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Folk Dance: An Occupation For Building Community

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FOLK DANCE: AN OCCUPATION FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

BY

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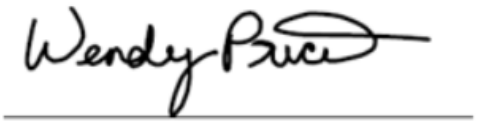

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BY

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Community, in all its forms. In particular, this thesis is dedicated to the folk dance community who asked me to dance, and wouldn't take "no" for an answer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the dance community as a whole, and to the participants in this study. Thank you for enriching the lives of others. Thank you to my advisory committee for your guidance. Friends and family who lovingly served as sounding boards, proofreaders, bagel providers, supervisors, and tear-dryers . . . Thank you. Mom and Sis – I couldn't have done it without your constant motivation and support.

ABSTRACT

This pilot ethnographic study describes the behaviors and values among the members of a central Appalachian folk-dancing community. The participants were four women, three adults and one teenager, each of whom were long-standing members of the community. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation, as the principal researcher had been a member of this community for 12 years at the time of the study. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, and subjected to cross-case analysis. Codes informed categories, from which emerged two overarching themes regarding values held by this community: *hospitality* and *human connection*. *Hospitality* encompassed practices related to *acceptance and inclusion* and *making people feel comfortable*. *Human connection* illuminated practices that foster *building relationships* and *connecting across boundaries*. The findings supported folk dance as an occupation that serves as a tool to help bring people together across boundaries and build community.

Key words: occupation, folk dance, community

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CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intergenerational Cultural Transmission

Across the Appalachian region of the Unites States there exists a network of communities whose active participation in its cultural customs and traditions serves to preserve them for generations to come. Aside from being a geographical region, Jamison (2015) asserts Appalachia is also defined as "a cultural region with its own unique customs and traditions" (p. 1). Jamison explains how these cultural traditions were preserved within and came to be associated with the region:

> Cultural traditions such as music and dance, which are passed on from one generation to the next, are clearly not contained by state lines, rivers, elevations, or other boundaries drawn on maps, and as people migrated through the Appalachian region and across the South during the 19th century, these customs became established in communities far beyond the southern mountains. Pointing out that the traditional music of Appalachia is not significantly different that that found elsewhere in the rural South, country music historian Bill Malone has suggested that "there is no such thing as 'Appalachian music.'" Some might argue that this is also true of the "Appalachian" dances; these folk traditions likewise were not unique to the mountains but at one time could be found throughout the South. The relative isolation of the mountains, however, slowed the onslaught of

> the modern world, allowing these traditions to survive longer there, long enough to be discovered by outsiders in the early twentieth century and to be labeled "Appalachian." (2015, p. 5)

Appalachian traditions such as dance, song, music, storytelling, drama, and crafts are passed down from generation to generation through the active participation of community members across the lifespan. According to Connor (2000), the differentiation between folk dance and other styles of movement lies in the purpose of the activity. While there are relatively fixed patterns to traditional folk dance, variations in style emerge secondary to both regional preferences and the reason for performance - whether for an audience or for social interaction. Connor states that "while much of folk dance is traditional, it is also living cultural behavior, with a character that reflects people and their world" (2000, p. 75). As a living cultural behavior, folk dance is subject to the intergenerational cultural transmission carried out by its community. Corsaro (as cited in Trommsdorff, 2009), elaborates:

> Continuity and change of cultures over generations are affected by cultural transmission. The intergenerational transmission of culture refers to the way values, knowledge, and practices that are prevalent in one generation are transferred to the next generation. Cultural transmission, thus, is seen as a process by which the reproduction of culture occurs in each successive generation (Corsaro, 1997). (p.126)

This process of the transmission of beliefs, behaviors, and history occurs on multiple planes between generations and across population sizes ranging from individuals to communities (McMahon, 2018). Cultural transmission can be classified into three

different categories depending on the interaction between generations: vertical, horizontal, and oblique transmission. Vertical transmission occurs as cultural information is passed down between relatives of different generations, such as directly from parents to their children. Horizontal transmission occurs between members of the same generation, such as between peers. Oblique transmission occurs between people of different generations who are not related, such as between a child and their parent's peer (McMahon, 2018; Trommsdorff, 2009). While psychologists tend to focus on intergenerational transmission among family members (Trommsdorff, 2009), it is not uncommon to see a high number of incidences of horizontal and oblique transmission within the folk dance community at large, as intergenerational transmission can be based on "different cohorts who share the same historical and socialization background" (Trommsdorff, 2009). Furthermore, although transmission is typically assumed to occur from older to younger generations, studies have identified bidirectional effects, likening the process of influence to a transmission belt. This bidirectionality creates an environment where children actively participate in the transmission process as they interpret, evaluate, either accept or reject their parents' message, possibly conform and internalize the message, and then exhibit behavior influencing the parent-child interaction (Trommsdorff, 2009).

Relevance to Occupational Science

Meaning in Occupation

While there is a lack of consistency regarding the definition of occupation within the discipline (Hasselkus, 2011), it can primarily be described as *doing*, with Hocking and Wilcock (as cited in Ellerin, 2015) describing occupational science as the study of "what people do" (p. 403). According to Trombly (as cited in Ellerin, 2015), this doing, or occupation, involves engaging in purposeful and meaningful activity. Meaning is inherently personal, as it exists only as a construct of a person's unique experience and perception - a product of their efforts to make sense of their experiences. Thus, it is through doing that meaning is realized (Hasselkus, 2011). Ellerin (2015) offers another explanation of the nature of meaning:

> Meaning is not something that can be found in the open; it is expressed indirectly through actions, words, or other kinds of human productions and, as a consequence, the meaning of human occupation needs to be interpreted to enhance our understanding (Borell, Nygard, Asaba, Gustavsson, & Hemmingson, 2014, p. 84). (p. 403)

The discipline relies heavily upon *doing* as the definition of occupation (Hasselkus, 2011). However, Wilcock (1998) explains that while *doing* is an attractive definition for occupation because it is readily digested, it is not inclusive to all concepts of occupation. Thus, she prompted discussion of occupation as "a synthesis of doing, being, and becoming" (p.249). Later, Hammell (as cited in Hasselkus, 2011), expanded upon this conceptualization of occupation by including *belonging* as one of these themes,

each a dimension of meaning in daily occupations - *doing, being, becoming, and belonging*. Christiansen and Baum (as cited in Wilcock, 1998) suggest occupation is defined by something beyond the active process of doing, and Wilcock agrees: "I think what is beyond the process is, at least partly, about self, which brings us to the notion of being" (1998, p. 250). Stone (2005), argues that being is an occupation in its own right:

> If occupational science is to develop an understanding of "all dimensions and levels of functioning of people, namely the fullness of the spectrum of life," then occupation must be understood broadly to include activities that do not require active engagement with the environment (p.23)

Occupation is way for one to know oneself and to develop and express personal identity, both of which are closely related to being (Hasselkus, 2011). Beyond being, becoming involves potential, growth, transformation, and self-actualization (Wilcock, 1998). Belonging has been proposed as a basic human right that includes, according to Rebeiro et al. (as cited in Hasselkus, 2011), "the need for a place that is physically and emotionally safe, provides both private and community spaces, meets social needs, and helps to form a group identity" (p. 32).

