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GIVE PEACE A DANCE:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PROJECT
ABOUT A DANCING COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO AND
THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPY

by

Isabel Martinez Mulcahy

Thesis submitted to the faculty of Columbia College Chicago in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Master of Arts in Dance/Movement Therapy & Counseling

Dance/Movement Therapy and Counseling Department

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Abstract

An ethnographic research study on the monthly gathering of a Chicagoan dancing community called Give Peace a Dance (GPD). The main goal of this study was to understand the potential therapeutic aspects of dance and creative self expression in a community setting. The ethnographic data was analyzed through the lens of Community Psychology, Chacian dance/movement therapy theory and Carl Rogers' theory of creativity. The main research question that guided the study was: How do the participants of GPD experience this event emotionally, socially and/or spiritually? At the end, community, creativity and safety were the most important factors that emerged as the healing elements of GPD. The results of this study may contribute to the development of a model for applying dance/movement therapy as community development and community activism in settings such as unsafe neighborhoods, public schools, or to support the reintegration of soldiers into society. The model may also be used by dance/movement therapists to promote a more curious, creative, collaborative, and peaceful American society that supports positive social conditions with the goal of minimizing conflict and promoting a healthier emotional integration of individuals.

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Introduction

Many cultures around the world consider community dance an integrated and essential part of life allowing individuals an opportunity to express themselves and to integrate themselves into the community. It provides individuals an opportunity to be seen and to be freely themselves through the creative expression of dance. In addition, it empowers individuals and communities and creates a sense of cohesiveness. Thus, in these societies, community dance is seen as vital to the health of the community and as a form of violence prevention. These cultures have created dance rituals that foster positive social environments, peace and healing among individuals and entire communities in the form of carnivals, celebrations, and religious ceremonies that involve dancing, drumming, and creative expression. They use dance as a tool for supporting healthier emotional integration.

In American culture, however, dance has taken on a different meaning. Most people do not think of dance as central to health. Dance has been reserved for performances, for dance classes, for nightclubs and sometimes for weddings, and is rarely considered a necessity for health or a part of community living.

There is a growing recognition of the lack of community and connectedness among people in American society and its negative effect on individuals and ultimately society in general (Putman, 2000). The preponderance of electronic social media and virtual relationships through networks such as Facebook, Twitter and others, have increased the need for embodied human social interaction. As a somatic and relational field, dance/movement therapy has a unique opportunity to reconnect American culture with the healing properties of community dance. By providing dance therapy in community settings and/or by creating intentional dance communities, dance therapy can provide individuals with an opportunity to connect in safe

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environments through the medium of dance. Native Americans understood the importance of dance, and still do, while the majority of today's Americans have lost that lesson. Dance/movement therapists have the chance to bring community dances back to America.

This, however, is not an easy task, as most of the work of dance/movement therapists is done in private clinical settings with powerful and positive results. A first good step would be to study current dancing communities. This is precisely why I decided to study a community dance celebration in Chicago called Give Peace a Dance as a model for understanding the benefits of dance and self-expression in a community setting. The creators of Give Peace a Dance describe it in the following way:

> GIVE PEACE A DANCE (GPD) is a public non-alcohol conscious-dance celebration. Produced by Preston & Emily Klik, we create a possibility of loving self expression in a safe and creative environment of like-minded/like-spirited individuals coming together as an ongoing evolving community. This celebration is a fundraiser for MKP (ManKind Project), for the amazing work and growth they actively manifest. (Klik, n.d., p. 1)

GPD is a public celebration and a healing community that provides a safe space for self-expression through dance, music, and peaceful interactions. I chose this research project in order to examine the potential therapeutic aspects of dance and creative self-expression in a public community setting. My intention was to expand the understanding of dance/movement therapy concepts outside of the clinical setting. My hope is that the results of this research may contribute to the development of a model for applying dance/movement therapy to community development and community activism in order to promote a more creative, collaborative American society.

This study was designed using qualitative ethnographic methods. I became embedded in this Chicagoan community as an active participant in an effort to fully understand the experience from an ethnographic perspective. I collected data from a number of participants about what GPD meant to them, why they continued to participate, and what effects this celebration had on them. I used my main research question as a guide: How do the participants of GPD experience this event emotionally, socially, and/or spiritually? Going further, what implications does this event have for the application of dance/movement therapy in community settings?

My main motivation for this research was born out of the fact that research has found that community integration and community support are important aspects of the psychosocial development of human beings and of the healing process of trauma. It appears that the emphasis of American culture on individualism vs. collectivism has created a lack of spirit of community, which has affected Americans' overall well-being and mental health (Putman, 2000). Furthermore, American society has been highly traumatized by current events. The housing crisis has created an economic recession causing unemployment rates to surpass those of the Great Depression and has created emotional turmoil for affected families. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have impacted the emotional state of the country as well, evident by the current "suicide epidemic" of returning and active duty soldiers (Donnelly, 2011; Keteyian, 2007; Mount, 2009). Correspondingly, my clinical internship with veterans at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center inspired me to explore how dance/movement therapists can provide therapeutic work in the form of community dance celebration, like that of GPD, which might reduce the suicide rates and the mental health stigma in American military culture.

I was also inspired as I came across the concept of *community psychology* while researching for my literature review. Community psychology seeks to make changes in social

institutions and communities for the psychological well-being of individuals. Community psychologists analyze threats to individuals' mental health in the context of social environments. For example, they analyze the influence of the social environment on an individual, and/or an individual's struggle to fit within his/her environment (Perkins, n.d. p. 1). The Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) is the division of the American Psychological Association that serves community psychology and actively encourages community research and action. SCRA was founded on the idea that social systems and environmental influences are important foci for enhancing wellness via preventive research and interventions (Society for Community Research [SRCA], n.d. para. 1). SCRA encourages research and action towards more peaceful and healthy environments that prevent pathology and support the well-being of people.

To form the theoretical framework of this thesis, I combined community psychology theory with Marian Chace's dance/movement therapy (DMT) theory. The four core concepts of Chacian theory support my theoretical framework: Body Action, Symbolism, Therapeutic Movement Relationship, and Rhythmic Group Activity. Marian Chace is known as the founder of DMT in America and has written about the power of DMT to support individual expression and community well-being. According to Chace, "one of the most important purposes of dance therapy is to enable a patient to participate in human relationships. Music and dance have the advantage of being social arts" (as cited in Wittner, 1996, p. 73). Even though most of her work was done in clinical settings, her writings have emphasized that through movement and group rhythmic action, individuals are able to escape loneliness, connect with others, and create community. Chace's DMT theory and techniques combined with community psychology can become a powerful tool for community empowerment and preventive health care.

A quote from the article "Towards a Peaceful Social Evolution" (Post, 2011) accurately summarizes what I hope can come out of this research:

Let us (instead) envision new tools -evolutionary tools- that push our culture beyond the reductionist, mechanistic thinking that arrests us in a state of physical destruction and psychopathology and instead, into the realm of the sacred, the peaceful, the powerful.

(p. 3)

It is my belief that GPD is one such tool that has the potential to help shape individual's identity and sense of self. I hope that this thesis inspires other dance/movement therapists to use DMT as a tool to empower our communities, and/or to create new intentional dancing communities, in an effort to shape a more creative, collaborative, American society with the goal of minimizing conflict and promoting healthier emotional integration of individuals.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

To begin, I will define community and community psychology. Then, I will explore dance as community activism, community dance rituals around the world, American ritualistic traditions, American dance communities, the role of dance/movement therapy, and finally creativity and self expression.

What Is Community?

The article "What Is Community? An Evidence-Based Definition for Participatory Public Health" defined community as a group of people with diverse characteristics, linked by social ties, who share common perspectives and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings (McQueen et al., 2001). However, community is more than this definition in that it helps bolster the healthy psychosocial development of individuals. For the purpose of this thesis, I refer to the essence of community as the quality of belonging to a group, of being part of something larger than oneself. Some (1993) supported this definition of community in his book, *Ritual: Power, Healing and Community*:

> A community is a place of self definition. Any group of people meeting with the intention of connecting to the power within is a community…Without a community you cannot be yourself. The community is where we draw the strength needed to affect changes inside of us. Community is formed each time more than one person meets for a purpose. (p. 144)

Cohen (as cited in Smith, 2001) also attempted to demystify individuals' relationships to their communities: "People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning and referent of their identity" (Smith, 2001, p. 3). Though communities

exist only in our minds, though we are not literally tied to others, these groups of people become symbolic of entities that we belong to, that we are attached to, that mean something to us, and that define us. McQueen et al. (2001) and Lounsbury & Mitchell, (2009) also emphasized the importance of community in the development of self and identity. They highlighted the fact that communities play a significant role in preventing health issues and in determining individuals' health outcomes.

