# AN INVESTIGATION INTO CIRCLE DANCE AS A MEDIUM TO PROMOTE OCCUPATIONAL WELL-BEING

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# Acknowledgements

The completion of this dissertation symbolises a significant milestone in my life. It is the fruit of many years working as an occupational therapist and a circle dance teacher, and is imbued with my passion for understanding the world from multiple points of view. As a path of transformation and growth, this PhD has enriched my life professionally, academically and personally.

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# Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father, José Borges da Costa, whose determination, dedication and perseverance have inspired me to pursue my aspirations and fulfil my dreams.

# PhD Thesis Abstract

Circle dance, which derives from the tradition of folk dances, is a popular form of dance and is practised worldwide. As a form of meaningful physical and leisure activity, circle dance can be explored in the context of occupational therapy principles and practices to promote health and well-being. However, to date, the synergy between circle dance, occupational therapy and well-being has yet to be explored. This research develops an understanding of the complexity and meanings attributed to circle dance and its impact on occupational well-being and considers how pedagogic practice might facilitate a sense of well-being in participants.

Using a constructivist approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), thirty nine in-depth interviews with participants, teachers and coordinators of teacher training programmes from the circle dance network in the United Kingdom (U.K.) were undertaken. The process of simultaneous data collection and analysis culminated in the development of three major categories, representing the meanings and experiences of circle dance participants, teachers and training coordinators. From the intersection of the three major categories, a core category was generated and named by an in-vivo code "There is a place for everybody". The findings of this study suggest that engagement in circle dance creates meaning and can influence people's health and well-being; they also highlight the important role that pedagogical practice plays in enriching the experience of the participants and in sustaining occupational engagement and continued involvement.

This investigation provides a detailed knowledge of the process of being engaged in circle dance, whilst informing occupational therapy practice and advancing occupation-based knowledge in the field of leisure, physical activity and wellbeing. It also makes a unique contribution in relation to the pedagogy of circle dance and

informs teachers from within the U.K. network offering a comprehensive understanding of the benefits of circle dance.

# Prologue

The inspiration to undertake this doctoral journey goes back to 1992 when I first encountered circle dance during a work experience placement in Italy[1]. Circle dance has, since then, impacted on my life, both personally and professionally. I also believe that lifelong learning is fundamental for my own development and growth as an individual and as a professional. This has ultimately led me to pursue a doctoral pathway which has helped me to understand circle dance from a different angle, gain a deeper knowledge of this topic and, therefore, has enriched my practice, both as an occupational therapist and as a circle dance teacher.

I have undertaken this study essentially from the perspective of three identities: from that of an occupational therapist, of a circle dancer teacher (and circle dancer) and that of a researcher. As an occupational therapist, working with people in the field of mental health for over twenty four years, I have been led to believe that occupations give structure, form and meaning to what people do and to what they are and therefore can have an impact on their sense of well-being. I consider it fundamental practice to explore and to attempt to understand what motivates people to engage in different occupations and to discover how they find meaning and satisfaction in their daily lives. Furthermore, I have always been interested in exploring the value of group activities and shared occupations which can elucidate elements such as sense of belonging, inclusion and participation. As a circle dancer and circle dance teacher, I was interested in understanding and exploring the dynamic process and complexities of this form of dance in order to increase my understanding of a topic which has inspired my practice and my personal life. Moreover, as an occupational therapist teaching circle dance, I

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[1] This will be further explored in chapter 4, section 4.4.

wanted to explore the pedagogical element of circle dance and its impact on people's sense of well-being.

From the perspective of a qualitative researcher, I wanted to immerse myself in the experiences of circle dancers in order to understand the meanings they attribute to them and to explore the impact of this occupation on people's lives. This study was influenced by a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) and is also congruent with both the occupational therapy training which I undertook at the University of São Paulo, Brazil (from 1985 to 1988) and my practice as an occupational therapist since then, which was embedded in principles of multi-realities and partial truths (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

I have also embarked on this doctoral journey with my own personal attitude of being reflective and open to challenges which led me to develop new ways of understanding a highly relevant and meaningful occupation (circle dance) both personally and professionally.

Academically, this study is informed by a contemporary trend in occupational therapy and occupational science and the need for sound evidence-based practice. I hope to respond to the need for further research in the context of occupational therapy and occupational science in order to extend the knowledge of the dynamic process involved in occupations (Hocking, 2000; 2009; Kronenberg et al., 2005; Wilcock, 2006; 2007; Hammell, 2008).

# Chapter 1 Introduction

The significance of well-being, both at individual and community levels, has long been a topic of research and interest from an interdisciplinary perspective, including the fields of social sciences, occupational therapy, occupational science, psychology and leisure studies. In all these fields there is a growing recognition that the concept of well-being is multifaceted and complex.

The foundation of occupational therapy advocates a link between occupation and well-being (Wilcock, 2006). At the core of occupational therapy lies the use of occupation as an agent of individual and collective change and the belief that people are innately active beings who benefit from engaging in meaningful occupations (Hasselkus, 2002; Wilcock, 2006; 2007; Polatajko and Townsend, 2007; Hammell, 2008; Kielhofner, 2008). This concept encompasses the idea that through being active, we learn about ourselves, develop skills, maintain our physical and mental health, interact with others and construct and transform our reality (Finlay,1997; Peloquin, 2011). A contemporary occupational therapy philosophy based on the social model of health is embedded in a broader concept of occupation, which emphasizes the importance of the balance between productivity, self-care and leisure, placing its impact on the promotion of health and well-being in a wider context. From this perspective, delivering and broadening occupation-focused practice to extend opportunities for all people to achieve their potential and improve their sense of well-being should be prioritised (Kronenberg et al., 2005; Wilcock, 2006).

Although dance, as a topic of inquiry, has been explored from different viewpoints (dance therapy, dance education, history of dance), there is still little understanding of the relationship between dance and well-being in the context of occupational therapy and occupational science.  Only a few researchers (Connor,

2000; Graham, 2002; Froggett and Little, 2012), to date, have explored dance as an occupation which could influence people's sense of well-being. Circle dance, in particular, remains an unexplored vehicle for promoting well-being through occupational therapy.

This study explores the connection between circle dance, occupational therapy and well-being. In order to introduce the topic of my research, I will briefly contextualise dance and circle dance.  Next I will discuss my motivation for conducting the study. Finally I will present the rationale for the study before outlining the aims and objectives of this investigation. The structure of the thesis will be presented at the end of this chapter.

## 1.1 Contextualising circle dance

Dance is the language of movement and the body, a complete and complex language, which enables individuals to manifest their essence, their culture and their history. It is a way of physically integrating movement, expression, thoughts and feelings and, as a non-verbal language, of communicating meanings and of expressing what cannot be described with words. Dance can also be defined as human behaviour that consists of expressive movements that are purposeful, culturally defined, intentionally rhythmical, frequently accompanied by music, with aesthetic value, and symbolic potential (Hanna, 1998). As a language of transformation, dance can be instrumental in facilitating the individual's creative potential, raising self-awareness, enhancing communication, encouraging personal growth and social interaction (Chorodow, 1991).

Dance is an art-form which does not depend on an intermediate element to make it concrete. Sachs (1937) states that dance can be considered the mother of the arts, as "the creator and the thing created [creation], the artist and the work are

still one and the same thing": before human beings expressed their experience of life through materials, they did so with their own body (p.3). As an ancient form of expression, dance is acknowledged as being present throughout the history of humankind and as being part of all societies. Dance, like all art-forms, is a result of human beings' need for self-expression; it is part of one's nature, as old as human beings' actual existence. The significance of dance for humankind throughout history has been explored by various researchers and theorists (Sharp, 1924; Sachs, 1937; Boucier, 1987; Portinari, 1989; M.G. Wosien, 1992). As a highly complex human activity, dance has served many purposes and still does: communal, religious, recreational, educational, social, theatrical, therapeutic, traditional / cultural. It has developed a multiplicity of styles, forms and movements, from classical ballet to modern dance, folk dance, circle dance to dance therapy, dance education, which proliferate, prosper, decline and change according to social, cultural and historical context.

As one of the types of dance which have evolved over time, circle dance is a revival of a very ancient art form, which for thousands of years has allowed different cultures and peoples to express themselves in movement in a variety of ways. Historically, the circle is the earliest space form in dancing; there is evidence of circle dances in many traditions, being performed by people from every continent (Sachs, 1937). Modern circle dance derives from the tradition of folk dance and the repertoire includes traditional dances from different countries and cultures in addition to contemporary choreographies. Whereas folk-dancing groups tend to restrict themselves to one particular (national) style, circle dance teachers can draw on the whole repertoire of folk dances from around the world. The participants hold hands in a circle and repeat a pattern of steps, following the rhythm dictated by the music and related to specific dances. The choreographies range from simple to complex arrangements of steps and can involve different

group formations such as dancing in a circle or in lines.  As a shared occupation, the integration and inclusion of the participants is a fundamental aspect of circle dance (Borges da Costa, 2012). As a taught occupation, circle dance involves a pedagogic component which can be explored in order to understand its influence on the participants' experience.

In the U.K. the Circle Dance movement was instigated by a former German ballet master, choreographer and researcher of folk dances, Bernhard Wosien (2006), following an event in October 1976, at the Findhorn Community[2], Scotland, where he was invited to teach a compilation of folk dances and to present his ideas related to the use of this form of dance in communities[3]. Since then, the movement has been disseminated throughout the U.K. and other European countries as well as world-wide. Currently, the Circle Dance network includes groups which are active in Africa, Australia, Europe, North America and South America.

In the U.K. there are approximately 270 circle dance teachers, offering regular sessions of circle dance to local communities, workshops and events. Two teacher training programmes provided by experienced teachers are available. The Circle Dance network has its own journal, *The Grapevine*[4], and a not-for-profit company, *Circle Dance Friends Company Limited*[5] (Thompson, 2011).  Around 260 regular circle dance groups are listed in *The Grapevine* in addition to workshops and events. Long term involvement is usually one feature of this group activity.

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[2] Findhorn Community  is a "spiritual community, ecovillage and an international centre for holistic education" founded 50 years ago (Findhorn Foundation, n.d.)
[3] Other aspects of the roots of the Circle Dance movement will be further explored in chapter 2.
[4] The first edition was published in 1984 (Roberts, 2011). At the present time, there are around 580 subscribers  in the U.K. alone (there are also international subscribers).
[5] The company was created in 2002.

## 1.2 Motivation for conducting the investigation

This research has evolved from my experience as an occupational therapist, working in the field of mental health for over twenty four years, and as a circle dance teacher for the past eighteen years, in a clinical setting as well as in non-clinical settings and community groups. As an occupational therapist, I have always been interested in how to facilitate people's engagement in meaningful occupations and how this can contribute to their sense of well-being. Reflecting on my practice has led me to question what meanings people attribute to this form of dance and what their motivation and aspirations are which lie behind their participation. Having first introduced circle dance to the curriculum of occupational therapy at the University of São Paulo in 1995 (Borges da Costa, 1998) and having later added a regular extra-curricular circle dance class for health professionals there, I was led to enquire about the pedagogy of circle dance and the impact of this form of dance on people's occupational experience. These two aspects, the experiential nature of circle dance and its pedagogic elements, provide the foundation for the aims and objectives of the investigation, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

## 1.3 The rationale for the investigation

In the U.K., along with the various strategies to encourage participation in physical activities developed by the Department of Health (DoH 2004a; 2004b; 2009), the College of Occupational Therapists (2005, 2008) has recommended that promoting and providing opportunities for a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity, and supporting the provision of, or access to, affordable facilities and opportunities for exercise and recreation should be one of the key roles in the

promotion of health and well-being. In this context, circle dance can be a modality which occupational therapists can use to enable people to be physically engaged in active occupations. As a shared occupation, circle dance requires the participants to work as a group, towards a common goal; it cannot be performed satisfactorily by an individual and the collective aspect is fundamental to making it happen. Hence, it can provide an opportunity for developing and maintaining connections with others, fostering a sense of belonging and improving one's sense of well-being (Wilcock, 2006; Hammell, 2009a).

The links between circle dance, occupational therapy and well-being have yet to be fully explored. Circle dance may provide a new avenue for extending services into health-promoting physical activity programmes in the community. In this context, circle dance used as a physically active leisure occupation in clinical settings as well as in non-institutional settings and community groups, could generate satisfaction and provide an opportunity to enhance self-esteem, motivation and socialization. As a meaningful and fulfilling occupation, it can, ultimately, help people to achieve a sense of occupational well-being (Borges da Costa, 2012).

The overall focus of this research is to develop an understanding of the complexity and meanings attributed to circle dance and its impact on one's sense of occupational well-being, generating a detailed knowledge of the process of being engaged in this shared occupation.  It will also consider how pedagogic practice might induce a sense of well-being in participants. Hammell (2009b) suggests that "theories of occupation should reflect the priorities and occupational experiences of a diversity of people" (p.113). If occupation needs to be re-conceptualised in terms of how people experience it, this study can contribute to the body of knowledge related to the development of a theoretical framework in

which the occupational experience of participating in circle dance can be prioritised socially and culturally contextualised at the present time.

This research aims to provide an understanding of the process of being engaged in circle dance and the potential contribution of this leisure occupation to well-being through the subject field of occupational therapy, enhancing the theoretical framework related to occupation-based practices in the domain of health promotion and well-being. A more contemporary trend of occupational therapy and occupational science was chosen as an appropriate framework for this study, as it suggests that the role of the occupational therapist should be extended to provide occupational opportunities for all people,  developing approaches outside of the health care context, contributing to the well-being of communities and the prevention of physical and mental ill-health whilst focussing on human beings as occupational beings (Kronenberg et al., 2005; 2011; Wilcock, 2006; 2007; Hammell, 2008 ; 2009a).  In this perspective, the understanding of the relationship between occupation and health in populations, backed up by extensive and sound research, is of primary importance to advance the occupation-based knowledge base (Yerxa et al. 1990; Wilcock, 2006; Tonneijck et al., 2008). Within this framework, the focus of this study is on the experience of able bodied people who are engaged in circle dance as a leisure occupation, outside the context of the health care system and clinical settings, in order to provide an understanding of the process of being engaged in this form of leisure occupation, named circle dance.

## 1.4 Research questions

Reviewing what has been researched provides insight into aspects that have not received attention in the academic field (Hocking, 2000). In this context, the links between circle dance, occupational therapy and well-being have yet to be fully explored. This investigation reflects a contemporary trend of occupational therapy and occupational science, which embraces practices beyond the clinical setting and considers the importance of meaningful occupation for all. I would argue that the pedagogical aspects of circle dance would facilitate the engagement of people in a meaningful physical occupation, improving their sense of well-being. By providing a study which prioritises the subjective occupational experience of participants of circle dance and explores the relationship of this occupation with well-being, I hope to respond to the need for further research in the context of occupational therapy and occupational science in order to extend the knowledge of the dynamic process involved in occupations (Hocking, 2000; 2009; Kronenberg et al., 2005; Wilcock, 2006; 2007; Hammell, 2008).

The central research question for this study is:

> A. What are the subjective occupational experiences of people who engage in circle dance?

The sub-research questions are as follows:

> 1. How do participants perceive the benefits of circle dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being?
>    a. What are the meanings and purposes that participants attribute to circle dance?
>    b. How can circle dance, as a shared occupation, facilitate a sense of belonging amongst participants?

2. To what extent could circle dance pedagogy facilitate a sense of achievement of occupational well-being?

    a. What are the experiences, background and motivation of circle dance teachers?

    b. To what extent does circle dance teaching facilitate a qualitative sense of achievement of occupational well-being amongst participants?

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis

This first chapter introduces the research topic and sets the scene for the study, the motivation for conducting the study, a brief overview of circle dance and its relevance to occupational therapy. The rationale for the study is discussed and the research questions are outlined.

Chapter 2 explores the three domains pertaining to this study - occupational therapy (O.T.), circle dance and well-being. Divided into three main sections, this chapter discusses and defines these territories and delineates the working concepts and the perspectives relevant to this study. It also reviews the literature available in these areas, identifying their potential contribution to this investigation and the gaps in knowledge.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology selected to answer the research questions, justifies the relevance of a qualitative approach and discusses the theoretical paradigm selected to guide this study. The grounded theory method is presented: its origins, history and available approaches are considered. The relevance of the constructivist version of grounded theory for this investigation is then discussed.

To finalise the chapter, an overview of the use of grounded theory in occupational therapy and occupational science is given.

Chapter 4 focuses on the data and methods applied in this study. The ethical procedures are outlined at the beginning of the chapter, followed by data management procedures. Access to the research field is presented in the next sub-section, including the sampling strategies and the characteristics of the respondents. The methodological procedures of data collection and data analysis applied throughout the research are defined. This chapter also presents a reflection of the position of the researcher and the criteria selected to evaluate the research. Closing this chapter, an overview of the theoretical model is provided.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 report the findings of the study. Chapter 5 presents the experience of the participants, the meanings and purposes they attributed to circle dance, and reveals how the participants perceived the benefits of circle dance. Chapter 6 reflects the experience of circle dance teachers and incorporates aspects relevant to the didactic elements, and includes the motivational factors for becoming circle dance teachers and their perceived roles. Chapter 7 represents the viewpoints of the teacher training coordinators. The core category, representing the culmination of the perspectives of the participants, teachers and coordinators, is discussed in chapter 8.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis, presenting a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature and explores new theoretical understandings related to the experience of the respondents.  I will discuss the implications for occupational therapy practice that are borne out by this study as well as for the circle dance network. The practice model developed from the study and its contribution to knowledge will be discussed. The limitations of the research and the recommendation for future research will also be explored later in this sub-section.

To conclude this chapter, the chosen evaluative criteria (Charmaz, 2006) will be considered and discussed in relation to my research study and a reflective section will be presented.

# Chapter 2 Occupational therapy, circle dance and well- being

This chapter presents the theoretical framework within which the research was conducted. This study addresses the interplay between three main domains: occupational therapy (O.T.), circle dance and well-being (figure 1) by investigating the perceived benefits of this form of physical activity, understanding its complexity, and exploring the pedagogy of circle dance and its impact on the participants' experiences. In order to clarify these territories and define the working terms adopted, the three domains will be presented and the available literature will be discussed, with the intention of drawing some propositions related to the synergy between them.

**Figure 1 The three domains: occupational therapy, circle dance and well-being**
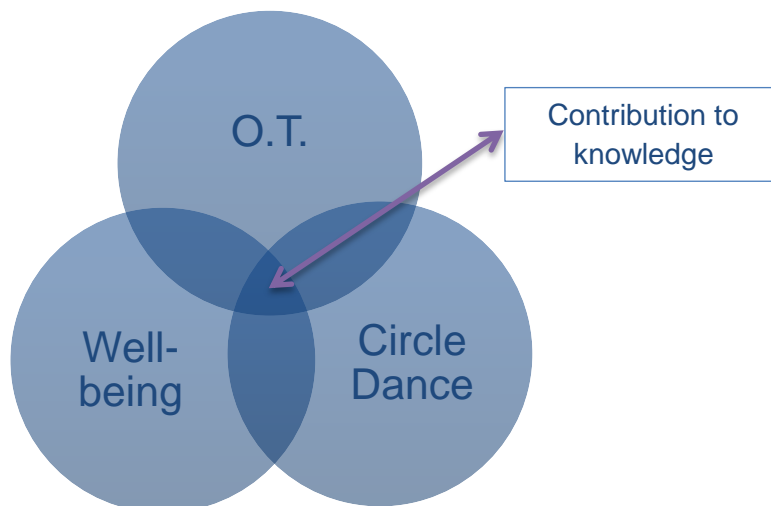
## 2.1 The conceptual foundation of occupational therapy

The primary intention of this section is to explore some of the principles and concepts of occupational therapy which are relevant to the study of circle dance and to define the working terms adopted. A definition of occupational therapy will be presented in order then to discuss the conceptualisation of occupation, the central element of the profession; a working definition of the term will be given. Considerations related to the influence of the social model of health on occupational therapy practice will be presented in order to address the use of artistic and leisure occupations, where circle dance can be located in terms of categorisation, and to review the literature available.

### 1.1.1 Defining occupational therapy and occupational science

Occupational therapy is a client-centred health profession concerned with promoting health and well-being through occupation. The meaning and purpose that people place on occupation and activities are crucial to improving their quality of life and realising their fullest potential (Creek, 2003). It encompasses the idea that the engagement of an individual in purposeful, meaningful and fulfilling occupations should lead to feelings of well-being, providing also a positive impact on one's self-esteem, motivation and socialization (Wilcock, 2006). The World Federation of Occupational Therapy (2012) states that:

> Occupational therapy is a client-centred health profession concerned with promoting health and well-being through occupation. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in the activities of everyday life. Occupational therapists achieve this outcome by working with people and communities to enhance their ability to engage in the

occupations they want to, need to, or are expected to do, or by modifying the occupation or the environment to better support their occupational engagement (WFOT, 2012).