Occupation vs. Activity

Individual perception and experience is what separates occupation from activity. Pierce (2001), defines occupation as "a specific individual's personally constructed, nonrepeatable experience," one that is "a subjective event in perceived temporal, spatial, and sociocultural conditions that are unique to that one-time occurrence" (p.139). Activity, on the other hand, is defined as "an idea held in the minds of persons in their

shared cultural language" (Pierce, 2001, p. 139). As an activity, dance is a generalized class of actions that is conjured up in the mind as a reference - a shared understanding with cultural meaning (Pierce, 2001, p. 139). Multiple individuals across a shared culture may have an idea in their minds of what dance *is*, but until they participate in their own subjective experiences of dance within a unique, non-repeatable temporal, spatial, and sociocultural context, dance does not become an occupation for them (Pierce, 2001). For example, in the folk dance community there is an activity called *parlor*, where dancing ceases and the group gathers together to share song, storytelling, drama, and music. Every member of the dance community knows and defines parlor by this general class of actions - as an activity. However, as an occupation, parlor is a unique, nonrepeatable, subjective experience that is different for each individual, each time it occurs. Although one can expect song or storytelling or music at each parlor event, each event is experienced and perceived completely differently - no two parlor programs are alike, and no two individuals within the same program experience and perceive it alike. The songs, stories, and music are different every time. Sometimes parlor is in the morning and sometimes it is in the evening. The individuals are different every time, too, depending perhaps on their mood, level of engagement, level of fatigue from dancing, with whom they are sitting, or where they are sitting - on the floor or in a chair. All of these factors combine to create the experience of a unique, non-repeatable occupation out of a collection of activities. Thus, occupation is in the doing.

Co-Occupation

Although this doing exists as an individual's unique experience, individual experiences can be highly interactive with one another, as Pierce (2003) explains through the concept of co-occupation:

> All occupations fall somewhere on a continuum of social involvement from completely interactive to solitary. Co-occupations are the most highly interactive types of occupation, in which the occupational experiences of the individuals involved simply could not occur without the interactive responses of the other person or persons with whom the occupations are being experienced.... They are a synchronous back and forth between the occupational experiences of the individuals involved, the action of one shaping the action of the other in a close match. (p.199)

The social styles of occupation fall on a continuum of inter-relatedness that includes solo-occupation, parallel-occupation, group occupation, and co-occupation (Pizur-Barnekow & Pickens, 2009; Pierce, 2009; Lavalley, 2017). Pizur-Barnekow and Pickens (2009) assert that in addition to shared experience, shared meaning is an essential element to co-occupation. They emphasize that this shared meaning is created by the interaction itself, and examine three aspects of co-occupation that are shared within the interaction: *shared physicality*, *shared emotionality*, and *shared intentionality* (Pizur-Barnekow & Pickens, 2009). Shared physicality occurs when two or more people engage in shared motor behavior that directly affects one anther; shared emotionality occurs when individuals are reciprocally responsive to one another's emotional tones; and shared intentionality occurs when people have mutually established goals and understand each other's role and

purpose when engaging in co-occupation to reach those goals (Pizur-Barnekow & Pickens, 2009). The aspects of shared physicality, shared emotionality, and shared intentionality allow for fluidity between co-occupation and occupation, with co-occupational performance frequently emerging from occupational performance. Pizur-Bernekow & Pickens (2009) explain that this occurs "when individuals share aspects of the occupation and are mutually responsive to each other" (p.152).

Occupational Justice

Occupational justice concerns itself with how people's wellbeing is affected by harmful social conditions that restrict their ability to do and be (Hocking, 2017). It is founded upon the ideas that humans are inherently occupational beings and that their occupations, which occur in unique contexts, affect their health and wellbeing (Hocking, 2017; Pierce, 2001). Occupational injustices can be barriers to an individual's need for belonging (Hasselkus, 2011). According to Townsend and Wilcock (as cited in Hasselkus, 2011) occupational injustices include "prolonged experiences of disconnectedness and isolation, limited choices in occupation due to disability and stereotyping, exclusion from mainstream life, and lack of opportunity for everyday choices and decision making" (p. 32). Hocking (2017) discuss how both occupational justice and social justice examine human rights issues, and how an occupational justice perspective could be instrumental in the realization of social justice by assisting with determining priorities for change. Shifting the focus of study from participation in society to participation in occupations allows for the identification of specific barriers to human fulfillment and wellbeing. Furthermore, illuminating these injustices in the concrete terms

of occupation makes their conceptualization more accessible to the masses, because "occupation is the stuff of people's everyday lives" (Hocking, 2017, p. 40). By understanding the occupational injustices that are occurring, the social conditions that induce them can be more readily identified and changed (Hocking, 2017).

Transactional Perspective of Occupation

Lavalley (2017) discusses how occupations are examined at the community level through the lens of the transactional perspective, conceptualized by philosopher John Dewey, which informs the situational and social emergence of occupation. The transactional perspective explores the complexity of occupation, in that it is influenced by an array of elements that interact at multiple levels. Lavalley focuses on the interaction of multiple contextual elements along the social continuum, deconstructing the false dichotomy of individual and community occupational context (2017). He explains:

> In pursuit of this endeavor, Ramugondo and Kronenberg (2015) suggested the African ethic of *Ubuntu*, which asserts the individual and community are integrally connected and co-constitutive, as a starting point for this conceptualization. Ubuntu stresses that "the community is not something 'outside,' some static entity that stands against individuals," but that "in a dynamic process the individual and community are always in the process of coming into being" (Cornell & Marle, as cited by Ramugondo & Kronenberg, 2015, p. 10). The community and individual unceasingly influence one another, which led Ramugondo and Kronenberg to highlight "the moral obligation for

> individuals and collectives to regularly ask of themselves, 'How well are we doing together?'" (p. 10). (p. 458-459)

Lavalley's understanding of the transactional perspective is that it does not renounce the individual experience, but recognizes the individual experience cannot be severed from its socially embedded context (2017). Consequently, the interplay of individual and community experiences and contexts ushers occupation to into being as a complex cultural phenomenon (Lavalley, 2017, p. 461). Thus, the transactional perspective contributes to the examination of occupational justice issues by transcending the discipline's traditional focus on the individual through an exploration of the interconnectedness and co-influence of the individual and the social systems that constitute a community (Lavalley, 2017).

