with dancing.” (2016, 118). The reasons for this are varied, and I will explore some of them in more detail later in this paper. In particular, there appears to be a bias as to what is acceptable evidence of impact. Milton, Petticrew, and Green (2014) note that qualitative evidence is not as easily accepted as quantitative evidence across some organization and institutional contexts. There is a tradition and a hierarchy of accepted evidence, with the quantitative often perceived as the gold standard, followed by the qualitative, and lastly, new and emerging forms such as performance-based research (Haseman 2006). This hierarchy can mean that some types of evidence are more widely collected than others, as they are more valued by funders, stakeholders, policy makers, etc. The problem with this hierarchy is that it means that some of the impacts of projects are overlooked, because the method of data collection doesn't allow their impacts to be

I The Timed Up and Go test is used to quantify functional mobility. In it, participants are asked to stand up from a chair, walk to a marker three meters away, turn, walk back to the chair and sit down. The activity is timed and is also be used to follow clinical change over time.

recorded. Alfredsson Olssen and Heikkinen assert “it is clear that older people’s dancing is a multi-faceted phenomenon which has primarily been studied in terms of health” (2019, 2). From my experience of working on the *Falling on Your Feet* programme, I observed positive changes that went far beyond those that could be measured by a Timed Up and Go (TUG) test¹ or other quantitative measures. This paper seeks to investigate how some of these impacts can be traced and why it is important to do so.

Why use qualitative methods for tracking impacts?

Qualitative research is explorative, meaning that the researcher can learn more than the expected effects (van’t Riet et al. 2001). This can help to focus attention on the experience of the dancers themselves, rather than focusing on documenting only the data from a pre-prescribed area of interest. Especially because, as noted above, the focus of any writing that takes place about dance with older adults is largely centred upon health outcomes. Qualitative research can allow for a more holistic approach. The aim of qualitative research is “to understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures, and explore [the] behaviours, perspectives and experiences of people in their daily lives” (Sparkes and Smith 2012, 14). As ageism can promote the exclusion of older persons (Burnes et al. 2019), it is especially important to document their experiences and to work to understand their social reality. In addition, there are still assumptions made in society about how older people are expected to behave. These are often in conflict with the experience of today’s older people, as they experience old age differently to previous generations (Alfredsson Olson and Heikkinen 2019). For example, the Office for National Statistics notes that people over the age of 65 are getting married and divorced in greater numbers than in any previous generation. The ONS also notes that this generation of older adults are living longer, and are more connected economically and socially, in part because they are more likely to still be working (Office for National Statistics 2017). These are large shifts, and it is difficult to dispel previous conceptions of older adults that may no longer be relevant. As far as possible, when tracing the impacts of dance for older people, we should enter without preconceptions, either about the dancers themselves, or the potential impacts of a given dance programme.

In the new paradigm, qualitative research, the researcher/participant relationship is viewed as “proceeding from two knowing subjects rather than ‘knower-known’” (Opsal et al. 2016, 1138). In their initial impact study of the *Falling on Your Feet* Programme, Bailey, Reynolds, Hearne, Gavin, and Iftkha used a qualitative, values-based evaluation. This was a

participatory, reflective and ongoing (process) approach, rooted in three questions: What’s important to the participants (values)? Clarifying what’s important to the participants (why these values?); Identifying and mapping values-based aspects (processes and outcomes).

This allowed them to evaluate the impacts of the programme based on the values of the participants. Instead of the participants having research done to them, the research was shaped by the participants. This was in order to create more relevant outcomes for themselves.