The discipline of occupational therapy was created and named at the end of 19th century and early 20th century (Law et al., 1998). As a relatively new profession, it has evolved and is still growing worldwide. A contemporary perspective of the profession incorporates practices in all areas within a more inclusive framework, incorporating approaches to health promotion and well-being, to social and cultural themes and to reflective and critical thinking (Townsend 1997a, 1999; Law et al., 1998; Wilcock, 1998b; 2006; Christiansen, 1999; CAOT, 2002; Creek, 2003; Hammell, 2004; COT 2006; 2008; Doble and Santha, 2008; Kielhofner, 2008; Polatajko and Townsend 2007). A comprehensive definition has been proposed by Creek (2003):

> An approach to health and social care that focuses on the nature, balance, pattern and context of occupations and activities in the lives of individuals, family groups and communities. Occupational therapy is concerned with the meaning and purpose that people place on occupations and activities and with the impact of illness, disability, social deprivation or economic deprivation on their ability to carry out those occupations and activities. The main aim of occupational therapy is to maintain, restore or create a balance, beneficial to the individual, between the abilities of the person, the demands of her/his occupations in the areas of self-care, productivity and leisure and the demands of the environment (Creek, 2003, p.56).

More recently, an interdisciplinary field of study named 'occupational science' has been developed and named in 1989 by a faculty team at the University of Southern California led by Elizabeth Yerxa (1990). As an academic discipline,

occupational science is defined as "…the study of the human as an occupational being including the need for and capacity to engage in and orchestrate daily occupations in the environment over the lifespan" (Yerxa et al. ,1990, p.7). Occupational science can also be defined as "the rigorous study of humans as occupational beings" (Wilcock, 2006, p.343). Fundamental for the founders of this discipline was to provide a foundational knowledge for occupational therapy, investigating occupation "as it related to both ability and disability" (Molke et al., 2004, p.270). The meaning of occupation is of primordial importance and relevance for both occupational therapy and occupational science. However, it has been conceptualised and used in different ways; there is no single definition which could construct a strong and unified theory of occupation. For some scholars, this fact opens the possibility of extending the scope of research related to occupations and continuing to explore the complexity of the term as well as the experience of being engaged in occupations (Yerxa et al., 1990). Hence, it is relevant to present an overview of the definitions used in the context of occupational therapy and occupational science in order then to clarify the working concept adopted for this investigation.

## 1.1.2 Conceptualising occupation

As a multifaceted concept, occupation can be defined from different perspectives and approaches. A generic definition describes occupation as *a* "job or profession; a way of spending time; the action, state, or period of occupying or being occupied "(Oxford English Dictionary, 2011). This idea implies a strong and simple correlation of occupation with paid work and expenditure of time, which does not reflect the scope of this central term for occupational therapy and occupational science arenas. As a complex and multi-layered term, occupation has been conceptualised by scholars and theorists incorporating elements related to a more comprehensive definition. It is also important to clarify that some

occupational therapists tend to refer to 'activity' and 'occupation' as being synonymous. However, the term 'activity' refers to "the state or quality of being active" (Collins English Dictionary, 2010), whereas 'occupation' "includes the use of activity but also implies involvement in what is being done" (Creek, 1990, p.22). Activity can be also defined as "the basic unit of a task" (CAOT, 1997, p.33). Pierce (2001) suggests a distinct differentiation between occupation and activity as follows: the first term is defined as "a person's personally constructed, one-time experience within a unique context"; the latter, as "a more general, culturally shared idea about a category of action" (p.138). As a central concept in occupational therapy and occupational science, many theorists and scholars have defined occupation from different perspectives. Adopting a comprehensive viewpoint, Law et al. (1997) state that:

> Occupation refers to groups of activities and tasks of everyday life, named, organized and given value and meaning by individuals, and a culture. Occupation is everything that people do to occupy himself or herself, including looking after himself or herself (self-care), enjoying life (leisure), and contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities (productivity) (p.34).

Reed and Sanderson (1980) define occupation as "any activity which engages a person's resources of time and energy and is composed of skills and values" (p.29). Kielhofner (1980) extends this concept highlighting the meaningful component of the definition:

> The purposeful use of time by humans to fulfil their own internal urges toward exploring and mastering their environment at the same time fulfils the requirements of the social group to which they belong and personal needs for self-maintenance (p.659).

Johnson (1973) acknowledges value and self-worth when conceptualising occupation as "any goal-directed activity meaningful to the individual and providing feedback about his worth and value as an individual and about his interrelatedness to others" (p.234). Creek (2003) adds the role of the structure provided when people engage in occupation and social identity: "occupation defines and organises a sphere of action over a period of time and is perceived by the individual as part of his/her personal and social identity" (p.55).

Bringing an important theoretical contribution within occupational therapy and occupational science fields, Ann Allart Wilcock (1993; 1998a; 1998b; 2006) proposed a model - 'An Occupational Perspective of Health' - in which occupation is considered "a central aspect of the human experience" (1993, p.17). In 1998, at the World Federation of Occupational Therapists Congress in Montreal, Wilcock (1998a) presented a keynote address putting forward a definition of occupation based specifically upon meaning "as a synthesis of doing, being, and becoming" (p.249) and discussing the relationship between occupation and health. For Wilcock (1993), occupation is primordial for human existence, as "it enables individuals to utilise their biological capacities and potential, and thereby flourish" (p.23). In this context, occupation is defined as:

> All that people need, want, or are obliged to do; what it means to them; and its ever-present potential as an agent of change. It encapsulates doing, being and becoming (Wilcock, 2006, p. 343).

The component of 'doing' incorporates purposeful action, goal-orientated tasks, defines occupation and it is associated with survival. For Wilcock (2006), doing "is so important in people's lives that it is impossible to envisage them without it" (p.78) and it is also considered a determinant factor in well-being or illness (p.77). The notion of 'being' "requires that people have time to discover themselves, to

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think, to reflect and, to simply exist" and to find meaning in what they do (Wilcock, 1998a, p.250). The 'becoming' aspect is related to "the notions of potential and growth, of transformation and self-actualisation" (1998a, p.251). As a result of Wilcock's research into the trilogy of "doing, being and becoming", a fourth element – 'belonging' – was included as "the contextual element of the connectedness of people to each other as they do and of the major place of relationship within health" (Wilcock, 2007, p.5).

This definition opens the possibility to incorporate a variety[6] of occupations related to everyday life, considering their meaning and purposes for individuals and to realise their transformative component (Wilcock, 1998a, p.249). This conceptualisation expands the role of occupation beyond therapeutic tools and suggests that "doing, being and becoming are integral to health and well-being for everyone and to occupational therapy philosophy, process and outcomes, because together they epitomise occupation" (Wilcock, 1999, p.10). In this context, circle dance could be defined as a purposeful and meaningful occupation which can have an impact on people's lives. Hence, it seems appropriate to adopt this definition for this investigation.  For the purpose of this study, circle dance will be then defined as a human occupation which encapsulates the elements of doing, being, becoming and belonging.

The concept of meaningful occupation will be explored in the next section as it represents one of the core concepts in occupation therapy and occupational science. As the one of the aims of this study is linked with an exploration of the meanings of circle dance, is relevant to clarify this concept, which will be also pursued further at different points of the thesis.

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[6] The categorisation of occupations will be addressed in the sub-section 2.1.3.

### 2.1.2.1 Meaningful occupation

As a basic term in occupational therapy and occupational science, 'meaningful occupation' has been explored by many scholars (Nelson, 1988; 1996; Crabtree, 1998; Hasselkus, 2002; Hammell, 2004; Wilcock, 2006; Pemberton and Cox, 2011; 2013) with the intention of theorising this important concept. Hasselkus (2002) proposed that "occupation is a powerful source of meaning in our lives, meaning arises from occupation and occupation arises from meaning" (p.14). Other theories of occupation, in particular the theory of the human need for occupation articulated by Wilcock (1998b; 2006), reflect clearly the idea that meaning and everyday occupation are essentials for life. Coherent with this perspective, Crabtree (1998) states that it is the nature of humans to make meaning from occupation.

Some theorists have also suggested that occupational therapists should differentiate between the purposes and the meanings of occupations in order to gain a better understanding of what they mean by occupation. Nelson (1988; 1996) defines purpose as "the goal orientation of the individual and the link between the individual's developmental structure and occupational performance" (Nelson, 1988, p.636). Furthermore, meaning can be defined as "the sense that the person makes of a situation" which includes perceptual, symbolic, and affective experience (Nelson, 1996, p.776). Trombly (1995) suggests that purposefulness and meaningfulness are the two dimensions of occupation: the former, organises the individual's time and behaviour, and the latter motivates the individual's performance in occupation. Pemberton and Cox (2011) propose that the quality and meanings of occupations are also related to aspects of time and rhythm. For these authors, it is important "to locate the occupation within both the internal and the external temporal context of the individual" (p.81) in order to understand the reciprocal relationship between occupation and time.

Focussing on the meanings of occupation, Hammell (2004) proposed that "occupation might be best understood, not as divisible activities of self-care, productivity and leisure, but as dimensions of meaning" (p.297). In this context, it is proposed that the components of "doing, being, becoming and belonging" (Wilcock, 1998a) can be used to describe these dimensions. Similarly, Hasselkus (2002) highlighted that the components of "being" and "becoming", in particular, can be strongly linked with the notion of meaning of occupation. Furthermore, Pemberton and Cox (2013) suggest that time should be seen as "a dimension of being" (p.4). From this perspective, occupational therapists need to consider the temporal aspects related to occupations as broader than just the linear measure of time, shifting "from the clock time perspective of time use to a dynamic event time paradigm animated by tempo and temporality" (p.13). These conceptualisations appear to be relevant for this study as they can shed light into some aspects related to the meaning people attributed to circle dance.

For some theorists, spirituality is considered to be one of the facets of the notion of meaning of occupation. The model of occupational performance articulated by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT, 1991) explicitly incorporated spirituality as one of four performance components which they define as "the force that permeates and gives meaning to all life" (p.142). Later in 1997, a revision of this concept was suggested as: "a pervasive life force, manifestation of a higher self, source of will and self-determination, and a sense of meaning, purpose and connectedness that people experience in the context of their environment" (CAOT, 1997, p.182). Spirituality "resides in persons, is shaped by the environment, and gives meaning to occupations" (CAOT, 1997, p.33). It is also relevant to differentiate spirituality from the concept of religion: the latter "refers to corporate, more formalized, aspects of spirituality, such as belief, dogma and ritual" (Howard and Howard, 1997, p.181). In this perspective, an

individual can "experience the spiritual within a religious context, but also outside of it" (CAOT, 1997, p.3).

Theoretical interpretations of spirituality have been carried out for occupational therapy practice. For Urbanowski and Vargo (1994) spirituality "may be defined as the experience of meaning in everyday life" (p.89), emphasising "what people do in their lives, and how they experience these activities" as the essence of spirituality (p.91). Hammell (2001) proposes that the term "intrinsicality" is more appropriate than "spirituality" to refer to the source of meaning. Intrinsicality is "influenced by environmental context, constitutes the essence of the self; the source of volition and self-determination and of choices based upon personal values and priorities" (p.193). Furthermore, Hammell (2001) states that this term facilitates recognition of the personal dimensions of meaning which inform occupational choices and are expressed and experienced through occupation (p.192).

### 2.1.2.2   Understanding occupation from other perspectives

Outside the occupational therapy and occupational science fields, the symbolic interactionist perspective (Mead, 1934; Strauss, 1959) appears to be significant for this discussion as it "addresses the active processes through which people create and mediate meanings. Meanings arise out of actions, and in turn influence actions. This perspective assumes that individuals are active, creative and reflective and that social life consists of processes" (Charmaz, 2006, p.189). From this theory, derives the idea that human actions are not only purposeful but they are embedded in meaning, both for the individual and for others. It could be argued that 'human actions' in this perspective have parallels with the concept of occupation.

Other theories have also contributed to the understanding of the concept of occupation. For the purpose of this study, the theory of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 2007) will be explored due to their relevance and contribution to the relationship between occupation and health and also to study the meaning of the experience of occupation. These concepts appear also appropriate for exploring the meanings of circle dance.

*Flow*

The concept of *'flow'* was developed by a psychologist, Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1975; 1992) to explain 'optimal experience'. 'Flow' is a subjective psychological state that occurs when one is totally engaged in an activity[7] and is present under the following set of conditions: sense of competence in executing the activity; requirement of concentration; clarity of goals of the activity; immediate feedback from the activity; sense of deep, focused involvement in the activity; sense of control in completing the activity; loss of self-consciousness during the activity; sense of time is truncated during the activity (1990, pp.48-67). Certain activities such as "making music, rock climbing, dancing, sailing, chess and so forth are designed to make optimal experience easier to achieve. They have rules that require the learning of skills, they set up goals, they provide feedback, they make control possible" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.72). It is relevant to note for this study that, for Csikszentmihalyi (1992), physical activities contribute to 'optimal experience' as they involve body and mind and dance, in particular, "is probably the oldest and the most significant, both for its universal appeal and because of its potential complexity" (p.99).

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[7] It is important to note that Csikszentmihalyi's use of the term 'activity' can be considered as synonymous of occupation.

The theory of 'flow' has evolved over the past 30 years. Many studies have been conducted by Csikszentmihalyi and his associates (Csikszentmihalyi and McCormack, 1986; Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter, 2003) as well as by other theorists and scholars. In the field of occupational therapy and occupational science, flow as a phenomenon can help "to understand how occupation may help people attain the highest level of well-being" (Wright , 2004, p.73) and to study the meaning of the experience of occupation. 'Flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993) has also been acknowledged by Wilcock (2006) as compatible with her approach (p.183).

*Serious leisure*

The concept of 'serious leisure' has become a dominant notion in leisure studies over the past 30 years. Its principal exponent Robert A. Stebbins defines serious leisure as:

> …the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centered on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience (Stebbins, 2007, p.5).

Although the adjective 'serious' appeared to contradict the common sense association of leisure with pleasurable and non-obligatory occupations carried out during free-time, the word 'serious' in this conceptualisation is related to qualities of "earnestness, sincerity, importance, and carefulness" (Stebbins, 2009, p.9). Six distinct qualities characterised 'serious leisure': the need to persevere; the opportunity to follow a leisure career; significant personal effort required to gain knowledge and skill; realisation of durable benefits (self-actualisation, self-

enrichment, regeneration or renewal of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and sense of belonging); unique ethos and social world; and an attractive personal and social identity (Stebbins, 2007, pp.11-13). The rewards of serious leisure are defined as follows:

> Personal rewards: personal enrichment; self-actualization; self-expression; self-image; self-gratification; re-creation (regeneration) of oneself; financial return.

> Social rewards: social attraction; group accomplishment; contribution to the maintenance and development of the group (Stebbins, 2007, p.14).

The Serious Leisure Perspective is a theoretical framework designed to understand and classify leisure activities. Stebbins (2007) also defines two other forms of leisure thus: 'casual leisure' and 'project-based leisure'. Casual leisure, in contrast to serious leisure and conceptualised at the same time of serious leisure (1982), has been defined as "an immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable core activity, requiring little or no special training to enjoy it" (2007, p.38). Project-based leisure is a concept developed in 2005 (Stebbins, 2005) and related to "a short-term, moderately complicated, either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time" (Stebbins, 2007, p.43). Out of the three forms of leisure, the concept of 'serious leisure' appears to be the most apt for exploring the meanings and purposes of circle dance in people's lives.

The serious leisure perspective also incorporates an important concept of 'devotee work' or 'occupation devotion' which could shed light onto the motivations of the circle dance teachers. Stebbins (2004) proposed the following definition:

Occupation devotion is a strong, positive attachment to a form of self-enhancing work, where the sense of achievement is high and the core activity (set of basic tasks) is endowed with such intense appeal that this work and leisure become virtually one and the same (Stebbins, 2004, p.9).

This concept incorporates six criteria: the valued core activity must be profound; it must offer significant variety and must also offer significant opportunity for creative or innovative work, as a valued expression of individual personality; the would-be devotee must have reasonable control over the amount and disposition of time put into the occupation (the value of freedom of action); the would-be devotee must have both an aptitude and a taste for the work in question; the devotees must work in a physical and social milieu that encourages them to pursue often and without significant constraint the core activity (Stebbins, 2004, p. 9). It is important to note that parallels between the characteristics / criteria of serious leisure and devotee work can be drawn, suggesting that both concepts "occupy a great deal of common ground" (Stebbins, 2009, p. 23).

Recently, Stebbins (2009) has developed the notion of positive sociology, a new scholarly field which is defined as "the study of what people do to organize their lives such that those lives become, in combination, substantially rewarding, satisfying, and fulfilling" (p.xi). Positive sociology emphasises the idea of leisure as a domain of life "capable of generating health benefits" (p.97) and its relevance for quality of life and well-being. From this perspective, this new field can also contribute to the framework of preventive medicine (Stebbins, 2009, p.97). It could be argued that there are parallels between Stebbins' approach (that of positive sociology) and Wilcock's approach (2006), which emphasises the role of prevention and understands the important role that occupation plays in this.

### 2.1.3 The influence of the social model of health on occupational therapy practice

It is important to recognize that different viewpoints have influenced the use of occupation as a therapeutic tool. In the ambit of health, where the discipline of occupational therapy has been mainly situated, it is essential to acknowledge the historical influence of the biomedical model, based on the positivist paradigm, and the social model of health. For the purpose of this study, the impact of the latest influence on the profession will be presented as it provides a useful framework from which to develop a critique of the potential contribution of circle dance to well-being and it is also consistent with my practice as an occupational therapist.

The challenge of the social model of health to the biomedical developed in the 1970's in response to increased awareness of the underlying social, environmental and economic causes of poor health. An important marker of this period was the International Conference on Primary Health Care held by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in September 1978, which highlighted "the need for urgent action of all governments, all health and development workers, and the world community to protect the health of all people of the world" (WHO, n.d., p.1).

The Alma-Ata Declaration led to the WHO adopting in 1981 the *Global Strategy for Health for All* by the Year 2000 (WHO, 1981), the formal representation of the beginning of the social model of heath. Building on the progress made, the First International Conference on Health Promotion was held in November 1986, adopting the *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion,* which identified eight key prerequisites of health: peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable ecosystem, sustainable resources, social justice and equity (WHO, 1986). *The Health for All* concepts were extended by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1998 with the document *Health for All in the Twenty First Century* (WHO, 1981;

1986; 1997; 1998; Wilcock, 2006). With this new vision, health promotion, social justice and equity, and their profound influence on public health, occupational therapy was also challenged to extend its scope from the personal / clinical to the social and to adopt a critical approach, beginning with a "comprehension of the macrostructure that defines the ethical, social, cultural, economic and political boundaries" and which is concerned with the well-being of people, both individually and collectively (Galheigo, 2005, p.95). In this context, the concept of occupation was revised:

> …beyond being meaningful, an occupation should promote personal, professional and social transformation and should contribute to humanizing and improving the quality of people's life (Magalhães and Galheigo, 2010, p.119).

The new field of occupational science was developed in the late 1980s, focussing on the study of humans as occupational beings, the purpose of occupation being centred on survival and health and how humans realise a sense of meaning through occupation (Yerxa et al., 1990; Wilcock 2006). It considers why people engage in occupation and seeks an understanding of how occupations are organised and the skills necessary to undertake different occupations (Wilcock, 2001). In this context, contemporary and innovative practices should be occupation-based and explore not only clinical settings but extend their scope of intervention to reach communities and to address themes such as occupational needs and occupational opportunities for all (Kronenberg et al., 2005; Wilcock 2006; Kronenberg et al., 2011).

By the mid 1990s, person-environment-occupational performance models[8] had been generated by occupational therapists, collaborating occupational therapy

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[8] Model of Adaptation through Occupation (Reed and Sanderson, 1992); Model of Human Occupation (Kielhofner, 1995, 2008); Enabling Occupation (CAOT, 1997; 2002); Competent

academics or national occupational therapy associations, sharing a common belief in occupation as an essential part of human life, which contributes to health and well-being and which also considers fundamental the subjective aspects of experience which contribute to personal meaning and quality of life (Hagedorn, 2001). These models of practice, reflecting theories of occupation, define occupation mainly in the ambit of three categories[9]: self-care, productivity and leisure (Hammell, 2009a). Patterns of occupation, satisfaction, occupational opportunities as well as the importance of a balance between self-care, productivity and leisure and its impact on promotion of health and well-being are some of the themes addressed by these models of practice.

