

Article

Dancing as Moments of Belonging: A Phenomenological Study Exploring Dancing as a Relevant Activity for Social and Cultural Sustainability in Early Childhood Education

Maria Grindheim * and Liv Torunn Grindheim

Kindergarten Knowledge Centre for Systemic Research on Diversity and Sustainable Futures (KINDknow),
Faculty of Teacher Education, Arts and Sports, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences,
5063 Bergen, Norway; ltg@hvl.no

* Correspondence: maria.grindheim@hvl.no; Tel.: +47-55-58-55-31

Abstract: Individuals' capacities to contribute to more sustainable living are deeply influenced by their early life experiences. Hence, there is a need to discover which experiences are relevant to young children's contemporary and future contributions to more sustainable living. Perceiving children as aesthetically oriented to the world and their sense of belonging as a core experience for social and cultural sustainability, and using the example of dancing, we investigate how such a sense of belonging can be supported through aesthetic first-person experiences. This article is therefore structured around the following research question: How can adults' experiences of themselves, others and their sense of belonging—when dancing—inform explorations of ways to foster embodied and aesthetic belonging for social and cultural sustainability in early childhood education (ECE)? Drawing on a phenomenological study, we analyse interviews with four dancers, who differ in age, gender and dance genre. Our analysis reveals their experiences when dancing as being in a meditative state, having a sense of freedom and feeling body and mind as one, described as an overall "different", resilient way of being and belonging in a social context. Our findings indicate that facilitating moments of sensible and bodily awareness can support a non-verbal understanding of oneself and others, as well as arguments for promoting aesthetic experiences while dancing as relevant to sustainable practices in ECE.

Keywords: social and cultural sustainability; belonging; dance; aesthetic first-person experiences



Citation: Grindheim, M.; Grindheim, L.T. Dancing as Moments of Belonging: A Phenomenological Study Exploring Dancing as a Relevant Activity for Social and Cultural Sustainability in Early Childhood Education. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 8080. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13148080>

Academic Editor:

Enrique-Javier Díez-Gutiérrez

Received: 13 May 2021

Accepted: 17 July 2021

Published: 20 July 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Individuals' capacities to contribute to more sustainable living are deeply influenced by their early life experiences. A central context for early experiences is early childhood education (ECE), and strong voices argue for the importance of education for sustainability, even for young children [1–3]. Despite these strong voices, there is still a need to discuss what experiences are relevant to young children's contemporary and future contributions to more sustainable living [4]. We aim to participate in this discussion by investigating how dance can form relevant experiences for young children's contemporary and future contribution to more sustainable living.

Our approach to sustainable development is enlarged from environmentalism to include human, social, cultural and economic perspectives, as well as political perspectives or "good governance" [4–6]. In this article, we approach social and cultural sustainability in ECE. Our lens, which focuses on social and cultural sustainability, takes its departure from the perspectives of Boldermoe and Ødegaard [7], who point to social and cultural sustainability as a development that ensures safety, social rights and good living conditions for all, in line with Siraj-Blatchford, Smith and Samuelsson's [8] outline of social and cultural sustainability. McKenzie [9] views such sustainability as "a life-promoting state within communities, and a process within communities that can achieve this condition" [9]

(p. 12). Manion and Adey [10] and Grindheim et al. [5] perceive it in the ECE context as creating surroundings that include and stimulate positive interactions, such as promoting *a sense of community* and *a feeling of belonging* to the community where children live, to ensure their safety and attachment to the local area. Thereby, experiences of belonging to a culturally situated local area and to a peer community [11] are viewed as relevant for sustainable education in ECE. Children's life in ECE, where they are physically and socially separated from the rest of society, creates both age and spatial segregation [12], which can limit their sense of belonging and entanglement to their local culture and nature. Thereby, participation, participatory decision-making and agency are important aspects of social and cultural sustainability [13]. We perceive the sense of belonging as a core experience to establish resilience and empowerment and thereby children's contemporary and future contributions to more sustainable living.

The sense of belonging requires a way to perform belonging, someone to belong to and a place to belong to. The place where children belong, the focus of this article, is ECE in the Scandinavian context, which has traditionally emphasised a holistic approach to children's development through play and closeness to nature [14]. These traditions are challenged by an international trend where education is more often presented in a uniform and universal way to solve contemporary problems through early intervention [15] (p. 1) This can be observed in the constant pressure to start teaching academic skills at a progressively younger age in Russia and in the West [16] (p. 358). Such pressure triggers worries about multiple and bodily ways toward sustainable education and ways to belong in ECE. Viewing humans and especially young children as bodily and aesthetically oriented to the world [17], and considering the aesthetic dimension as a fundamental aspect of children's way of being in the world, body movements and dance appear as interesting ways to perform belonging. Unfortunately, limited research has investigated children's bodily and aesthetic orientation in ECE, and we aim at contributing to fill this research gap. Before undertaking a research project that investigates children's bodily and aesthetic orientation to the world—perceived as ways to foster cultural and social sustainable education and ways to belong—we examine how and why such a project might be relevant. We therefore use a phenomenological lens to investigate experiences when engaging in dance from the perspective of adults who can verbalise their experiences. We structure this article around the following research question: How can adults' experiences of themselves, others and their sense of belonging—when dancing—inform explorations of ways to foster embodied and aesthetic belonging for social and cultural sustainability in ECE?

Through a phenomenologically inspired lens [18], we understand dancing as an aesthetic first-person experience [19,20] and a symbolic non-verbal way to build resilience, emphasising the whole person's belonging in context [21]. Drawing on interviews [22] with four people who differ in age, gender and dance genre, we investigate their experiences while dancing. Our study brings to the surface their experiences as being in a meditative state, having a sense of freedom and a sense of body and mind as one, which affect their notions of themselves, others and their sense of belonging. These moments of belonging emerge as providing space for diversity, and new ways of understanding themselves and others. Additionally, we depict structures that are inherent in these states and suggest how such insights can inform how to perform belonging, perceived as social and cultural sustainability in ECE practices. We put forward these experiences as forming a relevant base for further explorations of how to meet and celebrate the kinaesthetic and aesthetic dimensions of young children's bodily, social and cultural formation.

2. Social and Cultural Sustainability, Dance and ECE

Children contribute to their own and others' social and cultural formation, through interpersonal interactions in local communities, as well as participation in the global sphere via travel, migration, television, the Internet and social media [23]. Lifestyles full of rapid changes that require flexibility, in terms of where to live, whom to interact with and how to take part in both private and public spheres, pose challenges to children's sense of

belonging to a community, to a place and together with other people. Building resilience through self-understanding, self-expression and compassion can support individuals' understanding of their places and effects on the world [21] despite these rapid changes, thereby promoting social and cultural sustainability. Østern and Øyen [24] consider how dancers with different abilities can experience transformative processes that construct both belonging and exclusion. Their experiences go beyond the artistic performance and facilitate an understanding of "the other" as different but important participants.