The limits of qualitative data

Haseman (2006) notes that “within the binary of quantitative and qualitative research, [these] practice-led researchers have struggled to formulate methodologies sympathetic to their fundamental beliefs about the nature and value of research” (98). As a dancer, choreographer, and teacher, I encounter limitations in documenting the impacts of my work through qualitative data alone. Recording qualitative data requires a transcription sorts; a translation from live dance and all the complexities and interactions this entails, to a piece of written text. There are subtleties that cannot be communicated in any form other than dance; that require co-presence. Haseman describes practice-led researchers as having

little interest in trying to translate the findings and understandings of practice into the numbers (quantitative) and words (qualitative) preferred by traditional research paradigms. This means, for example, that the practice-led novelist asserts the primacy of the novel; for the 3-D interaction designer, it is the computer code and the experience of playing the game; for the composer, it is the music; and for the choreographer it is the dance. This insistence on reporting research through the outcomes and material forms of practice challenges traditional ways of representing knowledge claims. It also means that people who wish to evaluate the research outcomes also need to experience them in direct (co-presence) or indirect (asynchronous, recorded) form. (101)

The impacts of the *Falling on Your Feet* Programme cannot be captured completely in words any more than they can be documented with numbers. As a dance-based programme, the primary way to understand its impacts are by experiencing them in direct co-presence. With my group, as well as with Bailey et al.’s group, this was facilitated by inviting stakeholders to attend sessions and a sharing event. Bailey, Reynolds, Hearne, Gavin, and Iftkhar documented some of the feedback from the event they held at the end of *their Falling on Your Feet* sessions. The quotes from those who attended illustrate the strong impact that was communicated through direct co-presence.

I found this incredibly moving, touching, I just welled up. I’m not used to seeing older people dance in this way. I want to know can you join these classes even if you are younger - [general audience laughter], was it very emotional to make?

-Audience member taking part in the Q&A session, following the public dance performance (Bailey et al. 2017, 5)

Through witnessing the *Falling on Your Feet* dancers moving, the audience members' perception of age was changed. This was not what the project set out to do, but was nevertheless an impact that was captured, both by creating opportunities for co-presence for the impact to be witnessed in the form in which it was created, and in the careful tracing of the impact through a values-based evaluation that resulted in publication. I would argue that both of these are crucial for tracing impacts in dance; for the impact to be witnessed through direct co-presence, and also for impacts to be communicated to a different audience through written documentation and/or publication. Haseman (2006, 98) notes that "established qualitative and quantitative research methodologies frame what is legitimate and acceptable". In order to communicate the impacts of this work to a wider audience, it is useful to reach out to them through their established methodologies as well as through those that most clearly illustrate the impacts in their primary form.

Impact for participants

In my work with the *Falling on Your Feet* programme, I noticed positive impacts on the dancers' sense of agency, self-expression, and their desire and ability to help others. The participants also seemed to be increasing in confidence and developing new social bonds. Two factors seemed to have contributed towards these impacts:

1. Having the dancers involved in tracing the impacts of the programme through the time for discussion between the participants and myself, meaning that both myself and the dancers were consistently reflecting on the changes they were experiencing.
2. Working with a photographer to document the changes. This appeared to contribute to the participants' developing sense of confidence and their sense of self-identifying as dancers.

I perceived changes over time in the dancers' self-expression and self-understanding. They started to identify and to discuss more specific impacts in their physical wellbeing, particularly with their balance and in their social wellbeing with a growing network of friends that they were speaking to regularly. They also took a greater interest in each other's development and would help each other during the session, giving demonstrations and explanations of movements and choreography. This is consistent with Opsal, Wolgemuth, Cross et al.'s finding that participants that actively take part in research experience benefits including self-expression, self-understanding, expressing agency, knowledge and skill acquisition, a relief from a sense of isolation, and an increase in helping others.

For the *Falling on Your Feet* programme there was one quantitative measure of impact which was a TUG test both in the first week and in the final week of the programme. All of the dancers immediately wanted to see their result. They had all improved from their initial score. They shared my interest in the impacts that the programme was having and were keen to trace those impacts with me. Sharing the qualitative and

quantitative data with the participants and creating an atmosphere in which they were very much involved in the research appeared to result in an increased feeling of agency.

