

## Review Article

# Latin Partnered Social Dance and Well-Being in the Qualitative Literature: A Framework-Based Scoping Review

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Latin partnered social dance is aesthetic, artistic, and creative and carries with it a distinct Latinx cultural identity. We have previously explored this popular form of social dance in a qualitative fashion and have described its engagement from a health-oriented perspective. Previous relevant reviews on dance-based well-being have embedded quantitative values in their summarisation of largely quantitative Latin and non-Latin dance primary studies. Accordingly, we believe a rigorous mapping of the qualitative health-oriented research activity on this topic area is due. We followed the health and social research-oriented PAGER framework to guide us in our scoping review of Latin partnered social dance and flourishing. Our interpretation of flourishing is aligned with the PERMA model of well-being. Of the 1275 records initially identified from our search of seven bibliographic databases, following screening, 11 full-text studies were included in our work. Within this literature, we interpreted patterns of shared meaning that centred around: a community of meaningfulness and belonging; a merger of self, body, and music leading to multisensory engagement; interrelated experiences of positive emotion; an embodied and fulfilling dance practice facilitating personal growth and accomplishment; and a reimagined space for global dance participation that emphasised meaning making and interpersonal relationships.

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## Introduction

Latin partnered social dance is aesthetic, artistic, and creative and carries with it a distinct Latinx cultural identity. Domene and Morley<sup>[1]</sup> and Domene and Jackson de Domene<sup>[2]</sup> have previously explored this popular form of social dance (specifically, salsa) in a fully qualitative fashion and have described its engagement in detail from a health-oriented perspective. Domene and Jackson de Domene<sup>[2]</sup> wrote that recreational or leisure participation in salsa dance affords opportunities for “pleasure, enchantment, achievement, social benefit, physical health, [and] psychological well-being” (p. 2) in adults. In their recent dance and well-being book, Colin and Stamp<sup>[3]</sup> characterised dance as “both a physical and a creative practice” (p. 3) whereby playful participation offers “potential for transformation, discovery and cooperation” (p. 1). Moreover, in a social dance and movement context, Delattre et al.<sup>[4]</sup> referred to partnered dance as a genre where much of the time participating “is spent in a two-person partnership, moving together” (p. 2).

Lazar<sup>[5]</sup> proposed that Latin partnered social dance, in particular salsa, acts as “a sort of lingua franca” in Latinx communities, despite being “a Caribbean dance of Cuban origin” (p. 360). Consequently, we extend these points and, for the purposes of this scoping review, offer a definition of the term *Latin partnered social dance*, as we understand it, as any current popular Latinx genre of dance performed socially, danced primarily in couples, and with a heritage traceable back to the Spanish Caribbean islands of Cuba, Puerto Rico, or the Dominican Republic—examples of these dances include salsa, bachata, and merengue.

Furthermore, we provide in this writing a holistic definition of *well-being* that personally resonates with us, is highly relevant for contemporary health-oriented research in dance, and is wholly congruent with our previous positive psychology-aligned investigation of flourishing in salsa (for further detail of the beneficial effects of salsa dance in relation to emotion, cognition, health and wellness, and community building, see Domene and Jackson de Domene<sup>[2]</sup>). We put forth that well-being comprises five constituent elements or what Seligman<sup>[6]</sup> referred to as “pillars” (p. 24) in his PERMA flourishing model. These are: Positive emotion (encompassing happiness and life satisfaction); Engagement; Relationships; Meaning; and Accomplishment (PERMA), whereby each pillar, as Domene and Jackson de Domene<sup>[2]</sup> reported, “contributes to well-being, is pursued for its own sake, and has measurability independent of the others” (p. 2).

We know that primary studies of dance for health, that may include the genre of Latin, have been previously published: in non-social or non-recreational dancers, i.e., those who engage vocationally, professionally, or competitively; in dance exercise class participants, i.e., Zumba fitness; in therapeutic or clinical patients; in formal education settings for students; and using combinations of Latin and non-Latin genres of dance together. The recent review papers by Liu et al.<sup>[7]</sup>, Moratelli et al.<sup>[8]</sup>, Delattre et al.<sup>[4]</sup>, Du et al.<sup>[9]</sup>, and Liguori et al.<sup>[10]</sup> provide a very robust starting point for familiarisation with the dance-based mental health and psychological well-being academic literature; however, the majority have embedded quantitative values and principles in their summarisation and interpretation of largely quantitative Latin and non-Latin dance primary studies. Accordingly, we believe a rigorous mapping of the evidence and scope of the current qualitative health-oriented research activity on this topic area is due.

### *Rationale*

The knowledge gap in the academic literature we therefore hope to resolve focusses on qualitative explorations of the experience of well-being, or flourishing, through engagement in Latin partnered social dance. Of the guidance available indicating best practice on how to do a review paper in a scoping manner, the health and social research-oriented PAGER framework from Bradbury-Jones et al.<sup>[11]</sup> is the most suitable for us (as qualitative researcher-explorers and practitioners and instructors of salsa dance) due to its flexible, creative, and reflexive approach. This framework facilitates the analysis, synthesis, and presentation of a potentially diverse and methodologically heterogeneous body of research knowledge under the subheadings of: Pattern; Advances; Gaps; Evidence for practice; and Research recommendations (PAGER). Hence, it is well suited to be used for a constructivist-oriented scoping review of qualitative-only academic literature in the field of dance for health.

## *Objectives*

This scoping review, with support from a key stakeholders group, seeks to map the existing evidence and explore whether, and in what ways, participation in Latin partnered social dance contributes to well-being or a sense of flourishing in adults in non-clinical and non-therapeutic settings as demonstrated within the qualitative academic literature.

## *Research Questions*

Using the population, concept, and context (PCC) mnemonic described by Peters et al.<sup>[12]</sup>, the primary research question we are seeking to answer is: In the adult population, can engaging with the concept of Latin partnered social dance, i.e., salsa, bachata, or merengue, for leisure and socialisation purposes lead to experiences of well-being or flourishing when the context is outside clinical or therapeutic environments and is this currently evident within the corpus of qualitative research? Our secondary research question is: If well-being or flourishing is evident, how exactly does this take place in dancers of Latin who participate recreationally or for purposes of leisure?

## **Methodology**

### *Ethical Approval*

We were granted ethical approval for this research from the School of Health, Education, Policing and Sciences at the second author's university. The approval reference was PRF-251125.