Folk Dance in Occupational Science

Borges da Costa and Snape (2015) examined the meaning attributed to circle dance - a staple of folk dance, found in many cultures around the world - and its contribution to occupational well-being. The study highlighted the potential contribution of circle dance to a healthy lifestyle and development of one's potential, finding support for efficacy of circle dance in facilitating the interplay of the elements of doing, being, belonging, and becoming. In their study on the experience and meaning of circle dance, Borges da Costa and Cox (2016) found that "meanings were gained through the experiential nature of circle dance, which influenced their sense of well-being and promoted the quality of their experience" (p. 205). Borges da Costa and Cox found that the participants experienced meaning and satisfaction through engagement in circle

dance, and that it for them it provided opportunities for *self-investment*, *self-development*, *feeling transformed*, and *feeling transported* (2016). In addition to research on the therapeutic aspects of folk dance, further research is needed on the meaning, purpose, and value attributed to engagement in folk dancing, and in a diverse selection of cultures and communities.

While there is a support for the physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional benefits of dance as an occupation (Oliver & Hearn, 2008; Connor, 2000; Roberson & Pelclova, 2014; Silva et al., 2016), little research has been carried out on folk dance, in particular, as a treatment modality within occupational therapy practice. Borges da Costa (2012) proclaims there is a need for research addressing the therapeutic application of folk dance within the context of occupational therapy, including a more developed understanding of perceived meanings attributed to it. Some headway has been made on research in both arenas, but it is still in its infancy.

Benefits of Folk Dance to Health and Well-being

Recreational folk dance can be a meaningful and purposeful activity for all generations. Oliver and Hearn (2008) recognize dance as both a physical and social activity that is intergenerational and can be initiated at any stage of life, as "it is never too soon or too late to start dancing" (p. 6). Dance can be a tool in promoting motor, cognitive, and social-emotional development in children. According to Mitchell (as cited in Oliver & Hearn, 2008, p. 6), studies show that physical activity is important to children's cognitive development. For example, "When children create dances together,

they participate in decision-making and learn cooperation. They learn how to observe and develop into informed creators, participants, and spectators," (Oliver & Hearn, 2008, p. 6). Dance also builds children's confidence (Oliver & Hearn, 2008, p. 6). In the teenage years, dance can be an important social aspect of life as well as a venue for learning about different cultures (Oliver & Hearn, 2008, p. 6).

In adults and older adults, dance can be a social occupation that also has physical and mental health benefits. Dance can provide a disguised form of exercise that makes it easier for individuals to make it a regular exercise activity in their schedules (Connor, 2000). Connor (2000) studied the use of a folk dance program as a form of gentle exercise for women aged 50-80 years, where gentle exercise is defined as exercise that does have too many parts, not too much impact on the joints, but exercising a wide variety of muscle groups - which can be increased in complexity as the participants progress in ability. "Dancing can be an activity to reduce stress and promote relaxation. Formal relaxation exercises need not be the only means of inducing relaxation. Rhythmic activity, such as jogging or dancing, provides tension release" (Connor, 2000, p. 74). Dance can also be inclusive toward individuals who use crutches or wheelchairs (Oliver & Hearn, 2008, p. 70), or those who benefit from less-fatiguing "sit dances" that are carried out in chairs (Connor, 2000, p. 70).

Dance has social benefits for the aging population. A study by Roberson and Pelclova (2014), found that social dance helps to reverse some of the negative images associated with ageing. "Specifically, social dance helps older adults to rearrange preconceived notions of ageing by being active, doing what they did when they were younger, meeting people during a social occasion, and touching others" (p. 134-

135). Silva et al. (2016) found that dancing was able to positively influence the self-esteem, self-image, and self-efficacy of its elderly participants.

Dance also has cognitive benefits for the aging population. As part of the treatment for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, the Alzheimer's Association suggests the use of cognitive stimulation therapy, which includes "art and other expressive recreational or social therapies, exercise, and dance" (as cited in Oliver & Hearn, 2008, p. 8).

Relevance to Occupational Therapy History

Folk dance and associated arts and crafts provide for occupational opportunities that are tied to both the history of Occupational Therapy and its current presence and agenda. The profession emerged in the wake of World War I, when civilian women working as reconstruction aides began providing therapy to war-injured troops (Low, 1992, p. 38). Their use of various forms of hand crafts such as basketry, weaving, and simple wood carving demonstrated the concept of activity as therapy, which historians credit with the beginnings of the development of the profession (Low, 1992, p. 38, 39). The United States was in the midst of the arts and crafts movement, which, at its core, valued and strived for meaning in life (Levine, 1987, p. 249). Schemm (1994) explains: "The arts and crafts ideology, reflecting the compelling force of intrinsic creation, was combined with a therapeutic process (occupational therapy) that was developed to make persons with disabilities and idle persons productive" (p. 1082). While the arts and crafts movement and work of the reconstruction aides strongly influenced the beginnings of

occupational therapy, early occupational therapists understood the need to develop a more scientific and therapeutic focus in order to advance the efficacy and legitimacy of the profession (Schemm, 1994, p. 1082). Still, occupational therapy remained committed to the humanistic ideals upon which it was founded by promoting well-being, independence, and optimal quality of life through occupation (Reitz, 1992, p. 50). In the 1960s, the profession experienced a resurgence in its role in preventative health, and by 1978 the American Occupational Therapy Association had adopted the World Health Organization's definition of health, that "health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmary." Furthermore, AOTA's "The Philosophical Base of Occupational Therapy" included the statements "Human beings are able to influence their physical and mental health and their social and physical environment through purposeful activity" and "Occupational therapy is based on the belief that purposeful activity (occupation) may be used to prevent and mediate dysfunction" (as cited in Reitz, 1992, p. 52). Occupational therapy's commitment to preventative health and well-being has potential to be realized through recreational folk dance, in addition to other folk arts and crafts, as a meaningful and purposeful activity in which generations can participate throughout the lifespan.