There could potentially have been negative results from sharing the results of such a quantitative test. What if one of the dancer's scores had not improved? How would this have affected their desire to continue with the programme? In their paper, Opsal et al. (2016) note that vulnerability of groups and sensitivity of topic do not predict risk. Indeed, instead of avoiding these projects, Opsal et al. encourage researchers to attend to relationships in their projects. This attendance to relationships is important to note. Sharing such direct data, if it did not show the desired results, could have triggered negative emotions. Developing mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between myself and the dancers was key to being able to navigate these potential challenges. Opsal et al note in their paper that "To date, there is little evidence that even the most emotionally charged qualitative interviews cause lasting harm, or even that participants experience as harmful the charged emotional state that can accompany recounting painful memories" (2016, 1139). Indeed, through the weeks of discussions with the *Falling on Your Feet* group, occasionally members brought up emotionally charged subjects including loss and loneliness. The overall feeling of the group remained one of joy and positivity, showing the importance of attending to each other's relationships. The mutual respect and connectedness seemed to help the participants discuss difficult topics with candour and without causing lasting harm.

The dancers expressed specific interest in the effects the programme was having on their balance and social bonds. Through ongoing discussion, over time, these became focus points for the group. The dancers were central in identifying these impacts and the positive effects they were having. For example, T said that he could now stand while he put on his trousers, which he hadn't been able to do in years. This marked an improvement in strength and balance was greeted with smiles, laughter, and lots of congratulation from fellow dancers. The dancers also told me in the discussion that one of their favourite things about the sessions was the group. We talked about feelings of loneliness and loss, and I began to understand from them that a primary value of the sessions was the social aspect. I began to build in more social dances and the dancers told me during the discussion how much they enjoyed the sessions that included more physical contact, such as circle dances, or partner work such as salsa. The sessions that involved touch through circle or partner dances were always met by the most enthusiastic feedback in the post-class discussion. The positive reaction to physical touch that was experienced in these sessions does have a scientific foundation. Shanley Pierce writes that "touch starvation increases stress, depression and anxiety, triggering a cascade of negative physiological effects" and that "when we hug or feel a friendly touch on our skin, our brains release oxytocin, a neuropeptide involved in increasing positive, feel-good sensations of trust, emotional bonding and social connection, while decreasing fear and anxiety responses in the brain at the same time" (Texas Medical Centre, 2020).

From the dancers, I learned that they valued balance and social bonds, and so was able to develop their sessions to continue to build on these impacts. Their awareness of these two impacts was developed because of the discussion and impact study built into the sessions. As they became more aware of these impacts, they began to seek them out, for example, they continued to develop their social bonds by self-organizing weekly meetings over our summer break. Over the course of the program, the dancers went from being strangers to regularly meeting for coffee, chatting over WhatsApp, and organizing special meals together.

Photography was used throughout the project:

1. To document the impact the project was having for the participants; to make visible to them the social, emotional, and physical changes and
2. To potentially help to develop a shift in identity; to develop the confidence to self-identify as a dancer.

Through a discussion with the dancers and Helix Arts, we decided to invite a photographer who could instantly print photographs for the dancers to take home with them after the final session of the first term. When I was watching them, near the end of their ten weeks in the programme, I saw real joy, freedom of movement, improved posture and social connections, and, I wanted to make these impacts visible to them. Frith and Harcourt (2007) note that “visual methods, including the use of photographs, video recordings, drawings, and art, are increasingly used in the study of psychosocial aspects of health and well-being” (1340). Although in this project the photographs were used to communicate the visible impact the sessions were having to the dancers themselves, there is further scope to develop the role photography could play in tracing the impacts of dance with older dancers. For example, photo-elicitation is a method in which “photographs (taken by the researcher or by research participants) are used as a stimulus or guide to elicit rich accounts of psychosocial phenomena in subsequent interviews” (Frith and Harcourt 2007, 1340). Photo-elicitation could be used, therefore, to develop a rigorous documentation and a very deep understanding of impacts.