### *Creation of and Consultation with a Key Stakeholders Group*

One of the initial steps we undertook as part of our scoping review was to create and consult with a key stakeholders group. The decision was made as this will help us in deciding on future strategies for knowledge translation and dissemination, as described by Levac et al.<sup>[13]</sup>. As qualitative researcher-explorers and practitioners and instructors of salsa dance, we decided early in the design of this research to involve key stakeholders in critical discussion of: phrasing of the objectives, primary research question, and secondary research question; creating the PCC inclusion criteria and search strategy to be used; and translation and dissemination of the analysis following completion of the research. Our key stakeholders comprised a small group of three professional adults that were experienced in either conducting dance or health-oriented academic research, publishing an academic review paper, or practicing or instructing Latin partnered social dance of any kind. We recruited for this key stakeholders group using our own professional networks. Those involved did not know each other prior to agreeing to join for the purposes of research consultation. There were no conflicts of interest to report within the key stakeholders group.

### *Positionality Statement*

In terms of qualitative researcher positionality, the first author describes himself as a cisgender Latinx male who has practiced salsa dance regularly for 15 years as an able-bodied person, mostly in the United Kingdom and in other European countries, and who by profession is a university lecturer of 10 years with experience in researching community and participatory dance practice from a psychological and health sciences perspective. The second author describes herself as a cisgender British female and an able-bodied independent dance artist and instructor by profession with 16 years of experience in Latin partnered social dance, also mostly within the United Kingdom. As insider-outsider authors of this research, we acknowledge that we frequently reflect on our passion for doing qualitative research and trying to understand and experience well-being and all of its contextual and situated nuances within the Latin partnered social dance environment. Our perspective/identity as both insiders and outsiders is congruent with Suzuki et al.'s<sup>[14]</sup> description of the experiences, complexities, and subjectivities ever present when researching “communities of study” (p. 296).

### *Prospective Protocol Registration*

We prospectively registered our research protocol on the Open Science Framework (OSF) website under the OSF Registries section. This provided us with an opportunity to archive our research protocol publicly and in a fully transparent manner. The permanent web link for our research protocol registration can be found here: <https://archive.org/details/osf-registrations-j7whu-v1>

### *Inclusion Criteria*

#### *Population*

Studies of adults were included; those that exclusively sampled children, adolescents, and older adults were excluded. We considered children and adolescents, adults, and older adults to be in the age ranges of 5-17 years old, 18-64 years old, and 65 years old and above, respectively, which is in accordance with Bull et al.'s<sup>[15]</sup> account of current physical activity guidance from the World Health Organization. There were no restrictions placed on any sociodemographic or socioeconomic factors.

#### *Concept*

Studies that described engagement in Latin partnered social dance were included; those that described non-social or non-recreational Latin dancers, i.e., vocational, professional, or competitive dancers, and studies using dance fitness/exercise class participants were excluded. Additionally, genres of dance that did not fall strictly within our definition of Latin partnered social dance, i.e., Argentine tango, Brazilian samba, and Standard/Latin ballroom, were excluded. Studies that we interpreted as describing any aspect or element of well-being through Latin partnered social dance were included, regardless of whether this term or any related terms were explicitly referred to or not within the text.

## *Context*

Studies that adopted a qualitative or mixed methods research design from any academic discipline were included; those that used a quantitative research design were excluded. Where mixed methods studies met the criteria for inclusion, only the qualitative component of the research was considered for this scoping review. Studies that used participants in: therapeutic or clinical contexts; psychiatric or medical contexts; formal education contexts; or controlled or clinical trial contexts were excluded.

## *Types of Evidence Sources*

Primary research studies, academic textbooks, conference abstracts, published or unpublished university student theses and dissertations, and any additional sources of academic literature were included; however, review papers were excluded as evidence in our research. Review papers found had their reference lists manually searched to identify any sources that potentially met our PCC inclusion criteria that did not appear in our searching. Only sources written in the English and Spanish languages were considered as evidence for this research. No restrictions were placed on country of origin of the sources.

## *Search Strategy*

Sources were searched for using the databases Academic Search Complete, APA PsycInfo, CINAHL Ultimate, ProQuest Central, PubMed, Scopus, and SPORTDiscus. No date restrictions or any other filtering was applied. The reference lists of all included studies were manually reviewed. Based on our own expertise and the search strategies used in the Latin dance review papers of Liu et al.<sup>[7]</sup> and Liguori et al.<sup>[10]</sup>, we decided on the following keyword search string: (bachata OR Caribbean OR Latin\* OR merengue OR salsa) AND (danc\*) AND (health OR flourish\* OR “mental health” OR PERMA OR “quality of life” OR thrive\* OR well-being OR wellbeing OR wellness). An academic librarian from the first author’s university was consulted for feedback prior to finalising the search strategy. The search was completed on 30 November 2025.

