

The project „Forever Young’: The Social World of Competitive Senior and Pro-Am Ballroom Dancers” concerns dancers over 35 years of age participating in dance competitions in two styles: Standard (slow waltz, tango, Viennese waltz, slow fox and quickstep) and Latin American (samba, cha-cha, rumba, pasodoble, jive). Senior dancers compete in pairs where both partners are of a similar age and at a similar level of dance skills. Pro-am dancers compete in pairs with professional dancers who are also their teachers. The pro-am formula has been popularized by programs like *Dancing with the Stars*, in which celebrities who are not able to dance are paired with professional dancers who teach them and perform with them during the programme. The reason for undertaking research is the desire to learn about the social group that has not been studied yet in Poland, and with each year is becoming more and more popular among people over 35 years of age.

The project aims to examine the social world of “earlier-born” dancers. Studies confirm that dance has many positive consequences – it improves physical condition, helps maintain health, reduces the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease, improves mood and mental condition, as well as protects against social isolation, is an opportunity to meet other people. The project aims to explore the social side of ballroom dancing, including answering the following questions: what does the daily functioning of senior and pro-am dancers look like, how often do they train, in what form, how often do they go to competitions, what benefits and difficulties associated with dancing do they perceive, what relations they have with other dancers and teachers, what meaning competitions and related rituals have for them, what dance experiences they have, did they dance at a young age, what are the reasons for beginning a leisure career in ballroom, how do they conceive their dance future, do they as dancers differ significantly from their younger colleagues?

To answer these and other questions, a sociological study will be conducted including individual interviews and observations during competitions and training. The PI of the project himself was a ballroom dancer who for many years participated in national and international dance competitions, he also has experience as a teacher of pro-am dancers. These experiences will help in the realization of the project and allow more accurate observation of the social group of dancers over 35 years old.

The expected outcome of the project is to gain a thorough knowledge of how senior and pro-am dancers function in Poland. The results of the project will be published in the form of prestigious scientific publications, but also in the form of a popular scientific book, which will present the social world of dancers "from behind the scenes" in an accessible way and, perhaps through this, spread the idea of active leisure, not only in young age.