Emphasising experiences when dancing and young children as bodily and aesthetically oriented to the world is relevant to education, which seems to focus on measurable individual achievements [25,26], thereby being in danger of overlooking dimensions of children's dynamic and multi-faceted meaning making. This has been argued as contributing to (if not being sustained by) a hierarchical view of mind over body. Alexander [26] contends that a hierarchical view of mind over body can lead to an education where teachers might risk overlooking the embodied life, thus doing injustice to children as bodily and aesthetically oriented to the world. We postulate that a (more) just educational setting can be established when all aspects of being human and humans' entanglement with others, nature and culture are taken seriously. Alexander [26] emphasises that the somatic characteristic of dance (here, through kinaesthetic sensations) offers possibilities for an alternative approach where the dancer can let go of the means and the ends by focusing on attentiveness and the here and now. Aesthetic subjects, such as singing, music, painting, rhyme, verse, play and dance, have a long tradition in ECE. In the romantic pedagogical movement starting with Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel, aesthetics has been found to be just as important as logic and ethics as a foundation for learning [27]. This traditional approach to ECE represents a way to embrace children's dynamic and multi-faceted meaning making, which is challenged in contemporary discussions about what knowledge and content should be emphasised in ECE.

When art is used in the educational field (also in ECE), it is often "linked to the interests of the arts institution: training, artist support, audience building, providing high quality experiences to audiences, recruiting students etc." [28] (p. 5), and connected to dominant discourses maintaining "constricted notions of both art and education" [28] (p. 5). First, these discourses can lead to a negative self-image of both practitioners and children through an emphasis on whether both practitioners and children "succeed", thereby ending up validating or "measuring" whether the children have acquired the appropriate set of skills [26,29,30]. Thereby, there is a risk of falling back into a body/mind dualistic approach to the human being [26]. Second, as dance may hold certain expectations to skills, Anttila et al. [29] consider how dance can lead to a larger gap between differences in a children's group, rather than a celebration of differences. In contrast to these dominant discourses, we place our study in an emerging discourse where art is put forward as picking up on matters of resilience [21], creativity, curiosity, exploration and change that are close to sustainable principles, since art might form creative responses to the unsustainable challenges of our time [31]. By doing so, we aim to contribute to fulfilling Rasmussen's request for informed discourses, which (among other things) "underlines that making art or training for mastery in a discipline is a learning process beyond learning the artistic skill" [28] (p. 13). We find support from Anttila et al. [26], who postulate how dancing has educational potential beyond learning dance moves, which can create transformational and social change through performing and celebrating differences.

Transformational and social changes call for the involvement of persons. Thereby, traditionally student-centric practices in the Nordic countries can be viewed in line with this emerging discourse. Rasmussen argues that there is a need for "a discursive power that breaks with the myth that it is European artistic and elitist genius that represents the creativity of the people who [are] taken up with industrial labor" [28] (p. 13). In line with studies promoting dancing as a cultural practice that is inclusive of belonging [32,33] and the sense of community [33,34], as well as identity development within and across minority groups or cultures [32,33] and age groups [33,34], we view dancing as offering potential

for celebrating differences and disrupting existing and dominant discourses. Thereby, we regard dancing as providing possibilities to embrace a variety of people and ways to belong and to embrace social and cultural sustainability.

We aim at overcoming the body/mind dualistic approach and the emphasis on measuring beforehand defined competencies versus the focus on children as bodily beings in their situated world, by proposing aesthetic subjects in ECE as more than serving the established cultural heritage and the expression of art. We investigate how embodied exploration as an aesthetic first-person experience in dancing can offer more than knowledge of cultural heritage, rhythms and body motions. We examine these experiences and discuss how an awareness of exploration through an aesthetic first-person experience can be of interest when aiming at constituting future research projects that investigate how children can be involved in activities that facilitate moments of belonging and thereby social and cultural sustainability.

3. Dancing as Embodied Aesthetic First-Person Experience, a Way to Perform Belonging and Social and Cultural Formation

According to Bond [35], dancing is often connected to happiness and freedom, although dance can also be traced to abuses of power and control, greed, hatred and delusion. Dancing has been forced on humans and non-humans, used as punishment, and humans have been punished for dancing. We build on Sheets-Johnstone's [18] and Farleigh's [36] descriptions of dancing as a phenomenon. The structures inherent in dancing as a phenomenon therefore become relevant to how the dancers experience themselves, others and moments of belonging when dancing. Sheets-Johnstone's and Farleigh's phenomenological descriptions of and perspectives on dancing turn the attention to how dance can be described differently in relation to different people's experiences with dancing. Dancing is therefore perceived as a lived experience, from which additional perspectives and understandings are gained than from a cognitive perspective, as dancing is understood as a non-verbal/animate way of knowing [18]. This way of knowing is of specific relevance to young children's education since they have limited verbal competence to express their knowing [37].

In its roots, the phenomenon of dancing is understood as comprising the moments when the whole being is dancing and the dance is being created, performed and one with the dancer [18,36]. These moments can occur in both guided and unguided dance, where the dancer moves effortlessly, is fully present in the movement and can feel existential freedom, by moving "freely, spontaneously, or in total accord with the willing" [36] (p. 19). Sheets-Johnstone [18], Alexander [26] and Fraleigh [36] emphasise how kinaesthesia (movement) is the root of dancing. Fraleigh [36] claims that the aesthetic in the kinaesthetic can come to realisation through dancing and that when the aesthetic is realised, the experience when dancing gains value. In line with Sheets-Johnstone's and Fraleigh's arguments, we propose that dancing involves more than specific movements and motor skills, and we understand dancing as a way to create relations to the dancer's body movements, being deeply engaged with the movements' own form and dynamic in their communicative and aesthetic aspects.

Stelter [19] describes the aesthetic aspects as constituting a first-person experience; a body-sensible and embodied perspective; an immediate, sensible experience and orientation; a pre-reflective and implicit access to knowledge and first-person expression; and an approach that brings out personal meanings. Thereby, an aesthetic first-person experience is viewed as a basis for personal meaning making and "a source of the individual's deeper understanding of his/her interplay with a specific context and environment" [19] (p. 45). An aesthetic first-person experience is understood as a sensible way of being in contact with and being in the world. The moment of interest is when dance occurs as something more than doing motor-skill exercises, and the aim is to extract the aesthetic first-person experience from this. We aim to gain insight into aesthetic bodily ways to belong in ECE, a way of belonging that is of core value for young children who still first and foremost experience themselves, others and places to belong through their moving bodies [14].

Therefore, it is the root of dancing as an aesthetic first-person experience moment from which we seek to learn.

Stelter [19] postulates that an aesthetic orientation to the world can create meaningful communities of practice, as it is through understanding one another's "thoughts, reflections, values, motives and aims [that] we [are] able to build up well-functioning learning and working communities" [19] (p. 45). We regard a meaningful community of practice as one where the persons involved belong. Therefore, based on our aim to take children's primary ways of belonging and the whole human being seriously, we investigate aesthetic orientations in dancing and how a sense of belonging can be experienced if the place to belong to (community of practice/dance) is meaningful for the persons involved. By mapping out different aesthetic first-person experiences when dancing, we investigate whether we could find common elements of dancing—despite differences in genre, age, gender and experience while dancing—that would influence people's experiences of themselves, others and their sense of belonging in ECE.