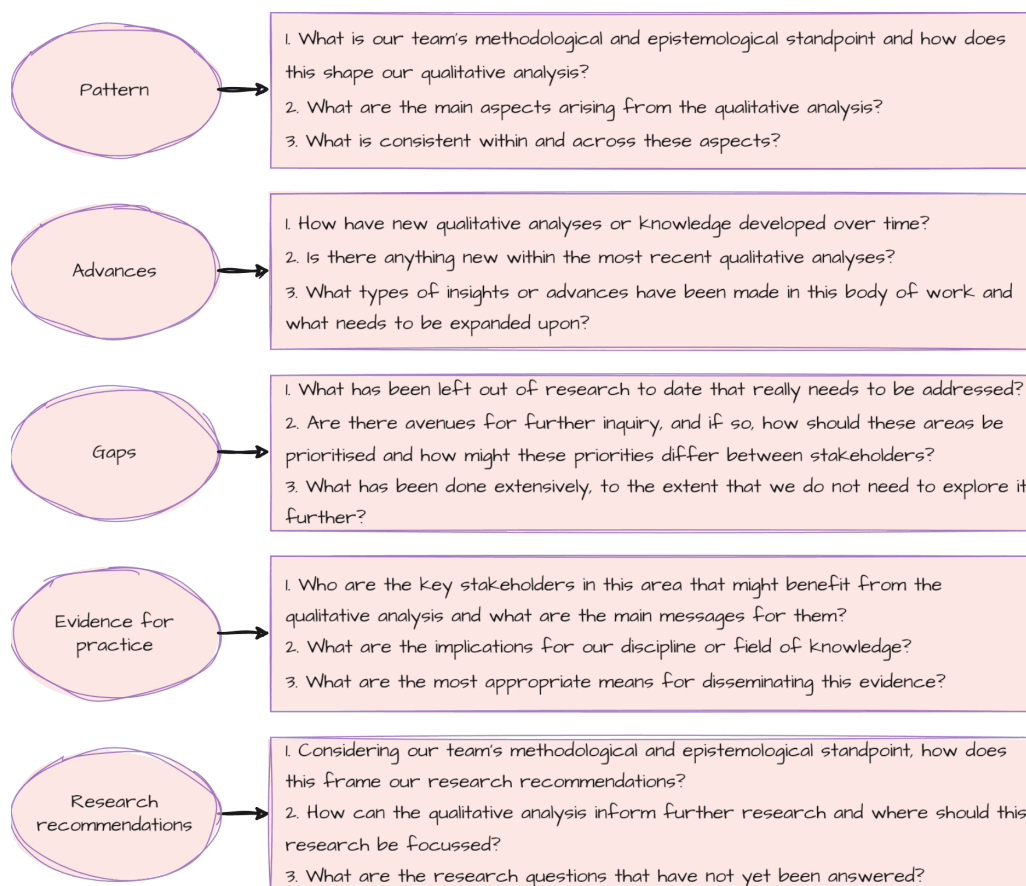
## *Evidence Screening and Selection*

Selection involved reviewing the title and abstract of all search results in the English or Spanish languages and involved both authors. Results in Spanish were first translated into English by the first author. Disagreements in selection between authors were resolved through critical discussion with referral back to the PCC inclusion criteria. Evidence screening and selection was documented narratively and through the use of a flow diagram as described by Tricco et al.<sup>[16]</sup> in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR). Sources that were excluded during the full-text review stage had the authors’ specific reasons for exclusion indicated within the flow diagram. We were prepared to utilise inter-library loans at this stage to acquire the full-text version of any sources; however, this step was not needed. We used Clarivate EndNote 21 reference management

software to assist us in organising our evidence screening and selection. The license for the use of this software was granted by the first author's university.

### *Data Extraction and Analysis*

A descriptive summary containing characteristics of the included studies was charted in a manner guided by the PAGER framework of Bradbury-Jones et al.<sup>[11]</sup>. This involved a chronological summarisation alongside a presentation of the pattern, advances, gaps, evidence for practice, and research recommendations of the included studies, providing transparency, clarity, and reflexivity in the data extraction and analysis stage. An explicit presentation of details in this manner is theoretically and practically useful for both ourselves and our readers. Both authors were involved in this stage of the research process. As previously mentioned, disagreements in data extraction and analysis between authors were resolved through critical discussion with referral back to the PCC inclusion criteria. As the PAGER framework can be seen as a flexible and creative tool for qualitative researcher reflexivity, we paused and took time to discuss with each other the following reflection questions shown in Figure 1 prior to proceeding to the next stage of the research. These questions were adapted from the work of Bradbury-Jones et al.<sup>[11]</sup> and the discussion summaries are presented within our analysis and discussion. We intentionally decided not to do a numerical appraisal of our included sources of evidence as this would have shifted our focus away from the values and principles of constructivist research—our presented analysis is therefore based on qualitative critical interpretation, not ratings or rankings.



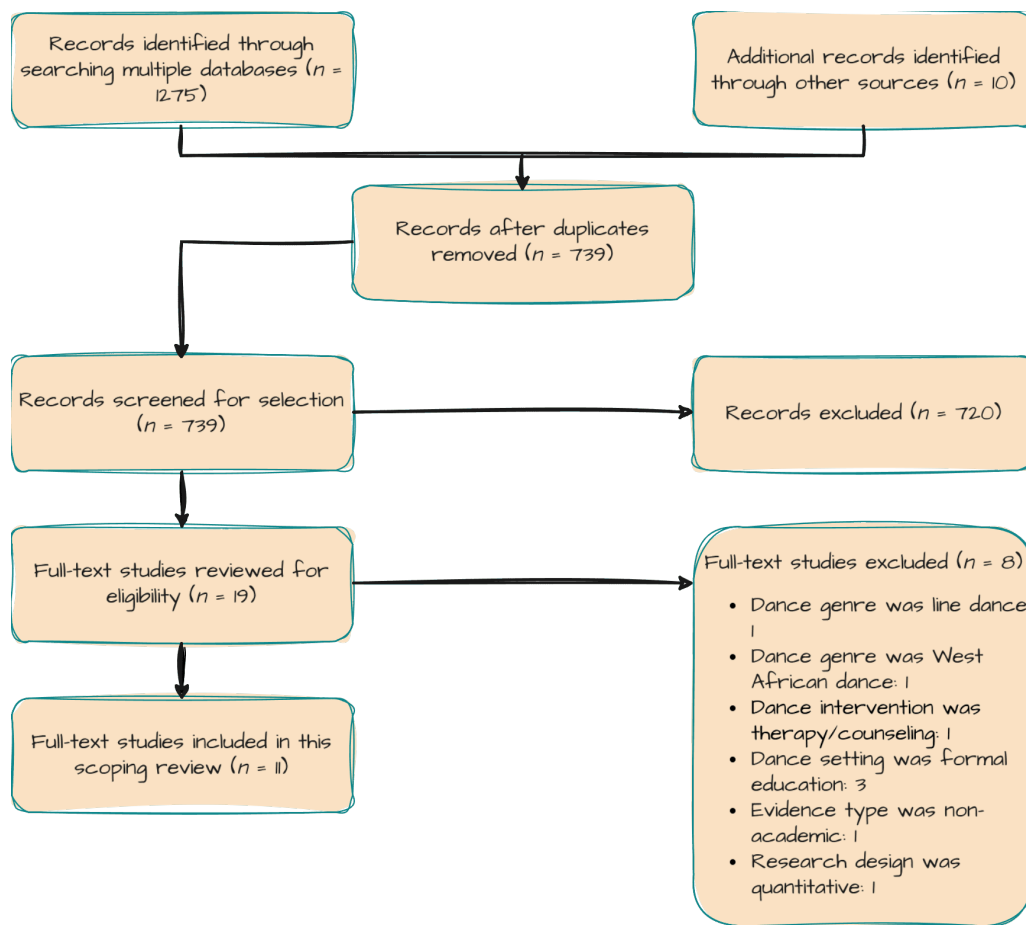
**Figure 1.** Qualitative Researcher Reflexivity Questions Discussed Between Ourselves Following Data Extraction and Analysis

Note. These questions were adapted from the work of Bradbury-Jones et al.<sup>[11]</sup>.