In the past decade, occupational therapists have started to seek alternative ways to conceptualize occupation, which are more inclusive, addressing societal and political needs, and providing an evidence-based foundation for practice (Galheigo, 2005; Jonsson and Persson, 2006; Jonsson, 2008; Hammell, 2009a; Pemberton and Cox, 2011; 2013). Hammell (2009a) proposes a theoretical understanding of occupation based on dimensions of occupational experience and provisionally labelled as: 'restorative occupations', 'occupations fostering belonging, connecting and contributing', 'engaging in doing occupations' and 'occupations reflecting life continuity and hope for the future'. These categories or dimensions should reflect the "intrinsic needs for meaning, purposes, choice and control, and a positive sense of self-worth that occupational therapists have identified as important to human well-being" (p.112). The temporal aspect of occupations and the need to address balance and rhythm are discussed by Pemberton and Cox (2011, 2013). The authors suggest that the modern pace of life has been heavily dominated by the notion of clock time, "leading people away

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Occupational Performance in the Environment (Hagedorn, 2000);Creek (2003); Polatayko and Townsend (2007).
[9]Different terms used to define the categorization of occupation are adopted by Occupational Therapy Associations in the USA, Sweden, Europe and Canada (Jonsson, 2008, p.3).

from the concept of rhythm and harmony, the need for balance between work, rest and play" (Pemberton and Cox, 2011, p.83). From this perspective, occupational therapists have an important role within the context of health promotion in helping people to redesign their lifestyle in order to enhance their quality of life and sense of well-being and "introducing new occupational strategies that seek to slow the pace of life and focus on the harmony of our body's natural rhythms" (p.83). Based on a qualitative study, Jonsson (2008) offers a new direction in categorizing occupation. Seven experience-based categories of occupation were identified based on the narratives of the participants: engaging, basic, social, relaxing, regular, irregular and time-killing. The category of 'engaging occupations' is very relevant for this theoretical framework as being "both significantly contributing to well-being and a necessary part of a person's occupation" (p.6). The common characteristics of this category were described as follows:

> *…infused with positive meaning and experienced as highly meaningful; involved intense participation both in duration and regularity; consisted of a coherent set of activities; had evolved into a commitment or responsibility; involved a community of people who shared a common interest; gave an identity for the individual; were often narrated as analogues (p.5).

The concept of 'engaging occupations' was also defined as having a link with the concept of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007) however they can be present in all arenas and not exclusively leisure (Jonsson, 2008).

For the purpose of this investigation, it will be significant to discuss the use of artistic and leisure occupations in occupational therapy, where circle dance could be located in terms of categorisation and to review the literature available.

## 2.1.4  The use of artistic and leisure occupations

The use of artistic and leisure occupations in occupational therapy has evolved, particularly in the field of mental health, and has been embedded in different conceptual frameworks.  From the beginning of the profession, the therapeutic use of occupations was influenced by the concepts of the moral treatment[10] in the 18th century. The elemental aspect of the treatment attempted to divert the focus away from the neuropsychiatric disorder through engagement in occupation. In this context, any occupation, including the artistic and leisure ones, could be used for this purpose: diversion (Rebeiro, 1998).  It is important to highlight that this aspect of using occupation exclusively as a diversion, without considering its meaning for the individual, has unfortunately been perpetuated. For many authors, this is possibly one of the reasons why occupational therapists, with the advent of reductionism, were drawn to other disciplines and focused solely on functional activities for rehabilitation purposes (Kielhofner and Burke, 1977; Wilcock and Steeden, 1999). However, the idea of using occupation as a diversion was challenged as early as the 19th century. Adolph Meyer (1977), an American psychiatrist, discussed the importance of meaningful occupation as central for the occupational therapy intervention. He believed that a balance between personal and domestic activities of daily living, work and leisure activities was fundamental for the success of the treatment; therefore the role of the occupational therapist was to provide opportunities, thereby enabling people to achieve this balance, by involving the clients in decision making (Meyer, 1977; Mayers, 2000). Later, other influences beyond occupational therapy, such as the Arts and Crafts movement (Friedland, 2003; Wilcock, 2006; Ikiugu and Ciaravino, 2007) and psychodynamic theory (Fidler and Fidler, 1963; Cramer-Azima, 1982 ;

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[10] The first systematic treatment for people with mental illness that was used in the last decade of the 18th century in France was inspired by Phillipe Pinel's revolutionary ideas. It had a very significant impact on the field of psychiatry in Europe and America. Programmes of occupation were established in asylums, being valued as fundamental treatment method for mental illness, generating "changes in beliefs about the causes of illness and the place of occupation in improving people's experience of health" (Wilcock,  2006,  pp.131-134).

Finlay, 1997; Lloyd and Papas, 1999) also had an impact on the use of artistic and leisure occupations in different ways.

With the increasing prominence of the social model of health, the therapeutic use of artistic and leisure occupations within occupational therapy has been revised under the concept of meaningful occupation and their importance in promoting health and well-being. Contemporary practices, in which occupational therapy philosophy is embedded in a broader concept of occupation, highlight the importance of the balance between self-care, productivity and leisure and its impact on promotion of health and well-being (Kronenberg et al., 2005; Wilcock, 2006).

Recent research studies in the U.K. have explored the therapeutic properties of artistic and leisure activities in various fields of practice. In a qualitative study, Bedding and Sadlo (2008) investigating the experience of retired people participating in art classes in the community using a phenomenological approach have described the participants' lived experience. They demonstrated that participants have valued the experience of attending art classes, as they perceived, an enhancement of their sense of well-being and an opportunity for social interaction and learning. Griffiths and Corr's (2007) cross-sectional survey of occupational therapists working in mental health revealed that creative activities were perceived to enhance intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to facilitate personal growth. However, further research is necessary to discuss the implications and recommendations for practice. The concept of '*flow'* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1992) was explored in art-making with women suffering from cancer in a qualitative study which showed that participation in creative activities represented an opportunity to experience *'flow'* and enhance perceptions of quality of life (Reynolds and Prior, 2006). Another study investigated the therapeutic use of creative activities within mental health services

for adults. This has highlighted that the use of this form of activity represented an important "vehicle of choice and engagement" for the clients, improving their sense of self-confidence and providing an opportunity for them to develop new skills (Griffiths, 2008, p.49).

The concept of leisure as an occupation and its implication for practice has not been easily defined and agreed upon by occupational therapists. An important contribution within the profession has been made by Primeau (1996). He supports the idea that the notion of work and leisure are "culturally bound" (p.569); therefore, occupational therapy practice should transcend this dichotomy by using a client-driven leisure definition, prioritising the experience and meaning attributed by the client to a given occupation. Suto (1998) has explored leisure from the perspective of a subjective experience, a complex phenomenon with three elements: time, occupation and experience. Suto (1998) emphasises the significant contribution of theories outside the profession, such as *serious leisure* (Stebbins, 2007) and *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1992), to enhance the theoretical framework. Within the occupational therapy domain, Suto (1998) advocates that the Occupational Performance Process (CAOT, 1997) provides "conceptual and practice guidelines for occupational performance issues that include leisure occupations" and that future development of leisure assessments should be based on this model (p.277).

Some studies investigated specific occupations amongst the general population in order to advance the understanding of the experience of being engaged in them. For example, a small qualitative study explored choir singing as a leisure occupation by using an ethnographic approach (Tonneijck et al., 2008). Participant observations and in-depth interviews were conducted with six choir members in the Netherlands; the findings suggested that the experience of being engaged in choir singing was perceived as providing a sense of wholeness

amongst the research participants, derived mainly from the combination of the challenging aspects inherent in the nature of the occupation, creating opportunities to experience '*flow'*, and the supportive environment in which the occupation was situated. Exploring university students' experience of participating in a leisure-based choir, a qualitative study revealed that feelings of accomplishment, the positive affect on mood and the sense of community and social bonding were considered by the respondents as motivational factors for continuing involvement (Jacob et al., 2009).

Some recent U.K. studies of leisure within occupational therapy have been undertaken. A qualitative study by Pieris and Craik (2004) identified enabling and hindering factors related to occupational engagement of people with mental health problems in community-based leisure programmes. This research was further complemented by the same authors, highlighting the importance of occupational therapists working in collaboration with clients in order to identify how they define leisure occupations and their relevance for their lives (Craik and Pieris, 2006). In another study, Taylor (2003) explored the link between leisure and social identity amongst women and its impact on leisure choices and participation. It was suggested that the understanding of the symbolic meanings of leisure as well as the concepts of group identity could facilitate occupational therapy processes with women from different backgrounds (p.157). More recently, the same author (Taylor, 2008) proposed a theoretical framework about the relationship between occupation and identity using a narrative approach. In this study, qualitative data were collected amongst seventeen serious leisure enthusiasts enabling the conceptualisation of the "occupied self" (p.92) and contributing to "an understanding of how occupations, meanings, self and identity are related" (p.94). In terms of assessment tools, a study evaluated the use of an adapted form of the Leisure Satisfaction Scale (Beard and Ragheb, 1980) to measure leisure

satisfaction. This quantitative study suggests the potential use of this tool in occupational therapy but it also highlights, as do the other studies already cited, the importance of further research to develop a theoretical framework linking leisure and occupational therapy (Di Bona, 2000).

Having presented the conceptual foundations of occupational therapy, I will now discuss the relevant aspects of circle dance.

## 2.2 Conceptualising circle dance

For the purpose of this study, circle dance is defined as a human, purposeful and meaningful occupation which encapsulates the elements of "doing, being, becoming and belonging" as proposed by Wilcock (2006). As one of the types of dance which have evolved through time, circle dance is a revival of a very ancient art form, which for thousands of years has allowed different cultures and peoples to express themselves in movement in a variety of ways. Historically, the circle is the earliest space form[11] in dancing; there is evidence of circle dances in many traditions being performed by people from every continent (Sachs, 1937). Modern circle dance derives from the tradition of folk dance and the repertoire includes traditional dances from different countries and cultures in addition to contemporary choreographies. Self-expression is not the primary aim and the process of learning movements and positions takes place within a social and cultural context. In a community performance a "non-ego-bounded experience is learned through others in a social environment" (Norris, 2001, p.120).

In this section, I will initially discuss the structure of the circle dances and the symbol of the circle before presenting the establishment of the Circle Dance movement and its network. The pedagogical component of circle dance will be discussed at the end of this section.

### 2.2.1 The structure of the circle dances

The participants hold hands in a circle and repeat a pattern of steps, following the rhythm dictated by the music and related to specific dances. The choreographies

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[11] An image known as the Addaura Wheel dating from 8000 B.C. was discovered in a cave near Palermo, in Sicily. The scene depicts a circle of seven characters dancing in an anticlockwise direction around two central figures (Boucier, 1987, p.9). Another image of dance being performed in a circle was discovered in the cave of Cogul, in the province of Lerida, Spain, dating back to 8300B.C. (Portinary, 1989, p.17).

range from simple to complex arrangements of steps, from traditional folk dances to choreographed ones, and can involve different group formations such as dancing in a circle or in lines. According to Cecil Sharp (1924), the exponent of the folklore revival in England, folk dances are often mistakenly described as a very simple type and/or imperfectly developed. Some of them are undoubtedly very simple; however these dances contain basic elemental types of steps from which more complex ones have been developed. Other folk dances are extremely complex and highly developed in structure, steps, movements and figures (Sharp, 1924). Maria-Gabriele Wosien (1995) suggests that the traditional dances of Europe, from the point of view of their symbolism and mythological images, may reveal behind their structure a "timeless spiritual tradition". Furthermore, due to the simplicity of the repeated basic dance patterns, this tradition is still just as vibrant today (p.35). In this context, folk dance patterns can elicit a "new and unique experience in the dancers", as the steps, style, movement, formation and music bring a different message related to the experience of "being in the body…being in the community" (Shannon, 2001, p.48). Participation in folk dance can also contribute towards an experience of belonging to something larger than oneself. In this context, it can be seen as a shared text as specific knowledge and qualities are exchanged through bodily participation coming from the music, the postures, physical contact and social contact (Norris, 2001).

Whereas folk-dancing groups tend to restrict themselves to one particular (national) style, circle dance teachers can draw on the whole repertoire of folk dances from around the world. It is this idea of working with a variety of folk dances that also characterises the circle dance movement. It is important to note that throughout this study, the term 'circle dance' refers not only to the type of

dance but also to the circle dance movement. This will be further explored in the section 2.2.3.

## 2.2.2 The symbol of the circle

It is relevant to explore the symbol of the circle as this is the form that the dances present in their basic choreographies. The study of symbolism is very wide-ranging; however, for the purpose of this study, I have chosen the psychological approach of Professor Dr. Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, as my point of reference in order to illuminate the meanings behind the symbol of the circle.

### *2.2.2.1  Defining the concept of symbol*

The symbol is a term, a name or a picture that "possesses a specific connotation in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning" (Jung, 1978, p.3). For the sake of accuracy, it is important to distinguish between signs and symbols. The first are commonly used in marketing, advertising, industry, mathematics and in other fields and denote the objects to which they are attached. According to Jung (1977), "a sign is always less than the thing it points to, and a symbol is always more than we can understand at first sight....it promises more than it reveals" (p.212). In this context, symbols are therefore used "to represent concepts that cannot be defined or fully comprehended" (Jung, 1978, p.4). Symbols are also considered part of the development of all civilisations and commonly found in all forms of art (Cirlot, 1962, p.x). Mircea Eliade, one of the most distinguished authorities in the study of religions, states that symbols can help people to become integrated into society through their cultural and universal significance (Eliade, 1959).

Symbols can be characterised as cultural or universal. A cultural symbol relates to a specific period of history and can represent or express "eternal truths" for a particular culture or religion. These symbols have been transformed and consciously elaborated and, therefore, have their meanings related to specific cultures (Jung, 1977, p.253). By contrast, universal symbols, or natural symbols, are defined as spontaneous manifestations which transcend history, time and culture. These symbols (ones which are the most important and the most relevant for this study as they include the circle) are collective in their nature and origin, deriving from the unconscious contents of the psyche[12] (Jung, 1977, pp.253-254). In order to explore this idea, it is important to briefly discuss two fundamental and correlated concepts developed by Jung (1968) – namely, the collective unconscious and the archetypes, as they will help to better conceptualise the symbol of the circle.

### 2.2.2.2 The collective unconscious and the archetypes

The collective unconscious is a fundamental concept developed by Jung (1967; 1968) to refer to the universal contents and modes of behaviour which are common to all individuals, representing "a common psychic substrate" (p.3-4). The collective unconscious is, in its essence, distinct from the personal unconscious. The latter derives from the personal experience of the individual and, therefore, is developed individually. The universal and impersonal nature of the collective unconscious is inherited and identical in all individuals. According to Jung (1977), "on this collective level we are no longer separate individuals, we are all one. Because the basic structure of the mind is the same in everybody, we cannot make distinctions when we experience on that level. At the underlying collective level, there is a wholeness which cannot be dissected" (p.42).

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[12] Jung (1971) defines psyche as "the totality of all psychic processes, conscious as well as unconscious" (def. 48, par. 797).

The collective unconscious consists of pre-existent forms called archetypes. This Greek term comes from *archē,* which means "origin", and *tupos*, meaning "blow, imprint", and is defined as "an inherited tendency of the human mind to form representations of mythological motifs – representations that vary a great deal without losing their basic patterns" (Jung, 1977, p.228). These collective representations are not related to a particular time, region or race and are without known origin (Jung, 1977, p.228). It is relevant for this study to point out that the archetypes belong to humankind in general and can be found in fairytales, myths, legends and folklore. The circle is one of them: an archetypal and primordial image, which can be found throughout the whole history of humankind (Jung, 1977). As one of the recurrent motifs throughout the ages, the symbol of the circle has had "enduring psychological significance from the earliest expressions of human consciousness to the most sophisticated forms of 20th century art" (Jaffé, 1978, p.257). The circle is considered by Jung (1968) to be a special category of symbol, known as a *'mandala'*.

### 2.2.2.3    Mandala: an archetypal image

The Sanskrit word '*mandala'*, which means 'circle' and refers to drawn, painted, modelled, woven, or danced circular images (figure 2). As an archetypal image, the *mandala* expresses the totality of the human psyche in all its aspects, signifying the "wholeness of self" (Jung, 1963, p.367).  Jung investigated the significance of the universal symbol of the *mandala* and its psychological relevance for more than 30 years prior to publishing  for the first time his thoughts and ideas about this theme in 1929  [13] (Jung, 1963, p.367; Shamdasani, 2009, p.84). For Jung, "the mandala represented one of the best examples of the universality of an archetype" (Shamdasani, 2009, p.90).  It is relevant to point out

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[13] In the commentary to *The secret of the Golden Flower* (English translation in 1931 – originally published in German 1929) (Wilhem and Jung, 1931).

that the therapeutic effect of this type of image was extensively and empirically researched by Jung (1968) and later by his followers (Jaffé, 1978; Von Franz, 1978; Neumann, 1990; Shamdasani, 2009). Throughout the therapeutic process with his clients, Jung (1968) observed that the functional significance of individual mandalas, which they would create spontaneously[14], is "to produce an inner order, balance and wholeness" (p.384); furthermore a "rearranging of the personality is involved" in the healing process (p.360).

**Figure 2 Example of mandala (Source: Jung, 1968, picture 6, following p.292[15])**



There are countless circle images to be found throughout the world as well as innumerable variations of the same motif. These symbols are still alive today as they have always been, and occupy their place not only in art and religion, but also in the individual's psychological processes, manifested in dreams and fantasies. For Neumann (1990), images of circles, wheels and roundness, are an expression of a perfect state, where opposites are united (p.29). Similarly, Joseph

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[14] Jung (1968) emphasised that the effect of primordial images like *mandala* could only produce a therapeutic effect if created spontaneously and not through suggestion or "artificial repetition" (p.390). Jung refers to this therapeutic method as 'active imagination', which is based on the natural healing function of the imagination, and its many expressions developed in drawings and other creative arts, including dance (Chodorow, 1997).

[15] This mandala can be found in Jung's text on individuation (Jung, 1968, pp. 290-354).

Campbell (1990) points out that the symbol of the circle represents wholeness in time and space. The spatial aspect is defined by the fact that "everything within the circle is one and the same, surrounded and limited", while the time aspect is represented by the fact that "you move away, go somewhere and always return" (pp.224-225). The symbol of the circle, independently of the historical period or the cultural context, represents wholeness because of its perfect form (Jaffé, 1978, p.266; Jung, 1977, p.224).

*Mandalas* are found all over the Orient and were first brought to Tibet from India in the 8th century A.D. Cirlot (1962) suggests that the *mandala* is "an image and a synthesis of the dualistic aspects of differentiation and unification, of variety and unity, the external and the internal, the diffuse and the concentrated" (p.192). In Tibet, *mandalas*, which are designed through an imaginative process, have two important aspects for the community involved. One is to restore a previously existing order, helping to reinstate a psychological balance of the group. The other one, related to creative purpose, is to give "expression and form to something that does not yet exist, something new and unique" (Von Franz, 1978, p.247).

In architecture, we can also find the *mandala* symbolism or the use of the circle as an important geometrical spatial organization or pattern, used as the ground plan of secular and sacred buildings in almost all civilisations as well as embodied in the structure of town planning, from the medieval to the modern period. Some examples can be cited to illustrate the use of *mandala* in architecture: in the structure of the modern cathedral of the city of Brasilia, Brazil; in the ruins of a fortified camp in Denmark, dated from A.D. 1000, which was laid out in a circle; in the town of Palmanova, in Italy, built in 1593; in Paris, where ten streets meet at L'Étoile forming a *mandala;* in the city of Rome; in the modern city of Washington D.C. (Cirlot, 1962 p.15; Jaffé, 1978, pp.269-272).

Alain Berthoz (2000), a neuroscientist, professor and director of the Laboratory of Physiology of Perception and Action at the *Collège de France,* points out that the brain is particularly sensitive to three basic elements in nature. The first one is regularity, which can be geometric or rhythmic. The second element is chance, which disrupts regularity. Movement is the third and very important element. In this context, Berthoz (2000) highlights the pleasure of shape and movement that curves provide to the human body and mind. He cites the recent work of a Japanese neurophysiologist, Sakata, which demonstrates that "neurons in the parietal cortex are activated in a specific way by shapes such as a cylinder". Berthoz (2000) also comments on the work of modern architects who, with few exceptions, have forgotten the pleasure of movement, using mainly flat and square constructions (pp.255-257).