In the context of social and cultural sustainability, dance is perceived as a bearer of culture [38], which is of interest. Leaning on Ødegaard and Krüger's [39] perspective, dancing is thereby viewed as an activity where the situated cultural conditions are explored and transformed by the involved persons' body movements in their aesthetic first-person experiences. It forms a personal, relational and contextual experience of being in the world and in an ECE institution, which can transform the persons involved, the relations among people and their sense of belonging to their given culture. The transformation that emerges from the tension between the established educational culture and the persons involved—which is embedded in our way of understanding cultural formation [40]—may provide the experience of putting forward something new and different. In the context of our study, these comprise new or unique ways of belonging, thereby promoting social and cultural sustainability.

4. Methods and Materials

4.1. Method

We investigate how aesthetic first-person experiences affect individuals' experiences of themselves, others and their sense of belonging, leaning on a qualitative phenomenological approach [18,41]. Phenomenology is described as "a philosophy that is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of the world" [42] (p. 25). To describe and define how the dancers make sense of the world around them, we build on two methodological levels inspired by Moustakas [41], Giorgi [43] and Fraleigh [44]. At the first level, we create a first-person voice for the dancer and thereby an understanding of the subjective experiences that can occur when dancing. At the second level, we draw closer to a hermeneutic approach as we follow the content of these subjective experiences and search for their essence and shared meaning. Thereby, we aim to gain insights into the states that occur in dancing as aesthetic first-person experiences and which structures are inherent in these states. Consequently, we aim to understand how dancing—as a phenomenon and a way for the whole human being to take part in a community—can offer experiences of oneself, others and one's sense of belonging.

4.2. Materials

The materials for analysis are outlined from qualitative, semi-structured and one-on-one interviews [45,46]. Our aim is to uncover subjective experiences in dancing through first-person experiences, by having in-depth conversations. We also seek to capture a broad understanding of the essence of the phenomenon of dancing by including interviewees of different ages, with varying levels of experience and expertise in dancing, as well as experience from different genres of dancing. Our inquiry's purpose is to find a shared meaning in the experience of dancing, not depending on required skills in dance.

When choosing the informants, five aspects were considered. First, building on the notion of dance as happening when the dancer is fully present in the movement [18], it became important to choose informants with experiences in dancing where they had reached this point. Since we aimed to find out what would happen in the moments of flow/presence (aesthetic first-person experience) in the dance, we focused on the moment when the dance occurred [18]. This does not depend on the dancer's skill but on the defining moment in dancing. It is a matter of whether the difficulty matches the skill/presence, which means that moving freely and spontaneously to Elvis Presley's music is just as much acknowledged as a ballerina's moment of dancing when doing pirouettes on stage. Since dance in its root (often) has a non-verbal character, where the dancers work with their emotions using their bodies on a pre-verbal/pre-reflective level, it can be difficult to express experiences when dancing. Therefore, for the second aspect of choosing informants, it seemed appropriate to interview dancers who had experiences and awareness of their experiences in dancing and were able to express these verbally. Third, it was important to not only include experts (professional dancers) as their manner of speaking might be coloured by the jargon of the field. The selection of informants was therefore based on which experience they had with dancing, as follows: a professional contemporary dancer (M60), a contemporary dancer under training (W27), a hobby dancer and Zumba instructor (W46) and a hobby dancer (G15). The fourth aspect to consider was whether various dance genres would offer different or similar experiences, which could show (if any) a shared meaning in the activity of dancing in general. Although this might be counter to the disregard for the skill level, we found it interesting to investigate different genres of dancing, as some genres are traditionally known to be more improvisational and "free" (such as contemporary dance), and others are more dependent on a particular set of skills (such as ballet). By doing so, we aimed to limit potential biases based on the jargon in one specific dance genre. The informants were therefore selected based on their experiences with different dance genres. For the fifth aspect, the informants were chosen based on their age and gender. The four in-depth interviews were conducted with a female contemporary dancer (W27), a female hip-hop dancer (G15), a male contemporary dancer (M60) and a female Zumba dancer (W46), as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The criteria for being interviewed and the interviewees.

| Criteria | Interviewee |
|--|---|
| First-person experience with the phenomenon | All |
| Enough experience to talk about the phenomenon | All |
| Different types of expertise | The interviewees' expertise ranges from being a "hobby dancer" to having been a professional dancer for 35 years. |
| Different dance genres | Hip hop, zumba, contemporary, modern, dance theatre and contact improvisation |
| Different ages and genders | G15, W27, W46, M60 |

The interviews with G15, W27 and M60 were recorded. W46 did not feel comfortable with being recorded, so it was agreed that the interviewer would take notes. The notes were confirmed by asking questions, such as "I have noted that you experience Is that right?" The summaries of the detected themes were confirmed by direct questions, such as "It seems that you are saying that . . . , and . . . are important aspects of your experience with dancing. Is that correct?" The interviews lasted for approximately 1 h each, and some parts were deleted on the interviewees' request. The transcribed interviews that formed our material for analysis totalled 70 pages (Times New Roman, size: 12 points, line spacing: 1.5).

4.3. Analysis

Our analysis was inspired by Giorgi's [47] descriptive phenomenological analysis strategy using five steps. In the first step, an overview of each interview was prepared separately, which already gradually happened during the interview conversations. Second, each interview was read through and examined, and the meaning units from each interview were detected. Third, still reviewing the interviews separately, the meaning units were reformulated into themes that seemed to match the informants' descriptions/views, such as a sense of freedom, a meditative state and a sense of body and mind as one.

In the fourth step, the themes that emerged were examined in relation to the aim of the study and the research question. Further on, the themes were highlighted in different boxes drawn on a page. Each box presented the themes that seemed important to the interviewee and also answered the research question. In the fifth step, lines were drawn between the different informants' boxes, and the themes were connected to each other. The themes that were highlighted and common for the interviewees were then examined more closely. The three themes—a meditative state, a sense of freedom and a sense of body and mind as one—containing overlapping structures, were drawn out as crucial in all informants' experiences with dancing.

Finally, the themes and the structures within the experiences of these themes were approached through the interviewees' descriptions of their experiences in conjunction with theories about aesthetic first-person experiences. Subsequently, the themes and the structures within the experiences were investigated, considering the sense of belonging as bodily cultural formation towards increased social sustainability.

4.4. Ethical Considerations and Limitations of the Study

The data were generated in line with the ethical guidelines of Aarhus University [48] and the Danish Council on Ethics [49]. Informed consent was given electronically, as well as orally before starting each interview. In the case of G15, her parents gave informed consent by e-mail. The interviewees (as well as the parents of G15) were each offered the option to read through the transcription of the interviews. All interviewees were informed about their right to withdraw from the interview at any time or refrain from answering any question. Subsequently, the informants (and the parents of G15) signed a consent form approving further publishing of the information from the interviews.