The *American Journal of Community Psychology* dedicated an entire issue (2009) 44:213–22 to social ecological approaches to community health research and action. *Social capital* is an interesting term that I came across while reviewing this journal. Social capital is a way to measure community connectedness and refers to the depth of connections among individuals. In other words, when individuals in a community have reciprocal social relationships and are highly invested in each other, then the community is said to have social capital (Smith, 2001). Interaction allows people to connect, to build communities, and to commit themselves to each other in communion, which Smith (2001) defined as a profound sense of attachment to a place, group, or idea.

Social capital has steadily declined in the U.S., according to Putman (2000), author of the book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. This decline has not occurred without consequences: child development, public spaces, economic prosperity and health are all affected by the decline of social capital. Likewise, there is a strong correlation between the possession of social capital and better health. Putman stated:

> As a rough rule of thumb, if you belong to no groups but decide to join one, you cut your
>
> risk of dying over the next year in half. Regular club attendance, volunteering,

entertaining, or church attendance is the happiness equivalent of getting a college degree

or more than doubling your income. (p. 331)

Thus, Putman emphasized the need for the cultivation of social networks. He also called

attention to some of the downsides of social networks and communities such as the possibility of

being oppressive and narrowing.

The American Journal of Community Psychology has published many studies supporting

community models for health and healing. Olson, Jason, Davidson, Ferrari, (2009), Ellis, Marsh,

Craven (2009), and Herman, Onaga, Pernice-Duca, Ferguson (2005) are some of these

researchers and authors. Olsen et al. (2009) conducted research among 150 participants

discharged from inpatient treatment centers and randomly assigned to either therapeutic

communal living or usual self-help-based aftercare. The authors concluded that residents of the

communal living model demonstrated significantly greater values of tolerance by striving toward

community goals, which individual members could not achieve alone. A similar study was

conducted in 10 psychosocial rehabilitation clubhouses (Herman et al., 2005). A clubhouse

program is an intentionally created community for adults with psychiatric disabilities and major

mood disorders. It establishes a support system based on a sense of purpose, belonging, and

empowerment. The study found that these intentional communities provided the social

connections and social supports needed for recovery.

It is important to point out that community and social support is not only needed for

individuals dealing with psychosocial rehabilitation; all individuals require social support and

benefit from being a part of active communities. Many of these benefits are well documented in

the *American Journal of Community Psychology*. Ellis et al. (2009), Kalil, Born, Kunz, &

Caudill (2001), and Cherniss (2002) are just a few authors who have conducted research on the

benefits of community support for early adolescents, for older adults dealing with depressive symptoms, and for the development of emotional intelligence respectively.

So, what conditions might these communities share? Smith (2001) examined components of healthy communities and uncovered three categories: tolerance, reciprocity, and trust. Tolerance included an openness to others, curiosity, respect and willingness to listen and learn. Reciprocity in communal life involved doing something for others without expecting something back, perhaps without even knowing the person to whom one has directed the good deed. Trust went hand in hand with reciprocity; community members maintained confident expectations that their community would act in consistent, honest, and appropriate ways. Trust allowed people to cooperate and develop, and this is essential for communities to flourish. It is important to note that these qualities or expectations were not imposed upon people. Given the right conditions, they emerged naturally because humans have social and cooperative instincts. Smith added that the cultivation of reciprocity, honesty, and trust was less about building alien institutions and structures than creating the conditions for their emergence. For the purposes of this study, community is defined as a group of people with diverse characteristics, linked by social ties who share common perspectives and engage in joint action and provide reciprocity, honesty, and trust.

Community Psychology

Community psychology is an area of psychology that has been growing in popularity in recent years. It seeks to make changes in social institutions and communities for the psychological well-being of individuals (Perkins, n.d. p. 1). Community psychologists analyze threats to individuals' mental health in the context of social environments. For example, they analyze the influence of the social environment on an individual, and/or an individual's struggle

to fit within his/her environment (Perkins, n.d. p. 1). Accordingly, community psychologists advocate social rather than individual change. They focus on health rather than on illness, and on enhancing individual and community competencies (Perkins, n.d., p. 1). The Society for Community Research & Action (SCRA), a large proponent for community psychology, encourages practitioners to not only do analysis, but to take action in an effort to empower communities that support psychological well-being and prevent mental health issues (SCRA, n.d., para 1).

Further literature reveals that many authors support the empowerment of individuals and communities and associate the idea of social activism with the goal of reaching a more peaceful society. In the article "Toward a Psychology of Peaceful Social Evolution," Post (2011), argued that in order to move toward a more peaceful social evolution, we need to:

> . . . re-weave the cultural fabric from which our individual identity is cut and in so doing, transform our sense of self such that we see peace as an imperative to our identity rather than as an ideal. Notably, this kind of social evolution is dialectical; the re-weaving of our cultural identity must be at one and the same time a re-weaving of our own identity. One cannot and will not precede the other. As these two are in mutual conversation, the restructuring of our social institutions will be an emergent property of this constant communion. (p. 2)

Thus, one's affiliations with certain social institutions affect one's personal identity; therefore community psychology proposes that social institutions provide the necessary conditions to support a healthy development of one's identity.

Dance as Community Activism

Researcher and author Judith Lynne Hanna, has conducted impressive anthropological research on the topic of dance as human behavior among various communities around the world. In her book, *To Dance is Human: A theory of Nonverbal Communication* (1987), she compiled a number of studies that explore the role that dance plays in many aspects of human life. She described dance as "human thought and feeling expressed through the body: It is at once organized physical movement, a language, and a system of rules appropriate in different social situations" (p. 330). According to Hanna, dance can be a unique tool in social activism as well as in creating socio-cultural patterns. One of her studies titled "Dance Movement and the Communication of Sociocultural Patterns," focused on the associations between dance/movement and social relations of the Ubakala Igbo of the former eastern region of Nigeria. She explained how:

> …mental categorizations may be transformed into dance signs of visual motional configurations, to transmit information about and for social interactions. Such signs may promote self identity, prescribe and assert social values and roles, and mediate between persons and their situations; they may also evoke emotion and rally people to action.
>
> (p. 83)

She concluded that in Ubakala culture, dance focuses on social relationships and identity of social groups and individuals. Additionally, "Dance provides pleasure, allows a special kind of license prohibited in everyday life, guards against the misuse of power, and produces nonviolent change in Ubakala society" (p. 100).

Another research project conducted by Hanna called "The Urban Ecosystem of Dance," explored dance in urban settings (1987). She referred to dance as a medium for people relating to

each other, and thus it contributes to shaping the social and cultural aspects of groups. She added that "It is frequently a way of blending harmonious principles and mediating contradictory ones in culture and society" (p. 99). "Dance Rites in Political Thought and Action," is another study conducted by Hanna where she explained how many communities around the world have used dance rituals as social activism. Furthermore, dance rituals can empower the self and others, and aid in the process of enforcing values. This study was mainly focused on how dance rituals around the world have been used as symbolic communication to bring change and empower communities. She described ritual as "an extraordinary event involving stylized, repetitive behavior" (p. 129).

Hanna's work offered a valuable perspective to this thesis because it explored the potential value of dance as a force of change, as social activism, and as a tool for enculturation. Her studies demonstrated how some communities have successfully used dance to bring positive social change and promote positive socio-cultural patterns. In my opinion, Give Peace a Dance (GPD) can be viewed as a form of social activism because it promotes peaceful interactions, and provides socio-cultural patterns that support the creation of a peaceful community through dance and creative expression.

Community Dance Rituals around the World

The theme of community dance as an important part of the healing process is illustrated in several of the DMT works utilized for this literature review. Wittner (1996), Thomas (1991), Parker (2006), Jimenez (2004), and Lopez (2007) are some authors that agreed, in their thesis work, that community dance is an important factor in the healing process. Parker embedded herself into ethnographic work in a Ugandan community and found that dance provided five healing themes, and that community was the most important theme and the base for all other

healing themes. Other DMT works like the thesis *Why dance? Individual expression and community building through dance* (Wittner, 1996) made a strong argument about the importance of community in mental health and how dance can provide such a spirit of community. Wittner wrote about the lack of ritual in Euro-American society and of the resulting alienation and isolation that people experience in their lives. She emphasized the idea of using dance as a preventive therapy. As she put it: "in cultures where dance is an integrated part of life, where it is viewed as a healing art, where it supports individual expression and community, dance is also often viewed as preventative therapy" (p. 56). Thus, community dance has the potential to heal, to prevent the development of mental health issues, and to create and strengthen community.