The circle, or *mandala,* is also a form commonly present in dance and found throughout the history of humankind.  The circle is at the same time the focus for all movement as well as providing the structure of which the dancers are an integral part (M.G. Wosien, 1995, p.38). Evidence of circle dances can be found in many traditions and throughout the world. According to Sachs (1937), the earliest spatial conception of primitive cultures is the circle. The presence of a central point represented by a fire, a pit or a post was commonly found in the oldest circle choral dances (pp.144-145). The simplest form of circle dances is where the dancers form a closed circle with a centre, which the dancers face or move around. A development of this original form can be also found where the dance floor forms the circle or where the dancers walk in a spiral or in a snake line.  The essence of the spiral form is a continuous centripetal movement until it joins the centre-point; or, vice-versa, from the central point in centrifugal motion it reaches the circumference of the turning wheel. This form is also commonly found in many European folk dances (Sachs, 1937, pp.150-155).

Other symbols such as the figure of eight, the cross, the star and the square are also found within the patterns of the steps of circle dances. Similarly, the arm postures of the dancers, including many variations (e.g.: arms held down or raised high; arms stretched out horizontally, where the dancers place their hands on the neighbour's shoulders), can also be interpreted in terms of symbols present in circle dances (M.G. Wosien, 1995, p.51-52). According to Machado Filho (2005), circle dances can facilitate a sense of collective empathy, as the participants hold hands and repeat the same steps, following the music and the rhythm. In this process, each individual becomes part of a whole unit (the circle), shifting the focus from the individual to the group, from the personal to the collective (p.55). Furthermore, Machado Filho (2005) states that the psychophysical elements involved in circle dance can also stimulate the experience of special states of consciousness.

Maria-Gabriele Wosien (1992; 1995) points out that by looking at the traditional choral dances, in particular of Europe, and considering the symbolism and mythological images behind their structure, their connection with a "timeless spiritual tradition" may be revealed. According to her, the sacred dance traditions were linked to a ritual context, which has disappeared over the years and hence their value and meaning have been lost. However, for Maria-Gabriele Wosien (1995), the structure and patterns of movement of these dances carry universal themes and images, in particular the circle, often found in mythology and religious art, and therefore can be called "movement archetypes" and the dances can be experienced as "symbols in movement" (p.35). This is coherent with what Jung (1931) discovered among his patients, he worked with women who did not draw *mandalas* but danced them instead. Moreover these dance figures would express the same meanings as the drawings. Although they were unable to say very much about the meaning of the figures they had drawn or danced, Jung was

nevertheless very clear that they found them to be very effective in their healing process (Jung, 1931, p.98). Furthermore, Jung [16] carried out a comparative study of esoteric practices, including Yoga and Buddhist meditation[17], concluding that "these practices were all based on different forms of active imagination – and that they all had as their goal the transformation of the personality – which Jung understood as the process of individuation[18]" (Shamdasani, 2009, p.89).

### 2.2.3 The establishment of the Circle Dance movement and its network

In the United Kingdom the Circle Dance movement emerged through the pioneering and innovative work of Bernhard Wosien (1908 - 1986), a former German ballet master, choreographer and a researcher of folk dances. Bernhard Wosien (2000; 2006) was born in 1908 in Passenheim, a province of Masuren, in former East Prussia. Between 1930 and 1933, after initially following in his father's footsteps by enrolling in the Theology College at Breslau University, he soon abandoned this path in order to study art, first at Breslau College and then at the Academy of Art in Berlin (in this he was following in his mother's footsteps, as she had been a fine art student) . Soon, however, Bernhard Wosien began following his real passion, that of dance. His classical ballet training which he started in 1933 in Berlin, was followed by a successful career as a ballet master, leading to his becoming a solo dancer (figure 3) and choreographer (B. Wosien, 2006[19], pp.9-15).

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[16] Between 1933 and 1941, Jung presented a series of lectures at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), where he held a professorship. These lectures have been prepared for publication by the Philemon Foundation (https://www.philemonfoundation.org/forthcoming/eth_lectures).
[17] The series of lectures related to this theme are compiled in the forthcoming publication: *Volume 6. The Psychology of Yoga and Meditation - Winter semester 1938/39 and Summer semester 1939* edited by Ernest Falzeder and Martin Liebscher and translated by Mark Kyburz and John Peck.
[18] The term individuation in Jung's psychology refers to "the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'individual', that is a separate, indivisible unity or 'whole' "(Jung, 1963, p.415).
[19] Bernhard Wosien's daughter, Maria-Gabriele Wosien, has compiled a book about Bernhard Wosien (2006) based on his autobiography and other articles which he had published in Germany.

In 1952, he was involved in a research project related to folklore, including the re-development of old and traditional circle dances, their origins, cultural and social context as well as the patterns utilised in the choreographies and steps. This project was part of the creation of a Lusatian folk art ensemble in Bautzen and marked the beginning of a very significant phase in his career as a dancer, when he decided to deepen his knowledge of folk dance. Bernhard Wosien (2006) defined folk dance as having "roots in the social context of a community" (p.34) which provided a means to integrate individuals into a communal context through the language of movement. Coming from the highly disciplined world of the classically trained ballet dancer, Bernhard Wosien (2006) was struck by the differences in style between the two dance forms:

> I felt immediately touched by the spontaneity that the folk dance requires, by the much more strongly differentiated rhythm that requires the foot to

touch the ground in an entirely different way... To me, folk dance steps are similar to a language dialect, while the technique of executing steps in classical ballet is, by contrast, like an aristocratic style of language. The precise angle and forms of the classical language of movement in folk dance are constantly adjusted to create the charming phonetic variations of the language of folklore (p.33).

For Sharp (1924), the earliest forms of folk dance have signs of a religious origin; some of them are performed ritually, usually associated with the cultivation and fertility of the soil and performed at particular seasons of the year (pp.4-5). Likewise, Bernhard Wosien (2006) too refers to the religious and ritual background commonly found in these types of dance. He also refers to the sense of unity that these dances bring to the group and the community, given that they are what he calls an "introverted" form of dance as they are not for public performance (p.34).

**Figure 4 Bernhard Wosien's drawing – Macedonian circle dance (n.d.) (Source: B. Wosien, 2000, p.99)**

From 1962, as a lecturer in Educational Theory of Dance at the High College for Youth and Social Work and the Technical College of Occupational Therapy in Munich, Bernhard Wosien started to integrate concepts of folk dance into the principles of dance and movement therapy, working more specifically with children with special needs and providing training for teachers, psychiatrists and therapists. His main interests were the pedagogy of dance and the idea that dance should be available to all people. In 1965, he was invited to join the Department of Special School Education at the University of Marburg (figure 5) as principal lecturer of the pedagogy of dance, combining research and practical work with his students and using traditional folk dances with his choreographed dances as a tool of group consciousness (B. Wosien, 2006; Fawkes, 2011). Being interested in the original forms of folk dances, Bernhard Wosien travelled around Europe with his group of students in order to learn traditional dances and understand their cultural background and symbolism (B. Wosien, 2012, p.8). He would stay in this post until his death in April 1986.

**Figure 5 Bernhard Wosien teaching at the Marburg University in 1974 (Source: B. Wosien, 2006, p.10)**
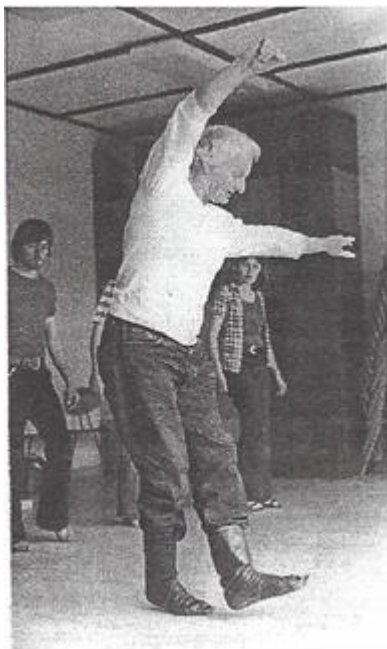
In October 1976, Bernhard Wosien accepted an invitation by two of the founders of the Findhorn Community, Scotland, Peter and Eileen Caddy, to teach a compilation of folk dances and to present his ideas related to the use of this form of communal dance. They had previously met Bernhard Wosien at a conference in Frankfurt, Germany, at a time when they were looking to inspire their community members through music and dance. In their eyes, Bernhard Wosien had appeared to be an ideal choice and so it would turn out to be the case. His daughter, Maria-Gabriele Wosien, accompanied him to Findhorn (Fawkes, 2011, p.29) (figure 6). Little did he know that his work would have a very significant impact on the Findhorn Community. Since its inception fifty years ago, Findhorn Community (n.d.) has developed into a "spiritual community, ecovillage and an international centre for holistic education". In 1972 it was successfully registered as a Scottish charitable trust and is now one of the largest planned residential communities in Britain. Today it operates partly as an educational centre and partly as a holistic community for its members[20]. The reason why Bernhard's version of dance was able to take root at Findhorn was due to the Community's experience and inherent understanding of group work, as it was here especially that the "spiritual essence of dance could be appreciated" (Barton,2011,p.53). Since then, the movement has been disseminated throughout the U.K. and other European countries as well as world-wide.

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[20] "All of the businesses, organisations, groupings and individual people who are part of the Findhorn Foundation community, make up the New Findhorn Association (NFA). This community of 430 members and 32 organisations is diverse, constantly evolving and dedicated to the founding principles of the community" (Findhorn Foundation, n.d, 'About us').

**Figure 6 Bernhard Wosien and his daughter Maria-Gabriele Wosien, Sacred Circle Dance Festival[21] 1982, Findhorn (Source: B.Wosien, 2006, p. 42)**



Bernhard Wosien's approach is known in Germany as *Heiliger Tanz[22],* which means holy or sacred dance but it also has the connotation of healing, holistic and wholeness (Barton, 2011), or *Meditation des Tanzes,* Meditation through Dance. Group awareness and the meditative aspect of movement are other elements which were encapsulated in his approach. For Bernhard Wosien (2006), meditation through dance "signifies a movement, leading from an inner awareness to outer perception" (p.18). His daughter, Maria-Gabriele Wosien (1992; 1995) has published books and articles about circle and sacred dance from an academic perspective of religious art and symbolism. She continues teaching, exploring themes related to archaic structures in dance and other creative modalities. She has also compiled a book about Bernhard Wosien (2006) based on his autobiography and other articles which he had published in Germany. Some of his former students are continuing his work, developing his

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[21] Since 1976 onwards, a Sacred Circle Dance Festival has been held yearly at the Findhorn Foundation. Special guest teachers and circle dancers from around the world take part in this event (Findhorn Foundation, n.d.,' Programmes'). The researcher has attended many of these festivals, including their 20th (in 1996) and 30th (in 2006) celebrations of circle dance at the Findhorn Foundation.
[22]"The English translation of 'sacred' is inadequate and we have no single word to cover the multiplicity of meaning of the German word" ( Frances and Bryant-Jefferies 1998, p.40).

ideas and contributing to the growth and maintenance of the movement (Shannon, 2001; Barton, 2006; Vallance, 2011; Wragler, 2011; Kloke-Eibl, 2012).

Currently, the Circle Dance network includes groups which are active in Africa, Australia, Europe, North America and South America. In the U.K. there are approximately 270 circle dance teachers, offering regular sessions of circle dance to local communities, workshops and events. Two teacher training programmes provided by experienced teachers are available in the U.K.[23]. The Circle Dance network has its own journal, *The Grapevine*, and a not-for-profit company, Circle Dance Friends Company Limited (Thompson, 2011). Around 260 regular circle dance groups are listed in *The Grapevine* in addition to workshops and events. There are some books published in the U.K. about circle dance; however, they are not linked to academic research studies. Frances and Bryant-Jefferies (1998) describe their personal journeys with circle dance and the impact of this form of dance on their lives. Barton (2006) and Watts (2006) give their own subjective account of being circle dance teachers. Publications such as The "*Grapevine*" (U.K), "*Balance"* (Germany) and "*The Dancing Circle*" (U.K.) incorporate a variety of articles, letters, opinions and experiences on the subject. Research evidence is still limited and will be discussed in the section 2.3.3.

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[23] Since 2008, a one-day course has been regularly held to provide training to health professionals, care staff, dance therapists, circle dancers and volunteers who want to teach circle dance in dementia services. The circle dances are simplified and adapted for use in various environments such as residential and nursing homes (Heymanson, 2009; Heymanson and Kershaw, 2011).

**Figure 7 Bernhard Wosien with a group of circle dancers in Findhorn, 1985 (Source: B.Wosien, 2006, p.40)**



## 2.2.4 The pedagogical component of circle dance

Circle dance is a structured form of occupation, in which the steps and the movements need to be learned in order for them to be performed. In this context, circle dance teachers use methods and strategies to provide a learning experience for the participants. The teaching approach in circle dance tends to focus not only on skills acquisition, but on developing other aspects related to the cultural and historical background of the dances, the ability to perform the dances in a collective way and on the use of dance and movement as a tool which can be used with groups and communities. Bernhard Wosien (2012) states that dance "offers the development of movement, movement within space, rhythm, spatial awareness, awareness of Self and partner, group and community awareness" (p.63).

The teachers in the circle dance network come from a variety of backgrounds; it is still not entirely clear what methods and strategies they use to deliver circle dance classes or what the qualitative impact on the learning experience of the participants is, as this has not yet been fully explored. However, it could be argued that the pedagogical aspects of circle dance appear to have parallels with teaching approaches used in the larger field of dance which consider the influence of the teaching environment, acknowledge different learning styles and provide individualised and student-centred approaches. These emphasise the importance of the social interactions which take place in the learning process, in addition to the physical performance attributes related to dance and movement (Graham, 2001; 2002; Mainwaring and Krasnow, 2010). For the purpose of this study, it is appropriate to review the related literature from the fields of education, dance and occupational therapy which could contribute to the exploration of the pedagogical component of circle dance.

In the field of education, one of the most influential theorists, Paulo Freire (1970; 1973; 1990; 1998a; 1998b), a Brazilian educator, proposed in the late 20th century a pedagogy with a new and revolutionary relationship between teachers, students and society. Influenced by the American philosopher and educator John Dewey's (1916; 1934; 1938) ideas[24], Freire was strongly critical of the transmission of mere facts as the goal for education. One of his most well-known works, the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), laid the foundation for what has become known as 'critical pedagogy' which is characterised by co-operation and mutuality in the roles of teacher and learner, assuming an environment of mutual acceptance, respect and trust, and by the deep understanding of education as a path for social

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[24] "The founder of what became known as the progressive education movement, Dewey argued that it was the job of education to encourage individuals to develop their full potential as human beings. He was especially critical of the rote learning of facts in schools and argued that children should learn by experience. In this way students would not just gain knowledge but would also develop skills, habits and attitudes necessary for them to solve a wide variety of problems" http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAdewey.htm

change. This approach emphasises inter-relatedness of the teacher and the learner, both of whom are at the teaching/learning continuum and moving ever closer through the process towards their respective states of self-actualisation: "[w]hoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning" (1998a, p.31). Other important concepts derived from Freire's approach are 'empowerment', 'liberatory education' and 'praxis' (1970; 1998a; 1998b; 1990). The revolutionary methodology of Paulo Freire has inspired practitioners not only in field of education, but in other areas, in community development, community health and many other fields including occupational therapy[25] and dance.

Teaching practice in dance is informed by a variety of theoretical frameworks, strategies, and individual styles. In this context, disciplines and theories within the field of dance pedagogy and dance education, but also other domains such as education[26], physical education and sport pedagogy, and psychology have influenced best practice in teaching dance. Mainwaring and Krasnow (2010) emphasise the importance of the learning environment for the successful achievement of dance skills and suggest that practical teaching strategies in dance are needed to enhance "mastery of skills and to promote self-esteem, self-efficacy, and positive self-image" (p.14). In this approach, fostering an enjoyable and challenging atmosphere, providing opportunities for students to explore and recognise their learning styles, and using "mix and match" techniques to accommodate diverse ways to learn are some of the strategies proposed which could also shed light onto the pedagogical aspects related to circle dance. Similarly, Graham (2001; 2002) proposes a theoretical framework, "Teaching

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[25] In particular *Occupational Therapy without Borders'* approach is heavily influenced by Freire's philosophy. "Through a cycle of analysis, reflection, and action, Freire's methodology aimed to enable disadvantaged people to discover their self-confidence and to work together to 'change the world'. *Occupational Therapy without Borders* shares a similar vision: its scope extends from the personal to the global" (Werner, 2005, p.xi).
[26] In particular Freire's approach.

Conditions Theory", which incorporates thirteen essential teaching conditions that "support the development of social, emotional and intellectual meanings in dance learning contexts" (p.128).

Whilst acknowledging that teaching and learning are reciprocal, Warburton (2004) discusses the relationship between caring and competent teaching. Teaching is defined as "a willingness to let others learn in an environment of mutual effort and responsibility" (p.94). Furthermore, he argues that the combination of content knowledge, or "the familiarity with the subject being taught", and pedagogical knowledge, or "the familiarity with techniques for teaching the subject", is fundamental for effective dance teaching. For him, "[t]ruly effective teaching requires consideration not only of *what* and *when* to present the information but also *how* to present it" (Warburton, 2008, p.8). Moving away from the transmission model of teaching and learning, Warburton (2008) points out the value of the critical thinking and reflexive approach, proposing a pedagogy in dance which goes "beyond steps" (p.7). This appears to have parallels with Freire's approach.

Similarly, Côté (2006) discusses the relevance of incorporating innovative teaching methods into the field of dance education. Traditional methods promote "teacher-centred pedagogy" (p.28) in which the students are seen as lacking knowledge and incapable of contributing to their learning. By contrast, innovative methods prioritise "student-centred learning" in which the role of the teacher "becomes that of a facilitator of learning – one who plans, observes, suggests, guides, and motivates students to engage in their learning process" (p.28). Therefore, Côté (2006) also proposes that successful teachers should not only have knowledge of the content, but also "knowledge of the learners' capabilities, and knowledge of the learning process" (p.28). She suggests that through lessons based on these three sets of knowledge, which take into consideration age

differences and include effective instructional methods, the learning process could be maximized. Emphasising a collaborative approach linked with holistic education and lifelong learning, Côté (2006),  defines a good teacher as one who "keeps an open mind and knows how his or her actions affect the learning environment and who views students as competent contributors to the learning process and problem-solving process" (p.29). Moreover, the teachers' preparation is considered fundamental to the achievement of this goal.

Student-centred approaches also take into consideration the fact that people learn in different ways and, therefore, the use of one method of teaching might not work for every student. Thus, over the past three decades, learning styles models have emerged in order to enhance the students' learning processes, expand the opportunities for effective learning and provide teaching strategies for teachers (Hawk and Shah, 2007). One of the models to address different learning styles is proposed by Fleming (2001), known as the VARK model. The acronym VARK stands for "the initial letters of four means of communicating – Visual, Aural, Read/Write and Kinesthetic" (p.ii). Learning style is defined by Fleming (2001) as an "individual's characteristics and preferred ways of gathering, organizing, and thinking about information" (p.1). This model focuses on the different ways people "take in and give out information" (p.1) and proposes instructional preferences based on the characteristics of each learner[27].  From this perspective, the author suggests that visual learners would prefer charts, graphs, diagrams and other visual strategies to represent the learning information, whilst  aural learners would prefer   "heard and spoken" (p.1) information, learning best from group discussions, tutorials, seminars. Read/Write learners would select information

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[27] A VARK Inventory was designed to evaluate learning preferences, offering "thirteen statements that describe a situation and asks the respondent to pick one or more of three or four actions that the respondent would take. Each action corresponds with a VARK learning style preference (Hawk and Shah 2007, p.7). The free VARK questionnaire can be self-administered, self-scored and self-interpreted and used by students and/or teachers (available from http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp).

"displayed as text and printed words" (p.2). The kinesthetic modality refers to the "perceptual preference to the use of experience and practice (simulated or real)" (p.2). Fleming (2001) also accounts for a multimodal preference to describe learners who would prefer a combination of visual or aural or read/write or kinesthetic modes (p.100). The relevance of the model is to offer a variety of teaching strategies which can be applied in different learning contexts.

In the occupational therapy and occupational science domains, teaching strategies are commonly used to enable people to engage in meaningful occupations. In this context, various frames of reference have been applied by occupational therapists to facilitate skills acquisition and mastery, and to enhance the client's learning processes (Crossan-Botting, 2004; Carrier et al., 2011; Greber et al., 2007a; 2007b; 2011). Drawing from contemporary theories of occupational therapy, psychology and pedagogy, Greber et al. (2007a; 2007b; 2011) proposed the "four-quadrant model of facilitated learning" (4QM), providing a framework for planning interventions in order  to enhance occupational performance.