The researcher who conducted the interviews was a dancer herself, and familiar with the dance milieu in both Norway and in Denmark. The informants were chosen based on her knowledge of them. Three of the participants were Danish, and one was Norwegian. The familiarity between the interviewer and the interviewees established trust, and the interviewer was familiar with the terms regarding dance activities. The researcher's knowledge about the involved dancers' passion for dance provided access to people who had aesthetic first-person experience of the phenomenon of dancing. This probably prevented a broader spectrum of experiences in dancing (such as experiences bearing more negative connotations). The small number of participants also limited the materials for analysis. However, it gave room for more in-depth interview conversations and generation of data materials.

The selection criteria can be questioned. First and foremost, children's aesthetic first-person experiences in ECE are missing in our materials. Insights into the phenomenon of dancing would be deeper and more in line with our overall aim to foster multiple ways to belong as social and cultural sustainability for young children in ECE if their experiences were present in the materials. Additionally, by examining experiences limited to verbal utterances among adult dancers (in privileged contexts), we are in danger of celebrating the already dominant discourse and unsustainable ways of living. Despite these concerns and limitations, we find that our study provides important arguments for further research where the voices of children and teachers embedded in ECE practices are present, as well as an overall argument for celebrating the kinaesthetic and aesthetic dimensions of young children's bodily, social and cultural formation.

5. Results: Moments of Belonging as Aesthetic First-Person Experience in Dance and Other/Different Ways of Being in the World

The findings are presented in three parts. Section 5.1: the states as first-person experiences while dancing; Section 5.2: the structures inherent in these aesthetic first-person experiences and Section 5.3: how these first-person experiences also give space for perceiving other people as different and facilitate moments of belonging. All the direct quotes from the interviews are in italics.

5.1. Aesthetic First-Person Experiences while Dancing

Our analysis reveals that the interviewed dancers experience themselves, through first-person experiences of a meditative state (Section 5.1.1), a sense of freedom (Section 5.1.2) and a sense of body and mind as one (Section 5.1.3).

5.1.1. A Meditative State

All four dancers describe their experience in dancing with words such as “letting go of their thoughts” while in a meditative or Zen state, which is a form of meditation practice. M60 explains his experiences when dancing:

When I once tried to describe this to someone many years ago, the person said, ‘What you just described, that is Zen Buddhism. And I was like, ‘Oh, that makes sense.’ It is a state where you are allowed to let go of the thoughts and just be present in the dance.

G15 refers to letting go of thoughts and everyday hustle. W46 puts it this way:

It is like a meditation class It is the combination of music that goes straight to the heart, and you also have the dance, and these melt together. This makes me happy. . . . when you have the right music and just floats, you don’t have to think about [cooking] dinner or anything.

W27 also describes the experience as “dance/or ‘the physical thing’ overlaps something that is not physical It is not exactly meditative—well, actually, yes, it is; it is kind of Zen-ish.”

Through these utterances, despite their differences in age, sex, occupation and experience with dance, the informants express their views that, when dancing, they (can) experience a shift from everyday life, where a lot is going on in their head (M60), to a state in which they can let go of the everyday hustle (G15), disregard thoughts and a strong will (M60), let go of vainness and judgements towards self and others (M60) and just be in the moment (M60, G15, W27, W46). Being in this state reflects an embodied, immediate, sensible and pre-reflective experience that creates meaning for the persons involved, in line with Stelter’s [19] outline of an aesthetic first-person experience.

5.1.2. A Sense of Freedom

The dancers outline their experience of a sense of freedom when dancing, feeling free from chores (W46), schoolwork (G15, G27) and thoughts (G15, W27, W46, M60). Their experiences can also be connected to a more existential freedom, the freedom to express themselves as they want:

To me, this is a free space. I really only need to concentrate about one thing, and that is to dance and to express myself in the way that I want to express myself. I do not really have to think about anything else, and that has helped me a lot. (G15, hip-hop dancer)

W27 (a contemporary dancer) refers to the same sense of freedom of expression in dance:

You know, I feel like I speak a language I can understand. Well, I just fell in love; it was just there, the thing about not needing a form for the movement, not using a beat, and just approach the dance through . . . what do you call that . . . a quality, instead of a technique. It is more like ‘okay, be a tongue’ or ‘be yellow’ or something like that. You know, ‘What is that for you, right?’ The freedom this has created, the freedom I got from this has created a base or a fundament for my way of thinking . . . and my way of creating

. . . . I still try; I want to develop this, but I feel incredibly free and inspired when I am not told what to do or told what/who I am or who to be.

This can be viewed in relation to Fraleigh's [36] description of existential freedom in contemporary/modern dance, which is confirmed by W27 and M60, who perform contemporary dance. They describe the freedom in using contemporary dance as a tool for expression. However, in the present study, we discover that this form of freedom can be found in other forms of dance as well, through being allowed to and able to (W27, G15) express themselves through their bodies, both in guided and unguided dance. The body is put forward as a tool for expression (M60, G15, W27), and the dancers describe a different way of communicating. These utterances reveal that the sense of freedom is not limited to making choices while dancing, which is the case for many improvisatory contemporary dance genres. It involves being allowed to express oneself through an embodied and emotional expression that is not dependent on words. Thereby, the involved persons' experiences of themselves when dancing bring to the surface a sense of freedom that is connected to embodied and emotional expressions, aligned with Stelter's [19] outline of an aesthetic first-person experience. Additionally, this sense of freedom can be interpreted as Fraleigh's description of existential freedom as "moving freely, spontaneously, or in total accord with the willing" and her notion of how to express freedom through embodiment in dancing: "we create it, and experience it aesthetically" [36] (p. 19).

5.1.3. A Sense of Body and Mind as One

Since both the possibilities of letting go of thoughts in a meditative state and being able to express themselves with their bodies as having a sense of freedom occur in the dancers' experiences when dancing, it is interesting to note how M60 explains that it is "not about letting go of your thoughts completely" but about the connection between body and mind in dance:

You can never really get out of your head; the head is always there; the thoughts are always there; you can never really be released from the head. Which parts of you do not belong to your body? Your ears? Or what about your eyebrows, or the brain? The skull? What about your spine? All is body! Your brain is body! And I think you will get lost/lose track if you think it is about not thinking You are SUPPOSED to use your sense and your brain, for what it can be used for For me, it is primarily about using your brain in a different way than when we sit like this (pointing towards us sitting and chatting), to get a different connection.

Here, a different connection between body and mind is emphasised. This is evident in another informant's (G15) descriptions as well:

You get a different understanding of your body and what you are capable of doing with your body than what others who do not dance, perhaps do not know [what] their bodies can do I get a mindset of believing I can do more things than I think I can do.