Author's Note

Throughout the course of this article, the community under study will be referred to as "the *dance* community." However, its traditions encompass all of the folk arts, which include music, song, storytelling, crafts, and dramatic performance. For the

purpose of this study's examination of this particular community, dance is oriented at the core of social participation. However, the other folk arts are not merely satellites to dance. Rather, each represent a facet of an interconnected and interdependent network of arts and artists that inform each other and the Appalachian folk tradition as a whole. Thus, many "dancers" also identify as musicians or storytellers or craftspeople.

Furthermore, this dance community is unique in that its members participate in several different types of folk dance styles. These styles include, but are not limited to, English country dance, American contra dance, Danish folk dance, Irish set dance, English Morris dance, Appalachian folk dance, and early American colonial dance. However, only two of these dance styles are discussed extensively by the participants - English country dance and American contra dance, which are examined with a focus on their relational elements.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH

Introduction

Across the Appalachian region of the United States there is a network of communities whose active participation in its cultural traditions serves to preserve their heritage for generations to come. Aside from being a geographical region, Jamison (2015) explains that Appalachia is also defined as “a cultural region with its own unique customs and traditions” (p. 1). Appalachian traditions such as folk dance, song, music, storytelling, and crafts are passed down from generation to generation through the active participation of community members across the lifespan. According to Connor (2000), the differentiation between folk dance and other styles of movement lies in the purpose of the activity. While there are relatively fixed patterns to traditional folk dance, variations in style emerge secondary to both regional preferences and the reason for performance - whether for an audience or for social interaction. Connor (2000) stated that “while much of folk dance is traditional, it is also living cultural behavior, with a character that reflects people and their world” (p. 75). In this research study, the people and their world under study is a folk dance community located in the western foothills of central Appalachia.

This dance community is unique in that its members participate in several different types of folk dance styles. These styles include, but are not limited to, English country dance, American contra dance, Danish folk dance, Irish set dance, English Morris dance,

Appalachian folk dance, and early American colonial dance. However, the dance styles discussed heavily in this study are English country dancing and American contra dancing. For the purposes of this study, it is important to note the relational differences between the two styles. In contra dancing, although two dancers maintain a partnership throughout the course of an entire dance, it is typical for one to spend as much - or, perhaps, more - time interacting with individuals outside this partnership. This cyclic interchange of partners is the product of a couple's progression up and down the contra line. In English dancing, however, the two dancers in a partnership spend significantly more time interacting with one another, a condition made possible by their belonging to set of couples that is limited in its number, with whom the entirety of the dance is spent.

Co-Occupation

The examination of the relational differences between dances styles underscores the significance of interpersonal interaction as a fundamental component of folk dance within this community. Appalachian folk dance is a highly interactive occupation, as its existence is dependent upon collective participation. Although *doing* exists as an individual's unique experience, individual experiences can be highly interactive with one another, as Pierce (2003) explains through the concept of co-occupation:

> All occupations fall somewhere on a continuum of social involvement from completely interactive to solitary. Co-occupations are the most highly interactive types of occupation, in which the occupational experiences of the individuals involved simply could not occur without the interactive responses of the other person or persons with whom the occupations are being experienced.... They are

> a synchronous back and forth between the occupational experiences of the individuals involved, the action of one shaping the action of the other in a close match. (p. 199)

The social styles of occupation fall on a continuum of inter-relatedness that includes solo occupation, parallel occupation, group occupation, and co-occupation (Pizur-Barnekow & Pickens, 2009; Pierce, 2009; Lavalley, 2017). Pizur-Barnekow and Pickens (2009) assert that in addition to shared experience, shared meaning is an essential element to co-occupation. They emphasize that this meaning is created by the interaction itself, and offer three aspects of co-occupation within the interaction: *shared physicality*, *shared emotionality*, and *shared intentionality* (Pizur-Barnekow & Pickens, 2009). These aspects allow for fluidity between co-occupation and occupation, with co-occupational performance frequently emerging from occupational performance. Pizur-Bernekow & Pickens (2009) explain that this occurs "when individuals share aspects of the occupation and are mutually responsive to each other" (p.152). Folk dancing is inherently a co-occupation. The nature of the physical, goal-oriented partnership between dancers results in a feedback exchange that informs both immediate and future execution for all parties. In solo performance, too, co-occupation occurs as the performer and the audience engage in a mutually responsive, non-repeatable experience.

Transactional Perspective

Just as the mutual responsiveness of co-occupation travels the social continuum, so, too, does the contextual experiences of the participants. Lavalley (2017) discusses how occupations are examined at the community level through the lens of the transactional

perspective, conceptualized by philosopher John Dewey, which informs the situational and social emergence of occupation. The transactional perspective explores the complexity of occupation, in that it is influenced by an array of elements that interact at multiple levels. Lavalley focuses on the interaction of multiple contextual elements along the social continuum, deconstructing the false dichotomy of individual and community occupational context (2017). Lavalley's understanding of the transactional perspective is that it does not renounce the individual experience, but recognizes the individual experience cannot be severed from its socially embedded context (2017). Consequently, the interplay of individual and community experiences and contexts ushers occupation into being as a complex cultural phenomenon (Lavalley, 2017). Thus, the transactional perspective serves this study through its exploration of the interconnectedness and co-influence of the individual and the social systems that constitute a community (Lavalley, 2017).

Folk Dance in Occupational Science

Borges da Costa and Snape (2015) examined the meaning attributed to circle dance - a derivative of folk dance found in many cultures around the world - and its contribution to occupational well-being. Their findings supported its efficacy in facilitating the interplay of the elements of doing, being, belonging, and becoming, in addition to its potential contribution to a healthy lifestyle and development of one's potential. In their study on the experience and meaning of circle dance, Borges da Costa and Cox (2016) found that "meanings were gained through the experiential nature of circle dance, which influenced their sense of well-being and promoted the quality of their experience" (p.

205). Borges da Costa and Cox found that the participants experienced meaning and satisfaction through engagement in circle dance, and that it for them it provided opportunities for *self-investment*, *self-development*, *feeling transformed*, and *feeling transported* (2016). Borges da Costa and Snape illuminated the need for research on the therapeutic aspects of folk dance, as well as studies on the meaning, purpose, and value attributed to engagement in folk dancing in a diverse selection of cultures and communities.