This framework acknowledges the role of the therapist as a facilitator of learning, engaging the client "in developing the prerequisite skills to support meaningful occupations" (p.S35). The model identified four distinct clusters of learning strategies based on different learner needs. The first two quadrants (1 and 2) are facilitator-initiated and the last two (3 and 4) are learner-initiated. As a flexible framework, the learning strategies can be selected and used dependent on the learner's progress and his/her learner's evolving needs. In a preliminary study, Carrier et al. (2011) argued that the use of learning strategies by community occupational therapists can enhance intervention efficacy. Using a constructivist approach to grounded theory, the study suggests that, although a range of teaching methods and tools were identified amongst the participating

practitioners, there is a need for further investigation related to the efficiency of teaching interventions and their impact on the occupational therapy process and outcomes. Influenced by Freire's methodology (1990), Crossan-Botting (2004) proposed that "the practice of occupational therapy is a teaching/learning process based on mutuality, reciprocity and a dialogical ethic" (p.27) providing to both, therapist and client, an opportunity to create meaning and purpose.

Other studies in the occupational therapy domain recognise the importance of the environment in enabling occupational performance. The person-environment-occupation model (Law et al., 1996) suggests that the environment, or "the context within which the occupational performance of the person takes place" (p.17), is dynamic; therefore, it might enable or constrain the occupational performance. Kielhofner (1995) emphasises that the environment should offer a range of opportunities for performance and provide the "right challenge between the skills of the individual and the demands placed upon the performance (p.91). Rebeiro (2001) proposes that a safe, accepting and supportive environment can enable both initial and sustained occupational performance (p.83).

## 2.3 Well-being: perspectives and contextualisation within occupational therapy and occupational science

The concept of well-being is complex, with multiple meanings. A generic definition has been proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001):

> Well-being is a general term encompassing the total universe of human life domains, including physical, mental and social aspects that make up what can be called a good life (WHO, 2001).

In occupational therapy and occupational science, well-being is shaped by the idea that individuals benefit from engagement in meaningful activity (Hasselkus, 2002; Hammell, 2008; Wilcock 2006; 2007; Polatajko and Townsend, 2007; Kielhofner, 2008). This can be seen in established models of practice, for example, the Model of Human Occupational (Kielhofner, 2008) and the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (Polatajko and Townsend, 2007), supporting the proposition that people need to *"*actively make use of their physical, mental, and social capacities to enjoy well-being naturally and link this with their social needs for belonging" (Wilcock, 2006, p.316). In this perspective, well-being

> *…*embraces the belief that the potential range of people's occupations will allow each of them to be creative, adventurous, and find meaning as they experience all human emotions, explore and adapt appropriately, and without undue disruption meet their needs through what they do (Wilcock, 2006 , p.139).

People experience occupational well-being when they are able to carry out activities they need to do or wish to do without undue consideration of their physical, mental, and social capacities or status and when the environment in which they live allows such activity (Wilcock, 2006, p.315).

This definition of occupational well-being encompasses the dynamic synthesis of doing, being, becoming and belonging. 'Doing' refers to the occupational performance, the traditional focus of practice models, where interventions are designed to enhance an individual's competency to perform occupations that they need or are expected to do. 'Being' is captured within the process of doing or the individual's occupational experience. 'Becoming' is related to the "ongoing evolution of an individual's occupational identities". The concept of 'belonging' suggests that occupations provide opportunities for developing and maintaining connections with others, and the social context in which occupation is performed (Wilcock, 2007, p.5). These concepts are relevant and can be applied to circle dance. As the investigation is related to the interplay of occupational therapy, circle dance and well-being, the conceptualisation of occupational well-being seemed pertinent to be adopted as a working definition.

The next section will review the literature pertaining to perspectives of well-being related to occupations which could contribute to the study and what research has been so far carried out into the impact of circle dance on well-being.

## 2.3.1 Well-being and physical activity

Over the past twenty years, many research studies have highlighted the role of physical activity and exercise in improving well-being (Faulkner, 2001; Faulkner and Biddle, 2001; Salmon, 2001; Reynolds, 2001; Biddle et al., 2003; McKenna and Riddoch, 2003; Faulkner and Taylor, 2005; Lee, 2007). Extensive quantitative as well as qualitative studies support the idea of promoting well-being through

exercise in the general population (all age groups), in different areas such as mental health, cardiology, palliative care, or with individuals with Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (Biddle and Mutrie, 2001; Faulkner and Taylor, 2005). There is also consistent evidence that physical activity can play a significant role in promoting well-being especially amongst those over 65 years of age within the population (Biddle and Mutrie, 2001; McKenna and Riddoch, 2003).

In the field of occupational therapy, a special issue of the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* (BJOT, 2012) was dedicated to the theme of "Promoting physical activity to enhance quality of life" in order to respond to "the growing prominence of health promotion, focussing on physical activity in disease prevention and management" (Bexter and Porter-Armstrong, 2012, p.47) . This indicates that the topic of my research is not only timely but also allied with a contemporary trend in occupational therapy, in which occupation-based practices should prioritise physical activities to promote health and well-being. From seven research articles, three studies are based in the U.K., exploring the use of gardening (York and Wiseman, 2012), walking (Wensley and Slade, 2012) and dance (Froggett and Little, 2012). These studies will be discussed in the next sub-section. International research studies are also included (Alexandratos et al., 2012; Bacon et al., 2012; Bonsaksen and Lerdal, 2012; Northey and Barnett, 2012).

## 2.3.2 Well-being, leisure and dance

The relationship between leisure and well-being is another area of research which can have parallels with this study. Caldwell (2005) explores the empirical evidence concerned with leisure and its therapeutic implications. She concentrates particularly on studies which elucidate the 'therapeutic elements of

leisure' and suggests that the 'common protective factors' provide beneficial qualities. Another relevant aspect is attributed to the perceived freedom related to the engagement in leisure, promoting intrinsic motivation and contributing to health and well-being. Leisure, in this context, is characterised as free or unobligated time expenditure (pp.17-18).

In order to understand leisure and its meanings, Barker (1947) proposes a return to ancient Greek philosophy and explores the contribution of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) to this field of knowledge. According to Aristotle, there are three different ways of spending time and being involved in activities: the first one is "the way of work or labour"; the second way is defined as "amusement or recreation", meaning a recovery from work and a renewal of capacity for work. The third way of spending time suggested by Aristotle is "the enjoyment and the employment of leisure – something essentially different - both from work and from recreation; something done for its own sake" (pp.1-3). From this perspective, leisure is understood as "the use of the mind in activities which [are] desirable and worthwhile for their own intrinsic sake" (p.3), leading to fulfilment, self-actualisation and enjoyment. Barker (1947) suggests types of leisure activities which include reading, handiwork, gardening, music, drama and further education. It is interesting to note that activities related to music and drama refer not only to the passive act of listening to music or watching a play, but also the active act of performing and taking part in an orchestra, choir or a play. In this context, it could be argued that dance, including circle dance, should also be integrated in this categorisation. Furthermore, Barker (1947) proposes that leisure has to be generalised and socialized; leisure has to be made a common possession of all (p.5).

The importance of the study of leisure from the social psychology perspective is discussed by Mannell et al. (2006). These authors highlight that the

understanding of leisure should consider the 'macro – or societal' level and incorporate interpretative or constructionist approaches to contribute to the growing body of research in this field (p. 121). Haworth (1997, 2004) has proposed a development of the Principal Environment Influences (Warr, 1999) by including the role of enjoyment in well-being and suggesting that "enjoyment and situational factors are conjoined, and that enjoyment can give rise directly to well-being" (Haworth, 2004, p.178). Stebbins (1997; 2007) discusses the link between serious leisure and well-being proposing that "(1) social well-being emanates from a high quality of life, as generated through the three forms of leisure[28] and (2) self-fulfilment through leisure leads to well-being and on to mental and physical health" (2007, p.113).

Zuzanek et al. (1998) draw attention to the role of physically active leisure and its effects on perceived stress and self-reported health by investigating data derived from the 1985 and 1990 surveys conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in partnership with the National Center for Health Statistics. One of the conclusions is that the relationship between health-enhancing effects and participation in physically active leisure is more obvious than the stress-reducing effects (pp.256-257). Walking as a leisure occupation was evaluated by Wensley and Slade (2012) in the context of occupation therapy. This qualitative study, based in the U.K., addresses the positive benefits of this form of active leisure occupation from the point of view of healthy students and suggests that walking should be considered as a valuable intervention in clinical as well as in community settings. Similarly, gardening was explored in the context of occupational therapy (York and Wiseman, 2012). Using a meta-ethnographic approach, the study proposes that gardening in the natural environment can enhance a sense of well-being amongst individuals whilst promoting a sense of community and social integration.

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[28] Serious leisure, casual leisure and project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2007).

Dance, as a form of physical activity and a medium to enhance a sense of well-being, has been explored with different approaches, theoretical frameworks, styles and techniques. Associations between dance and therapy are commonly found. Publications related to the field of dance therapy are quite numerous, as the discipline has significantly expanded to constitute a profession in the late 1960's. The body of knowledge refers especially to the use of dance as "the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional and physical integration of the individual" (Chodorow, 1991, p.1). The studies are situated mainly within the field of mental health although there has been a significant expansion in the use of dance therapy and its application in other areas. Some journals, such as the *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, are completely dedicated to the field of dance therapy. Hanna (1995) discusses the potential of dance in health and healing, suggesting that dance therapy can provide "unique multisensory, emotional, cognitive, and somatic" (p.329) experiences to clients as part of broad treatment programmes or as a primary intervention modality. Similarly, Ward (2008) proposes that dance, as a physical activity and therapeutic tool, can be used in chronic diseases, mental and physical health prevention and management, both in a health care context and in community settings.

Ballroom dancing is explored and contextualised within leisure in the British context and the historical and generational perspective by Bramham (2007). Using an action approach, he emphasises that the significance and function of this form of dance varies according to age group however the dance classes are "crucial sites for leisure… and for creating, inhibiting or realising physicality,…and body competence"(p.27). Kreutz (2008) investigates the potential health benefits of tango Argentino (partnered dance) amongst healthy participants in the Netherlands and Germany. Questionnaires were developed from interviews and

from notes made by the researcher as participant / observer and applied to 110 participants. The results show that tango was perceived by the participants as a leisure occupation which brings physical, social and emotional benefits. Moreover, motivation factors for engaging in this form of dance are "related to relaxation, enjoyment and mood management" (p.82).

In the domain of occupational science, Graham (2002) discusses dance as a transformative occupation as it can "serve multiple functions, simultaneously develop the whole self, stimulate intimate and significant social relations, support optimal functioning through the lifespan" (p.133). She also highlights an important outcome of the investigation the Graham's Teaching Conditions Theory, in which she identifies conditions that "support the development of social, emotional and intellectual meanings in dance learning contexts" (p.128). Froggett and Little (2012) evaluated a dance programme in an acute mental health setting in the U.K. carried out by a professional dancer with the collaboration of hospital-based occupational therapists. Using a mixed-method approach, the study suggests that dance, as a complex intervention, is a valuable tool which can be used with service users within hospital-based environments. Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews with service users and staff and observations of film footage were made. The Herth Hope Index (Herth, 1992) was used throughout the study. The findings indicate that the participants perceived dance as a medium which promotes a sense of relaxation, improves mood and facilitates cultural and social engagement. The authors propose that further research is needed to "assess the benefits of more consistent and prolonged participation" (p.98).

### 2.3.3 Well-being, folk dance and circle dance

There have been scant research studies exploring the specific link between folk dance and well-being[29]. A recent quantitative study (Mavrovouniotis et al., 2010) has been carried out relating the impact of Greek traditional dances on the quality of old people's life, using the Subjective Exercise Experiences Scale (McAuley and Courneya, 1994) to measure positive well-being, psychological distress and fatigue and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1970) to measure state and trait anxiety. Significant decreases in state anxiety and psychological distress were observed after dancing, as well as significant increases in positive well-being [30]. In another study, a recreational folk dance community programme for healthy women aged from fifty to eighty years was briefly presented by an occupational therapist, emphasising the relevance of this initiative to the Australian health care system (Connor, 2000).

The research evidence on the use of circle dance as a strategy to promote well-being is limited with just a few qualitative studies discussing the application of circle dance in the field of mental health and education. Jerrome (2002) discusses a project undertaken in the U.K. with older people with dementia, evaluating the therapeutic use of circle dance. This has highlighted positive outcomes such as a general sense of well-being, improved fitness and an opportunity to establish relationships within a group context. More recently, a pilot study was conducted in East London, U.K., to investigate the potential benefits of circle dance as a psychotherapeutic intervention in dementia (Hamill et al., 2012). Using a mixed-method approach, the results of this small-scale (eighteen participants in total[31])

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[29] CINAHL and Scopus database used as search strategy.
[30] Experimental (participation in Greek dances) and control (discussions) group were established, involving 111 participants, seventy five women and thirty six men, aged sixty- ninety-one years.
[31] Research participants were recruited from the Mental Health Care of Older People's service (East London NHS Foundation Trust) and took part in a ten-week circle dance therapy group. The study was conducted by a clinical psychologist and a nurse, both specialised in "using psychotherapeutic and psychosocial interventions with older adults who are suffering from a broad range of cognitive

indicated that circle dance can benefit people with dementia and their carers as it facilitates self-expression through movement and rhythm, helping people to re-connect to their own bodies and re-discover "skills such moving and singing as a means of communicating with others" (p.716). The findings also highlighted that dancing together in a circle appeared to enhance the relationship amongst the participants and promote a sense of integration and connection, "at least for the duration of the sessions" (p.716). In Brazil, a group intervention using music therapy and circle dance was investigated within a mental health service for adults. The findings elucidated the subjective experience of the clients and its impact on the development of social identity and belonging (Leonardi, 2007).

From the perspective of Jungian psychology, Hebling (2004) conducted a study with healthy students of art therapy, investigating the impact of circle dance on their quality of life and on their sense of spirituality. The results demonstrated an improvement in quality of life, positive modifications in body image and an impact on the participants' sense of spirituality. My own work (Borges da Costa,1998) has examined the introduction of circle dance in the curriculum of the School of Occupational Therapy at the University of São Paulo, evaluating students' perceptions of the therapeutic elements of circle dance, highlighting particularly its application in mental health settings. Although these studies provide interesting insights, they do not address the interrelationship between circle dance, occupational therapy and well-being. My further research exploring the perceived experience of being engaged in circle dance, as well as highlighting its application in the context of occupational therapy could build upon and enrich the present (limited) body of knowledge (Borges da Costa, 2012).

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impairment" (Hamill et al., 2012, p.711) and trained to use circle dance in dementia (Heymanson, 2009; Heymanson and Kershaw, 2011).

## 2.4 The synergy between occupational therapy, circle dance and well-being: some propositions

In the context of occupational therapy, circle dance can be seen as a multifaceted occupation. The College of Occupational Therapists (2005; 2008) recommended that promoting and providing opportunities for a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity, and supporting the provision of, or access to, affordable facilities and opportunities for exercise and recreation should be one of the key roles in the promotion of health and well-being. From the point of view of occupational therapy, circle dance, considered as a form of meaningful physical and leisure activity, can provide opportunities for people to be physically active and for social interaction (Borges da Costa, 2012).

Circle dance can also be understood in the context of leisure.  As a subjective experience, the therapeutic use of leisure is coherent particularly with the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance (Suto, 1998). This client-centred practice (CAOT, 1997) is embedded in the concept of 'enabling occupation', which   "means collaborating with people to choose, organize and perform occupations which people find  useful or meaningful in a given environment" (p.30).

Considering the concept of occupational well-being, the experiential aspect of circle dance could be translated as follows. 'Doing' refers to the physical aspects of dance and the motor and process skills involved. The repertoire of dances and the patterns of movement can be adapted to meet the needs of individuals and of the group as a whole. 'Being' refers to the process of learning the steps and experiencing the body in movement in a social context. 'Becoming' refers to embodiment and the meanings attributed to the experience. 'Belonging' refers to the sense of connectedness within a communal form of dance. As a shared

occupation, circle dance requires the participants to work towards a common goal as a group, in a non-competitive environment; the dances cannot be performed by an individual and the collective aspect is fundamental. From this perspective, it could provide opportunities for developing and maintaining connections with others, fostering a sense of belonging (Wilcock, 2006; Hammell, 2009b).

In the context of the pedagogy of circle dance, the relevance of an environment which promotes freedom, choice, expression, attention and singularity can be related to principles of contemporary approaches in occupational therapy and the singular use of meaningful occupation to transform people's lives (Galheigo, 2005; Kronenberg et al., 2005; Wilcock, 2006; Kronenberg et al., 2011). This aspect has parallels to the revolutionary methodology of Paulo Freire (1990). Freire (1990) was interested in raising people's awareness for the need of collective social action for change. He also emphasized that learning and empowerment should take place in a social context (Werner, 2005). This point is also congruent with the principles of circle dance and with those presented by Bernhard Wosien (2006) as he stated that circle dance could be a tool which could be used for working with groups and communities. In this context, the pedagogy of circle dance encompasses more than just teaching the steps, movements and positions but incorporates aspects related to the background of the dances, their cultural context and, if appropriate or relevant, their symbolism.

As a group and shared occupation, it is essential that the teacher pays attention to the group dynamic, facilitating the inclusion of all participants and working in collaboration with the group. Teachers need to be able to judge the level of competence of the group, in order to adapt their dances according to the different levels of ability of all participants. This also involves making decisions about the programme and the order of dances to be presented. The teachers have the delicate task of acting both as a facilitators and group leaders. As no research is

extant on these pedagogical aspects, then it is clear that further exploration is needed.

Having presented an overview of the literature available to date and pertaining to each domain related to this investigation (occupational therapy, circle dance and well-being) and some possible directions to take in order to understand the synergy between them, I will present the methodology chosen to address the research questions.

# Chapter 3 Methodology

The nature of the research questions in this study is basically exploratory and requires a methodology which can develop an understanding of the phenomena. Firstly, I will justify the relevance of a qualitative approach followed by the theoretical paradigm selected to guide this study. The qualitative research strategy will then be presented, considering its significance for this investigation. In the next chapter, the data collection and method will be discussed.

## 3.1 Approach to research

This study is concerned with circle dance, the processes it generates and the meanings behind them, and its pedagogical aspects in the context of occupational therapy and occupational well-being. The type of data arising from the research questions allows the researcher to capture the lived experience of the participants and teachers of circle dance groups; therefore the respondents' points of view are vital for the research process and for understanding their experiences, perceptions and meanings. In this context, data need to be collected directly from circle dance participants and teachers in their natural setting (Creswell, 2007). The methodological approach to this research should then be "capable of capturing the complexity and subjectivity of the phenomenon" (Valiant Cook, 2001, p.3). A qualitative approach was chosen in order for it to be coherent as this type of inquiry attempts to "…make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.3). The main role of a qualitative researcher in this perspective is "to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and

thoroughly their points of view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking" (Patton, 1990, p. 24).

## 3.2 Theoretical paradigm

The underlying principles of constructivism guide this study. In this worldview, the subjective meanings of an individual's experiences are interpreted as being varied and multiple and also constructed socially and historically and through interaction with others. The participants' views and perspectives of a phenomenon, as well as their social, cultural and historical context are vital for the research process. Constructivist researchers acknowledge that their own background and experiences determine and influence the interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2007, pp.20-21). The concepts used in the research design derive from my background as an occupational therapist and my experience as a circle dance teacher, in a clinical as well as non-clinical settings and community groups. As a researcher and a circle dance teacher, my understanding is that my reflections, background and actions will impact upon the meaning and the experience under investigation and are an integral part of the interpretation (Charmaz, 2006).

Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed and aims toward interpretive understanding of subject meanings (Charmaz, 2000, p.510).

## 3.3 Qualitative research strategy

The grounded theory approach was chosen as the most appropriate method of inquiry, as it could assist in generating an insightful, representative and innovative theory. This method, which is suitable for use with different forms of qualitative material, is particularly relevant when used for research proposals which are not linked with a strong theoretical framework. It can be seen as a "stepping stone to develop and update a disciplinary body of knowledge" (Corbin and Holt, 2005, p.51).The use of a grounded theory approach to qualitative data has significant advantages such as enabling the researcher to develop a theory grounded in the views of the participants and in data from fieldwork (Creswell, 2007). As a process representing participants' response and interpretation of events, the grounded theory in data tends to make it more reflective of practical situations (Corbin and Holt, 2005, p.49). The goal of the research, using grounded theory, is that knowledge is based on the lived experience of the participants.