This indicates that experiencing her body in a different way than usual strengthens her self-confidence. M60, who is a dance teacher, says, "I see this all the time"; that is, he teaches people to dance, and suddenly, they learn more about their minds as well or realise that they have bodies in a way that they did not have the same awareness of previously—which again seems to strengthen their self-confidence. W27 points to dancing as "an interplay between something physical and something emotional". Now, in a period of her life when she cannot dance because of health issues, W46 describes how "[I] bring the experiences and sensations from dancing with me in other areas of my life". Thus, although she does not use her body as when dancing, she says, "[I] use [my] mind to stimulate the experiences in dancing, thereby getting into a similar state that serves me well mentally". This does not necessarily either prove or refute a body–mind connection but shows that such a connection becomes strong through dancing.

These experiences that strengthen self-confidence create or are created by a different connection between body and mind, representing another way of experiencing oneself that

is in line with Alexander's [26] and Fraleigh's [36] concept of dance as a way to overcome the dualistic approach to mind and body.

5.2. The Structures Inherent in Experiencing a Meditative State, a Sense of Freedom and a Sense of Body and Mind as One

In line with our phenomenological approach, we have searched for the structures inherent in experiencing a meditative state, a sense of freedom and a sense of body and mind as one [18]. The insights into these structures can offer knowledge of how such moments can be facilitated in ECE.

5.2.1. "Different" Experiences of Oneself, Letting Go, Forgetting—And Finding—Oneself

A closer look at the informants' descriptions shows a clear coherence between the structures of getting into the three states and the first-person experiences of being in these states. The aesthetic first-person experiences in dance make the dancers let go in a way that makes them feel happy (W46, G15), but it also appears to affect them at a deeper and more existential level. Therefore, the structure of **letting go** seems to affect the dancers at an existential level. The dancers highlight the fact that through dancing, they can let go of everyday thoughts and concerns. It "*helps you let go, engage fully in a task*" (W27) and "*forget yourself and your wishes and give your ego a break*" (M60). Both G15 and W46 talk about letting go and floating with the music as an important part of the experience. Thereby, we can trace structures, such as being **present in the here and now** ("*forget yourself*"), **flow** ("*let go*") and **shift of focus** ("*give your ego a break*").

Sheets-Johnstone [18] and Fraleigh [36,50] explain that through the presence (which is required) in the dance, dancers must let go of their thoughts and reflections about the dance and of themselves to fully become one with the dance. The dancers in this study talk little about letting go of their thoughts about the movement but describe how they can take a break from thoughts and judgements of themselves and others (M60, W27, G15, W46). This resembles Stelter's [20] description of one of the dimensions of body-anchored learning as the subjects "*shift into a state of being in the present moment without being judgmental in regard to oneself as subject and in regard to the situation*" [20] (p. 114). Stelter [20] further compares this to a meditative state, which can simply be explained as being in the here and now. Hence, the understanding of what happens to the informants when they experience a meditative state is supported by Stelter's theories. M60 takes this point even further:

Actually, I have found that it is not as much about forgetting yourself; I think it is the opposite. I cannot say precisely what the opposite word is, but you are coming back to yourself—or a different side of yourself . . . where you are less vain, more present, less judgemental. When this succeeds—because you can also go the other way and get more judgemental, but when this succeeds, you get to turn off some of those . . . all those things that you are in your daily life, which for me is a liberation of . . . the body You could say, it cleans out the pipe between your thoughts and your body

By **letting go** and forgetting himself, M60 describes a transformative potential; he is not just forgetting himself but is coming back to himself, to a different side of himself, wherein he becomes "*less vain, more present, less judgemental*". He also explains that dancers "*can also go the other way and [become] more judgemental*", which shows that the experiences in dancing are not given. From his descriptions, it seems that the dancers themselves play a part in whether they succeed in getting into the states through their ability to *let go*.

The structure of **letting go** and being **present** seems crucial for getting into the states in dancing. The dancers explain that through their deep engagement in dancing, they are exploring the body's possibilities (W27, G15), something inner (W46), how their bodies can give them information (W27, M60) and how they can express themselves (M60, W27, G15). Further on, the experience of realising what they are capable of doing with their bodies offers them new perspectives on life that they bring into their daily life. "*I get a mindset of believing I can do more things than I think I can do*" (G15). These experiences are described as *different*, although from M60's elucidation of how he is coming back to himself/a different

side of himself, it can be understood that the experiences in dancing open up an awareness about something that already exists but is made accessible through a **bodily and sensible engagement and awareness** in dancing.

Bodily and sensible awareness is understood as a **shift in focus** from daily life (M60, G15, W27, W46) to a deeper level of consciousness. This can be understood through M60's interpretation that *"you are always your body and always learning about your body but that to get into this state in dancing, you have to spend quality time with your body"*. W46 explains that this helps her to be more present in her everyday life, even now, when she has an injury, which prevents her from dancing. Consequently, the shift in focus seems to help in attaining a different connection between body and mind that opens possibilities for experiencing both the body and "the inner self" differently. This connection can be understood as supporting the sense of body and mind as one and can open new understandings through the aesthetic experience.

Additionally, structures such as **space and environment**, as well as **trusting yourself and others**, seem crucial for letting go. G15 and W27 find their place in dancing as they walk into a room where they are able to and allowed to express themselves as they want, through their bodies. Hence, the potential of experiencing themselves differently seems to depend on both their own intentionality and the environment around them. This can create a sense of freedom and a body–mind connection or, in M60's words, *"a liberation of . . . the body You could say, it cleans out the pipe between your thoughts and your body"* According to W46 and G15, music helps them let go. From these informants' utterances, we can therefore imagine that music is what helps them get into a meditative state, gives them a sense of freedom and connects body and mind.

5.2.2. Summing Up the Inherent Structures in Experiencing a Meditative State, a Sense of Freedom and a Sense of Body and Mind as One

The states and the structures—involving a meditative state, a sense of freedom and a sense of body and mind as one—are understood as occurring through aesthetic first-person experiences. The different structures identified are (1) letting go, (2) a shift in focus, (3) presence in the here and now, (4) sensible and bodily awareness, (5) trusting oneself and others, (6) flow, and (7) space and environment. These seven structures are interwoven and represent structures of a whole that occur for the dancers in their experiences in dancing. Revealing these structures can help in understanding the pre-reflective and implicit transformative potential of their experiences, which is relevant to building resilience.

5.3. "Different" Experiences of Other People and Moments of Belonging

The transformational understanding of oneself, as outlined above, does not only mean a shift in one's experience of oneself in the world but also involves (1) ways of expression and understanding of others and (2) the sense of belonging to a community.

5.3.1. Body Movements as Expressions and Understanding of Others

The aesthetic first-person experiences in dance are expressed as containing a different possibility for expression and communication. The possibility to extend ways to communicate also influences how someone experiences and connects with other people. W27 describes it this way: *"and then suddenly, we were speaking the same language . . . and then I started to feel at home"*. This is considered as a community wherein people understand you when you do not use your words (W27, G15, M60). M60 explains that he *"feels present in the world in a fuller way"*; when he succeeds in getting into the state, *"time changes"*, and he senses the world differently:

. . . it is like having the headlights on, not in your eyes, but on your skin; I can feel the world around me. I am more present; things are not exactly happening in slow motion, but it is like I can register a lot more.