Methods

Purpose

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to describe the behaviors and values among members of a central Appalachian folk-dancing community.

Study Design

An ethnographic qualitative design was used in this study. According to Harris (1968), an ethnographic approach allows the researcher to examine, describe, and interpret the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, language, and interactions among members of a culture-sharing group (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethnographers study the meaning of these shared patterns, and may do so through observation of the group. This occurs most often through participant observation, a method in which the researcher participates in the lives of the group members for an extended period of time, immersing herself in the day-to-day lives of the participants

(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The participant observer is thus in a position to provide an insider account through personal experience, in addition to observation and interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). At the time of this study, the principal researcher in this study had been a member of the group under study for 12 years, supporting insight into and elaboration on behaviors, values, and language shared by the group. The principal researcher kept a reflexivity journal throughout the course of the study's development and execution. Reflexivity is a process by which the researcher remains cognizant of how his or her orientation to the study (such as background and beliefs) may inform the interpretation of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Participant Recruitment

Criteria for inclusion in the study included the participants' involvement in the community under study for at least one year, ability to communicate through spoken or written English, and age of at least 13 years. The study was approved by the institutional review board of a university in the central southeast region of the United States. Participants were recruited via a combination of convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling (Lavrakas, 2008a; Lavrakas, 2008b; Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004). Maximum variation sampling was used regarding age in an effort to broaden the range of generational perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). See Table 1 for participant demographics.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Gender	Years Involved in Community
Elizabeth	39	Female	33
Mary	63	Female	44
Jane	48	Female	48
Kitty	15	Female	15

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Prior to the interviews, written and verbal informed consent were obtained from each participant. For the minor participant, written and verbal informed consent were obtained from the minor's parent and written and verbal informed assent were obtained from the minor prior to the interview. Each participant was interviewed once, with each interview lasting 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality. The transcriptions were then analyzed using strategies outlined for qualitative data analysis by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Emergent thematic coding, beginning with in vivo coding and moving to emergent coding, was the basis for data analysis. Through in vivo coding, concepts were identified using the actual words of the participants rather than labels or terms applied by the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Emergent coding makes use of concepts, actions, relationships, and meanings that arise from the data themselves (Stuckey, 2015). A priori coding was used only for the codes termed *values* and *behaviors*, as these were determined prior to the outset of the analysis (Stuckey, 2015). Codes were analyzed and categories were formed. From these categories, themes emerged. Cross-case analysis was carried out after codes and themes were established in order to deepen understanding and explanation and to increase

generalizability of the findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). This process entailed examination of individual themes as they were examined across all cases, resulting in a comparative analysis of the sets of data for similarities and differences (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Participant validation was conducted in order to check the reliability/trustworthiness of the conclusions drawn from the data (Birt et al., 2016).

In addition to having been a member of this community for 12 years at the time of the study, the principal researcher attended two multi-generational community dances as a participant observer during the study. As a participant observer, the principal researcher was able to provide context, insight, elaboration, and perspective to interview data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Findings

From the data, two themes emerged regarding values held by the community: *Hospitality* and *Human Connection*. The findings are supported by interview excerpts.

Hospitality

Participant interviews elicited accounts of values and supporting behaviors indicating that a core value of the community was hospitality. Two supporting themes for hospitality were revealed through the data: *Acceptance and Inclusion* and *Making People Feel Comfortable*. The cross-case analyses of supporting themes for hospitality are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Hospitality: Cross-Case Analyses of Supporting Themes

Participant	Acceptance and Inclusion	Making People Feel Comfortable
Elizabeth	Blindness; LGBTQ+	Acceptance of mistakes; anti-rejection; building trust and support; value bringing people into the community; teaching someone where they are
Mary	Wheelchair user; Age	Valuing people; asking people to dance; taking people for what they are
Jane	ADHD; Autism	Asking people to dance; making people feel valued
Kitty	Ethnicity; Outsiders	Holding hands; Accepting invitation to dance

Acceptance and Inclusion

The participants indicated the community embodies the values of acceptance and inclusion in the form of welcoming and encouraging the active participation of individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities, across a broad spectrum of ages, ethnicities, and religions, as well as members of the LGBTQ+ community. Jane said, “I think that’s the best way to have a healthy community - where everybody has a place and everybody feels valued.” The community members have on more than one occasion embraced the opportunity to include dancers with physical limitations presenting obstacles to participation in dance. In one instance, Elizabeth recalled how members once guided a woman with blindness through the fast-paced and contorted figures of a contra dance. This was accomplished through the willingness of all the dancers to adapt their performance to support hers. Elizabeth said:

> I want to say she could see a shape - she could see that there was a person there but she couldn’t see anything beyond that. And [a community member] taught her what each move was and then she could contra dance because she knew there was

> someone receiving her. If she stuck out a right hand turn, she stuck out a right arm and someone would take her hand and she'd start moving.

In another account, a teenage boy made an effort to include individuals using wheelchairs in the participatory segment of his local dance group's performances in schools. Mary said:

> So [the boy] became a friend of someone in a wheelchair and so they danced together. And a couple times we went out to schools and there would be a wheelchair-bound student and he would go over and ask them - usually they said no - but sometimes they said yes, at different schools.

Mary went on to discuss how high school dancers like this boy could be counted on to work well with multiple age groups in a variety of dance settings, taking measures to include participants in whatever way possible. Mary said:

> They would just be making sure the other person was okay, whoever they were dancing with. For instance, you don't want to swing or twirl older citizens because that could get them off balance. But also, they were able to come down to the kindergarteners. I remember once when we were in England and we had this six-foot guy. We were dancing Silly Threes and we were doing the arch with kindergarteners. So he had to literally almost just lie flat to get through their little arches. But it was all about making them feel good.

The interviewees also portrayed the community as one that is accepting of those who feel as if they are outsiders or are being ostracized. Jane recalled an elementary school memory where a young boy, who she now suspects may have had either attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or autism spectrum disorder, was being ostracized during a physical education class dance lesson because no one wanted to hold his hand. Jane

stepped forward and danced with him for every turn, a behavior she attributes to her upbringing in the folk dance community. Jane said:

> And so I noticed that in elementary school, with that dance experience [in physical education class] that really didn't...it wasn't related to the awesome intergenerational dance community that we have, but because of that awesome community, I was the kid who didn't care - who could be welcoming and safe for this kid that got ostracized by everybody else.