I adopted more specifically a constructivist approach to grounded theory, explicitly located in the constructivist paradigm, in which the phenomena of study are prioritised and the data and analysis are "created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p.130). The resulting theory is an interpretation and therefore depends on the researcher's view and reflexivity. The focus is on the creation of a contextualized emergent understanding of the studied experience rather than the creation of a testable theoretical structure, as in the positivist tradition of grounded theory (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; O'Connor et al., 2008). In this perspective, the constructivist grounded theory provides "methods to explicate an empirical process in ways that prompt seeing beyond it" (Charmaz, 2005, pp.529-530). Although the method has been used widely for

over forty years, Grounded Theory still represents a contested term in different research arenas and thus requires further clarification. A brief discussion will follow, pointing out the origins and the historical context in which Grounded Theory was created and its further developments, including divergent implications between objectivist and constructivist points of view.

### 3.3.1 The Grounded Theory Method: origins, historical context and methodological approaches

The Grounded Theory Method, devised in the 1960's by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, derived from the combination of their sociological perspectives. Glaser's background was marked by a rigorous training in quantitative methods and middle range theories, and his work at Columbia University. Strauss' perspective had been influenced by pragmatist, symbolic interactionist and ethnographic traditions, from his doctorate studies at the University of Chicago (Glaser and Strauss, 1965; Charmaz, 2006 ; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a).Their book entitled *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser and Strauss, 1965) was the result of a six year ethnographic study on death and dying conducted in hospitals in the Bay area of San Francisco, financed by the National Institutes of Health. Common interests and similar personal experiences with the death of close relatives and friends brought them together in this research project, in which Glaser and Strauss compiled an iterative process involving the continual sampling and analysis of qualitative data gathered in six hospitals. They "systematically worked out the concepts (and types) of death expectations and awareness contexts, and the paradigm for the study of awareness contexts" (Glaser and Strauss, 1965, p.287).

The publication of *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser and Strauss, 1965), and its success, inaugurated this innovative and influential methodological strategy,

which "inspired generations of new scholars to pursue qualitative research" (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a, p. 31). In order to understand the revolutionary aspects of the Grounded Theory Method, it is important to delineate the historical context in which it was created.

### 3.3.1.1 Historical context

Considering the history of qualitative research proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2000; 2005), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is one of the exponents related to the modernist phase, the second moment or "the golden age of rigorous qualitative analysis", in which many texts pursued the formalization of qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, pp.16-17). The historical field at that specific period in the social sciences was almost exclusively subject to quantitative methods and the status of qualitative methods was "essentially at an all-time low" (Pidgeon, 1996, p.76). Another relevant characteristic of this moment is the clear separation between theory and empirical research and, subsequently, theorists and researchers (Charmaz, 2000).

In this context and in opposition to the current trend, Glaser's and Strauss' ideas were revolutionary and challenged the hegemony of the quantitative research paradigm in the social sciences (Pidgeon, 1996; Charmaz, 2000; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a; Creswell, 2007). At the simplest level, Glaser and Strauss aspired to design a method that "could claim equivalent status to the quantitative work of the time" (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a, p.33). Most importantly, they compiled a methodological strategy with a clear rationale for conducting qualitative research, which helped novices to engage in it. In addition, their written guidelines and precise analytic procedures have also challenged the oral tradition of mentoring in qualitative research (Charmaz, 2000).

Glaser and Strauss pursued a positivist, objectivist direction in their conceptualization of grounded theory. In this perspective, the researchers accept the assumption that a "systematic set of methods leads them to discover reality and to construct a provisionally true, testable, and ultimately verifiable 'theory' of it" (Charmaz, 2000, p.524). In *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser and Strauss, 1965), Glaser and Strauss dedicated an appendix - Methods of Collection and Analysis of Data – to describing the process of generating a 'systematic substantive theory'. The theory developed by their method should have at least four properties:

> …it must closely fit the substantive area; be readily understandable by laymen; it must be sufficiently general to be applicable to a multitude of diverse situations; allow the user partial control over the structure and process of the substantive area as it changes through time (Glaser and Strauss, 1965, p. 259).

The articulation and formalization of the scientific principles of Grounded Theory was further developed by Glaser and Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), *Time for Dying* (1968) and *Status Passage* (1971). In addition to *Awareness of Dying* (1965), they describe the foundations of Grounded Theory Methods, and they are also defined as the "four founding texts" (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007a, p.31). In the late 1980s, Strauss's and Glaser's paths through grounded theory diverged, according to their respective conceptual and philosophical base. Strauss subsequently co-authored his works with Juliet M. Corbin, moving the method towards verification. He died in 1996 (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Glaser still writes about and teaches grounded theory; his work remains consistent with the positivist standpoint (Glaser, 2007).

### 3.3.1.2  *Methodological approaches*

Grounded Theory, as a method and a product of inquiry, has been extensively used in the social sciences and in other disciplines. It has evolved since its creation and it has been revised, reviewed and debated by many scholars, including the founders, Glaser and Strauss. For Denzin (2007), seven versions can be distinguished: "positivist, postpositivist, constructivist, objectivist, postmodern, situational, and computer assisted" (p.454).Other scholars (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996; Charmaz, 1995; 2000; 2006; Bryant 2003) propose a distinction between positivist and constructivist approaches. The objectivist grounded theory, coherent with the positivist tradition, "attends to data as real in and of themselves and does not attend to the process of their production" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131). In contrast to the positivist approach, the constructivist perspective "recognizes that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 523). Morse (2009) states that grounded theory has continue to evolve over the past 40 years and is still changing (p.18). She proposes that a "distinct genealogy of development" has been derived from the work of some students of the original developers, Glaser and Strauss: dimensional analysis (Schatzman, 1991); situational analysis (Clarke, 2005); constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The major milestones have been exemplified in her graphic entitled "Genealogy of Grounded Theory" (p.17).

For the purpose of this study, I considered various versions of grounded theory before selecting the most appropriate one to this investigation. Glaser's (2001; 2007) approach[32], the pure discovery version, presupposes that the researcher adopts a neutral stance using a set of procedures to render the data into identifiable knowledge. Applying this perspective to my research would not take

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[32] Initially proposed by Glaser and Strauss and continued by Glaser.

into account my experience and background which would shape both the research process and the findings. Although Strauss and Corbin's (1990) version of grounded theory allows the inclusion of the researcher's views and experiences, they advocate a dense and precise way of developing a grounded theory, with rigid methodological prescriptions, using additional procedures such as "waving the red flag" (pp.80-82), "the flip-flop" (pp.79-80) constant comparative techniques and the use of "matrices" (pp.90-96) to maximise theoretical sensitivity and ensure the development of a grounded theory. Pidgeon and Henwood (1996) considered the constructionist element of theory generation and used the term 'theory generation' in contrast to 'discovery' to differentiate the constructivist approach to the positivist.  However, Charmaz's (1995; 2000; 2006; 2008a; 2008b; 2009) perspective is explicitly located within the constructivist paradigm.

In this  context,  the grounded theory researcher "actively constructs with his or her participants" and "must then study the meanings, intentions and actions of the research participants" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 32). Hence the constructivist version of grounded theory takes into account my experience and background and acknowledges my role as a researcher in the analysis and consequently in the construction of the theory.  This version advocates that the grounded theory process should be fluid, interactive and open-ended. In this context, "the researcher's emerging constructions of concepts shape both process and product" (Charmaz, 2006, p.178). Charmaz (2006) suggests that a grounded theory "that conceptualizes and conveys what is meaningful about a substantive area can make a valuable contribution" (p.183). The process of simultaneous data collection and analysis in this approach is based on heuristic strategies in preference to the positivistic procedures stressed by Glaser and Strauss (O'Connor et al., 2008, p.30). The goal of the research process, using grounded theory with an interpretative perspective, is to demonstrate that knowledge is

based on the lived experience of the participants and that theories rest on "the researcher's interpretation of the studied phenomena and are situated and located in particular positions, perspectives, priorities and experiences" (Charmaz, 2006, pp.126-127). The place of the author in the text, his/her relationship with the participants and the importance of writing a final report that remains grounded in data are fundamental in the research practice (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2007). All these elements were considered to be fundamental for this investigation and the constructivist version of grounded theory was selected as a valuable and appropriate method to address the research questions.

### 3.3.2 The use of grounded theory in occupational therapy and occupational science

Qualitative methodologies have been frequently used to explore different topics in occupational therapy and occupational science (Yerxa et al., 1990; Finlay, 2000; Hammell, 2002). The use of grounded theory has increasingly been used in the domain of occupational therapy and occupational science (A.T. Jönsson, et al., 1999; Jonsson et al., 2000; Goodacre, 2006; Barker et al., 2010; Chaffey et al., 2010; Carrier et al., 2011; Johansson and Isaksson, 2011; Mahony et al., 2012).

Stanley and Cheek (2003) argue that grounded theory could contribute to the generation of "theories grounded in the reality of practice" (p.143). They conducted a critical review of eighteen journal articles in which this approach was used to investigate various occupations in depth. Within these articles, studies which contributed to the development of the profession and educational issues, to occupational therapy practice and occupational science were identified. Stanley and Cheek (2003) concluded that grounded theory could contribute to "empirically derived theories pertinent to occupational therapy, grounded in the lives and social situations of the people occupational therapists work with, which will be

truly client centred and a significant step forward for the profession" (p.149). More recently, Nayar (2011) also proposed that the grounded theory methodology meets the criteria for occupational science research proposed by Yerxa et al. (1990) as: it preserves the integrity of the individual; admits the individual's experiences as credible; views the individual as an open system in interaction with the environment; includes past, present, and future; utilises cross-verification by both the subject and other sources; preserves and describes the natural environmental challenge and degree of skill possessed; and allows for the study of the individual as one who develops occupational behaviour over the lifespan (pp.11-12).

# Chapter 4 Data and method

This chapter presents the data and method applied in this study. The ethical considerations are addressed in the next sub-section, followed by data management procedures. Access to the research field is outlined in the next sub-section, including the sampling strategies and the characteristics of the respondents. The methodological procedures of data collection and data analysis will be discussed next, followed by a reflection on the position of the researcher and the criteria chosen to evaluate the study. To close this chapter, an overview of the theoretical model will be provided.

## 4.1   Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are fundamental and an absolute priority in studies involving human participants (Bell, 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Wertz et al., 2011). It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that ethical procedures at different levels are in place in order to safeguard the respondents involved in the study. It is also an integral part of the research design and responsibility of the inquirer to anticipate ethical issues in order to conduct the study in a moral, respectful and ethical manner. Transparency, honesty and credibility were aimed at and achieved at all stages. In this section, I will discuss the ethical challenges that have arisen in this study as well as the procedures and the strategies used to carry out this research.

### 4.1.1 Ethical challenges

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) propose that qualitative researchers should apply not only ethical principles and rules but also respond creatively to questions, challenges and issues that arise from their studies, whilst employing flexible judgement throughout the entire research process. The involvement of human participants in qualitative research as "sources of data, as objects and evaluators of knowledge" (Wertz et al. 2011, p.353) raises issues of how to protect the trust and interest of the respondents and their social networks, and of how the researchers deal with their own aims, including the question of "the inevitable power and knowledge asymmetries" (p.353) created in the relationship between researcher and respondents. These issues have influenced both the process and the product of my investigation. In this section I will address the ethical challenges I faced in this study and how I managed to resolve them.

First and foremost, my commitment throughout the research process compelled me to situate myself  as the researcher in a broader social context (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) and to try to gain an understanding of both my position and my own moral values. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest, "research is an interactive process shaped by [the researcher's] own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting…a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole" (p.6). However, "researchers, not participants, are obliged to be reflexive about what [they] bring to the scene, what [they] see, and how [they] see it" (Charmaz, 2006, p.15). Throughout the research process, I have reflected on the multi-layered position I occupy. I hold a university degree in occupational therapy and I am undertaking a PhD degree funded by the Centre for Research for Health and Wellbeing, University of Bolton. Both these factors give me a certain degree of status as a member of the educated middle-class. Furthermore, as the

researcher, I was the one who had determined the research topic, selected the methods, interpreted the findings and written the final report, which consequently provided me with an inherent privileged academic status (Wertz et al., 2011).

Another relevant factor is that I have dual Brazilian and U.K. citizenship and that when I started my doctorate journey, I had already been living in the U.K. for approximately ten years. During all this time, I had been actively participating in the U.K. circle dance network, both as a circle dancer (or participant) and a circle dance teacher and still continue to do so today. This has given me the opportunity to be familiar with some of the characteristics of the U.K. network as well as to be part of it. Moreover, it has conferred upon me "an insider view" (Morse et al., 2009, p. 239). Thus, as a constructivist researcher, who is also part of the circle dance network, I had to recognise that a power imbalance could compromise my study, in particular throughout the data collection, and therefore I should take exceptional care to be open about my position with all respondents. Taking this into consideration, I agree with Guba and Lincoln (2005) that efforts to attain reciprocity, or the "extent to which the research relationship becomes reciprocal rather than hierarchical" (p.209) should be considered as one of the fundamental elements in qualitative research. In this context, it was clear that my multi-layered position as a circle dance teacher, occupational therapist and researcher should be fully disclosed as well as the intention of the study to all respondents (appendix 2). Moreover, a conscious understanding of the nature of my position within the U.K. circle dance network and of my rapport with the respondents as well as the context in which data was gathered had to be considered a priority throughout the research process.

One of the challenges I have experienced was related to the recruitment of potential respondents. Discussions during meetings with my supervisors helped me to reflect on the nuances and boundaries involved in accessing fieldwork and

all the ethical matters which are inherent in the research process. The following diary entry[33] reveals some of my reflections in the early stages of fieldwork:

> *"Accessing fieldwork: how to start recruiting respondents? I have discussed this matter with my supervisors during our meeting. We have discussed and agreed that a pilot study would be helpful. I was going to attend two workshops in November and the plan was to take this opportunity to recruit some respondents. Although I feel very excited about the perspective of initiating the interviews, I also feel quite nervous: I'm not sure how many people I can recruit. My research project has now been approved by the University Ethics Committee. But, what other ethical procedures should I consider in the "real world" of collecting data?"*
> (October, 2010)

At the beginning of each interview, I realised that it was very important not only to refer to the participant information sheet and to the informed consent form (appendix 2), but also to discuss them fully with each respondent and be open to clarify and/or answer any points prior to the interview. For that, I decided to have a copy of the cover letter, participant information sheet and informed consent with me.

Throughout the research process, I was also aware of (and concerned about) confidentiality issues as I was conducting interviews with members of the circle dance network. Expanding my recruitment area to include other geographical areas of the U.K. was one of the strategies used. I also reflected on the relevance of reassuring the respondents that I would not disclose to any other member of the circle dance that they had been interviewed or any content of the interview.

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[33] My research diaries were hand-written and for the purpose of the dissertation, I have typed the entries as they appear in my diaries.

However, I also used other strategies derived from unexpected dilemmas which occurred during the interviews. One of my diary entries illustrated this:

*"When I was interviewing (initials of respondent), she mentioned one of the circle dance teachers and asked me if I knew her – I said yes. At that point, I had to interrupt her to ask how important it was in the context of the interview to mention this person - she said that for her, it was a good way to illustrate the point we were discussing. She continued her account however when we had finished the interview, we agreed that in the transcript, the initials of the teacher would not appear and that this would be treated as confidential information and would not be used."* (July 2011)

From that interview, I was able to reflect on a different way to approach this question and I decided to state, prior to the formal interview with each respondent, that for confidentiality purposes, it would be important not to mention names of other members of the circle dance network during the interview.

Throughout the research process, I was also aware of the emotional feelings that I experienced related to my interactions with the respondents and during the interviews. I decided that making notes immediately after each interview (fieldnotes[34]) would also help to capture my feelings. By having a written register, I could then return to these notes during the process of analysis and, if necessary, expand on these issues in my diary entries. The following passage of one of my diary exemplifies this:

*"I attended a circle dance workshop last weekend with one the international teachers visiting the U.K. and, as usual, I had no idea who else would be there. I met (initials), one of my respondents. She greeted me very warmly and it was as if the interview had also served the purpose*

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[34] All my hand-written fieldnotes were later typed up, saved as a word-document and then linked to the respective interviews.

*of making a connection with someone who I have danced with before however with whom I had never had the opportunity to talk. I also noticed that both of us, she and I, were aware of boundaries of confidentiality. Throughout the weekend, we had brief conversations about the dances and made comments about how much we were enjoying the weekend and how good the teacher was; however she never mentioned our interview, and I felt that we both respected the boundaries of confidentiality. A few days after, she replied to my email with the transcript, approving it and adding to the body of the email: "I've really enjoyed reading the transcript of our interview and I do hope this will help your research study – good luck!"* (October 2011)

Thus, by being actively reflexive of the ethical challenges and dilemmas as well as my position as a researcher, I hope that it may have minimized any effect that it had on my interpretations of the data. Furthermore, a conscious understanding of the ethical dimensions may have enriched the process of my data analysis, by bringing more clarity and understanding to the data content, and also to the context in which it was gathered.

## 4.1.2 Ethical approval

Ethical approval was granted by the University Ethics Committee (appendix 1). Additional information was also supplied in relation to data storage, respondents' recruitment, participant information sheet, cover letter and informed consent form (appendix 2).

As the study did not involve any particular vulnerable group or respondents unable to give their informed consent nor did it involve the recruitment of service users or of staff from the NHS, further approval from another external research ethics body was not necessary. The University's *Code of Practice for research students and supervisors (*Board of Studies for Research Degrees, 2005) and the *Research Ethics Guidelines* of the College of Occupational Therapists (COT, 2003) were used as benchmarks throughout the study.

## 4.1.3 Gaining informed consent

Obtaining the voluntary informed consent form is the first and vital step towards involving human respondents in any study (COT, 2003; Board of Studies for Research Degrees, 2005). Apart from the formal procedures of attaining informed consent, other strategies were also used to ensure that the study was accomplished in a moral, respectful and ethical manner. These strategies are discussed below.

### *4.1.3.1 Invitation to take part in the study*

The respondents were contacted initially by email, phone or face-to-face. A brief explanation about the research study as well as reassurance related to the type of participation (voluntary) was given by the researcher in the first instance. The respondents were then formally invited to take part in the study. Only four potential respondents declined the offer at different stages: one before receiving

the ethical forms, two after sending the signed consent form and one who did not return the consent form; no further explanation was requested and no further contact was made. By accepting the initial invitation, the respondents received, via post, all the ethical forms (cover letter, participant information sheet, informed consent form). This procedure gave the respondents the opportunity to read and re-consider their desire to participate (Creswell, 2007, pp.123-125). Clarification at every stage of participation was offered and ensured by the researcher (see appendix 2 - participant information sheet). A stamped addressed envelope was provided - the confirmation of acceptance was granted when the respondents returned the informed signed consent form. The researcher could contact them via email or phone to arrange the interview.

### 4.1.3.2 Prior to the interview

Prior to commencing the formal interview, the researcher ensured that the respondents had the opportunity to discuss any issues related to the study and to their participation and to ethical procedures. Reassurance was also given in relation to confidentiality and anonymity (Creswell, 2007); respondents were told that all the information would be treated confidentially and anonymously (particular attention was given to this as the researcher is part of the circle dance network) and be used for the purposes of this study only. The respondents were also reminded that they had the right to refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time, as well as withdraw any unprocessed information previously supplied.

### 4.1.3.3 During the interview

Although the focus of the interview did not include any particularly sensitive issues, some respondents did choose to disclose some information about their

personal circumstances. On those occasions, no psychological distress and/or anxiety was observed; however an ability to be empathic, open and sensitive was vital to the smooth running of the interviews.

### 4.1.3.4 After the interview

The respondents were invited to give their feedback about their experience of being interviewed. They were also consulted with regards to the verification process following receipt of the full transcription. It was also very important to allow time for a normal conversation after the interview in order to bring the interview to a close on a positive note.

## 4.1.4 Data management

All the information and notes collected during this study were stored in a secure manner and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's policy. The signed informed consent forms were locked in a filing cabinet. Data management procedures were also explained to the respondents prior to the interviews (also part of the participants' information sheet). Field notes taken during and after the interviews were also stored safely.

### 4.1.4.1 The use of digital voice recorder and CallBurner Software

All interviews were recorded, with permission of the respondents, using a digital voice recorder or CallBurner software[35] (CallBurner, n.d.). The MP3 files were transferred to the researcher's computer (password required) in a protected folder. The use of a digital voice recorder was based on the fact that the researcher could dedicate full attention to the respondent (eye contact) and detailed data could be stored (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher deliberately

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[35] CallBurner software allows Skype users to record calls direct to MP3, WMA or other formats (CallBurner.com).

chose a modern and small model in order to facilitate the interview process and to be able to conduct it in an unobtrusive way. High quality sound mode was used during the interview to secure a good quality sound recording in order to facilitate the transcription process. Prior to the actual interview, the researcher informed the respondent that it would be recorded using either a voice recorder or CallBurner software (CallBurner, n.d.).