Brazil, Trinidad, Haiti, Cuba and many other African and Latin American countries have made dance a central part of their community celebrations. Brazilians, for example, view dance as a central and vital aspect of everyday life. Their famous carnival is a week long, but preparations are a year-long event, with different samba schools, dance groups, costumes, floats, and preparations of themes happening all year long. The main focus is on community celebration expressed through creative costumes, dance, and music (Wittner, 1996). These communal celebrations provide mental health benefits for the participants by providing positive social conditions that allow individuals to engage with one another in a celebration of life through dance and creative expression.

Thomas in his thesis *The Healing Effects of Carnival in Trinidad and Its Relevance to Dance Therapy* (1991) documented how the traumatized slave community of Trinidad turned a dance healing ritual into an entire carnival celebration. Lopez (2007) studied how the traditional Puerto Rican dance, Bomba, helped heal female survivors of domestic violence. More locally,

Native American Indians have a strong relationship with dance as a healing modality. Native Americans place such a strong value on the concept of community dance, and the power that dance has for spiritual connection and healing, that they have continued to create community dance rituals in the form of Pow Wows up to this date. This is impressive despite the fact that such celebrations were banned by the colonial powers. Medical doctor, Carl Hammerschlag, in his book, *The Dancing Healers* (1988), beautifully documented how the Native Americans value dance as a healing art and how his educational credentials had no value in this community. While working with this population, he learned that he needed to be able to dance if he wanted to heal the native people, and as a result he also found personal healing. The Pow Wow is possibly one of the only ritualistic community dance celebrations that we still have in this country with the intention of healing and community connection.

American ritualistic traditions. The author of the book *Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture, and Family Rituals* (Pleck, 2000), summarized the Americans' many celebrations, holidays, festivals, rituals and their origins. For the most part, these rituals have become part of the consumerism culture whose main purpose is to support the economy rather than to support the individual dealing with difficult transitions. It appears that our social capital is in decline, and Putman (2000) made a clear point about his concern for the need of more interactive gatherings among American citizens. He drew on evidence, including nearly 500,000 interviews over the last quarter century, to show that Americans sign fewer petitions, belong to fewer organizations that meet, know neighbors less, meet with friends less frequently, and even socialize with their families less often. Despite the fact that they are consumer driven as are most holidays, there are two American holidays; thanksgiving and the winter holidays that do

bring people together to celebrate in community. Although they do not have dance as an integral part of the traditions, they do promote family and community values.

Rites of passage in America, which include cultural traditions (quinceañera, bar/bat mitzvah), sacred ceremonies (marriages, funerals, baptisms) and family affairs (weddings or baby showers), are just a few of the most common ways that Americans symbolically acknowledge moving from one state of consciousness into another, or from one social role into another. However, most of these American ritualistic traditions do not involve dancing celebrations as they do in many other cultures around the world. In fact, the "first dance" tradition in American weddings was the only main stream dance tradition that I could readily identify. As I mentioned before, the Pow Wow is another American community dance tradition although it is confined to the indigenous community and not celebrated by main stream society. However, this is not to say that there are no other dance communities in the U.S..

American dance communities. Despite the fact that there are no readily identifiable national dance celebrations in the U.S., there are local and regional community celebrations that feature dance prominently such as local festivals, public concerts, and parades. In Chicago for example, there are a number of festivals and summer celebrations that focus on music, dancing and community gathering: The Chicago Folk and Roots Festival, Taste of Chicago, the St. Patrick's day parade and the many concerts offered at Millennium Park to name a few. Chicago also has a dance specific festival. Chicago Summer Dance which is a summer long festival that features different genres of live music with free dance lessons and open dancing on a spacious wooden dance floor right in the middle of downtown Chicago (Explore Chicago, 2010, p. 1).

Specific dancing communities can be found throughout the nation and some have become very popular and active. The launching of the reality show "So You Think You Can Dance" has

also popularized certain styles of dance like Ballroom and Latin dance and more Americans have been interested in learning these styles of dance and joining these communities. For example, swing dancing communities are found in nearly every city and they have become very active on the west coast and in Chicago. Ballroom and Latin dancing communities are also active in most cities, as are country line dancing and urban dance. The difference that I see between these dancing communities and the GPD community though, is that the intention of the communities is different. Dancing communities such as swing or Latin dance are focused on promoting specific styles of dance. People gather in these communities with the intention to socialize and also to improve their dancing skills. GPD, on the other hand, has a healing intention at its base. The community of GPD is a very diverse community of all kinds of participants who do not focus on improving dancing technique, but rather on coming together as a community of peace to celebrate life and use creative expression in unique ways. This does not mean that other dancing communities do not offer healing. They very likely do. Nevertheless, the intention is not necessarily a healing intention as is the case of GPD.

The Role of Dance/Movement Therapy

According to the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), dance/movement therapy or DMT is defined as "the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration of individuals" (ADTA, n.d., p. 1). There are a number of DMT pioneers who laid the ground work for today's practice of DMT with theoretical and practical contributions. However, Marian Chace is considered the founder of dance/movement therapy in America, and, through her writings, has expressed her belief in dance as a means of individual expression to communicate inner emotions and ideas as well as to connect with others. The most basic concept of DMT is that communication is a basic human need and that dance is

communication. Chace recognized four major concepts that facilitate this communication in DMT work: Body Action, Therapeutic Movement Relationship, Rhythmic Group Activity, and Symbolism (Sandel, Chaiklin & Lohn, 1993).

Body action. "Chace understood that dance actions could help patients feel both relaxed and stimulated, thus preparing them to express emotions" (Sandel, et al, 1993, p. 77). Chace wrote:

In this restricted culture of ours, [dance] is a medium of expression for us to use which is built out of our natural need to communicate with body action. In the dance, freedom of action is demanded and is socially acceptable. (as cited in Wittner, 1996, p. 70)

Additionally, Ruthanna in the article "The Root of Dance Therapy: A Consideration of Movement, Dancing, and Verbalization vis-a-vis Dance/Movement Therapy," eloquently explained how movement can facilitate integration into society due to its non-verbal characteristics of communication:

Movement and dancing predate the acquisition of language and practice of verbal communication, which represent learned behavior. Movement and dancing are natural; we enter the human community already knowledgeable in the language of nonverbal communication, the language of the body. (2001, p. 356)

Moreover, one of the major contributors to the field and theory of DMT, Irmgard Bartenieff, believed that dance/movement therapists should not focus on the subjective aspects of the self on a body level without considering its relation to space, environment, and other people. She believed that the therapist's main focus should be on facilitating the patient's finding of a harmonious way of relating to the self and to society (Levy, 2005).

Therapeutic movement relationship and rhythmic group activity. These Chacian concepts address issues of relationship and community. The two concepts support the interactive nature of social relationships in an organized way and put value on healing through relationships with others rather than through individualism. Therapeutic Movement Relationship refers to the communication between a client and the therapist on a movement level. Therapists create relationships with clients through empathic reflection by mirroring the client's movements (Sandel et al., 1993).

Most of the work of Marian Chace was done in clinical settings, and she discovered that through body action and rhythmic group activity, mental health patients were able to escape lonely feelings and connect with one another. Rhythmic action in unison with others resulted in a feeling of well-being, relaxation, and good fellowship. According to Chace:

> Group dancing is satisfying, not only to those taking part in the dance, but also as passive recreation. Rhythmic action when watched is felt by the onlookers in their own musculatures. Eyes lift toward the dancers, bodies noticeably relax, and smiles appear. Suddenly another patient leaves her chair at the back of the room to join the circle of people stretching their bodies and then relaxing in time to the music. It is not the urging of the leader, it is the contagion of rhythmic body action which draws her in to the circle. She had made a beginning toward living and the enjoyment with other of this living. (as cited in Wittner, 1996, p. 74)

Thus, Chace emphasized the importance of dance for individual expression as well as the fundamental role of dance in creating relationships, community, and cohesion.

Claire Schmais was another DMT pioneer who articulated the power of dance therapy to support individual expression and community. Wittner (1996) quoted Schmais as saying that cohesion is one of the most important healing aspects of dance therapy:

> Dance therapy encourages identification with a social group by structuring the activity so that people move together in time and space. People moving in the same rhythm with the same spatial configuration become identified with one another… In this way the group achieves a sense of solidarity. Patients moving in rhythm to auditory stimuli, such as the beat of the music, take a first step towards breaking down the barriers to communication … Rhythmic synchrony is the initial bond. (p. 79)

Schmais created this solidarity through the power of rhythm and shared movement. Additionally, Schmais spoke about establishing dance communities through symbolism: "Being a part of the dance by sharing and repeating simple steps and rhythms builds a sense of community . . . [it is when] people actively participate in each other's symbolic statements that group cohesiveness takes root" (Wittner, 1996, p. 80).