## Analysis

### Included Studies

The number of records we identified through searching our seven databases resulted in the following: Academic Search Complete = 257; APA PsycInfo = 116; CINAHL Ultimate = 64; ProQuest Central = 256; PubMed = 268; Scopus = 190; and SPORTDiscus = 124. This totalled 1275 records. Additionally, through manually searching the reference lists of relevant and review papers we were aware of, 10 further records were identified. Of the total records, 546 were duplicates and were removed. The titles and abstracts of the remaining 739 records were screened in accordance with the criteria for inclusion and, of these, 720 were excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria specified. Of the remaining 19 records, we were able to retrieve all studies as full-texts and these were reviewed thoroughly for eligibility in our scoping review. A further eight studies were then excluded due to not meeting the inclusion criteria. The specific reasons for exclusion are shown in Figure 2. Thus, our scoping review comprised a total of 11 studies.



**Figure 2.** Flow Diagram of the Identification and Screening Stages of Evidence for our Scoping Review Resulting in 11 Full-Text Included Studies

### Academic Discipline and Research Design

Of the included literature, one of the first things we reflected on as qualitative researchers was the high degree of heterogeneity in narrative style used by the authors, due to the differing academic disciplines of the work. A chronological summarisation of the study characteristics is shown in Table 1. Five of the studies had a grounding in anthropology, sociology, and/or philosophy (Study 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6), whilst the remaining six were aligned with psychology and/or health studies (Study 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11). Qualitative ethnography was used as the research design in all of the inquires written from an anthropological, sociological, and/or philosophical perspective. In contrast, qualitative descriptive or participatory approaches were chosen as the research design by the psychological and/or health studies authors. Hence, we took note of and reflected on the contrasting narrative styles used between academic disciplines as this made our interpreting and comparing of studies more difficult than what we were originally expecting. For example, we were not able to determine the exact number of study participants or certain

sociodemographic details, such as age and gender, from the majority of ethnographic research for direct comparison to the other research designs as the information was not always clearly identifiable.

Study number, author(s), and year	Population	Concept	Context	Type of evidence source	Method of data collection	Epistemological standpoint	Summary of analysis
Study 1. Wieschiolek <sup>[17]</sup> – 2003	Salsa dancers	Fieldwork involving primarily observations and immersed personal interactions with German and Latinx dancers in the local salsa scene in Hamburg	Qualitative ethnographic research design	Published book chapter	Observations and interviews	No philosophy or values were mentioned explicitly; however, the research aligned with constructivism	Strong social support and connections between dancers were evident demonstrating an authentic enthusiasm for engagement with the salsa community and its dance and music practices
Study 2. Hamilton and Hewer <sup>[18]</sup> – 2009	Salsa dancers	Netnography of primarily postings on an English language online discussion forum for salsa dancers	Qualitative ethnographic research design	Published journal article	Ethnographic data analysis, observations, and interviews	No philosophy or values were mentioned explicitly; however, the research aligned with constructivism	Salsa was described as a well-being and health enhancing shared experience linking dancers together through music, movement, and recognition of the self
Study 3. Pušnik and Sicher <sup>[19]</sup> – 2010	Salsa dancers	Fieldwork in Ljubljana consisting of engagement with dancers at salsa festivals and social dances to understand its	Qualitative ethnographic research design	Published journal article	Observations and interviews	No philosophy or values were mentioned explicitly; however, the research aligned with constructivism	Salsa dance was interpreted primarily as a cultural practice involving interpersonal communication, identity building, self-

Study number, author(s), and year	Population	Concept	Context	Type of evidence source	Method of data collection	Epistemological standpoint	Summary of analysis
		practice in Slovenian society					expression, and emotion/passion
Study 4. Prentiss <sup>[20]</sup> – 2013	Salsa dancers	Ethnography exploring motivations of gendered role performance in salsa dance as a community of practice for students in an Oxford, UK-based higher education setting	Qualitative ethnographic research design	Unpublished doctoral dissertation	Observations and interviews	Constructivism	Despite social forces establishing strong gendered roles in salsa, dancers felt a sense of social achievement, improved self-image, synchrony with others through physical touch, and greater personal confidence through participation
Study 5. Akyildiz and Munusturlar <sup>[21]</sup> – 2014	Female (n = 16) and male (n = 8) young adult salsa festival participants	Salsa festival in Eskişehir, Turkey organised with daytime classes and evening social dances	Qualitative descriptive research design	Published journal article	Focus groups	No philosophy or values were mentioned explicitly; however, the research aligned with post-positivism	Meanings and understandings of leisure experiences were explored in salsa with dancers describing their practice as being primarily multisensory in nature

Study number, author(s), and year	Population	Concept	Context	Type of evidence source	Method of data collection	Epistemological standpoint	Summary of analysis
Study 6. McClure <sup>[22]</sup> – 2014	Salsa dancers	Fieldwork involving observations, interviews, and elements of autoethnography at salsa festivals to understand dancers' embodied experiences—this took place primarily in cities across Europe	Qualitative ethnographic research design	Published journal article	Observations, interviews, and informal group discussions	Constructivism	Salsa, as a social bodily practice, brought about connection, joy, self-discovery, pleasure, and kinaesthetic value in dancers, all of which were experienced in positive and transformational terms
Study 7. Nieto Alvarez <sup>[23]</sup> – 2014	Female (n = 1) and male (n = 2) adult <i>rueda de casino</i> dancer-teachers	Experts' perspectives obtained from archival data of interviews of <i>rueda de casino</i> dancer-teachers in Mexico City, Mexico	Qualitative descriptive research design	Published master's thesis	Observations, interviews, and personal reflexivity of the researcher	No philosophy or values were mentioned explicitly; however, the research aligned with post-positivism	Within a situated context, participation in <i>rueda de casino</i> had a profound socialising effect for dancers of all ages
Study 8. Iuliano et al. <sup>[24]</sup> – 2017	Latinx and non-Latinx (N = 16) adult social Latin dancers	Members of the Tucson, USA social Latin dance community who engaged in social Latin dance in a naturalistic setting	Qualitative participatory research design	Published journal article	Observations, interviews, and focus groups	No philosophy or values were mentioned explicitly; however, the research aligned with post-positivism	The social Latin dancers reported multiple perceived health benefits through dance—including those related to mental, emotional, social, and physical health