### 4.1.4.2 Transcriptions

The verbatim transcription of all interviews was carried out by the researcher. Respondents' names or any other personal identifying information did not appear in the transcription.   Identifiers were removed from data and replaced by a code. No personal identifying information or names were included in the transcript and dissertation. Before the interview started, respondents were told that they would be able to have a copy of the transcript (for verification purposes) if they wished. A full transcription of the interview was forwarded via email (as a pdf) to those who requested it. Respondents were asked to check for factual accuracy, to amend any passages and/or to add additional comments, if necessary. The majority of the respondents were completely satisfied with the transcription (only four requested minor corrections and one requested to add a comment).  Reading the transcript was also expressed as a positive experience.

## 4.2  Access to the field

Access to the field was gained through the U.K. circle dance network, as the focus of this study is on the experience of people outside the context of the health care system. The network comprises of members[36] of *The Grapevine*, the journal of the circle dance network and non-members[37] who attend circle dance groups, workshops and other events. *The Grapevine* is published quarterly, in which a listing for teachers, contacts and musicians is available and updated regularly in each issue. Currently there are approximately 270 teachers listed. Around 260 regular circle dance groups are also listed offering weekly sessions of circle dance to local communities in the U.K. Workshops and events including festivals, holiday schemes involving circle dance in the U.K. and abroad are advertised and updated regularly. The fact that the researcher is part of the circle dance network, and is familiar with the structure, facilitated access and recruitment of respondents and helped to establish trust early in the course of the fieldwork (Morse, 2007).

The recruitment process included respondents who are both members and non-members of *The Grapevine*. For the purpose of this study, the term "respondent" was used to refer to people who were interviewed. "Participants" refer to the sub-group of respondents who are engaged in circle dance, attending circle dance groups in local communities in the U.K. workshops and /or special events.  In order to use the same terminology as found in *The Grapevine* and to facilitate a clear distinction between respondents the term "teachers" was selected. The term

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[36] At present, *The Grapevine* has 577 members, including teachers, musicians and participants in the U.K. and Ireland, Europe, Africa, Australasia, North and South America (Information was obtained from the subscriptions secretary in January 2012).
[37] The numbers of non-members cannot be precisely estimated.

"teacher training coordinator" was chosen for the 3rd sub-group of respondents. The types of sampling used will be explored in the next sub-section.

## 4.2.1  Sampling

In the grounded theory approach, data collection and data analysis are done concurrently and sampling strategies are of critical importance for the process of theory generation and the successful development of the research (Charmaz, 2006; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007c; Morse, 2007). This continuous interplay implies that the data collection becomes "progressively more focused and the analysis successively more theoretical" (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007c, p.1).

In this study, convenience sampling (Morse 2007) was applied at the beginning of the field research process (see figure 8). This approach to sampling offers a starting point when entering the field and gives the researcher the opportunity to identify the overall scope of the research process in order to direct the next stages of data collection. For this purpose, the researcher identifies respondents "who are available, who are 'experts', who have experienced the phenomenon" (Morse 2007, p.235). In order to initiate the enquiry process, a small pilot study was completed in November 2010. Based on accessibility, respondents were located in two circle dance workshops. The researcher had asked for volunteers who would be interested in the study and who would be willing to be interviewed about their experience of circle dance either as a participant or as a circle dance teacher. At this stage, three participants (R1; R2; R3) and one teacher (R4) were interviewed.

Studying the data collected closely (initial coding),understanding the respondents' experiences, their views, insights and perspectives prompted further data collection using purposeful sampling (Morse, 2007) where respondents were "selected as indicated by the initial analysis of interviews" (p.235). This second

stage (February 2011 - see figure 8) consisted of interviews conducted with four participants (R5; R6; R7, R10) and two teachers (R8; R9). As a result of this, preliminary categories were constructed through comparative methods in order to explicate ideas, events and processes in the data. In order to define the relevance of these categories as well as to engage in the process of refining them, theoretical sampling was used. More data was collected at the third stage (July to November 2011). Seven participants (R12; R14; R16; R17; R18; R20; R21), five teachers (R13; R15; R19; R22; R23) and one teacher training coordinator (R11) were identified.

As a central strategy, theoretical sampling "means seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories" in the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006, p.96).  As an important guideline, this procedure cannot be developed before the process of defining some categories which are pertinent to the codes and data. It is only after this that the researcher identifies areas to probe with more data.  The main purpose is "to sample to develop the theoretical categories" (Charmaz, 2006, p.189).   With this intention, the researcher seeks respondents "who have had particular responses to experience, or in whom particular concepts appear significant" (Morse, 2007, p.240). When engaging in theoretical sampling the researcher becomes "more selective than earlier about what, when, where, why and from whom data are obtained" (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2007, p.168).

Further theoretical sampling was applied (from Dec 2011 to April 2012) until categories were saturated and no new information was attained (theoretical saturation) (see figure 8). The term saturation in grounded theory refers "to the point at which gathering more data about a theoretical category reveals no new properties nor yields any further theoretical insights about the emerging grounded

theory" (Charmaz, 2006, p.189). It can be also defined as "data adequacy" (Morse, 1995, p.147).

**Figure 8 The Grounded Theory Process**
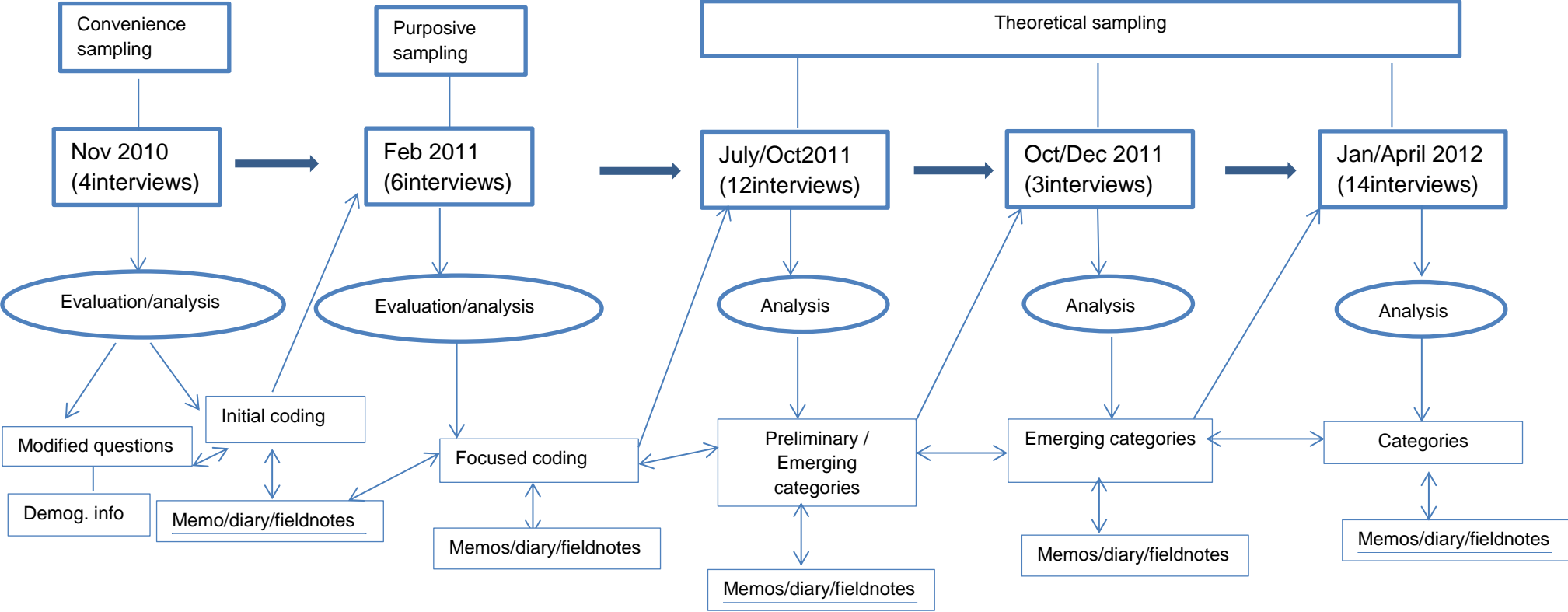
## 4.2.2    Respondents

The broad inclusion criteria established for recruiting respondents was:  adults over the age of 18 years, being competent to give their consent and U.K. residents, who have been engaged in circle dance. Thirty nine respondents were divided into three sub-groups: participants (twenty two), teachers (fifteen) and teacher training coordinators (two) (for a detailed characterisation of the respondents, see appendix 3). Demographic information was obtained at the end of the interview: gender, age group, occupation/ profession, length of time engaged in circle dance.

The respondents' profiles are summarised in  figures 9, 10 and 11:

**Figure 9 Participants' profile**
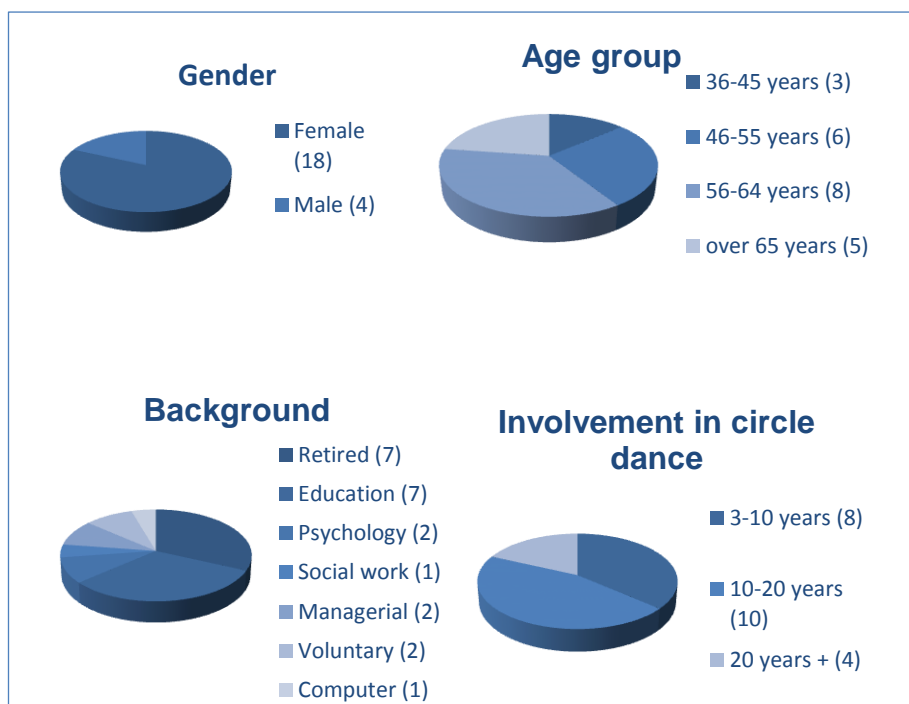
**Figure 10 Teachers' profile**

### Gender

- Female (13)
- Male (2)

### Age group

- 36-45 years (1)
- 46-55 years (2)
- 56-64 years (9)
- 65 years + (3)

### Background

- O.T. (1)
- Education (5)
- Therapy (2)
- Social work (1)
- Law (1)
- Business (4)
- Computer (1)

### Involvement in circle dance

- 3-10 years (1)
- 10-20 years (6)
- 20 years + (8)
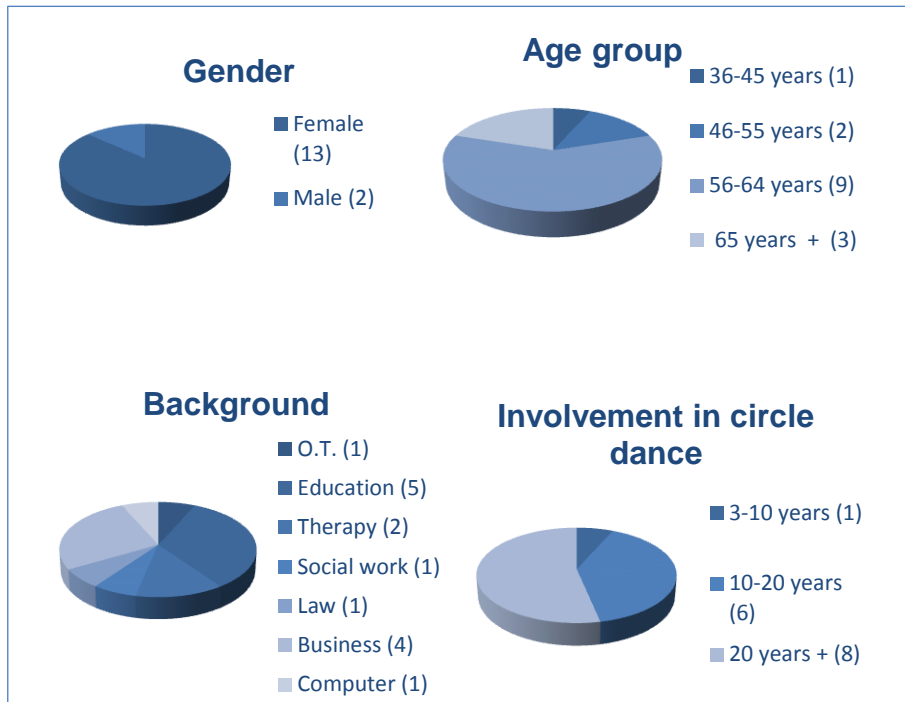
**Figure 11 Coordinators' profile**

### Gender

- Female (2)

### Age group

- 46-55 years (1)
- 56-64 years (1)

### Background

- Physical education (1)
- Education (1)

### Involvement in circle dance

- 20 years + (2)
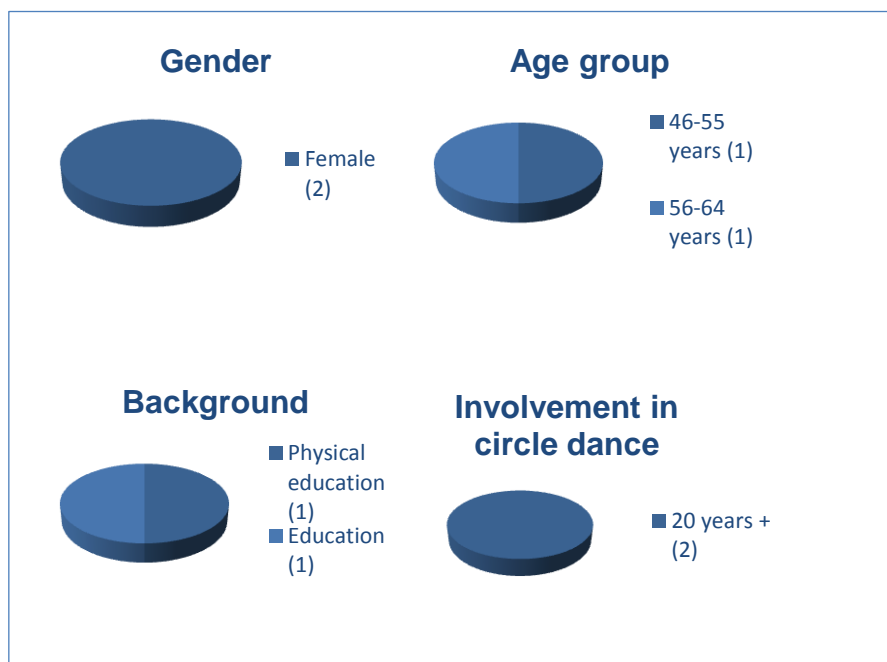
## 4.3 Data collection method: in-depth interviews

Collecting rich data was essential for the scope, quality and credibility of the study and represents the foundation for the development of a significant grounded theory which can make a valuable contribution to knowledge. The methods of data collection selected for the study are likewise important to generate relevant material to inform the analytical process (Charmaz, 2006). Since the focus of this study was on the lived experience of the participants and teachers of circle dance groups, in-depth interviewing techniques were prioritised in this study as they suit the grounded theory approach particularly well by contributing to a significant exploration of the respondents' points of view, reflections and insights related to their experience of the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006).

It is important to emphasize that in-depth interviews are also commonly used in practice in occupational therapy and occupational science in order to advance the understanding of occupation and its contribution to health and well-being. From this perspective, in this method of data collection, it is "appropriate to examine individuals' perceptions and experiences of occupation" (Lalibert-Rudman and Moll, 2001, p.25). The depth of information and unique perspective captured through interviews were also taken into consideration.

In-depth interviews can be seen as directed conversations with the intention of "eliciting each participant's interpretation of his/her experience" (Charmaz, 2006, p.25). As a co-construction, interviewing is "an active process where the interviewer and the interviewee, through their relationship, produce knowledge" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.17). In this context, it is also relevant to reflect on aspects related to the relative positions of the researcher and the respondents in this interplay and how their relationship is negotiated in a research context.

### 4.3.1 Negotiations in the relationship between researcher and respondent

The relationship between researcher and respondent is not neutral, as dynamics of power can permeate it at different levels. One of them is related to the fact that the researcher "initiates and defines the interview situation, determines the interview topics, poses questions and decides which answers to follow, and also terminates the conversation" and usually "has the monopoly of interpretation" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, pp.33-34). Hence, it is fundamental that the researcher acknowledges and deals with these issues conscientiously. Mills et al. (2006) suggest that selecting a constructivist approach presupposes the development of a "relationship of reciprocity with the participants" (p.9). The investigator should then adopt a reflexive stance and implement strategies in which a more equal position of power between the two parts is envisaged. Some procedures such as "scheduling interviews at a time and location of the participants' choice, using a relatively flexible approach to questioning" can be used to counteract imbalances of power in the relationship between researcher and respondents (Mills et al., 2006, p.10).

In this study, the schedule of the interviews was negotiated with respondents and fully respected. Prior to the negotiations, the researcher explained that the interviews would be conducted under conditions of privacy, in a place where the interview would not be interrupted and where it would be possible to use a digital voice recorder. Respondents were given the choice of venue, time and form of contact[38] (face-to-face; Skype; telephone). Most of the face-to-face interviews took place at the respondents' house or office (depending on the geographical area). Only two respondents opted for meeting in public places with which they were personally acquainted (café, garden centre). Residential workshop

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[38] This will be further explored in the sub-section 4.3.3

facilities[39] (e.g. conference rooms, library) were also used for some of the interviews. Due to privacy considerations and also as a matter of convenience at the time of the interview, one respondent chose to come to the researcher's home. One couple, who were both participants, decided to have a joint interview; this being the exception as all the other interviews were conducted one to one.

At the end of each interview, the respondents were encouraged and had the opportunity to talk about the experience of being interviewed. At this point the voice recorder was switched off (notes were taken), with the exception of one respondent:

> *"It is actually interesting because I don't often find myself talking in-depth to anybody about what circle dance is or what it means. I don't tend to talk to people who do circle dance because they already know about it and I don't talk to people who don't know about it because they would find it a bit weird"* (R30, participant ).

The majority expressed explicitly that participating in the interview had been a very positive experience, giving them the opportunity to evaluate and to talk about the meanings and purposes of circle dance in their lives. After the interviews, post cards were sent to the respondents as an appreciation of their contribution to the research study and the time taken to participate in the interview.

## 4.3.2 "Capturing voices": the role of the interviewer

In qualitative interviewing, the researchers' ability and skills are fundamental in the process of gathering / generating relevant and rich data. Charmaz (2006) proposes that "the interviewer is there to listen, to observe with sensitivity, and to

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[39] Both the researcher and the respondents were attending the same residential circle dance workshops. Permission to use the facilities during the free time was granted by the workshop's circle dance teachers.

encourage the person to respond…to learn about the research participant's experiences and reflections" (p.25-26).

Practical skills as well as personal judgements of the investigator help the respondents to articulate their experience, collaborating, therefore, in the quality of the research interview (Morse, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). In this regard, my background as an occupational therapist, working in mental health settings, facilitated and enriched my role as a researcher/interviewer. Skills developed from my practice were clearly transferable to the research interview situation: ability to be empathic; validation of respondent's perspective; establishment of trust and rapport in the interview process; sensitivity to the disclosure of confidential information; finding a balance between directing the conversation in order to obtain pertinent and relevant information and not interrupting the course of the respondents' thoughts, ideas.

