CultureCase

Frequent participation in the performing arts is associated with better mental health

This research was conducted by **Eryn Piper Block** and **three others** at the **University of California, Los Angeles, USA**

Summary

This study tracked young adults in America to discover that frequent participation in the performing arts was associated with positive mental health. The same was not true for writing or visual arts, which ‘are often done in solitude and involve little interaction’ with others. The mechanisms by which arts participation results in positive mental health is likely to be social bonding and collective flow (‘the experience of becoming totally engrossed in an activity, in which one creates effortlessly’). Frequent participation is associated with higher scores for mental health, and daily participation the highest scores of all.

The paper focused on young adults

Specifically, those aged between 18 and 28 from the ‘millennial’ generation in America. The data came from multiple waves of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, a long-running survey that tracks the lifestyles and outcomes of young people and their families. ‘Young adulthood is frequently marked by major life transitions, such as leaving the family home, going to college, starting a career, and even finding a romantic partner and having children’.

There is an important social justice component of this study

Although white individuals and those with higher incomes are more likely to engage in the arts in America, the study found that ‘the association between

performing arts and positive mental health is similar, if not greater, for people of colour than it is for white individuals'.

Keywords

survey **wellbeing** **mental health** **performing arts** **USA**

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