In the same vein, individuals in the LGBTQ+ community, who may also be likely to experience forms of ostracism or feelings of otherness in society at large, are welcome participants in a community that is attempting to address the sense of isolation they may be experiencing. Although it is not uncommon to see women dancing men's parts and vice versa, these dances are historically called as such - with gendered roles within each couple. Recently, callers have been taking measures to shift the language of instruction toward inclusivity, resulting in non-gendered dances. Elizabeth gave an example: "And so, [callers are] trying to call dances in ways that, instead of the male and female role - gents and ladies - you would have a 'lead' and a 'follow.'"

Fellow minority members and potential members of the dance community also include those of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, religions, and countries of origin. Kitty recounted an experience with a friend of hers whom she suggested join the local college's Appalachian folk dance group. Her friend was skeptical of what they would think of a tall Hispanic girl in the group, but Kitty explained:

> That's not the point. Anybody can join. Anybody can dance. You don't have to look a certain way or be a certain way - you can just dance. If somebody, you

know, doesn't really feel like they can belong in a place, the dance community is actually really accepting when it comes to that. It's great.

The contents of this exchange suggest the community is welcoming to anybody who wants to dance, with a love of dance being the common denominator among its members. This unifying factor is enhanced by a willingness to modify and adapt long-held practices in order to promote inclusion and allow participants to feel safe, respected, and loved.

Making People Feel Comfortable

Acts of acceptance and inclusion are supported by strong values around bringing people into the community. Its realization requires a commitment to practices that allow people to feel comfortable in a transparent learning environment. These practices are driven by person-centered values that include the acceptance of mistakes, invitation to dance, building trust and support, taking people for what they are, and teaching them where they are. Mary said, "I guess my first thought would be just valuing people - taking them for what they are and just trying to make them comfortable so they can enjoy whatever is happening."

Ensuring everyone feels valued is facilitated by perhaps the most fundamental social rule within the folk dance community - if one receives an invitation to dance, it must not be declined. The custom serves a dual purpose, both eliminating the possibility of rejection and stimulating participation by keeping dancers - old and new, experienced and inexperienced - in circulation on the dance floor. Elizabeth said, "If someone asks you to dance, you can't say no. And so you don't have the opportunity to reject someone who comes to you. And I think that's a really important value." Kitty said:

> You don’t have to just be best friends with somebody. I have danced with people that I have no idea who they are and it’s kind of sad, but it’s a really good point. You need to show up, but it doesn’t have to be somebody that you know personally. It’s like, ‘Ooh, that’s a really cool person,’ and they just ask you to dance and you’re like, ‘Yeah, sure.’ I do kind of appreciate and also hate the rule that you can’t really say no if somebody asks you to dance because you learn a lot just dancing with more people. And I also think it’s important.

This practice affords the learner ready exposure to a variety of dance styles and teachers. A teacher can be anyone who provides guidance and support, whether it be functional or emotional. Elizabeth explained, “There’s a lot of focus on support and focus on helping those that don’t know what they’re doing or feel insecure - helping them feel comfortable. Some building trust and building support for people that are new.”

Recall Elizabeth’s anecdote on the dancer with blindness, where the woman trusted that her partners would be receiving her as she moved through the figures of the dance. While this illustrates a functional level of support, social support also comes in the form of acceptance of mistakes. This is especially important when one is dancing within a set - a micro-community that relies on each of its constituents to work together to see the dance through to completion. Elizabeth elaborates,

> [The caller of the dance] commented on how we were dancing the set, and things fell apart briefly, and we just kept dancing. And she said “That is so valuable. That thing that you did - you just kept going.” So, it’s the sort of acceptance of mistakes and if you’re going to make it work you have to keep going. There’s no way to stop and re-sort things.

The ability to accept both one's partners' and one's own mistakes on the dance floor gives the dance community as a whole the ability to take someone for who and what they are and teach them "where they are at." Elizabeth's experience guiding the dancer with blindness can be reflected upon through this lens. "It was amazing. And it was learning how to teach someone where they're at. And for that, verbal and physical cues were important as opposed to visual cues," she said. The behaviors and values, such as teaching someone where they are at, that contribute to the success of the micro-community of a dance set have effects that radiate out into the community that contains it, making them building blocks for human connection.

Human Connection

Two supporting themes emerged under the umbrella of human connection: *Building Relationships* and *Connecting across Boundaries*. The cross-case analyses of supporting themes for human connection are presented in Table 3.

Building Relationships

The findings suggest that folk dance is the means for interactions that initiate relationships, that it is the foundation for a relationship-oriented value system and promotes a sense of family within the community. The dance itself serves as a foundation upon which relationships can be formed. This can occur between individual couples or within the larger group dynamic that exists in a dance. Elizabeth explained, "You can't back out once you're a part of this little community of people. You are, sort of, wedded to them to get through the square dance, or you're wedded to them to make it to the

Table 3. Human Connection: Cross-Case Analyses of Supporting Themes

Name	Building Relationships	Connecting across Boundaries
Elizabeth	Homestays; relationship-oriented rather than financially-oriented value system; establish relationships through socially required acceptance of invitation to dance; eye contact	Offers a way for different generations to connect
Mary	Homestays; Intercultural relationships; breaking stereotypes	Instrumental in dissolving cultural boundaries with other communities
Jane	Establishes connection in a natural way; Allows for emotional and physical human interaction on an even and wholesome level; English dancing is very relational due to increased eye contact	Dance is something to agree on; folk dance crosses any number of boundaries
Kitty	Dance allows you to relate to others; Foundation for friendships; Community is like a family	Anybody can dance

end." English country dancing is one such type of dancing in which it is typical for individual dancers to take hands as partners and in turn take hands with other couples to form a *set*, with whom they spend the entirety of the dance. Jane said:

> I love to contra dance – but in English dance it matters more who your partner is because you have to relate to them so much and you're supposed to have eye contact with them so much. I can go to a contra dance and never really make eye contact with anybody unless there happens to be a gypsy [face-to-face dance move] in the dance, and then it's like you have to make eye contact. But its inherent in English country dance. So, in contra dancing it's important that there are other people there, but it doesn't matter as much who they are. And there's less face-to-face time and more just group mob time, where everybody's moving

> together but it's not as relational. Tons of fun. Really fast. Lots of individual expression. But it's not as relational.

With fewer people in each set, English dancing allows participants to spend more time with each other, providing the opportunity to forge deeper relationships than does contra.

