

Community Formation through Sacred Harp Singing: “It’s Just *Practice*”

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Introduction

- Need for more research into occupations from the collective perspective¹
- Sacred Harp: group singing tradition practiced in the South since the 18th century
- Research suggests group singing leads to faster social bonding and the formation of a collective identity²

Research Aim

How does community form through the collective occupation of Sacred Harp singing?

Methods

- Qualitative study using a rapid ethnographic approach
- 3 participant observations
- 4 semi-structured individual interviews
- Thematic analysis

Results

Cohesion
through
rituals and
routines

“It’s just what we always do.....we’re calling the group together.”

“It’s a really connected feeling...nothing too lovey-dovey or woeee about it...”

Embodied
connection

Tension as
commitment

“One day I said, ‘let’s not start with 53 at the top’...having that speed-bump got people out of their... ‘oh, are we allowed to do this?’”

Discussion

- Communities serve a variety of purposes, not always interpersonal relationships
- Connectedness can be experienced through embodiment, which emerges from and contributes to the collective occupation experience
- Conflict within a community is an opportunity to practice social inquiry³

Implications

Occupational therapists are called to:

- Intervene in community contexts
- Recognize the diverse purposes and elements of communities
- Support communities in adapting their habits, routines & rituals

References

1. Lavalley, R. (2017). Developing the transactional perspective of occupation for communities: “How well are we doing together?” *Journal of Occupational Science*, 24(4), 458-469.
2. Pearce, E., Launay, J. Machin, A. & Dunbar, R.I. (2016). Is group singing special? Health, well-being and social bonds in community-based adult education classes.
3. Cutchin, M. P., Dickie, V. A. & Humphry, R. A. (2017) Foregrounding the transactional perspective’s community orientation, *Journal of Occupational Science*, 24:4, 434-445.