Study number, author(s), and year	Population	Concept	Context	Type of evidence source	Method of data collection	Epistemological standpoint	Summary of analysis
Study 9. Novikova et al. [25] – 2019	Female (n = 20) and male (n = 16) adult salsa dancers with an average age of 29 years old, and female (n = 1) and male (n = 6) adult Latin partnered social dance promoters	An exploration of Russian dancers' and promoters' perspectives on benefits from and reasons for engagement in Latin partnered social dance	Mixed methods descriptive research design	Published journal article	Semi-structured interviews	No philosophy or values were mentioned explicitly; however, the research aligned with post-positivism	Dancers experienced interpersonal communication, collaboration, and psychosocial health benefits through participation in salsa for leisure and recreational purposes
Study 10. Domene and Morley <sup>[1]</sup> – 2022	Female (n = 7) and male (n = 2) adult salsa dancers with an average age of 23 years old	Salsa dance lessons (non-credit) and social dances for students in a Coventry, UK-based higher education setting	Qualitative descriptive research design	Published journal article	Semi-structured interviews	Constructivism	Latin partnered social dance provided an opportunity for students to experience positive well-being, skill acquisition, and social connection
Study 11. Domene and Jackson de Domene <sup>[2]</sup> – 2023	Female (n = 29) and male (n = 12) adult salsa dancers with an	Experienced dancers participated in an English language survey on aesthetic, artistic, and	Qualitative descriptive research design	Published journal article	Anonymous online survey using open-ended questions	Constructivism	Salsa dancers experienced emotional and physical benefits, cognitive and learning aspects,

Study number, author(s), and year	Population	Concept	Context	Type of evidence source	Method of data collection	Epistemological standpoint	Summary of analysis
	average age of 45 years old	creative contributions to salsa					health and wellness, and community building

**Table 1.** Chronological Summarisation of Studies of Latin Partnered Social Dance and Well-Being in the Qualitative Literature

*Note.* Rueda de casino is a multi-couple style of salsa dance originating from Havana, Cuba.

### *Geographic Origin*

All of the ethnographies originated from Europe. One of the studies, however, made use primarily of a netnographic style of fieldwork (Study 2), and as such, the individuals contributing to these data could have been from any country. Germany, Slovenia, and the UK mainly represented this body of literature, with a single study (Study 6) indicating fieldwork took place across seven European cities, plus San Juan, Puerto Rico and New York, USA. There was a much broader geographic spread in the psychology and/or health studies research with data collected in the countries of Mexico, Russia, Turkey, the UK, and the USA. Despite an online survey for collecting data being selected for use in our own work (Study 11), the majority of participants in this study reported being UK-based with only a small number residing in other European countries.

### *Study Population*

Of the included psychology and/or health studies literature where sociodemographic details were mostly provided, the total sample comprised 129 Latin partnered social dancers. One of the studies (Study 8), unfortunately, did not provide information about gender of the participants. Therefore, excluding this research, the gender split was 65% female and 35% male. Information about age of the participants, similarly, was not provided in two of the studies (Study 7 and 8). Of the remaining psychology and/or health studies research, the participants' age ranges spanned relatively widely: 19-25 years old (Study 5), 20-40 years old (Study 9), 18-45 years old (Study 10), and 25-69 years old (Study 11). Of the anthropological, sociological, and/or philosophical studies, only two reported clear information about participant age ranges: 19-44 years old (Study 4) and -20-50 years old (Study 6).

### *Epistemology*

In terms of epistemological alignment, seven studies did not explicitly comment on any research philosophy or values. Of these, in four cases (Study 5, 7, 8, and 9) we did not believe an attempt was made by the authors at embedding a congruent philosophical standpoint within their inquiry. The remaining three studies (Study 1, 2, and 3), all

ethnographic work, were written, albeit somewhat subtly, from a constructivist positioning. Of the four studies that were underpinned by clear research values and philosophy, two were qualitative descriptive studies (Study 10 and 11) and two were ethnographies (Study 4 and 6). The alignment of this literature was to constructivism, where participant stories were portrayed in an actively constructed, interpretative, and nuanced manner through the authors' lived experience and reflexive understanding of Latin partnered social dance.

### *Data Collection Method*

A variety of qualitative data collection methods was evident in our scoping review. The ethnographic research (Study 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6) made use of primarily observations and interviews; however, informal group discussions (Study 6) and netnographic analysis (Study 2) were techniques also employed. The research aligning with psychology and/or health studies (Study 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11), in a similar fashion, utilised a range of traditional qualitative techniques we consider appropriate for the academic discipline. The majority of research involved interviews (Study 7, 8, 9, and 10) with observations also being used in two of these studies (Study 7 and 8). Additionally, focus groups were used as the sole method of collecting data (Study 5) or were utilised in combination with other approaches (Study 8). The only investigation that made use of a more novel manner of gathering qualitative data was our own work (Study 11), which employed an anonymous online survey with open-ended-only questions.

### *Study Outcomes*

The literature grounded in anthropology, sociology, and/or philosophy, although directly focussed on Latin partnered social dance and the importance and purpose of understanding participants' engagement, was less connected to our own personal experience of well-being in dance than what we were originally expecting. Despite this reflection, rich accounts of participants' multisensory engagement in dance for socialisation and leisure did indeed suggest a link between participants' experience and elements of the PERMA flourishing model of well-being. Dance fostered strong social support and meaningful communal bonds that promoted positive emotion through music, movement, and self-awareness (Study 1 and 2). Described as being part of a cultural practice, dancers were supported through building of interpersonal relationships, formation of identity, and personal expression (Study 3). Moreover, enhanced self-image, confidence, and physical synchrony with other dancers was reported (Study 4). As an embodied activity, Latin partnered social dance led to a sense of accomplishment, connection, joy, self-discovery, and kinaesthetic pleasure, which was experienced positively and in transformative terms (Study 6). These findings highlight the potential of Latin partnered social dance as a culturally grounded and health enhancing practice that affords opportunities for self-actualisation. The literature with a psychology and/or health studies orientation, as we expected, indicated similar outcomes in terms of the link between dance and flourishing. As a leisure activity, Latin partnered social dance was described as being a multisensory participatory experience fostering mental, emotional, social, and physical health benefits (Study 5 and 8). Furthermore, purposeful engagement promoted interpersonal communication, collaboration, and psychosocial wellness across diverse age groups (Study 7 and 9). Additionally, participation supported positive emotion, community and relational connection, and development and accomplishment of skill, offering opportunities for expression

alongside cognitive engagement and learning (Study 10 and 11). Collectively, these investigations demonstrate the ability of Latin partnered social dance to build relationships with meaningfulness between dancers, whilst also enhancing well-being and underscoring the genre's potential as a culturally significant practice within the broader context of dance for health. As another point of reflection, we add that the qualitative ethnographic research that we reviewed embedded dance's contributions to well-being and flourishing much more deeply and in a subtle, partial, situated, and implicit manner than the research written from a psychological and/or health studies standpoint. Although we had to dig deeper, so to speak, in the anthropological, sociological, and/or philosophical research, what we have presented in our analysis is a fair representation and construction of most participants' experiences. In alignment with the PAGER framework, a presentation of our analytic interpretation of the Latin partnered social dance qualitative literature included in our scoping review is shown in Table 2.