Symbolism. The final core concept of Chacian theory is Symbolism and it offers an individual the possibility of working out emotional problems with symbolic communication, rather than verbally and explicitly knowing that a problem is being addressed. Chace believed that "problems could be worked through on a purely symbolic level and that interpretation or analysis was not always necessary" (Levy, 2005, p. 22). This DMT concept of symbolism is often times found in ritualistic healing ceremonies and could play a valuable role in the treatment of trauma, as well as the healthy development of normal neurotics.

DMT also utilizes the healing benefits of rituals, particularly dance rituals that take place within a community setting as discussed in the following theses. In a thesis called *Ritual and*

Dance/Movement Therapy with Emotionally Disturbed Children, Bates (2000) stated that "it seems very appropriate that movement be used as a route for ritual within therapy since dance has historically been one of the most frequently used media for rites of passage" (p. 15). Consequently, symbolism and community support appeared to be the main factors contributing to the efficacy of rituals to heal (Wilson, 2005; Cole, 2004; Beck & Metrick, 1990).

Thomas (1991) emphasized the role of ritualistic dance in his thesis which evaluated the healing effects of ritual dance in Trinidad. The history of slavery in that country required a great amount of healing and community support. This was found through the use of ritualistic dance and community celebration that eventually led to the creation of the Trinidadian carnival.

Creativity and Self Expression

When one feels safe, has a feeling of trust, and is surrounded by a supportive environment, one feels more comfortable to self-express. This self-expression leads to the creative process, which in turn has beneficial effects for the individual. Thus a healthy, connected community encourages individuals to freely self-express and explore their own creative processes. Creativity is defined by *Merriam-Webster's dictionary* as basically the process of making, of bringing something into being (n.d.). *The Oxford English dictionary* talks about creativity as the creative power or faculty—the ability to create (n.d.). For the purposes of our topic; what is the effect that the creative process has on individuals, and what is the role that community plays in this process?

An ample amount of research and literature addresses the topic of creativity, and there are a number of theories about the creative process. Rollo May, in his book *The Courage to Create* (1975), stated that "the creative process must be seen as representing the highest degree of emotional health, as the expression of the normal people in the act of actualizing themselves" (p.

40). Rollo defined creativity as the encounter of the intensively conscious human being with his or her world. He went on to explain that by "encounter" he meant the meeting of two poles, a subjective pole, being the conscious person in the creative act, and the objective pole, being the person's encounter with his world. By "world," he meant "the pattern of meaningful relations in which a person exists and in the design of which he or she participates" (p. 50). Carl Rogers, the founder of client-centered psychotherapy, had a similar theory of creativity. He defined the creative process as "the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other" (Rogers, 1961, p. 350). What these two philosophers have in common in their definitions of the creative process is that it not only involves the person in the creative act, but also his/her world or environment. This environment includes the person's social networks or communities. Rogers also agreed with May in that the motivation for individuals to engage in the creative process is derived from one's tendency and desire to actualize oneself and reach one's potential.

Likewise, Wengrower, a researcher in the field of DMT, believed that the creative process and its results were psychologically meaningful and healing for the person engaged in them (2009). Wenglower provided a more amplified list of the benefits of creativity in psychotherapy, and in DMT more specifically. She explained that individuals may use artistic activity as (a) a way of expressing repressed desires and sublimation; (b) a way of approaching reality by engaging in creative expression as a phenomenon of identification, inspiration, and training of social roles and aspects of the self; (c) a defense mechanism against anxiety; (d) a way of creating control and order; and (e) a way of achieving recognition and repairing fantasized inflicted damage (2009). The topic of creativity is of such importance that there are a

number of journals dedicated to the support of research of creativity. The American Psychological Association has its own division and journal in support of creativity research known as *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts.* Other journals include the *Creativity Research Journal, Journal of Creativity in Mental Health,* and *Creativity Plus.*

One of the theories of creativity I found most relevant was Carl R. Rogers' theory in his book *On Becoming a Person* (1961). Rogers believed that every person has the desire and tendency to self-express and activate the creative process in an effort to self-actualize; though this tendency may be deeply buried under a massive layer of psychological defenses, a person may release and express it given the right conditions. So what are these conditions? Rogers spoke of inner conditions, as well as external conditions, that foster creativity. Because of my focus on community, I wanted to concentrate on the external conditions that foster constructive creativity. It is these external conditions that foster the creative internal conditions necessary for the creative process. In Rogers' own words: "The farmer cannot make the germ develop and sprout from the seed; he can only supply the nurturing conditions which will permit the seed to develop its own potentialities" (p. 357).

These nurturing conditions are divided into the following two categories according to Rogers:

1. Psychological safety which is accomplished by three associated processes:
    a. Accepting the individual as of unconditional worth. When a climate of safety is sensed, the individual slowly learns that he can be whatever he is, without shame or façade; hence he has less need of rigidity, can discover what it means to be himself, can try to actualize himself in new and spontaneous ways, and therefore move toward creativity.

b. Providing a climate in which external evaluation is absent. For an individual to find himself in an atmosphere where he is not being evaluated, not being measured by some external standard, is enormously freeing.

c. Understanding empathically. Understanding empathically means seeing you and what you are feeling and doing from your point of view, enter your private world and see it as it appears to you. In this climate you can permit your real self to emerge, and to express itself in varied and novel formings as it relates to the world. This is the basic fostering of creativity.

2. Psychological freedom - Permissiveness that gives the individual complete freedom to think, to feel, to be, what ever is most inward within himself. It fosters the openness, and the playful and spontaneous juggling of percepts, concepts and meanings, which is part of creativity. This freedom of symbolic expression is a permission to be free, which also means to be responsible. The individual is as free to be afraid of a new venture as to be eager for it; free to bear the consequences of his mistakes as well as to his achievements. It is this type of freedom responsibly to be oneself which fosters the development of a secure locus of evaluation within oneself, and hence tends to bring about the inner conditions of constructive creativity. (p. 357-359)

Rogers's theory of creativity highlighted the importance of a nurturing environment for the emergence and development of the creative process. It is my professional belief that community is an important part of these fostering conditions. A community needs to be able to provide psychological safety and psychological freedom as described above in Rogers' theory of creativity. If communities provide individuals with these two conditions, then individuals may be

able to foster their own inner qualities related to the creative process. The internal conditions are (a) openness to experience; (b) an internal locus of evaluation which is perhaps the most fundamental condition of creativity and means that the source or locus of evaluative judgment is internal; and (c) the ability to toy with elements and concepts, in other words, the ability to play spontaneously with ideas, colors, shapes, and relationships (p. 355).

This principal of a nurturing environment for the emergence and development of the creative process is at the center the GPD community. GPD is an empathetic, non-judgmental, accepting community that allows a person freedom to express. It creates within the individual the ability to achieve freedom of creative exploration and curiosity, resulting in psychologically meaningful and healing effects.

Conclusion

Research has shown that community and social interactions are important aspects of the normal development of individuals at all times in the life cycle. In order to prevent mental health issues, individuals need to have a sense of attachment and belonging that communities can provide for a healthy development of self. Unfortunately, for various reasons, Americans have become less active and involved in communities and social networks, which has had an effect on the emotional health of American citizens. One way to counteract this phenomenon is through community dance. Other cultures and communities from around the world have used dance in ritualistic ceremonies and communal celebrations—connecting people, providing healing, and empowering individuals and entire communities with non-verbal, symbolic language. DMT as a field has the unique opportunity to use the healing power of dance to empower existing communities in need of unity, to create intentional communities that promote positive social interactions, and to support and promote the use of dance celebrations as a preventive form of

therapy for American society. The purpose of this research was to examine the potential

therapeutic aspects of dance and creative self-expression in a public community setting in an

effort to expand the understanding of dance/movement therapy concepts outside of the clinical

setting.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Ethnography

Ethnography is a qualitative research method in the area of cultural anthropology that is also broadly used in the areas of education, sociology, business, and marketing. Ethnography as a method seeks to answer central anthropological questions concerning human social phenomena and communities. The data for ethnographies usually consists of extensive description of the details of social life or cultural phenomena. In order to answer ethnographic research questions and gather research material, ethnographers often immerse themselves in the community they are studying, or spend a considerable amount of time with the people being studied. Thus, ethnographers engage in *participant observation:* they participate as much as possible in local daily life while also carefully observing everything they can about it. Through this process, ethnographers seek to gain what is called an *emic perspective*, or the natives' point(s) of view, without imposing their own conceptual frameworks. The *emic* worldview, which may be quite different from the *etic,* or outsider's perspective*,* on local life, is a unique and critical part of anthropology. Through the participant observation method, ethnographers record detailed field notes, conduct interviews using open-ended questions, and gather whatever site information might be available in the setting as data (Penn Anthropology Department, n.d.). Ethnography describes the quality of phenomena and it tends to generate theory. Mental health practitioners, and others in allied health fields, have begun utilizing ethnographic research in order to understand new public health problems and their potential solutions.