Regardless the type of dancing, there are many opportunities to develop connections through nonverbal communication. Elizabeth said, "Bonnie Cuckoo, which is essentially a modern English dance, and I identified as one of my favorite dances – it's so romantic. It's just, it has this great swell and this, you know, eye contact. A very lovely piece." Elizabeth's description of *Bonnie Cuckoo* illustrates how eye contact is a factor central to the relational experience of a dance, and aids in the development of subsequent experiences and relationships. She said:

> And that is a really fascinating thing that people that are not a part of this community can have a very hard time with because they're suddenly having to interact on a very intimate level - we are required to look at our partners. You start to be able to look someone in the eye who you might not know or you might not trust, but you establish a relationship with them.

The act of acknowledging another's presence via eye contact also plays a functional role, enhancing a dancer's ability to lead or follow. Elizabeth said:

> It's a lot of eye contact to direct you to where you are going. And then its physical, so you are taking somebody's hand and pulling them in a direction. But you can't be assertive, you can't be too aggressive, but you have to be firm to help someone get to where they are going.

Physical interaction has a clear functional purpose in enabling dance, but it, too, serves as a platform for relational and emotional connection. Jane described how the simple act of holding hands in a dance establishes a physical connection between dancers, paving the way for an emotional connection:

> It's just part of what you do in the dance, and then it establishes some connection between people that becomes really important in a very natural way that allows for some emotional and physical human interaction on a real even and wholesome level that then spills over into other aspects of life and then makes people nicer and more social.

One such aspect of life includes the community-oriented practice of keeping guests. It is a common occurrence in the community for members to host fellow dancers as guests in their homes if they need overnight accommodations. Elizabeth discussed how she hosts fellow dancers and musicians who come to town, and how that generosity extends to people who are not part of her local dance community, but belong to other communities in which Elizabeth is involved. She said:

> So, in my home I have a guest room that has had revolving numbers of musicians and dancers and college students. And I had a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals student that was with me this past summer. And as I'm not intending to make any money out of this process – it's just a matter of, like, people need a place to be and I have a place for them to be, and so there's a sense of community in that way.

This value system regarding hosting guests extends outside of this specific community, as it is a value that many dance communities have in common, even internationally. When a

dance troupe is on an international tour, it is customary for the local dance communities to host the traveling dancers in *homestays*, a practice that fosters cross-cultural relationship building. Mary said:

> When we went [to Denmark] – [my husband] and I – we stayed with this couple that were teachers. They had four kids. And we sat around the breakfast table for three hours one morning. And we were just talking about education, because [my husband] and I both taught, and... about the differences and everything. And then, toward the end of the three hours, the couple laughed and one of them said "Should we say anything?" And the other one said "Yeah, go ahead." And said that, well, they didn't know if they wanted to host Americans because they heard so much [negativity] about Americans. And we laughed. We said "Well, you probably hear about [only a small percentage] of the population. You probably hear about what is on the news. That's the thing, 98 percent of us - that's not us. Because of those kids, we've got to travel. You know. And the teacher in me has loved seeing those little things that I told you about. That they discovered, "Woah," you know, "they are like me, even though they've lived on the other side of the world."

The practice of participating in homestays and developing cross-cultural relationships illustrates the intrinsic value the members of this community place upon building relationships, skills, and experiences, as opposed to financial gain. Elizabeth described a situation where she was welcomed as a tenant in the home of fellow dancers for a few months, where she was asked for guitar lessons in lieu of rent money. She said, "It was an interesting reality that your value system comes from the folk community. And the value

system is different - it's not financial, it's relationship-oriented." Mary, too, described experiences that reflect the practices of a relationship-oriented value system:

> Because of dance and the exchanges, we've opened our home to... now it's been 27 different countries. You know, you go to these places, you have all these people staying with you. And I know that [my children] have said it wasn't until they were in college that they really didn't appreciate the kind of upbringing that they had. And that's one reason we stayed in [this community]. We could have both gotten higher paying jobs other places, but [this community] is a family. And even though it was a small town, it has had so much more opportunity.

Mary's sentiment regarding the sense of family within the community was echoed by Kitty:

> I do think that in the dance community it's more like a family kind of thing. Everybody knows everybody at this point. And the [annual dance festival] - it is kind of like a family because you have the people that return and it's really fun to see them and sometimes you don't - you wouldn't see them without that. I guess over the years I've kind of realized it's more like a big, giant family that just gets together and dances.

This sense of community and family allows its members to be there for one another and look out for one another. Jane said:

> You can't [do dances] by yourself and you can't do them with just one other person. So, it has to be a community and it helps to build community and I think that there is a case for why that would make us more emotionally healthy and mentally stable. It allows us an opportunity to know each other, so that when somebody is off we'd probably notice.

Human connection is a value this community holds that is facilitated by the act of dancing and is further developed through opportunities the community creates off the dance floor. In addition to simply providing an opportunity for people who already have commonalities connect with one another, recreational folk dance creates an environment that supports connection where there many be any number of boundaries.

Connecting across Boundaries

As an occupation, dance serves as a tool to bring people together across multiple boundaries. One such boundary is age. Outside of the dance community, it is not typically common to participate in activities or occupations that facilitate such intimate interaction between multiple generations. Folk dance, however, is an intergenerational occupation in which dancers can participate across the lifespan. Thus, it provides an opportunity for people of different generations to interact by serving as both a point of access and as a tool for that interaction. Jane said:

> I feel like in a situation like we have in the dance community, we don't have to go seek out an opportunity to find a grandparent. They're there automatically. We know each other in a really natural, organic kind of way. And we know that we care about each other, and it can go both directions.

Elizabeth said:

> Growing up in this community, I never really thought of it as something that was out of the norm, but we would go to English dancing on Friday nights and there would be someone in their eighties and someone from college, and it was just everyone enjoyed dancing and that's what you did.

Once again, the love of dance surfaces as a unifying factor, a bridge that transcends multiple boundaries that tend to separate both individuals and communities. Beyond providing access, Elizabeth discussed *how* dance brings different generations together, broaching a stereotypical divide between older and younger people. Elizabeth explains how participating in the same experiences gives them something to talk about:

> I think that we tend to ignore different generations because we don't connect to them. We often have a different value system - we think. And so when we interact with an older generation, over time you start to see how very levelizing having the same cultural experiences is because everyone loves the same thing. And so you don't even think twice about sitting down to have dinner with a 70-year-old because you're going to have something to talk about.