The aim of the *Falling on Your Feet* sessions is not only to generate health benefits, but also artistic benefits. I was aware that my group didn't self-identify as dancers, because during the initial sessions they laughed when I referred to them as dancers. Cheyne notes that “the overly thin dancers photographed [in dance photography] can have a great influence on women, ultimately preventing many from considering themselves as dancers.” (Cheyne 2011, 23). Cheyne continues that “Dance photography indicates a clear weighting toward dancers with mesomorphic or ectomorphic somatotypes”. The dancers in the *Falling on Your Feet* programme do not fit with the images we see of dancers most often in dance photography. Especially in the beginning, the dancers would often make critical remarks about their weight. If, as Cheyne says, the images we most often see of dancers can have an influence over who considers themselves a dancer, then what can we do to start to broaden the range of dancers that are portrayed through dance photography?

I initially wanted to work with a photographer so that I could document the impact the programme was having on the participants for the participants themselves. I could see them increasing in confidence, smiling and socializing easily, moving with increased ease and better posture, and wanted them to be able to see this as well. I am now also conscious that by documenting older dancers dancing more often, perhaps we can begin to dislodge what has become the norm in dance photography. This is important because it can remove perceived barriers. By only documenting young, thin dancers, those who do not fit these descriptors can feel that dance is not for them. Considering the many documented, and undocumented benefits of dance for everyone, and not only for the young and thin, it may be worth considering whether expanding the range of ages and figures documented in dance photography could have some impact on perceived barriers to entry. During the sharing session at the end of our first ten weeks of *Falling on Your Feet*, we invited a photographer to take pictures. Each of us then took a picture of us dancing with the group home with us to remind us over the break of our social ties and also to reaffirm our identity as dancers.

Roland Barthes emphasized the close interconnection, in the late 1970s, between identity formation and memory: pictures of family and friends are visible reminders of former appearances, inviting us to reflect on 'what has been' but, by the same token, they tell us how we should remember our selves [sic] as younger persons. We remodel our self-image to fit the pictures taken at previous moments in time. Memories are created just as much as they are recalled from photographs (van Dijck 2008, 63)

The social bond between the group definitely developed and became increasingly strong. They self-organize weekly meetings as well as special events. They also chat regularly via a WhatsApp group. More detailed research is required to see if photography and reflection on their own images assisted in any way with this development. If we do remodel our self-image to fit photographs taken, as has been asserted by Barthes and van Dijck, among others, then tracing the impacts of dance through photography that the participants then have access to could have a profound effect. This could be done through photo-elicitation, as discussed above, or through digital storytelling, as I will discuss in more detail below.

Impact for the dance artist

As a dance artist I was contracted by Helix Arts to deliver the dance sessions and also to reflect on the sessions in an artist's journal that I shared with Helix Arts. These artist's journals, completed by all the dance artists contracted by Helix to deliver the *Falling on Your Feet* sessions, trace the impacts the programme had on both the participants and me as I developed my delivery based on the cycle of practice, reflection, and research.

By tracing the impacts of the programme in these journals, the dance artist can engage in reflective practice, giving them the opportunity for

targeted improvement. Reflective practice is defined by Knowles (2014) as:

1. "Purposeful in that it is something that we consciously decide to engage in".
2. Complex, considering "personal cognitions, emotions and behaviours, their interaction and impact on the situation, as well as the impact of the context on these".
3. Instigated through questioning.
4. Actively transforming experience into learning; experience "has to be examined through reflective practice in order to shift it to knowledge".
5. Having to result in change (10).

Looking back through my past artist's journal entries, I can see the complexity of the considerations I was engaging in.

On Thursday, T came up to me after class to tell me he stood on one leg for the first time. C, T, and I then spoke about how when you walk, you actually stand on one foot between each step and how important maintaining that balance and strength can be. Because we had an OT in on Tuesday, we also talked about how different dance steps use the foot in different ways – i.e. In salsa, moving toe and heel, compared to waltz heel toe and that being able to articulate your feet is important to prevent what the OT had termed the "shuffle walk".