Design, Procedures and Methods

This study combined the following ethnographic and research methods:

Participant observation. As principal researcher, I became a participant observer and wrote detailed field notes based on observations of, and my own personal responses to, Give Peace a Dance (GPD). My observations were focused on the way people related to each other, on how people engaged in the creative process, and my own personal feelings while participating at GPD.

Informal interviews. I engaged in casual conversations with other participants of GPD in order to collect data for this study. These informal interviews took place before, during, and after the event for at least ten consecutive months. These were casual conversations and were not recorded. I had approximately 50 such casual conversations that gave me a general idea about people's opinions of GPD. When talking to people I usually asked the question of why do you come to GPD and what do you like the most about GPD?

In-depth interviews. I selected ten participants with whom to have one in-depth interview at a public location agreeable to both parties. Each individual interview lasted about one hour, and was audio recorded directly on a laptop to facilitate its transcription and subsequent narrative analysis (Appendix B).

Setting and Demographics

In this section, I describe the setting of GPD and how I gathered the participants for this research. GPD happens every first Saturday of the month with the exception of July and January. The hostess for the event is Emily Klik. She usually greets participants at the door, and someone else offers each person a bindi along with a blessing. A bindi is a forehead decoration made out of small sequins, beads, or rhinestones. Self-adhesive bindis are made of felt or thin metal and are adhesive on the other side. The symbolic meaning of the bindi is to represent the opening of one's third eye to increase awareness. Most of the participants at GPD wear one of these self

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adhesive bindis. Bottles of water are sold at the entrance and they are each labeled with positive messages like, love, peace, understanding, forgiveness, enlightenment, etc.

The event starts with an opening ceremony which involves a blessing by Emily and Hazel L'Aura and the lighting of the bonfire. People are encouraged to join the blessing and are provided with sage for burning. At this time, people can set an intention for the night. Following the opening ceremony is the drum circle and rhythm ritual which is led by Hazel. This takes place on the outside patio where fire dancers can be found. Fire dancing is a type of performance art that involves manipulation of objects on fire. These objects have one or more bundles of wicking, which are soaked in fuel and ignited.

Inside, there are several rooms offering different experiences. The main room is called the Sanctuary, where DJ Preston spins music that he describes as "One-World Life-Positive Body-Temple Dance Music, Sensual and Goddess-Oriented, evoking the Divine Light in body-mind-heart" (Klik, n.d., p. 1). The entire Sanctuary room is very spacious and decorated in a way that is meant to enhance the senses. There are lights and colorful fabrics hanging from the ceiling. The fabrics are of soft texture and bright colors. There are also soft feather boas hanging from the entrance to the dance floor, and one cannot help but be touched by these feather boas when entering the dance floor. The dance floor is filled with red rose petals spread around the floor and there are projected images on the walls that capture one's attention. The DJ booth manned by Preston Klik displays a sign that reads "free DJ hugs". At the Sanctuary, people are dressed in very colorful and creative attire and sometimes people wear costumes or decorative make up for the occasion. On the dance floor, a variety of dance and movement styles can be observed from contact improvisation to acrobatic yoga. There are people who dance alone and others who dance in couples or in groups. Props are available for individuals to use like hula

hoops, poi balls, and silk spinning flags. Poi balls are soft, small balls attached to a string that one can spin around while dancing. Silk flags are square pieces of fabric also for spinning in the air while dancing. These props create very interesting designs under the black lights and are very entertaining to watch. There is a special corner where Shiatsu massage is offered, right in the open space of the Sanctuary room. In the middle of the night, DJ Preston stops spinning music for a short period of time to allow performers to showcase their talent at GPD. I have seen various belly dancing groups, as well as singers, take the stage.

Other rooms in the hallway offer private sessions of reiki healing, foot reflexiology, psychoenergetic readings, hand writing analysis, and other types of alternative healing techniques. All of these services are offered on a donation basis. The last room is called the Rainbow room where you can experience a more relaxed energy and mellow music. Two DJs spin music described as "Subtle Sounds Music" in this room. This is also the room used for the drum circle during inclement weather. At the end of the night, there is a closing circle and a blessing led by Emily Klik in the Sanctuary room. People gather in a circle at the Sanctuary room and hold hands while Emily offers a closing blessing.

The first two people I interviewed for this research were introduced to me by Emily, but as I continued to attend the event I met more people who became part of this research. With the exception of the off-site interviews, the research took place at GPD events. The participants in this research needed to be regular attendees who attended GPD at least three times a year, and were willing to sign an informed consent form authorizing the researcher to publish the findings. I also interviewed the facilitators of this event, Emily and Preston Klik.

I initially recruited ten participants for this study, including myself. From these ten individuals, two withdrew from the project due to time constrictions in their lives. This left a

total of eight participants. Three of these participants were male and five were female. Their ages ranged from 22 to 50. Three of the participants were born and raised abroad, including myself. Their countries of origin were Poland, Turkey, and Colombia, respectively. Two others were born in America and identified themselves as Caucasian, and were connected to German and Jewish ethnicities. Two of the participants were African American and one had Haitian ancestry.

Ethical Concerns

It is my belief that there were no known risks associated with this research study. Only individuals who were able to provide a formal written consent were considered for this research. Individuals who were related to the organizers, who only came to GPD occasionally, or who displayed mental challenges in the ability to understand the study, were excluded from this research. Some of the questions asked, that were of a more personal nature, such as disclosing the use of substances, may have caused slight discomfort to the participants. However, they were free to choose to not answer those questions (Appendix B).

Procedure

Data collection. Field observation and field notes are an integral part of the data collection for ethnographic research. Therefore, I attended GPD with a small notebook in which I wrote my observations and feelings about the event. I also wrote down my sensations, thoughts, and ideas about what I was experiencing. Nonetheless, I spent the majority of my time at GPD interacting with people and being a part of the present moment, not taking notes. This took a period of about ten months, and during this time I recruited the participants for this study.

The selection of the participants was a gradual process. I started by interviewing a couple of people that were introduced to me by Emily. As I continued to attend the event, I met more people and found more individuals interested in the project. All interviews were conducted in

public places, such as in classrooms at the Old Town School of Music or in coffee shops in Chicago. I compiled a list of questions to guide the formal interviews, but asked follow-up questions that emerged organically. For the most part, I wanted interviews to flow like natural conversations (Appendix B). The main focus of the interview was to find out how participants experience GPD socially, emotionally, and/or spiritually. Before setting up an interview, I provided each potential participant with a consent form via email and allowed them at least one month to review the consent form before they were scheduled for an interview. The consent forms were signed at the time of the interview, and all participants were provided with a copy (Appendix C).

Data analysis. I analyzed data using Appendix E of *The Ethnograph v5* manual*,* which summarizes the basic processes of qualitative data analysis and ethnographic techniques (Seidel, 1998). Following this model, I coded the information into themes that correlated to the main research question of how the participants experience GPD emotionally, socially, and/or spirituality. I used some quantitative analysis to determine the relative strength of each response.

The data analysis progressed as follows:

1. Transcription of interviews, including emotional intensity levels

2. Word frequency calculation

3. Coding of social, emotional, and spiritual categories

4. Sorting of categories, connections between categories, and search for new categories

I began the data analysis by transcribing each interview word by word. By transcribing this myself, I realized that when participants were speaking about GPD as a community, some seemed more engaged and committed to the topic than others. Thus, I attempted to gauge and record participants' emotional intensity during their responses. I tallied these responses and then

created three categories under which each participant could be placed based on their engagement during the interview process. Four people were fully engaged, three were somewhat engaged, and one was somewhat disengaged. Though I acknowledge that this part of the analysis was subjective in nature, I believe it was an important information source; our tone of voice and the way in which we speak about certain topics carry a lot of meaning and can convey how we feel about a particular topic.

My next step in the data analysis was a form of quantitative data analysis. Using the *find* button on Microsoft word tool bar, I proceeded to find how many times certain words were used throughout the text. I deleted my interview questions from the text and only conducted the word search among the responses given by the participants, including my own responses. I looked for the following words and sets of words in the text: community, social, spirit/spiritual, healing/heal/health, creativity/creative, freedom/free, emotional/emotion, safe/safety, feeling, expression/expressive/express, etc. This disassembling of the data highlighted the kind of language that was being used when participants spoke of GPD and helped me begin to make sense of participants' experiences.

Once I transcribed the interviews, I proceeded to print the interviews and continue with the coding process. I color coded the document with three different categories, based on my original research question: how do the participants of GPD experience this event emotionally, socially, and/or spiritually? Using color markers, I highlighted statements about social, emotional, and spiritual experiences. In the process of doing this, two new categories evolved: creative self-expression and safety. The statements about moments or thoughts about self-expression, creativity, and the creative process as it related to GPD were all part of one category.