Hence, the presence, the feeling of flow and bodily and sensible awareness are not only of meaning for how the dancers understand themselves but also the world around them and their community:

It was like human compassion in praxis. You train your empathy, you train your generosity, and your vainness . . . a lot of things are happening (. . .), but when you succeed, this is what you train. You also train your breath, your gaze, but you are training some kind of human compassion. (M60)

M60 experiences and trains his human compassion when dancing. This reveals that it is not only about being able to express oneself and communicate through dancing but also involves a more existential experience of human compassion and understanding of oneself and others, which has a transformational potential that has to be developed. He and the other dancers experience a state of being in which they can understand and navigate both their own and others' aesthetic, pre-reflective expressions. Consequently, the aesthetic first-person experiences in dancing seems to make people less judgemental and more compassionate towards others. Perceiving dance from a phenomenological perspective containing both the past and the present and having an effect on the future, their experience of human compassion in dancing can mean something for how they encounter others in the future (after dancing).

5.3.2. Moments of Belonging to a Place and to a Community of Practice

W27 points to how the experiences in dancing have affected her understanding of herself in relation to the world. She explains that exercises in dancing can help her to feel grounded—like she has a connection to the floor:

Another element in this is this thing about grounding, feeling like you have a connection. This simply happens through exercises, where you just . . . (she breathes and shows a peaceful expression). And when you are peaceful and grounded, not only can you feel the floor; you can breathe, and you believe that you can take space in the room.

W27 describes this feeling as being one of the side effects of dancing:

. . . something that I feel that I get from grounding—from dancing, you know—standing more firmly on the floor It is not just physical; it is also about believing in you being here, that you are allowed to be here. And this is 100% fundamental for who I have become today, to have a belief that people can like me and that can I like myself. And I am like, 'I can do that!' And I do not know if I [would have] this if I had been somewhere where they spoke another language, which I could not get into If I had not been dancing, I do not think I would be/feel like I [am]/do now. I would have been too much up here (pointing to her head), and I would not have had this connection, which you just get . . .

Dancing and “this connection between body and mind” seem crucial for W27's experience of being in the world—“to be allowed to move, explore and to feel like it is all right for me to be here, that people can like me and that I can like myself”. She mentions that she does not know if she would have this feeling if she had not been dancing. She “just feels at home” in dancing, and indicates her sense of belonging when dancing. “Feeling at home” is also emphasised by G15, who describes dancing as “a natural [place to] go to”. M60 stresses that he is “feeling present in a fuller way”, W46 and M60 point to compassion and to trust in oneself and others, and W46 refers to “taking responsibility for oneself and others when dancing”. G15 emphasises the value of “being different people with different skills, dancing together”, as she knows that she is “good at some things and that others are good at other things, and what is good about this, is that we can learn from one another”. Thereby, they point to communication, which aligns with Stelter's [19] outline of a meaningful community, with mutual understanding, where it is good for the persons involved to belong. It is a community where the dancers experience themselves and others as important but different participants.

5.3.3. Summing Up the Different Experiences of Other People and Moments of Belonging

Aesthetic first-person experiences in dancing seem relevant to meaning making and the sense of belonging and being in the world or, more specifically, in a community where it is all right to be, where different people can be accepted and belong, in a community that is created through trust in others and in themselves and their belonging there, which is made possible by letting go of thoughts, judgement and vanity about themselves and others. Through a sensible and bodily awareness, the aesthetic first-person experience in dancing seems to be a connector between body and mind, which opens up a pre-reflective dimension of human consciousness. From an understanding of the human being as aesthetically rooted in the world, this dimension is fundamental and might explain the dancers' sense of feeling at home. This indicates that not only can the body–mind connection grow stronger, but it can also form an experience of bracketing the me–world dualism and the sense of belonging. These moments emerge as room for diversity through communicating and for empathy through new ways of understanding both oneself and others. The transformation that emerges between novel and more established ways of belonging, pointed to as a different way of belonging, can be relevant to young children, who are fundamentally embodied in the world and, thereby, to the ways of facilitating social and cultural sustainability in ECE.

6. Discussion

The outlined aesthetic first-person experiences that also bridge the body–mind dichotomy may explain the overall and grounded knowledge of how to educate young children that can be traced in the history of ECE and the romantic pedagogical movement that highlighted aesthetic subjects in children's education and cultural formation [27]. This tradition is challenged in contemporary education by the urge for previously defined universal competencies, but another approach in contemporary education calls for local and contextual strategies to connect local and global challenges in meaningful situated practices [23]. Located in the latter approach, investigating different ways of belonging by dancing, our analysis—although outlined from adult dancers' experiences—offers arguments for revitalising aesthetic approaches in ECE.

Embedded in a phenomenological approach, the notion of children as fundamentally aesthetically oriented to the world is outlined by several researchers (i.e., [17,37]). The transformative experiences identified by the informants, regarding the understanding of themselves, others and their sense of belonging to the world, occur through the "sense" that children already use to orient themselves to the world. Creating space for fostering this dimension of children's orientation to the world therefore seems crucial to support their inborn ability to understand themselves and others through a pre-reflective dimension. Overlooking this dimension is unjust in the educational setting—that is, overlooking children's fundamental way of orienting themselves to the world. This unjust approach to young children's education might be a problem, not only for the individual child, but also in fostering social and cultural sustainability. People who belong also contribute, and the transformative experiences and knowledge of structures that facilitate such experiences may serve as important drivers when trying to address complex problems of unsustainability, such as the deprivation of belonging because of travelling, studies and flexible labour markets.

The structures inherent in the phenomenon of dancing that have surfaced from our analysis create awareness about how facilitating sensitive embodied moments of belonging in ECE calls for a different approach than promoting aesthetic subjects, such as dance, in a way that supports the existing discourses within arts in education. In particular, promoting aesthetic subjects such as skill training might lead to measuring whether educators and children attain the required skills [28–30]. Our analysis reveals that aesthetic first-person experiences in dancing can occur when humans are fully engaged and present in the moment, without being judgemental towards themselves and others. From our point of view, the structure of letting go and shifting the focus from timescales, the original plan

and goals to just being in the moment can be highlighted for both the teacher and the child, perhaps even more for the teacher, who, after all, has the responsibility and is most often more socialised in the established trap between body and mind. The same holds true for the structure bodily and sensible engagement and awareness, which calls for teachers who are sensible and aware of their bodily communication in their interactions with young children. Additionally, the structure space and environment calls for spaces and places for moving bodies in interaction. Lastly, the structure trusting yourself and others calls for possibilities to practice these aesthetic first-person experiences without being judged, neither by oneself nor others, as a pathway for receiving specific competencies that can be a hinderance to both resilience and celebrations of different people contributing in a community of diverse people in equity [24,29,32–34]. Outlined from the structures and evident from our analysis, the phenomenon of dancing seems to both rely on and foster such structures at individual, social and institutional levels. The structures inherent in the meditative state, the sense of belonging and the sense of body and mind as one seem to be the results of experiencing each state, as well as being in a condition where a person can get into the states. All of these states, leading to an experience of being in one's body in a different way than usual, sensing and feeling with one's body, and being allowed to express oneself in a non-verbal way (in a different way than usual), are interpreted as moments of belonging. We conclude that the bodily and sensible awareness, which the dancers recognise, asserts itself and makes space for a change in focus as reflections of a verbalised character are set aside and a pre-reflective, non-verbal orientation towards oneself and the world is opened.