Pattern	Advances	Gaps	Evidence for practice	Research recommendations
1. LPSD became a community with meaningfulness and belonging, enabling emotional release beyond the mundane—it comprised a merger of self, body, and music, facilitating authenticity, self-actualisation, and multisensory engagement	As an embodied practice, LPSD served as a communal site for the fulfilment of: negotiating identity, power, and cultural/gender roles; and reimagining global dance participation in localised contexts	There were clear gaps in the research on LPSD, including an insufficient critique of power asymmetries, i.e., around heteronormativity, and an underutilisation of multimodal qualitative approaches	The implications of LPSD underscore the importance of broadening dance for health research beyond biomedical paradigms to incorporate relational, transformative, sensory, and affective dimensions of well-being	Future LPSD inquiries should explore enhancement of dancers' identity and belonging, with specific attention paid to somatic and reflexive aspects; this ought to be approached in multicultural settings
2. Interrelated experiences of positive emotion, i.e., stress relief and escapism, personal growth and accomplishment through overcoming challenges, and enhanced interpersonal relationships were evident through LPSD	LPSD was framed as an embodied and culturally situated physical activity that facilitated emotional uplift and development of identity; findings emphasised participants' meaning making and community integration	Insufficient attention was paid to inclusion and equity in the LPSD literature; moreover, engagement with marginalised voices, diverse participants, and contexts of intersectionality remains underexplored	Educators, policymakers, health practitioners, community organisers, and arts facilitators will benefit from integrating sensuous and performative arts-based activities such as LPSD	The research highlighted LPSD as a culturally grounded health intervention; future studies ought to emphasise inclusive and participatory explorations of well-being promotion in diverse populations

**Table 2.** Presentation of the Pattern, Advances, Gaps, Evidence for Practice, and Research Recommendations (PAGER) of our Included Studies

Note. We use the abbreviation LPSD here to indicate all genres of Latin partnered social dance.

## Discussion

Our scoping review sought to map the qualitative academic literature and explore whether and how Latin partnered social dance contributes to a sense of flourishing (experienced as positive emotion, engagement, relationships,

meaning, and accomplishment) in adults when participation is outside clinical and therapeutic settings. As qualitative researcher-explorers and experienced practitioners of Latin partnered social dance, we have written our work as insider-outsider authors on this topic and have provided our own contextualised definitions of the terms *Latin partnered social dance* and *well-being* as it relates to flourishing in Seligman's<sup>[6]</sup> PERMA model. Our research is positive psychology-aligned and we have taken a constructivist approach in our reading of and reflecting on the included literature. The research values and principles we have interwoven into our interpretation and presentation is consistent with a fully qualitative approach to understanding the current health-oriented research activity on this topic. Eleven studies were included in this scoping review and these spanned two broad academic disciplines: anthropology, sociology, and/or philosophy; and psychology and/or health studies. Moreover, as part of our summarisation, we have presented the main patterns, advances, gaps, evidence for practice, and research recommendations from the literature in a manner that is consistent with Bradbury-Jones et al.'s<sup>[11]</sup> PAGER framework for doing scoping reviews in health and social research. We now discuss our analysis of the included literature in terms of how it addresses our research questions.

### *Addressing the Primary Research Question*

The first pillar of flourishing is positive emotion. Feelings of happiness through Latin partnered social dance were described by Hamilton and Hewer<sup>[18]</sup>, Prentiss<sup>[20]</sup>, Akylidiz and Munusturlar<sup>[21]</sup>, McClure<sup>[22]</sup>, Iuliano et al.<sup>[24]</sup>, Novikova et al.<sup>[25]</sup>, Domene and Morley<sup>[1]</sup>, and Domene and Jackson de Domene<sup>[2]</sup>, in some cases in vivid detail when illustrating participants' accounts of their engagement (Study 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11). Nieto Alvarez<sup>[23]</sup> wrote that those who participated in *rueda de casino* experienced a sense of fun and enjoyment (Study 7). Similarly, joy, passion, and vitality were described by Wieschiolek<sup>[17]</sup> as feelings that salsa dancers reported through participation (Study 1). Pušnik and Sicherl<sup>[19]</sup> wrote how dancers improved their opinion of themselves and linked engagement in salsa with improved life satisfaction (Study 3). In all of these studies, which spanned more than a 20 year range of academic publications, positive emotions through Latin partnered social dance were clearly evident for those participating. It is likely that dancers considered themselves part of a community of practice—a place, both physical and emotional, where a common language of communication is shared by those like-minded and is experienced as joyful and happy. Flippin<sup>[26]</sup> described the salsa dance floor as being the setting where this community of practice comes together to meet. Moreover, in terms of dance drawing people together for a shared sense of joy through mutual communication, salsa has been described by Martinez<sup>[27]</sup> as a kinaesthetic language of sorts, involving both the mediums of music and dance. Taken together, we suggest that participation in Latin partnered social dance does indeed lead to positive emotion and authentic happiness. When we are completely immersed and absorbed in an activity and when we find ourselves experiencing clear focus, deep involvement, and being purposefully and entirely present to the action in which we are doing, we are in a state of flow. This is what it means to be experiencing full engagement in a task. Engagement is the second pillar of flourishing in Seligman's<sup>[6]</sup> PERMA model of well-being. Flow states, or intrinsically motivated personal states of optimal experience and engagement, were identified by Wieschiolek<sup>[17]</sup>, Hamilton and Hewer<sup>[18]</sup>, Domene and Morley<sup>[1]</sup>, and

Domene and Jackson de Domene<sup>[2]</sup> in their participants' accounts of Latin partnered social dance (Study 1, 2, 10, and 11). Similarly, Gill<sup>[28]</sup> reported on flow in relation to motivation and happiness through engagement in *rueda de casino*. During salsa, the dancers experienced flow or what Gill<sup>[28]</sup> described as an “autotelic activity; that is, the goal or end (telos) that motivates the action is the action itself” (p. 192). Flow states of engagement we suggest are facilitative of true interest and enjoyment of a task (in the included literature, Latin partnered social dance) and can be explained by or linked to characteristics of self-determined behaviour. For a relevant and comprehensive summary of self-determination and qualities of physical activity as they relate to well-being, we recommend reading the work of Standage and Ryan<sup>[29]</sup>.