An occupational therapist had come in to observe the class. She took part in both the dance session and the informal conversation afterwards. Her different perspective allowed us to talk about the impacts of the sessions in a different way. She spoke about how the feet are articulated in different dance styles, suggesting that this could be useful in preventing "shuffle walk", a walking pattern that develops for a wide variety of reasons in older adults and can increase risk of falling. This was interesting to both me and the dancers, C in particular was interested, because she was aware of the risks of developing a shuffling walk as she aged. I was interested in particular, because I could see how dance could be used to prevent shuffling walks by using a variety of styles that themselves accentuate the use of the foot. We discussed non-physiological walking patterns, why they develop, their effects, and how dance could help. This discussion furthered my interest in gait, and I found that gait is a commonly accepted indicator of global health (Cullen et al. 2018) and that non-physiological gaits increase the risk of joint overuse, which leads to pain and in some cases osteoarthritis (Schließmann et al. 2018). This led me to consciously consider the use of footwork in my classes, developing sessions that focussed on the articulation of the foot and its conscious use. The informal discussion session that formed a part of the *Falling on Your Feet* programme, in combination with the artist's journal gave me an opportunity to question how dance could impact a particular aspect of ageing, in this case the "shuffle walk" and to transform this experience into learning through research and actively changing my practice to incorporate my new knowledge.

Reflecting through the artist's journal provided me with key insights which helped with a reflective cycle of practice. Vinjamuri, Warde, and Kolb (2017) note that the opportunity for reflection through activities such as diary writing is especially valuable to facilitate new learning in adults, as it helps them make connections between their existing knowledge and understanding and what they are learning. For me, linking my existing understanding with the emerging knowledge that was coming out of my experience leading the sessions, led me to new understanding and also to new avenues that I explored through further research.

As classes continued, I became more alert to the multi-dimensional impact the sessions were having on participants' wellbeing. The journal allowed me to track changes over time as I was able to look back on previous journals and see when changes occurred that would have been harder to trace. A later note in my artist's journal reflects on a new dancer that joined the group in its 23rd week. I note that I can see a clear difference between her dancing, the speed at which she picks up steps, her confidence in dancing in front of others, her strength, and balance, and that of the rest of the group. Recording that impact was powerful and it has had a profound impact on me as an artist, to see how much the group has developed through regular dance sessions.

In tracing the impacts through my artist's journal, I am able to reflect on them, when and why they have occurred and how they could be developed. Documenting the impact the sessions have had also provided me with encouragement and motivated the dancers to continue with the programme. In addition, my journals helped Helix understand my perspective, allowing them to see the impacts the programme was having through my eyes.

Impact for stakeholders

The *Falling on Your Feet* programme needs to document its effectiveness in order to attract funding. This involves communicating the impacts of the programme both to Public Health England and to NHS practitioners. As the project documents its impacts through a combination of quantitative methods (TUG testing) and qualitative methods (structured social session, informal interviews led by trained assessors, reflections written by the dance practitioners that track impacts and photography) there are challenges to translating these impacts to other stakeholders. The kinds of data preferred varies between stakeholders. One of the programme coordinators at Helix Arts explains further:

We used to collect quantitative clinical data for *Falling on Your Feet* through doing the 'Timed Up and Go' test. This was with the support of a Falls and Vestibular specialist physiotherapist [sic], who trained Helix and some *Falling on Your Feet* artists in carrying out the test - although you don't need to be a clinical practitioner in order to gather valid data. It's a useful way of measuring impact across the programme... It was also an extremely useful tool for communicating the impact of the programme to

Public Health and NHS practitioners, and developing partnerships for programme legacy.

However, many participants (and some artists) expressed their concern that this measurement was having a detrimental effect on participant engagement within the programme. They felt that they wanted to attend a creative session, and that the TUG test was too 'medicalised', and it put them off attending.

This presented a conundrum. Long term legacy of the programme requires relationships and communication with the health sector (this is a falls prevention programme). We know that this falls prevention programme works, but only if participants stay on the programme. If collecting the health data was affecting participant retention on the programme, then we had to address that first, and so we dropped that part of the evaluation.

It's a real 'crunch point' problem within the programme that I have not been able to find a satisfactory answer to.