As the leader of a middle and high school dance group, Mary deliberately used dance as a tool to promote interaction between her dancers and the older populations for which they would often perform. She said:

> But then when I took the group over, I guess I wanted my dancers to have more of an interaction with older residents simply because I didn't. And I just thought it would be good. And I also wanted them to not be afraid to interact. And that while it may not be in the same time period, you still face the same things. And they love seeing younger people. Well, not just dancing, but interacting with them. Because, as you know, at the end of a lot of the dancing or performances, you all would be required to go out and interact with them. So that was to build confidence. And the people were genuinely interested in you.

Kitty discussed how she feels her multigenerational dance experiences equipped her with the skills to more readily communicate with different age groups. She said, “It’s a lot easier to hold conversations with people that aren’t your same age or in the same age group.”

While fostering connections among generations is a function of folk dance, it facilitates connections across other boundaries as well. Mary said, “It’s not just generational, it’s cross-culture, it’s special needs.” Several of these boundaries have been discussed previously, and can include socioeconomic status, age, culture, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, physical or cognitive disability, and age. Regardless, dance is a means by which such boundaries can be crossed and community can be built. Jane revealed that a predecessor of the folk dance community existing today was established, in part, with the express purpose of building community. She discussed how a local college developed a country dance program with the intention of using it to bring people together. She explained:

> It was during the cooperative recreation movement. People - our society - were wise enough to know that it needed some tools to help people be together. In the 20s, at a time when there was a large separation between rich and poor, there was just a lot of social change happening and separation between rural and urban - things that we hadn’t experienced as much of before. Folk dance was one of those ways that communities could come together and do something across any number of boundaries.

Jane elaborated that teaching people how to dance seemed to be the best way to get communities doing other things together as well. It was realized that once communities were brought together by dance, they were inspired and enabled to create other ways to

be together as well. Whether that way to be together was by hosting a visiting group or sharing a meal at a potluck, the intent was the same - to continue nurturing fellowship and community. By participating in an occupation where everyone involved has the common goal of dancing, people are enabled to put aside their differences - whatever those may be - to simply do and be. Jane said:

> So [my uncle] used to say dancing - country dancing - was his way to help establish world peace. That when you have danced together, you're a lot less likely to drop a bomb on each other. And I feel like that can be simplified right down to the community level, where the people that you dance with, whether you agree with them on any other thing - I can think of people in the dance community that probably dance is the only thing we agree on - but I would help them if they needed help and I know that that's reciprocal.

The power of dance in helping people connect across boundaries is evident within the goings-on during a yearly, week-long folk dance camp held in this community. While this event is historically oriented around the Christmas holiday and Appalachian tradition, it fosters a community-wide embrace of a diverse range of religious and cultural experiences that include menorah lighting and associated prayer, Japanese temari craft, Bollywood-style dancing, African American song and storytelling, and international homestays. In a community enriched by diversity, folk dance is a universal language and connector for all.

Discussion

Analysis

This ethnographic study describes the behaviors and values among the members of a central Appalachian folk-dancing community. Two themes emerged regarding values held by the community: *Hospitality* and *Human Connection*. Hospitality had the supporting themes of *Acceptance and Inclusion* and *Making People Feel Comfortable*, while Human Connection had the supporting themes of *Building Relationships* and *Connecting across Boundaries*.

The highly interactive nature of folk dance creates an experience of co-occupation for partners in a dance (Pierce, 2009). The styles of folk dance on which the participants focused during discussion - English country dance and American contra dance - rely upon a mutually responsive partnership in order to exist. These dances cannot be danced alone, and the act of dancing together provides instantaneous and interactive feedback to both partners, with the action of one shaping the action of the other (Pierce, 2009). Partners and sets in a co-occupational dance experience shared physicality and mutually established goals. Shared intentionality only exists as a constant between dancers in the form of a mutually established goal - to see the dance through to completion. Beyond the functional, however, shared intentionality among the dancers is elusive and ephemeral. Individual intentions (social interaction, physical exercise, and cultural transmission) vary, and are subject to change from moment-to-moment, secondary to the mutual responsiveness that is fundamental to co-occupation. Furthermore, if dancers are

responsive to each other's emotional tones, they may also experience shared emotionality (Pizur-Barnekow & Pickens, 2009).

Occupational justice concerns itself with how people's wellbeing is affected by harmful social conditions that restrict their ability to do and be (Hocking, 2017). It is founded upon the ideas that humans are inherently occupational beings and that their occupations, which occur in unique contexts, affect their health and well-being (Hocking, 2017; Pierce, 2001). According to Townsend and Wilcock (as cited in Hasselkus, 2011), occupational injustices include "prolonged experiences of disconnectedness and isolation, limited choices in occupation due to disability and stereotyping, exclusion from mainstream life, and lack of opportunity for everyday choices and decision making" (p. 32). By understanding the occupational injustices that are occurring, the social conditions that induce them can be more readily identified and changed (Hocking, 2017). Jane expressed the importance of the community being a place where everybody has place and feels valued, one where individuals are not ostracized. The participants' reflections upon hospitality illustrate how elements of occupational justice are woven into the social fabric of their folk dance community, where acceptance, inclusion, and making people feel comfortable are values that promote people's ability to do and be. These ideals and the practices that support them help to mitigate occupational injustices in the community at large (Townsend & Wilcock, as cited in Hasselkus, 2011).

By viewing occupation through the lens of the transactional perspective, Lavalley's (2017) examination of the social continuum deconstructs the dichotomy of individual and community. While the transactional perspective doesn't deny the individual experience, it recognizes that the individual experience cannot exist outside of its socially embedded

context. When participating in a folk dance, a dancer simultaneously experiences occupation as an individual, a partner, a part of the micro-community of the dance set, and a member of the dance community at large. The interplay of individual and community experiences and contexts ushers occupation into being as a complex cultural phenomenon (Lavalley, 2017). As an occupation that traverses the social continuum, folk dance serves as a tool for building community.

Limitations

Limitations to this study include the following: There were only four participants in this study; having a higher number of participants would increase the breadth and depth of the data, increasing trustworthiness. All of the participants in this study were female; results could be more well-rounded with multiple perspectives if males were included in the study. Although the ages of the participants varied from 15 to 63, the study would be strengthened by including participants of an even wider age range. Furthermore, the results of the study might be strengthened by including more participants who joined the community at a later age (rather than being born into the community), thereby providing them with perspective as both an outsider and a newcomer.

Recommendations for Future Research

A larger, more inclusive study on the occupation of folk dancing would provide a deeper and broader understanding of the meaning and purpose of folk dance. This

community's values regarding acceptance and inclusion also make it a good candidate for research on folk dance from the perspective of occupational justice.

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