Relationships is the third pillar of flourishing. Almost all of the studies in our scoping review reported detailed descriptions of formation of interpersonal relationships, development of meaningful personal connections, and/or building community/social cohesion through participation in Latin partnered social dance. This was demonstrated in the research of Wieschiolek<sup>[17]</sup>, Hamilton and Hewer<sup>[18]</sup>, Pušnik and Sicherl<sup>[19]</sup>, Prentiss<sup>[20]</sup>, Nieto Alvarez<sup>[23]</sup>, Iuliano et al.<sup>[24]</sup>, Novikova et al.<sup>[25]</sup>, Domene and Morley<sup>[1]</sup>, and Domene and Jackson de Domene<sup>[2]</sup> explicitly (Study 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11). We found the work of Akyildiz and Munusturlar<sup>[21]</sup> and McClure<sup>[22]</sup> to be more implicit and less overt in terms of participants' experiences of establishing relationships with peers through dance that could lead to improved well-being over time (Study 5 and 6). Akyildiz and Munusturlar<sup>[21]</sup> framed what they termed the “relational experience” (p. 632) of dancers as an experiential socialising quality comprising elements of sensing, feeling, thinking, and acting through dance in their exploration of leisure in the Latin partnered social dance environment (Study 5). McClure<sup>[22]</sup>, on the other hand, investigated a similar cohort of salsa dancers, i.e., festival participants, but through a phenomenological lens and described engagement in dance as an “intersubjective bodily practice” (p. 116) that facilitates connection between individuals (Study 6). These connections (in all of the aforementioned studies) that were actively developed through purposeful engagement in Latin partnered social dance with others, we suggest can lead to sincere personal relationships being established between individuals.

The fourth pillar of Seligman's<sup>[6]</sup> PERMA well-being model is meaning. Choosing to do things in life that provide us with a sense of purpose, fulfilment, and growth through self-motivated action, or put simply, doing things that are meaningful to us, can lead to feeling that what we engage in is of high personal value—it is this deep sense of meaningfulness that contributes to our well-being. In a context specific to dancers, Hannah<sup>[30]</sup> described meaning, as a pillar of flourishing, as “belonging to and serving something beyond the self with subjective and objective logic” (p. 103). She went on to describe participation in dance as a vehicle for minimising ill-being and maximising well-being. We add, as proponents of positive psychology and from our experience as practitioners and researchers of Latin partnered social dance, that if those who engage have eudaimonic motives for participation, that is, seeking to use/develop the best in oneself, that meaningfulness, inevitably, will follow. Meaning in Latin partnered social dance was identified in three of the studies in our scoping review. Hamilton and Hewer<sup>[18]</sup>, Pušnik and Sicherl<sup>[19]</sup>, and Domene and Jackson de Domene<sup>[2]</sup> reported meaningfulness as a clear characteristic of participants' experience during Latin partnered social dance (Study 2, 3, and 11). In their sociological investigation of the rise of salsa dance as a consumer culture, Hamilton

and Hewer<sup>[18]</sup> wrote “herein lies the promise of salsa, as for some, experiential consumption of salsa provides meaning in life and offers enjoyment and ecstasy” (p. 506) for dancers. Pušnik and Sicherl<sup>[19]</sup> described salsa dance as a symbolic and ritualised form of communication in today’s global popular culture. They wrote that some dancers, reflecting the broader social situation, questioned their identity, uncertainties, and purpose and meaning in life. These dancers viewed salsa as a healing mechanism of sorts that brought back to them a sense of purpose and direction. In our own work on the aesthetic, artistic, and creative contributions of salsa, we showed that experienced dancers did indeed belong to something bigger than themselves by being part of a meaningful Latin partnered social dance community where solace, acceptance, and fulfilment were sought (Study 11).

The fifth, and final, pillar of flourishing is accomplishment. Participants’ sense of accomplishment and self-assurance were expressed by salsa dancers in the research of Prentiss<sup>[20]</sup>, Akyildiz and Munusturlar<sup>[21]</sup>, McClure<sup>[22]</sup>, Domene and Morley<sup>[1]</sup>, and Domene and Jackson de Domene<sup>[2]</sup> directly (Study 4, 5, 6, 10, and 11). Akyildiz and Munusturlar<sup>[21]</sup> described dancers’ experiences of salsa as akin to a tool for the reinforcement of learning and the provision of challenge. McClure<sup>[22]</sup>, in her investigation of embodiment in salsa dance, wrote that feelings of achievement were evident in participants only once an elementary understanding of movement, touch, and musicality had been learnt, alongside being able to “deploy these skills whilst paying close attention to ... [one’s] partner and to the music” (p. 124). Furthermore, through intentional engagement in salsa, a sense of personal growth, learning, and perseverance in order to achieve one’s goals were vividly evident in dancers’ experiences in our own two previous works (Study 10 and 11). The aforementioned five studies are all tied together by accounts of participants facing challenge in the Latin partnered social dance environment, followed by subsequent positive feelings of personal accomplishment, achievement, and reward. The merger of self, body, and music within this environment produces the challenge these dancers encounter. It is exactly this challenge that likely nurtures feelings of competence that lead to authentic experiences of accomplishment. We have addressed here how the literature in our scoping review connects with each of the pillars of flourishing in Seligman’s<sup>[6]</sup> PERMA model of well-being and, as such, we now turn our attention towards the secondary research question of how and why this may be taking place.

### *Addressing the Secondary Research Question*

Regarding mechanisms of Latin partnered social dance, as a culturally situated form of physical activity, that explain how a sense of flourishing is contributed to, it is plausible that these involve a combination of social psychological, physiological, and biochemical functions. In their work on positive psychology and physical activity, Faulkner et al. <sup>[3]</sup> described a lack of consensus regarding exact mechanisms by which leisure and physical activities exert their mental health-enhancing effects. However, being physically active linked to improved mental health and psychological well-being likely through the processes of physical activity being: a preventative function; a therapeutic function; a quality of life function; and a feel better function (comprising experiences of positive affect, being able to cope with stress, and being able to build resilience). Biochemically, it is the effects of being physically active on neurotransmitters, such as increased endorphins and alterations in central serotonergic systems, that likely explain the boost in well-being

from participation in Latin partnered social dance. These effects relate to the feel better function. Changes in physical self-worth, self-esteem, and self-image may occur through task mastery and greater personal control. Additional social psychological effects may be related to physical activity through time away and distraction from ordinary life stresses and negativities, i.e., a sense of escapism. Moreover, the effects of intentional engagement in physical activity may lead to opportunities for increased social interaction and social support, alongside reduced social isolation.