The safety category included psychological safety as well as physical safety. I also included statements about feelings of non-judgment under psychological safety.

Once the transcriptions were color coded into the five different categories of social, spiritual, emotional, creative, and safety statements, I proceeded with my final step of writing each of these statements on flash cards in order to sort and sift the data. I separated the flash cards into piles and counted how many flash cards were in each category. This gave me an idea of the relative strength of each category. I then proceeded to spread out the flash cards on a table and read each statement out loud. I separated the statements that I found to be the stronger ones in each category. By stronger I mean the statements that stood out for me and felt very descriptive of the GPD experience. What I also found during this process was that some categories overlapped. For example, I noticed that some statements about spiritual experiences overlapped with statements about the creative process, so I included those statements under each category. This concluded the coding, sorting, and sifting of the data.

Chapter Four: Results

The main purpose of this research was to examine the potential therapeutic aspects of

dance and creative self-expression in a pubic community setting in an effort to expand the

understanding of dance/movement therapy concepts outside of the clinical setting. The main

question that guided the research was: how do the participants of Give Peace a Dance (GPD)

experience this event socially, emotionally, and/or spiritually? The following graph illustrates the

quantitative results of the research. In the end, community, safety, and creativity emerged as the

defining elements of the experience of GPD. I combined certain categories, such as social with

community, physical safety with psychological safety, and finally, I made creativity, self

expression and freedom all part of the creativity category.

Figure 1. Comparison of Quantitative Results
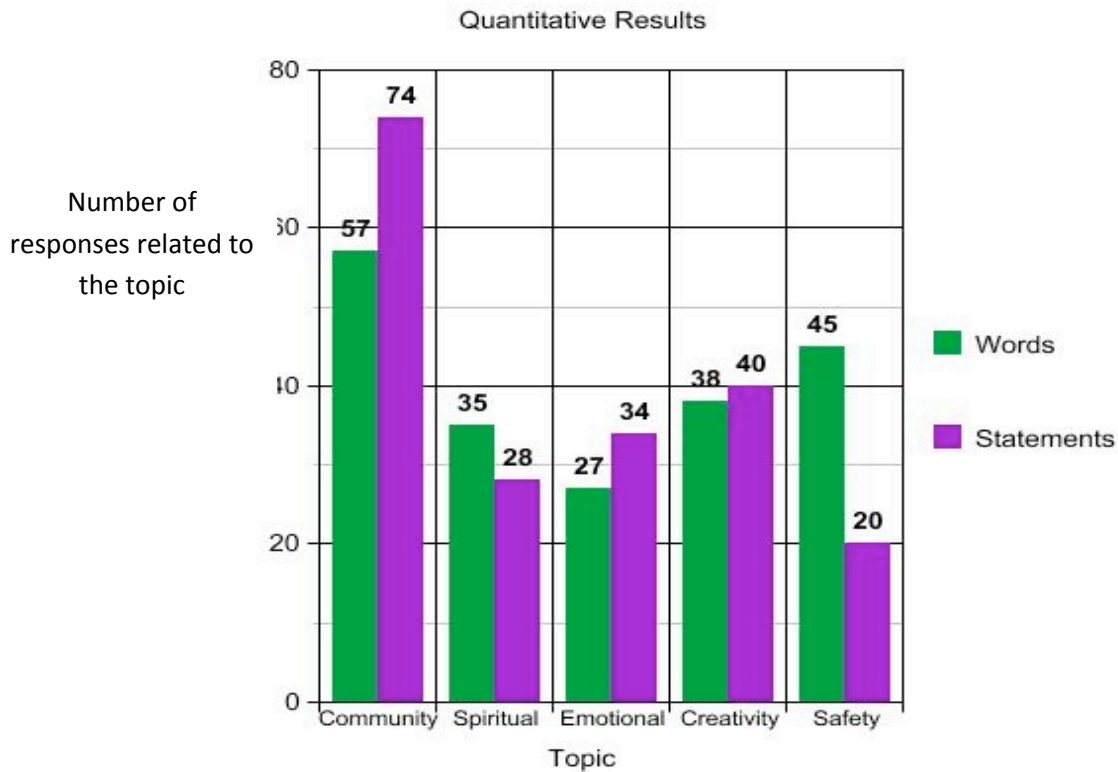
The community category yielded the highest number of responses from all categories, with 57 related words and 74 statements for a total of 131 responses. The rest of the categories all had a similar number of responses all below 45 for both words and statements. Following the community category was the creativity category, which yielded similar numbers of responses for both words and statements, for a total of 78 responses. Even though the safety category only had 20 statements, combined with the related words it yielded a total of 65 responses, making it the third strongest category. The spiritual category had very similar responses to the emotional category with a total of 63 responses. The category that yielded the least number of responses was the emotional category with a total of 61 responses.

General Findings

After reading and rereading the flashcards that belonged to each category, I understood that the overall experience of the participants in this research in relationship to GPD was a positive one. The majority of the participants believed that GPD was indeed a safe community that fostered self-expression and creativity. The participants also believed that this environment promoted emotional healing and provided healthy social interactions, and that it was a community characterized as unique and rare.

The safety category emerged as one of the three most important categories. The women, in particular, spoke of the sense of feeling physically safe at GPD and comfortable attending the event by themselves. They felt comfortable because of the "no-alcohol" rule and the "no-meat market" feeling, meaning that they did not feel sexually harassed or pressured by men. Although Emily is the person in charge of security, the community monitors itself with the common goal of maintaining peace.

GPD had spiritual and emotional effects on the participants, as illustrated in figure1. However, these categories yielded the lowest results from all categories. Some possible explanations for lower results in the spiritual category are that talking about spiritual experiences is not always an easy task, and there are many other existing avenues to pursue spiritual needs. In the emotional category, speaking freely about emotions often requires a strong rapport built over time, which this study did not supply. It should be noted that the results in these two categories, although lower, were not significantly lower than the other categories. Overall, the study indicates that all of these needs were served by participation in GPD.

There was an overlap between spiritual statements and creativity statements, and some participants said that when they were engaged in the creative process, they were able to tap into their spiritual selves. All the participants agreed that the GPD environment was one of acceptance and non-judgment. The majority of the participants agreed that GPD had, in fact, shaped their sense of self and understanding of the world. They claimed it had given them a space to express themselves creatively, which affected their individual identity. These results supported the idea that GPD provides a unique social experience that promotes healing and growth through creative expression and community support, and this in turn positively influences participants' sense of social, emotional and spiritual self.

Specific Findings

Community. In Emily Klik's own words:

This community just naturally attracts people from all different cultures, all different all different lifestyles, all different spiritual paths. We are about promoting acceptance and unity and peace. We are about sharing and celebrating our cultural differences rather than

highlighting them as a way of creating segregation. We are very much about global unity.

(E. Klik, personal communication, January 2011)

This is evident when one attends GPD; one finds all kinds of people together in the same space with the same purpose of celebration. However, this does not mean that everyone feels like they are part of the GPD community. Of the eight participants in this research, three of them did not consider themselves part of the community. They specifically said that, even though they did not feel they belonged to this community, they attended GPD because of the people and the energy that this community evoked. One person said that, even though he was not part of the community, he felt that the community accepted him, and he attended the event on a regular basis. Another person mentioned that, though she did not feel a part of the community, this did not mean that she did not enjoy being a part of the celebration of this community. I also found it interesting that the majority of the people interviewed considered GPD their main social dancing experience. Only three people said they went to other social events like nightclubs and other festivals; for the most part, participants consistently chose GPD to be their monthly dancing ritual.

Creativity. According to Emily Klik:

When people are given permission to be themselves without judgment, and when people are given the freedom to self express, that in itself is simply very healing; and when people are exploring new avenues to self-express, they are potentially discovering parts of themselves that were always there but they just never opened that door so to speak (Personal communication, January 2011).

Preston Klik added the following to the topic of creativity:

> At the very least you are the creative artist of your life and so part of the healing that
> people can get is the creativity of, I want to be myself but I don't necessarily know who
> myself is or people put me in boxes, but here [at GPD] I don't have to be in their boxes, I
> can step out of that a little bit and express who I am, and create who I want to be.
> (Personal communication, January 2011)

GPD appears to provide the necessary external conditions needed for the creative process to surface. This does not mean that all the participants of GPD engage in this creative process, as there are other internal conditions necessary for this process. It simply means that the environment of GPD is conducive to creativity and self expression.

When analyzing the interviews, I used the external conditions that Rogers explained are necessary for the creative process to emerge. In the table below, I matched Rogers' external psychological conditions for creativity with some quotes from the interviews that supported these descriptions. These quotes demonstrate that participants feel a sense of psychological freedom and psychological safety in the GPD community.

