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Healthy ageing: The flower children's emotional responses to music in exercise

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Reaching the age of 65 is widely celebrated in the United Kingdom as a milestone, bringing about retirement and supposedly a time for increased relaxation (Wang & Shi, 2014, *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65, 209-233). As the population of over 65s steadily increases however, so does the incidence of age related disorders and diseases (Rowe & Kahn, 1997, *The Gerontologist*, 4, 433-440). As regular exercise is well demonstrated to prolong healthy lives, and fight such disorders and disease, it is therefore important to encourage the ageing population to be active. Although, to date, music has been compellingly shown to help motivate healthy exercise, little research has investigated the role of music choices used within gym and exercise facilities for the over 65 population. The purpose of this study, using an ethnographic approach, was to explore how a group of over-65s, when exercising to music, make sense of their own preferences. With institutional ethical approval, 7 participants were recruited via social media, announcements on local radio stations, direct exercise classes and word of mouth. The participants took part in two exercise classes, which were filmed for reference to visual reactions, and a focus group was held post-class, allowing participants the opportunity to discuss their individual opinions of the music choices. An ethnographic frame work was used to build knowledge and understanding of how important music genres are to this population during exercise. While the final outcomes of the investigation are pending, initial findings suggest that music typically used within gym and class environments is not music that the over 65's enjoy. *'Music with a solid defined beat'* and *'music that reminds me of my youth'* were discussed, whilst dance music *'did nothing for me'* and most *'struggled to find the beat'*. It is also mentioned that gym environments are not appealing to their age group, they lack character and warmth and are intimidating. Existing research into music choices for gyms focuses on younger generations and has eliminated the older populations. This

study discusses how much value the over 65's place on music, not just in exercise but in everyday life. Creating playlists of music from their youth is a logical way to encourage exercise for an increasingly sedentary age group. Thus allowing this overlooked generation a reflection of their youth whilst inspiring increased activity levels, mental wellbeing and healthy ageing and potentially relieving an already overstretched health care system.