- Too medicalised - lose your participants, programme doesn't work = no programme.
- Not medicalised - keep your participants, programme works short term but no long term links with healthcare = no programme.

The *Falling on Your Feet* programme now aims to share impacts with funders through different modalities. Evidence that the dancers are attending and participating can be more impactful than highly medicalised data. As Rhodes et al. note: "most exercise programmes typically suffer high attrition in their early stages. It is estimated that over 50% of people will drop out of their attempted exercise routine within 6 to 12 months of initiation." (1999, 398). The best exercise is the kind that you do and so one of the most important impacts we can trace is the fact that the dancers return every week. The regular attendance in the case of my *Falling on your Feet* group was also a testament to the social bond the group created. If a member was missing, the others always knew through their mutual WhatsApp group the reason for the absence. They encouraged each other to attend, and, if someone was absent, made sure they followed up. Helping funders understand the social benefits that lie beneath the numbers is important and an area for further investigation.

Working with funders to help them to understand the impacts of the programme through visual forms can help. Sometimes it is the voices of the dancers themselves and videos of the sessions that can most powerfully convey the effect the programme has had. Hearing T tell the story of his balance improving to the point where he can stand to put on his trousers and seeing dancers smiling and helping each other in the class could be more powerful than a data set with before and after TUG times.

Digital storytelling is one possible way to communicate the impact of projects such as this one.

Given digital media's vast and nearly instantaneous impact, the use of digital storytelling as an innovative knowledge translation approach has the

potential to significantly decrease the time between knowledge generation and knowledge implementation.” (Rieger et al. 2018, 2)

Signs of wellbeing such as smiling, reaching to touch others, making eye contact, and laughter can clearly be seen in the images and video footage of the *Falling on Your Feet* programme. As “research on emotional body language is rapidly emerging as a new field in cognitive and affective neuroscience” (de Gelder 2006, 242), there is potential for more robust photo and video analysis which could provide the types of data that certain funders require.

Perhaps more work needs to be done in making this type of evidence more clearly understood, especially in healthcare settings, that can value quantitative data over other forms of impact tracing.

There is definitely more work to be done in communicating the impacts of dance for health. As Anderson et al. (2019) note:

Despite the demonstrated benefits of using arts in healthcare, art modalities are rarely integrated into patient care plans, even in practices that include multidisciplinary perspectives such as social work, psychology or psychiatry, palliative care and internal medicine (Crone et al. 2012). In addition, little has been described about what goes on inside the artist–patient encounter and how the artist can function as part of the interdisciplinary team. (Anderson et al. 2019, 68)

Continuing to search for ways to communicate the impacts of dance can help to create more opportunities for it to be usefully integrated into healthcare. Creating ways to meaningfully describe the relationships created through artistic practice may require us to develop new modes of research and new ways of communicating that research.

Conclusion

Tracing the impacts of informal dance training can be challenging. Dance requires co-presence for its impacts to be understood in their primary medium. There is a process of translation that is required to extract qualitative and quantitative data that cannot capture all the complexities of a live art form. However, tracing the impacts of non-professional dance is important. It can assist in making the case for dance as a powerful tool for wellbeing. Recording the impacts of dance can also have a profound impact on the dance artist facilitating the session and its participants, helping them to see the effects of dance and to develop them.

More work needs to be done to develop meaningful ways of communicating the role and impact of dance, especially in informal or non-professional settings. This can help to widen participation in an art form that can have positive effects on many aspects of social and physical wellbeing.

ORCID

Jennifer Essex  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8462-6075>

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Jennifer Essex is a choreographer, dancer, and Senior Lecturer at Teesside University. She has worked with Age UK Darlington to pilot a series of dance classes for people living with Dementia, was an artist in residence with Age Concern Central Lancashire, and she worked with Helix Arts on their project for older dancers: *Falling on Your Feet*. In response to the current COVID-19 crisis she developed online seated dance classes for older dancers with *Ageing Better Middlesbrough*. Born in Toronto, she lives and works in the UK.