Table 1.

External Conditions Necessary for the Creative Process Supported by Participant's Quotes

Psychological Safety	Quotes
Unconditional worth to generate a climate of safety to allow individuals to be less rigid and discover what it	"You can come into that space being whatever you are, conservative, colorful, whatever, and be into that space as you are" "There is more of authentic kind of love, not a

	manipulated or conditioned or even ideal of acceptance". "I can dance at GPD and not be afraid of judgment"
Psychological Freedom A permissiveness that gives the individual complete freedom to think, to feel, to be. It fosters the openness, and the playful and spontaneous juggling of percepts, concepts and meanings.	"It really helps to show yourself and express yourself because it helps your confidence and at GPD you can express yourself without fear" "I feel free to express, you come and do whatever you feel. It is good for my head". "A peaceful environment is where there is free expression and respect for other people like GPD". "The atmosphere is safe one and creative one" "My mind is not in that space of should or shouldn't" "They are people who accept me for who I am as I am. Everything is accepted and looked at without judgment".

Safety. In addition to psychological safety, a new category emerged during the process of analysis: physical safety, which I coded under safety. All of the female participants had something to say to the fact that they felt safe in this space. There was particular mention of the

fact that there was no alcohol or drugs allowed and that there were signs that specifically prohibited these activities. The signs also made mention of not wanting "political energy" or "meat market energy." The women often attended the event alone and never felt threatened or sexually pressured by men. Participants mentioned that, unlike a dance club experience, meat market energy and competitive energy was not felt at GPD. Instead, there was more of the feeling of reciprocity which Smith (2001) said was essential in communities.

All of the participants in the research agreed that freedom of expression was very much a part of what GPD was which I categorized under safety. When a person feels safe, they feel comfortable expressing themselves. Participants spoke of GPD as a non-judgmental environment. Some of the participants agreed that because of this environment of non-judgment and tolerance, they were able to explore certain aspects of themselves that they would have not done otherwise. In fact, all of the participants agreed that because of this feeling of tolerance, they were able to engage in self-expression that fostered their creativity and strengthened their own sense of self. Finally, the safety category included lack of performance, political or competitive pressure.

Participant Observer Findings

As principal researcher, I embedded myself into this community to better understand it. From the very first day I attended GPD, I felt that the community received me with an open heart, and I immediately felt this sense of safety that naturally allowed me to engage in the creative process. I distinctively remember being impressed by the direct eye to eye communication that I was having with complete strangers. I soon became comfortable engaging in dancing activities on a one-on-one basis, as well as on a group basis. I danced in the center of the drum circle and by the fire; I took part of the drum jam and experimented with this

experience; I attended healing sessions with the alternative healers available at GPD; I even

inquired about learning how to do fire dancing; and I participated in the final ritual which

consisted of people coming together in a circle and holding hands to give thanks for the

experience that had taken place. I became a part of the community by engaging and supporting

the activities available and I truly enjoyed myself.

Chapter Five: Discussion

My original research question at the beginning of this project was "how do the participants of Give Peace a Dance (GPD) experience this event, emotionally, socially and/or spiritually?" What I found after conducting this project was that GPD meets the necessary requirements to be considered a unique healing community. It uses elements that are also found in Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) in the support of peaceful human interactions, and it uses the creation of an intentional peaceful and creative community as a form of preventative therapy. These healing elements are community, creativity and safety.

Community, Creativity and Safety

In looking back at the literature review, I would like to remind the reader about the qualities that appear to be linked to communal life: tolerance, reciprocity, and trust (Smith, 2001). Based on the analysis of the data, it appears that GPD provides all of these qualities for the members of the GPD community. Here are some quotes that support this idea of communal life: "You feel free to express, you come and do whatever you feel because you know no one is going to judge you", "the community supports my own growth", and "GPD is a community and a family; it is my chosen family". The quality of tolerance in communal life, as stated by Smith, means openness to others, curiosity, respect, and a willingness to listen and learn. This is perhaps the strongest quality of communal experience that I have personally witnessed at GPD.

Likewise, GPD meets the external conditions stated by Rogers' theory of creativity for the creative process to emerge; psychological freedom and psychological safety. As explained in the literature review, psychological freedom involves a permissiveness that gives the individual complete freedom to think, to feel, to be, and it fosters the openness, and the playful and spontaneous juggling of percepts, concepts and meanings (Rogers, 1961). The participants of this

research all agreed that GPD indeed provided a permissiveness of creative exploration. One participant said "it really helps to show yourself and express yourself because it helps your confidence and at GPD you can express yourself without fear". This climate of freedom to express was one of the things that impressed me the most when I attended GPD for the first time.

Furthermore, the condition of psychological safety, involves a climate of unconditional worth to allow individuals to be less rigid and discover what it means to be him or herself; a climate in which external evaluation is absent; and a climate of empathic understanding (Rogers, 1961). The analyses of the data revealed that all these three climates are present at the GPD community. Comments like, "the whole building is a safe space of healing", "there is more of authentic kind of love, not a manipulated or conditioned or even ideal of acceptance", and "I can dance at GPD and not be afraid of judgment" seemed to support this concept of psychological safety.

Personal Experience and Insights

Speaking from personal experience, I have invested so much of myself into this study that it is hard for me to separate myself from the community. I have come to understand it, appreciate it, and seek it out. More than wanting to belong to this community, I want to experience the essence of community that GPD provides. I also enjoy socializing with creative people who think outside the box and have a personal desire for a more peaceful world.

I belong to and frequent other dancing communities, such as the Chicago salsa community, however, the experience is a very different one, because as much as I like dancing salsa, the salsa community is very competitive, and the feeling of cohesion and unison is not as strong as in the GPD community. I found that the GPD community was unique and different

from other dancing communities because it is mostly concerned with healing and does not create boundaries for self-expression and creativity.

Other dancing communities allow individuals to explore their creative side and often times limit creativity to certain techniques and formulas that need to be applied to the style of dancing. There are also norms for dress and social interaction with a greater emphasis on seeking out sexual partners. For example, in the ballroom and salsa dancing communities, there are specific rules and techniques that need to be utilized particularly due to the fact that these are partner dances. There are also expectations regarding dress and social interaction. At GPD, however, there are no specific norms for how individuals should dance or express their creativity. It is non-judgmental. Instead, people are encouraged to be themselves and if they feel like dancing they may do so in their very own way. This allows individuals to explore their creativity without boundaries and this freedom of expression and lack of judgment is what makes GPD such a healing dance community. GPD offers the psychological freedom and safety that Rogers (1961) suggested is needed in the creative process and points to this most important difference between GPD and other dancing communities.

After analyzing the data, I have concluded that GPD plays the role of a ritualistic dance experience that can be used by individuals who desire to express themselves creatively in the support of an empathic community of support. When an individual engages him or herself in this process of self-expression—one that allows the creative process to take place and does so in the support of a safe and peaceful community—the individual is able to find him or herself in the process of self-actualization.

Give Peace a Dance and Dance Movement Therapy

This brings me to the sub-research question for this study, "what implications does this event have for the application of DMT in community settings?" By studying GPD we can see how this intentional community mirrors some of the work of DMT. I have concluded that the main concepts that make GPD a healing event are: (a) a supportive non-judgmental community; (b) a safe space with physical and psychological freedom; and (c) opportunities to self-express and create or observe the creative experience of others. Dance/movement therapists often utilize these same GPD elements in their group work. For example, DMT utilizes the technique of mirroring also known as empathic reflection which involves the therapist mirroring the movements of a client. This technique offers support and empathy to the client without judgment. Mirroring evokes a sense of acceptance and encourages the individuals to express their feelings safely. This technique was observed frequently among the participants at GPD.

Additionally, because DMT is a creative art therapy, therapists often encourage the exploration of the creative process by asking clients to move in ways that they have never moved before. This exploration can contribute insight to oneself. So with their added understanding of mental health and therapeutic movement, dance/movement therapists have a unique opportunity to create intentional communities like GPD and/or to empower existing communities to become more like GPD. With this in mind, a larger research question suggested by this study was: how can the field of dance/movement therapy be more involved in promoting the therapeutic benefits of dance for a healthier and more integrative American society?

I would like to suggest that the field of DMT has a unique opportunity to become more active in the development of communities and in the creation of more intentional communities and community rituals that support healing through creative expression.