In line with Rasmussen's [28] call for art in education that focuses on the educated person, our analysis brings to the surface the phenomenon of dancing, not only as an expression of art and culture and bodily excellence (or lack of it), but also as a tool through which the dancer can experience the world in a different way than what is the main focus in society. We therefore call for more moments of open-ended explorative practices in ECE, where there is no external pressure for the child to be or act in a certain way, but a possibility to experience existential freedom and belonging by being a person/body in this world, situated in a community of different people.

Despite finding that our small-scale materials and analysis offer arguments for meeting and celebrating the kinaesthetic and aesthetic dimensions of young children's bodily and cultural formation, built on selected adult's mostly positive experiences while dancing, we ask for more research. There is still a lack of research where children's and the teachers' activities form the unit of study, that explores what kinds of aesthetic experiences are available for children in Scandinavian ECE, how children might experience aesthetic activities and how such activities can be performed in everyday life in ECE. We must also consider that our informants are adults. Children might experience dancing in other ways than adults do. Furthermore, we report positive experiences in dancing, yet dancing is not solely a phenomenon of happiness and freedom. Dance can also represent abuses of power and control, greed, hatred and delusion [35]. There is a need for more research into the kinaesthetic and aesthetic dimensions in ECE and how to bring to the surface and balance multiple ways for children to be entangled with others, nature and culture.

7. Summing Up

Our findings indicate that certain experiences in dancing affect the dancers' understanding of themselves, others and their sense of belonging. These experiences are put forward as different; they let the informants do something or experience something that creates a tension with what they usually do or experience in their daily life. If this is the case for mature persons with fully developed language, we could imagine that it could be far more important for children, whose ways of navigating the world, their relations and themselves are made possible primarily through their aesthetic orientation to the world. Such a view of sustainable education promotes different ways of belonging, expands ways of understanding and practices child-sensitive education for social and cultural sustainabil-

ity. People who belong to a community also belong to a place in a broader sense—that is, to an environment and nature that are both locally and globally entangled.

Author Contributions: M.G. has contributed by collecting materials for research, developing the theoretical approach and conducting the analysis. L.T.G. has contributed by framing the findings in ECE context and in a sustainable approach, as well as conducting the analysis. M.G. and L.T.G. have closely cooperated in writing and organising the text. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by the Norwegian Research Council (NFR) and Danish School of Education (DPU), Aarhus University.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were performed by representatives from Aarhus University, according to the rules of approval from the Danish Council on Ethics.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. Informed consent was obtained from the parents for the person under 18 years old.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to ethical restrictions of identification.

Acknowledgments: The authors acknowledge the KINDknow research centre, which has supported this work. The authors also thank the interviewees for sharing their experiences with us.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of the data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

References

- Davis, J. Examining early childhood education through the lens of education for sustainability: Revisioning rights. In *Research in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: International Perspectives and Provocations*; Davis, J., Elliott, S., Eds.; Routledge: London, UK, 2014; pp. 21–37.
- Sageidet, B.M. Norwegian perspectives on ECEfS: What has developed since the Brundtland Report? In *Research in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: International Perspectives and Provocations*; Davis, J., Elliot, S., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2014; pp. 112–124.
- Samuelsson, I.P. Why we should begin early with ESD: The role of early childhood education. *Int. J. Early Child. Educ.* **2011**, *43*, 103–118. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Sachs, J.D. *An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development*; Report for the UN Secretary-General; The Sustainable Development Solutions Network: New York, NY, USA, 2013; Available online: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/broaderprogress/pdf/130613-SDSN-An-Action-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development-FINAL.pdf> (accessed on 3 May 2021).
- Grindheim, L.T.; Bakken, Y.; Hauge, K.H.; Heggen, M.P. Early childhood education for sustainability through contradicting and overlapping dimensions. *ECNU Rev. Educ.* **2019**, *2*, 374–395. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Güler Yıldız, T.; Öztürk, N.; İlhan İyi, T.; Aşkar, N.; Banko Bal, Ç.; Karabekmez, S.; Höl, Ş. Education for sustainability in early childhood education: A systematic review. *Environ. Educ. Res.* **2021**, *27*, 796–820.
- Boldermo, S.; Ødegaard, E.E. What about the Migrant Children? The State-Of-The-Art in Research Claiming Social Sustainability. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 459. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Siraj -Blatchford, J.; Smith, K.C.; Samuelsson, I.P. Education for Sustainable Development in Early Years. OMEP. 2010. Available online: <http://www.327matters.org/Docs/ESD%20Book%20Master.pdf> (accessed on 8 July 2021).
- McKenzie, S. *Social Sustainability: Towards Some Definitions*; Hawke Research Institute Working Paper Series; University of South Australia: Magill, South Australia, 2004; Volume 27, pp. 1–29. Available online: <https://www.unisa.edu.au/siteassets/episerver-6-files/documents/eass/hri/working-papers/wp27.pdf> (accessed on 15 April 2021).
- Mannion, G.; Adey, C. Place-based education is an intergenerational practice. *Child. Youth Environ.* **2011**, *21*, 35–58.
- Johansson, E.; Rosell, Y. Social Sustainability through Children’s Expressions of Belonging in Peer Communities. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 3839. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Kjørholt, A.T. The modern child and the flexible labour market: An introduction. In *The Modern Child and the Flexible Labour Market*; Kjørholt, A.T., Qvortrup, J., Eds.; Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK, 2021; pp. 1–15.
- Bergan, V.; Krempig, I.W.; Utsi, T.A.; Bøe, K.W. I Want to Participate—Communities of Practice in Foraging and Gardening Projects as a Contribution to Social and Cultural Sustainability in Early Childhood Education. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 4368. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Grindheim., L.T. Exploring the taken-for-granted advantage of outdoor play in Norwegian Early Childhood Education. In *Outdoor Learning and Play Pedagogical Practices and Children’s Cultural Formation*; Grindheim, L.T., Sørensen, H.V., Rekers, A., Eds.; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, in press.