The social bonding effect of music was described by Tarr et al.<sup>[32]</sup> in their theoretical work on the physiological effects of music during synchronised group-based rhythmic activities, such as dance. From a physiological perspective, it is likely the endogenous opioid system that activates through music participation that, in turn, leads to social bonding and connection with others. These mechanisms of physical activity likely work in a synergistic manner to prevent ill-being, act as a form of therapy, enhance quality of life, and promote the feel better function when we participate in embodied activities for leisure and socialisation purposes. Specifically, regarding activities participated in for leisure, meaning engaged in predominantly for reasons of interest and enjoyment, Fancourt et al.<sup>[33]</sup> described in detail numerous mechanisms of action supporting health enhancement. The effects of leisure activity participation on physical health, mental health, and psychological well-being were proposed within a multi-level framework (across individual, group, and societal levels) involving psychological, social, behavioural, and biological processes and functions. Additionally, using grounded theory, Crone et al.<sup>[34]</sup> investigated physical activity and its link to mental health and psychological well-being—the authors reported that the overarching social psychological explanatory mechanism was “self-acceptance and inner contentment” (p. 604). Moreover, health improvements were connected to participation in physical activity that focussed specifically on developing one’s sense of belonging and sense of purpose. Taken together, we suggest that some, or all, of the aforementioned proposals explaining how physical activity engagement may contribute to improved well-being or a sense of flourishing are likely involved when adults participate in Latin partnered social dance recreationally or as a leisure activity.

### *Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions*

Strengths of our scoping review include incorporation of the health and social research-oriented PAGER framework of Bradbury-Jones et al.<sup>[11]</sup>, which assisted us in reflecting on and interpreting the literature we read for our work. Using this framework is consistent and aligned with our fully qualitative approach to how we wrote this scoping review. Another strength we highlight here is the congruency we have managed to achieve—our research mapped the currently available qualitative-only academic literature that addressed our research questions and we have presented our introduction, methodology, analysis, and discussion through the lens of constructivist-aligned qualitative researchers. We also consider as a strength of this research, the use of a key stakeholders group who have supported us in the design of our work and on decisions relating to strategies for knowledge translation. We purposefully sought out stakeholders that have a broad range of academic backgrounds and have experience and personal interest in Latin partnered social dance. We are aware of the discourse around stakeholder engagement as it relates to conducting scoping reviews, as outlined by Sabiston et al.<sup>[35]</sup>. We note that only the minority of scoping reviews engage with a key stakeholders group

(less than a fifth of those published) and that this step ought to be considered and adopted by all authors involved in scoping review work.

The main limitation of our work that ought to be pointed out is the fact that our included studies were aligned strongly with what we consider to be two distinct academic disciplines. We found there was heterogeneity in the narrative style used by the authors aligned with anthropology, sociology, and/or philosophy versus the authors whose work was grounded in psychology and/or health studies. This made our comparison and interpretation difficult when we attempted to synthesise the overall body of knowledge. We found this to be especially so as we reflect on the fact that as authors of this scoping review we are more in alignment with the second academic discipline (psychology and/or health studies) than the first. Accordingly, we are more comfortable in engaging with research studies written in a narrative style that we are intimately familiar with. We also point out, as another limitation of our work, the fact that we were not able to extract sufficient information for summarisation regarding participants' ethnicity and physical (dis) ability from our included studies. This information was mostly not reported or given only in an unclear manner. Similarly, our included studies also did not explicitly comment on the types of individuals who do not regularly engage with Latin partnered social dance, or those who participated in the included research but did not complete it and the reasons for why this may have occurred. A further limitation to acknowledge is the decision we made early on not to include studies that exclusively sampled children, adolescents, or older adults. We made this decision due to the fact that we thought we could comprehensively answer our research questions using as homogeneous a set of included studies as possible in terms of participant age ranges.

This leads us on to our future directions. Upon reflection, for our readership to have the broadest and most up-to-date information on Latin partnered social dance and flourishing from a qualitative perspective, all of those who take part in this embodied activity, regardless of age range, ought to have been considered in the knowledge synthesis. This is especially the case as we know from first-hand experience that children, adolescents, and older adults do indeed participate specifically for leisure and/or socialisation purposes. Therefore, in the future, we recommend for investigators not to exclude these age ranges from explorations of Latin partnered social dance in qualitative research aligned with dance for health. Future studies of Latin partnered social dance also ought to account for well-being promotion and intervention, as suggested by Colin and Stamp<sup>[3]</sup>, across more multicultural and diverse participant pools, incorporating aspects of dancers' identity and belonging using inclusive, participatory, and multimodal qualitative approaches. Furthermore, future Latin partnered social dance researchers ought to not overlook the existing biases and power asymmetries present in the current literature, especially around gender and heteronormativity.

## Conclusion

Latin partnered social dance, specifically salsa, in terms of the significance of its music and physical practice, was described by Manuel<sup>[26]</sup> as “a vehicle for Latin[x] identity” (p. 271). We agree with this as the included literature within our work emphasised the potential importance of this genre of dance as a culturally grounded health intervention for well-being promotion. Within the qualitative evidence of our scoping review, which encompassed two decades of

academic publications, we interpreted patterns of shared meaning that centred around: a community of meaningfulness and belonging; a merger of self, body, and music leading to multisensory engagement; interrelated experiences of positive emotion; an embodied and fulfilling dance practice facilitating personal growth and accomplishment; and a reimagined space for global dance participation that emphasised meaning making and interpersonal relationships. Our research sought to map the qualitative literature and explore whether and how Latin partnered social dance fosters a sense of flourishing in adults outside clinical and therapeutic settings. Indicative of our positionality, our perspective as insider-outsider authors on this topic has led us to generate a contextual, situated, and nuanced account of how Latin partnered social dance participation contributes to flourishing in a positive psychology context. Hence, through our presentation and interpretation of the literature, we have indeed been able to answer the two research questions we originally proposed. In summary, engaging in Latin partnered social dance can contribute to feelings of well-being and this is likely explained by the underlying social psychological, physiological, and biochemical mechanisms at work during participation in physically active leisure pursuits.

## Statements and Declarations

### *Data Availability*

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study. All information presented is sourced from the publicly available literature cited in the reference list.

### *Author Contributions*

Conceptualisation, P.A.D.; Methodology, P.A.D. and L.J.d.D.; Formal analysis, P.A.D. and L.J.d.D.; Investigation, P.A.D. and L.J.d.D.; Writing—original draft preparation, P.A.D.; Writing—review and editing, P.A.D. and L.J.d.D.

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