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GPD provides a model for how to do this and the facilitators play a big role in this process. According to Preston Klik:

> We are kind of midwifes because we present the opportunity for people to birth a new aspect of themselves. Our intention is a healing intention at the base. When people come in they can feel the positivity, the clarity, the open-heartedness and you can say yes or no to it but it is there. (Personal communication, January 2011)

Dance/movement therapists should be able to provide these kinds of opportunities to people in their communities so that people can "birth new aspects of themselves". There are plenty of existing communities such as school and neighborhood communities that could benefit from ritualistic community dance celebrations similar to GPD in order to promote peaceful interactions and provide the healing benefits of community and creativity. However, all communities have different needs and expectations. I am not suggesting an exact replica of GPD for all communities, but rather using GPD as a model for the creation of unique ritualistic dance celebrations based on the needs of each particular community.

It is my deep belief that GPD provides dance movement therapists with a model for using dance as a form of community activism, community support and community integration with the tools of creativity and dance. I also believe that dance/movement therapists have been missing this opportunity, and the limited documentation about DMT in the community supports this hypothesis. DMT has a unique opportunity to use dance as a preventive therapy and to change Americans' mentality around dance. Dance/movement therapists can use dance as a form of community activism and can synthesize DMT techniques, community psychology, and GPD principles to develop intentional communities, particularly in areas of high need, such as in violent neighborhoods or unsafe schools.

I would also like to suggest that the expressive community's model be used for other populations in need of support, such as soldiers returning from war. American culture does not currently have any kind of community celebration, community ritual or community support system for returning soldiers. Returning soldiers are expected to come home and readjust to society on their own, and in reality what they need is social support. They need a safe space for celebrating their return and/or expressing their emotions. Most of the support given to returning soldiers is done in clinical settings and the stigma of mental illness discourages many soldiers from seeking these services. A ritualistic monthly celebration such as GPD could provide returning soldiers with the space and opportunity needed to connect to others in a safe environment that fosters creativity and self-expression. Moreover, community dance needs to be promoted as a curative and preventative form of therapy that can be used not only by returning soldiers but by all individuals.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of this study include a small sample size, limited time frame, and the subjective nature of qualitative data analysis. As a result of a small sample size, the results of this project may not reflect the overall feelings and opinions of the entire GPD community. The time of the study took place within a ten-month period, which is a limited amount of time considering that GPD has been taking place for over five years and that people's opinions change over time.

The subjective nature of qualitative data analysis is another limitation of this study. The aim of qualitative data analysis is a complete detailed description of phenomena, but the findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative data analysis can. Only eight participants of GPD were included in this study out of the average 150

people that attended this event on a monthly basis. This only represents the opinion of a small sample size, and even though the results may give an insight into the experience of GPD, they cannot be applied to the entire GPD community.

Additionally, the participants in GPD may not be representative of the entire American society. It is a small cross-section. Certain individuals may not be comfortable with the format of GPD. For example, some people are not comfortable with crowds and might not feel at ease attending an event with over 100 people. Others may have reservations about fire dancing, holding hands and communal blessings. These types of things need to be considered when creating healing dance rituals for any given community. Research on the community needs, limits, and boundaries should be conducted before any kind of community dance ritual is implemented.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The lack of dance rituals and communal dance ceremonies in our communities to support self-actualization and foster the conditions necessary for the creative process is worrisome. Give Peace a Dance (GPD) is a ritualistic, monthly event that promotes community creation while utilizing healing concepts employed by dance/movement therapy (DMT). These concepts are empathic reflection, rhythmic group activity, and symbolism. GPD also acts as a form of community activism to promote more peaceful social interactions among individuals, and as a form of preventative therapy that provides a safe space for individuals to self-express. After conducting research, evaluating the data, and doing a lot of contemplation, I have come to the conclusion that GPD is indeed a good model that demonstrates the potential impact of ritualistic community dance celebrations for the psychological benefit of individuals. However, I am not suggesting that GPD is DMT or can replace clinical work, but rather that it effectively utilizes elements of DMT with positive psychological healing effects. I suggest that more dance/movement therapists look to their communities to enhance, complement, and support the work that is done in clinical settings.

This model offers certain healing qualities of DMT outside the walls of the clinical setting and addresses the lack of social capital underlined by Putman (2000). I recognize the value of DMT work in the clinical setting and its role in the counseling and mental health field. However, it is my belief that dance/movement therapists can also look at mental health from the perspective of community psychology and can use DMT in community settings to promote a more curious, creative, collaborative, and peaceful American society that supports positive social conditions. The community dance model has the potential to minimize conflict and promote a healthier emotional integration of individuals.

Further research needs to be conducted on the topic of DMT as a form of community activism and community development, and I would like to suggest that other communities similar to GPD be studied. For example, on each full moon there is a free public event at Foster beach on Chicago's lakefront called "Full Moon Jam." This has a similar format to GPD except that it is an open public space, and there are no controls regarding the use of drugs and alcohol. Individuals gather there on every full moon to play drums and dance creatively on the beach. It is a very well attended event and is free of charge. There are a couple of other similar events in Chicago such as the one done by the Yoga Now studio called "Chi! Ka! Go!", where Preston Klik of GPD is often times a featured DJ. The "Earth Fest ~ One Love ~ Global Celebration" is another event that takes place once a month on the north side of Chicago which offers healing meditation followed by a dance celebration with world music. I believe that the more we understand the effects that these public community dances have on people, the better prepared we are to design a program for the application of DMT in community settings.

Other research questions that can help guide future research are: how can we encourage the creation of more community dance events to benefit individuals outside of the clinical setting? and should all of these dance events arise spontaneously or should the therapeutic community strive to create them?

The Nobel Peace prize recipient, the Dalai Lama, in the documentary *Ten Questions for the Dalai Lama* prescribed that the solution for world peace is to have more festivals and picnics around the world (Ray, 2006). Even though the Dalai Lama put this lightly, it is my belief that this is precisely what our American society needs; more community celebrations of life and more symbolic rituals that offer us the opportunity to come together as true human beings and celebrate life, promote unity, and support individuals during difficult life transitions. I believe

that GPD plays such a role and as a researcher and dance/movement therapist, I am interested in understanding how to create an intentional community of peace through the creative expression of dance and music, and I hope that other dance therapist are also inspired to do the same.

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Definition of Terms

Body action

Activating body movements or dance actions that help patients in DMT feel both relaxed and stimulated, thus preparing them to express emotions

Community

A group of people with diverse characteristics, linked by social ties, who share common perspectives and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings

Community psychology

 Community psychology is a specialization of psychology that seeks to make changes in such social institutions and communities for the psychological well-being of individuals. Community psychologists analyze threats to individuals' mental health in the context of social environments, such as a social environment's influence on an individual or an individual's struggle to fit within his/her environment.

Creativity

The process of making, of bringing something into being. The creative power or faculty—ability to create.

Contact improvisation

A dance technique in which points of physical contact provide the starting point for exploration through movement improvisation. The improvised dance form is based on the communication between two moving bodies that are in physical contact and their combined relationship to the physical laws that govern their motion—gravity, momentum, inertia.

Fire dancing

Also known as "fire twirling," "fire spinning," "fire performance," or "fire manipulation" is a type of performance arts or disciplines that involve manipulation of objects on fire. Typically these objects have one or more bundles of wicking, which are soaked in fuel and ignited.

Peace

The absence of war and conflict, and the creation of positive social conditions which minimize destructive conflicts and promote human well-being.

Rhythmic Movement Activity

A relationship between group members created by moving together in a similar rhythm action. This relationship provides a structure in which thoughts and feelings are shaped, organized and released and creates solidarity and contagion among people.

Ritual

An extraordinary event involving stylized, repetitive behavior that carries symbolism.

The Mankind Project

MKP is a global not for profit organization that conducts challenging and highly rewarding trainings for men at every stage of life. GPD is a partial fundraiser for the MKP.

Therapeutic Movement Relationship

The communication between a client and the therapist on a movement level. Therapists create relationships with clients through empathic reflection by mirroring the client's movements.

Appendix B

Questions used to guide the interviews

1. How did you learn about GPD?

2. Why do you come to GPD?

3. Where else do you go dancing? Do you attend other events similar to GPD?

4. How long have you been coming to GPD and how often do you attend?

5. Have you used any of the healing services offered here? Which ones and why?

6. Do you think some participants of GPD may use substances that enhance or alter their experience at GPD? What substances do you think they might use?

7. What does GPD mean to you?

8. What are your thoughts about the dancing that takes place at GPD?

9. What are your thoughts about the music that gets played at GPD?

10. What are you thoughts about the drum circle at GPD?

11. Does GPD influence your spiritual beliefs? If yes, how?

12. Does GPD influence your emotions? If yes, how?

13. What does community mean to you?

14. What does peace mean to you?

15. What does self-expression mean to you?

16. Do you think that GPD offers a safe environment to explore your creativity?

17. Do you think that the creative process is important for human beings and why?

18. Have you been able to explore your creative process at GPD and if so how?