15. Biesta, G.J. *Beautiful Risk of Education*; Routledge: Boulder, CO, USA, 2015.
16. Bodrova, E. Make-believe play versus academic skills: A Vygotskian approach to today's dilemma of early childhood education. *Eur. Early Child. Educ. Res. J.* **2008**, *16*, 357–369. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Løkken, G. Toddler Peer Culture. The Social Style of One and Two Year Old Body-Subjects in Everyday Interaction. Ph.D. Thesis, NTNU, Institute of Education, Trondheim, Norway, 2000.
18. Sheets-Johnstone, M. *The Phenomenology of Dance*, 3rd ed.; Temple University Press: Philadelphia, PA, USA, 2015.
19. Stelter, R. Learning in the light of the first-person approach. In *Learning Bodies*; Schilhab, T., Juelskjær, M., Moser, T., Eds.; Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitetsforlag Ringhof: Copenhagen, Denmark, 2008; pp. 45–66.
20. Stelter, R. Exploring body-anchored and experience-based learning in a community of practice. In *Learning Bodies*; Schilhab, T., Juelskjær, M., Moser, T., Eds.; Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitetsforlag Ringhof: Copenhagen, Denmark, 2008; pp. 11–130.
21. Serlin, I.A. Dance/Movement Therapy: A Whole Person Approach to Working with Trauma and Building Resilience. *Am. J. Dance Ther.* **2020**, *42*, 176–193. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
22. Grindheim, M. Experiences in Dancing and Their Effect on Different Peoples Experiences of Themselves. Master's Thesis, Aarhus University, Emdrup, Copenhagen, Denmark, January 2018.
23. Grindheim, L.T.; Borgen, J.S.; Ødegaard, E.E. In the Best Interests of the Child: From the Century of the Child to the Century of Sustainability. In *Childhood Cultures in Transformation*; Ødegaard, E.E., Borgen, J., Eds.; Brill Sense: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2021; pp. 13–36.
24. Østern, T.P.; Øyen, E. Ulikhet som impuls for nye oppdagelser i dans: Å tøyne både muskler og meninger gjennom mangfold i Danselaboratoriet [Inequality as an impulse for new experiences in dancing: To stretch both muscles and meanings through diversity in Danselaboratoriet]. *Nord. J. Art Res.* **2014**, *3*, 1–19. [[CrossRef](#)]
25. Biesta, G. Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. *Educ. Assess. Eval. Account. Former. J. Pers. Eval. Educ.* **2009**, *21*, 33–46. [[CrossRef](#)]
26. Alexander, K.J. No Ends, no Means, Just Education: A Kinaesthetic Approach to Thinking Otherwise. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sterling, Sterling, UK, 2015. Available online: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/42545371.pdf> (accessed on 5 April 2021).
27. Samuelsson, I.P.; Carlsson, M.A.; Olsson, B.; Pramling, N.; Wallerstedt, C. The art of teaching children the arts: Music, dance and poetry with children aged 2–8 years old. *Int. J. Early Years Educ.* **2009**, *17*, 119–135. [[CrossRef](#)]
28. Rasmussen, B. Arts education and cultural democracy: The competing discourses. *Int. J. Educ. Arts* **2017**, *18*, 1–17.
29. Antilla, E.; Martin, R.; Svendler Nielsen, C. Performing difference in/through dance: The significance of dialogical, or third spaces in creating conditions for learning and living together. *Think. Skills Creat.* **2019**, *31*, 209–216. [[CrossRef](#)]
30. Antilla, E.; Svendler Nielsen, C. Dance and the Quality of Life at Schools: A Nordic Affiliation. In *Dance and the Quality of Life*; Bond, K., Gardner, S., Eds.; Springer Nature: Cham, Switzerland, 2019; Volume 73, pp. 327–345. [[CrossRef](#)]
31. Hunter, M.A.; Aprill, A.; Hill, A.; Emery, S. *Education, Arts and Sustainability: Emerging Practice for a Changing World*, 1st ed.; Springer: Singapore, 2018.
32. Sansom, A. Dance as a Taonga from Children to the World: A Perspective from Aotearoa New Zealand. In *Dance and the Quality of Life*; Bond, K., Gardner, S., Eds.; Springer Nature: Cham, Switzerland, 2019; Volume 73, pp. 83–100. [[CrossRef](#)]
33. Dunphy, K.; Ware, V.A. Dance and Quality of Life for Indigenous Communities in Australia. In *Dance and the Quality of Life*; Bond, K., Gardner, S., Eds.; Springer Nature: Cham, Switzerland, 2019; Volume 73, pp. 495–512. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. Blicher Johnsen, C.; Ravn, S. *Ta' Fat om Dansen*; Stjerne, L., Ed.; Institut for Idræt og Biomekanik, Syddansk Universitet: Odense, Denmark, 2017.
35. Bond, K. Introduction: At last, Together. In *Dance and the Quality of Life*; Bond, K., Gardner, S., Eds.; Springer Nature: Cham, Switzerland, 2019; Volume 73, pp. 1–20.
36. Fraleigh, S.H. *Dance And The Lived Body*; University of Pittsburgh Press: Pennsylvania, PA, USA, 1987.
37. Holgersen, S.E. Mening og Deltagelse [Meaning and Participation]. Ph.D. Thesis, Danish School of Education, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2000.
38. Ravn, S. Fagdidaktiske overvejelser [Didactical considerations]. In *Bevægelse—om Dans, Krop og Læring [Movement—About Dancing, Body and Learning]*; Ravn, S.L., Ed.; Syddansk Universitetsforlag: Odense M, Denmark, 2012; pp. 19–24.
39. Ødegaard, E.E.; Krüger, T. Studier av barnehagen som dannelsesarena. In *Barnehagen som Dannelsesarena*; Ødegaard, E.E., Ed.; Fagbokforlaget: Bergen, Norway, 2012; pp. 19–47.
40. Grindheim, L.T. *Kvardagslivet til Barneborgarar: Ein Studie av Barna si Deltaking i Tre Norske Barnehagar*; Doctoral dissertation 329; NTNU: Trondheim, Norway, 2014.
41. Moustakas, C. *Phenomenological Research Methods*; SAGE: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 1994.
42. Bryman, A. *Social Research Methods*, 6th ed.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2016.
43. Giorgi, A. *Phenomenology and Psychological Research*; Duquesne University Press: Pennsylvania, PA, USA, 1985.
44. Fraleigh, S. A Vulnerable Glance: Seeing Dance through Phenomenology. *Dance Res. J.* **1991**, *23*, 11–16. [[CrossRef](#)]
45. Kvale, S.; Brinkmann, S. *Interview—Det Kvalitative Forskningsinterview som Håndverk. [Interview—the Qualitative Research Interview as a Tool]*; Hans Reitzel: Copenhagen, Denmark, 2015.
46. Merriam, S.B. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*; Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco, CA, USA, 1998.
47. Giorgi, A. *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology: A Modified Husserlian Approach*; Duquesne University Press: Pittsburgh, PA, USA, 2009.

-
48. Aarhus University, Students.au.dk. Available online: <https://studerende.au.dk/en/it-support/information-security/data-protection-gdpr/projects/> (accessed on 9 June 2021).
 49. The Danish Council on Ethics. Available online: <https://www.etiskraad.dk/english> (accessed on 9 June 2021).
 50. Fraleigh, S. Consciousness Matters. *Dance Res. J.* **2000**, *32*, 54–62. [[CrossRef](#)]