At the beginning of each interview, it was emphasised that the purpose of the interview was to listen to the respondents' points of view, to the experiential process of being engaged in circle dance, in an informal and conversational manner (Charmaz, 2006; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). It was also stated that a set of questions and/or a script would be used in order to guide the exploration of the relevant topics related to the research study. As a creative process, each interview constituted a unique experience for me as a researcher, advancing my understanding of circle dance and helping me to pursue and refine points for the subsequent interviews. Beer (1997) suggests that interviews "augment experience, rather than simply reflecting it. They alter meaning, instead of delineating it" (p.127)

### 4.3.3 Form of contact

The respondents were given alternative forms of contact which would allow the interview to be conducted. When establishing the schedule, priority was given as much as possible to face-to-face interviews (twenty seven interviews). In this form of contact, the researcher and the respondents share interpersonal aspects of the interaction involving the physical presence of both, and make use of the grammar of non-verbal language, expressed in gestures, facial expressions, eye contact (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). However due to the fact that some respondents were located outside the researcher's geographical area, options such as Skype or telephone was used in order to facilitate participation.

Skype was selected as a feasible and convenient one-to-one alternative. In terms of accessibility, Skype is a free desktop videoconferencing application which has been publicly available since 2003 (Skype Technologies S. A., n.d.). Software such as Skype provides not only synchronous real-time contact (Flick, 2006) between the researcher and the respondent, but it also allows the visual aspect of the interview to be accomplished by using a web-cam. Both the audio and visual interactions can also be recorded through a simple piece of software[40] downloaded onto the workstation (Hanna, 2012, p.241). To some extent, Skype (n.d.) makes it possible to maintain the visual and interpersonal aspects of a face-to-face interaction, in which verbal and non-verbal language can take place and enrich the interview experience. In this study, seven Skype (n.d.) interviews were successfully conducted.

Telephone interviews were used with respondents who did not feel confident enough to install the software (five respondents). For this, Skype (n.d.) was also

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[40] CallBurner software was used in this study to make audio recording whilst using Skype.

used as it provides the possibility of making phone calls to landlines and mobiles by buying credits and of recording the audio interaction in a simple way[41].

### 4.3.4    Format of the interviews

Interviews were all conducted by the researcher and lasted between forty five and sixty minutes. A set of questions and topics was initially designed, considering the aims and objectives of the research, to explore the respondents' experiences and to learn about their views, insights and reflections. For this purpose, open-ended questions were selected and used during the interview. The questions provided enough flexibility for the informants to respond to them from their own perspective (see appendices 4, 5 and 6). Coherent with the constructivist grounded theory, the questions were revised in order to refine and/or to explore relevant points related to the research questions and to facilitate the process of theory generation. As the grounded theory process "fosters following new leads and issues" (Charmaz, 1991, p.276), I went back to early interviews and formulated new questions around the topics which emerged in order to include them in the subsequent interviews.

Notes were also taken during the interviews to record observations and help the researcher to record points to be further explored during the interview. Validation during the interview was used in order to ensure that the meaning expressed by the respondent was clearly understood. Member checks (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) were regularly carried out during the interviews to improve the trustworthiness of interpretations and emerging categories.

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[41] When scheduling telephone interviews, the researcher made clear that the call would be made from her Skype account, not incurring any expenses to the respondent. CallBurner software was used to record the interview.

### 4.3.5    Field notes, memo-writing, research diary

Field notes were made as soon as the interview was over in order to keep as accurate and as spontaneous as possible the impressions, reflections, written records of the researcher's thoughts and interpretations. This process helped me, the researcher, to document other aspects of the interview, such as non-verbal elements. It also helped to identify relevant topics elicited during the interview which could contribute to theory generation.

In addition to field notes, a research diary and memos were kept as a fundamental practice for the organisation and development of ideas and for recording analytical progress related to the generation of a grounded theory. In the process of developing theory, memos, as written records of the researcher's thoughts, observations and interpretations, were considered in the study as essential data. This practice allowed me, as a researcher, to retrieve conceptual ideas and formulations in order to reach a robust and logical theoretical framework (Corbin and Holt, 2005).

## 4.4   Researcher's perspective

Qualitative research takes into account the fact that complete detachment on the part of the researcher is impossible, as "the individual who carries out research comprises an integral component of the entire process and product" (Horsburg, 2003, pp.307-308). The researcher's reflections, background and actions will impact upon the meaning and the experience under investigation and it is an integral part of the interpretation (Flick, 2002, p.6). The constructivist version of grounded theory presupposes that the findings are a co-construction between

researcher and participant; the resulting theory is an interpretation and depends therefore on the researcher's view and reflexivity. The focus is on the creation of a contextualized emergent understanding of the studied experience (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; O'Connor et al., 2008).

This research study has evolved from my experience as an occupational therapist, working in the field of mental health for over twenty four years, and as a circle dance teacher for the past eighteen years in clinical as well as community settings. As several lenses have been influencing my practice, it is relevant to make explicit the pathway that conducted me to this research.

My practice has been embedded in the social model of occupational therapy (Galheigo, 2005) and the belief that occupation and health are intimately connected (Hasselkus, 2002; Galheigo, 2005; Wilcock 2005). In this context, the use of meaningful occupation and the understanding and reflection on its impact on people's well-being have been crucial to my practice in the field of mental health. Consistent with this model, my practice is rooted in the idea that occupational therapists should, ultimately, provide opportunities and facilitate the engagement of people in meaningful occupations. My career path, particularly in Brazil[42], has also given me the opportunity to move beyond clinical settings and work in services in which health promotion has been prioritised (Wilcock, 2006). It was in this context that I started to include circle dance within the domain of occupational therapy. However, in order to clarify my journey, I will explore how dance has been part of my personal and professional life and discuss how the encounter of the occupational therapist and the dancer was realised in 1992.

Dance has always been part of my life. My experience with dance started in my childhood, where it played an important part in my personal development as it

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[42] This is where I'm from and where I qualified as an occupational therapist. I worked there as an occupational therapist for 12 years.

was a very significant leisure occupation for me. With the lens of an undergraduate student, dance, body work and movement gained another dimension, entering the realm of occupational therapy. My perspective changed from using dance personally as a leisure occupation, to starting to consider its therapeutic aspects as well as how it could be incorporated into people's lives as a meaningful occupation. A post graduate course in psychological kinesiology contributed to a deepening of my knowledge about the application of body work and movement and exploring a conceptual framework based on Jungian psychology.

I was introduced specifically to circle dance in 1992 during a work experience placement in the mental health service in Trieste and Imola (Italy). It is important to highlight the context in which circle dance was used. It was during the inauguration of a sheltered accommodation unit for adults with mental health problems (Mosher, 1991). A community circle dance group was invited to entertain[43] the clients, their families, visitors and health professions in the first instance. This experience had a very significant impact on my practice and inspired me to pursue a journey in which circle dance could be explored in the domain of occupational therapy. It represented a turning point in the sense that I envisaged the link between this form of dance and my practice as an occupational therapist.

I started using circle dance in 1995, initially in a mental health clinical setting. Positive feedback from clients as well as from other professionals inspired me to pursue[44] this avenue and to extend the use of circle dance in community settings. As an occupational therapist, I have always been interested in how to facilitate

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[43] Much more than an entertainment, circle dance has contributed to creating a sense of community, a relaxing environment, and an invitation for everybody to join the dances from different countries and cultures.
[44] This has taken the form of my attendance at countless circle dance courses, workshops and events led by various international teachers (including Maria-Gabriele Wosien) primarily in Brazil and the U.K. (including Findhorn Foundation) and also in other European countries.

people's engagement in meaningful occupations and how this can contribute to their sense of well-being. When I moved to England in 2001, I was also able to continue this work[45] (Borges da Costa, 2004).

Reflecting on my practice as an occupational therapist using circle dance in the field of mental health and as a circle dance teacher has led me to question what meanings people attribute to this form of dance and what their motivations and aspirations are which lie behind their participation. Having also introduced circle dance to the curriculum of occupational therapy at the University of São Paulo in 1995 (Borges da Costa, 1998) and an extra-curricular circle dance course for training health professionals, I was then led to enquire about the pedagogy of circle dance and its impact on people's experience of this form of occupation. These two aspects provided the foundation for the aims and objectives of the proposed investigation.

## 4.5  The process of data analysis

The data were analysed following the constructivist grounded theory method proposed by Charmaz (2006). For her, a method consists of "unfolding temporal sequences that may have identifiable markers with clear beginnings and endings and benchmarks in between. The temporal sequences are linked in a process and lead to change" (p.10). Although the guidelines offer a systematic way to gather and analyse data, this approach also allows for flexibility, creativity and openness to emerging concepts. The set of concepts and principles should be flexibly used, instead as "prescriptions or packages" (p.9).

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[45] This was made all the easier due to the fact that the circle dance network is well-established in the U.K.

The point of departure is defined by research questions which are permeated with "sensitizing concepts and general disciplinary perspectives" (Charmaz, 2006, p.17). The constructivist approach to grounded theory presupposes that the researcher plays an integral part in the research process. In this context, my position as a researcher and my background have influenced the way I understood, observed and defined the respondents' meanings. As I engaged in all phases of data collection and data analysis, I was able to create an abstract interpretive understanding of the data and progressively construct a theoretical framework concerned with the exploration of circle dance and grounded in data. In this section, I will describe my journey throughout the data analysis process.

Following the interactive nature of the grounded theory, the course of analysis was initiated with the process of transcription of the first interviews as I began to explore nuances of meanings and became familiar with the data. The next step was a prolonged immersion in the data, studying the interviews closely, by repeatedly and actively listening to the MP3 files and reading the transcriptions and the fieldnotes. This allowed me to attend to the respondents' terms and feelings and search for meanings and patterns before initiating the process of coding. Notes were taken during this process to help me to register my impressions.

The next stage in the analytical component of the grounded theory process was coding. Coherent with the foundations of grounded theory, coding is an emergent process in which the researcher is led in new directions, by remaining open to what the data suggests and discovering "subtle meanings and new insights". In coding, the researcher becomes involved with the data and learns from them. This practice elucidates the researcher's assumptions and the participants' point of views at the same time (Charmaz, 2006, p.70).

In the constructivist grounded theory, two main phases of coding are stressed: the initial and the focused coding. The first one involves studying fragments of data (words, lines, segments, incidents) in order to explore and define meanings within the data, to understand the points of view of the research participants. Following Glaser's ideas (1978), Charmaz (2006) advocates the use of "gerund" when coding. By using this strategy, the researcher can have "a strong sense of action and sequence", which helps identify implicit processes within the data and begin the analysis from the point of view of the participants, "make connections between codes and keep the analysis active and emergent" (Charmaz, 2008b, p.164). As a subsequent step, the focused coding intends to explain larger segments of data and "requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize [the] data incisively and completely" (Charmaz, 2006, p.57).

In this study, the analytical process incorporated the following stages: (1) initial coding (line-by-line) of the first set of interviews (Nov 2010); (2) focused coding of the second set of interviews (Feb 2011); (3) developing the preliminary / emerging categories into conceptual categories through theoretical sampling (July 2011 to April 2012); (4) integrating the categories and sub-categories into a coherent process. With the intention of providing a visual representation of this process, I have designed a graphic which illustrates the dynamic development of my grounded theory / theoretical framework (see figure 8).

The analysis of the first set of interviews (Nov 2010) was vital to the process of later generating the conceptual categories. It prompted preliminary lines of enquiry for me to pursue and relevant topics to explore in the subsequent set of interviews (Feb 2011). Initial coding line by line, using gerunds, was performed manually by writing notes, using a highlighter and designing a table (an example is given in appendix 7). MAXQDA (n.d.) was used at a later time in order to

organize and store data.  In this phase, in order to remain open and stay close to the data, I asked questions of the data such as:

- What is this data a study of? (Glaser, 1978, p.57)

- What does this data suggest? Pronounce? Assume? (Charmaz, 2006, p.47)

- From whose point of view? (Charmaz, 2006, p.47)

This initial coding was exploratory and an attempt to understand the logic of the respondents' experience and to attend to actions and language (Charmaz, 2008b). The codes created at this stage were fluid and provisional, reflecting the respondents' perspectives and maintaining their essential properties; these codes were revisited and renamed as the process of analysis evolved and new insights were gained.

Following this step, a focused coding was completed using MAXQDA (n.d.) (see figure 12).

**Figure 12 Focused coding - participants (Code Matrix Browser - MAXQDA / January 2011)**
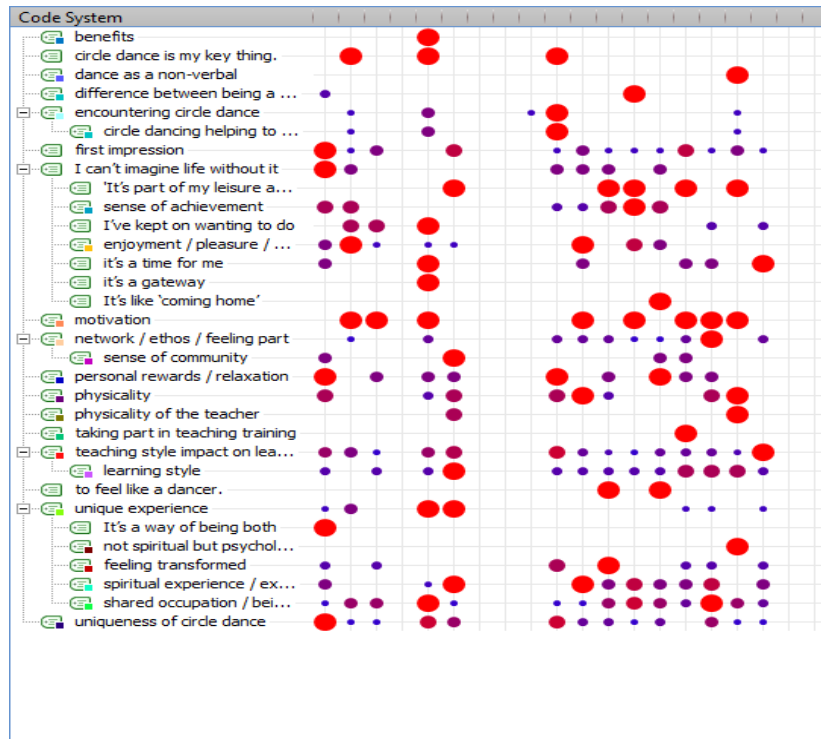


During this stage, the most relevant codes were selected as I compared data to data and data with codes. The analysis advanced as data was collected and interpreted: through coding the data, I gained insights about what kind of data to collect at the next stage. This early analytical task was not linear, as I had to go back and forth from data collection and analysis; however it facilitated the constant comparative procedure, an essential element of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). In this process, categories and sub-categories were constructed in order to explicate ideas, events and processes in the data. As the early coding procedures broke the data up into their component parts, defining the actions implicated in the data, the emerging categories were all brought together into a coherent narrative in order to move the analysis forward in a more theoretical way. A visual representation of this process is shown in figure 13.

**Figure 13 Process of coding**



Initial coding
line by line     Focused coding     Emerging
categories
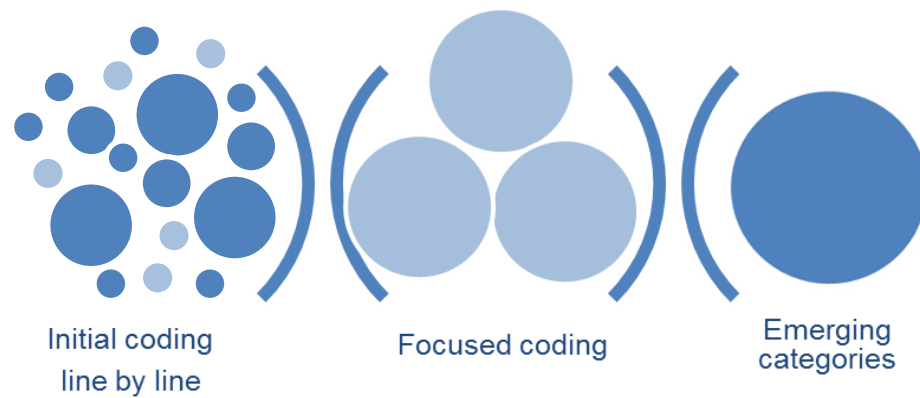
In the grounded theory approach, memo-writing "is the pivotal intermediate step between defining categories and the first draft of [the] completed analysis" (Charmaz, 2008c, p.101). It represents a central procedure as it prompts the researcher to analyse both the data and the codes early in the research process (Charmaz, 2006, p.72). Throughout the study, memo-writing was used as a fundamental strategy to help me to organize my thoughts, develop ideas, be actively involved with the material and, most importantly, increase the level of abstraction of the emerging analysis. This practice was also vital to developing the focused codes to creating conceptual and preliminary categories, and in helping to focus data collection in order to refine the emerging categories (theoretical sampling). Later, writing memos helped me to define the major categories and sub-categories, their relevance and the relationships between them. As Charmaz (2006) proposes, memo-writing should "form a space and place for exploration and discovery" (pp.81-82) and fulfil analytic purposes. Some methods such as clustering and freewriting can be used to facilitate this task and make the memos spontaneous and creative:

Like freewriting, a major objective of clustering is to liberate your creativity. You write your central idea, category, or process; then circle it and draw spokes from it to smaller circles to show its defining properties, their relationships and relative significance (Charmaz, 2006, p.86).

Clustering was a useful technique which helped me to organize ideas with the advantage of providing an image or a visual representation of the analytical process. This technique was used in memo entries either to provide a sketch at the beginning or to summarise ideas developed at the end. Figure 14 illustrates the emerging categories (related to the experience of the participants) which were developed between July and October 2011. Through further theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006), one of the emerging categories illustrated in figure 14, *"I can't imagine life without it"*, was later developed into a major category (further discussed in chapter 5). Theoretical sampling also helped me to develop other emerging categories into sub-categories (as shown in figure 14), such as 'unique experience of being engaged in circle dance, 'teaching impacting on circle dance experience' and 'feeling part of the ethos of circle dance' (this is further discussed in sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 respectively). Similarly, this process prompted me to collapse any emerging categories which were not robust enough to be developed as a major category or a sub-category.

**Figure 14 Clustering**
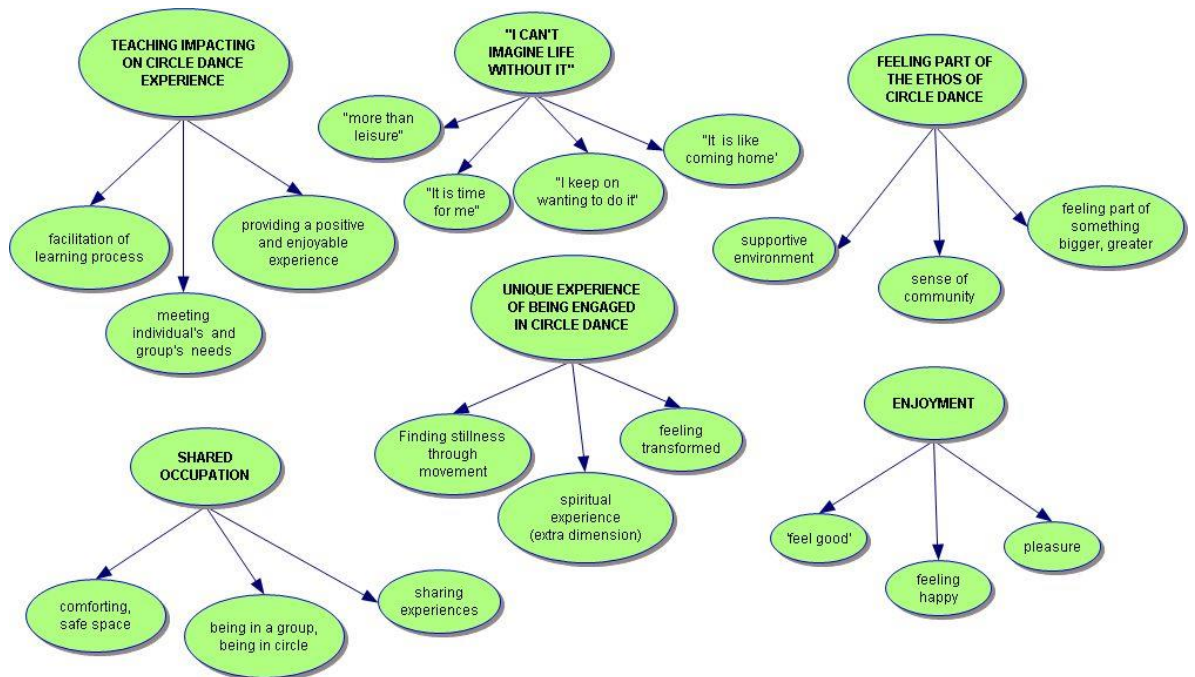


Following the logic of grounded theory, the integration of the theoretical categories and the possibility of comparing them at an abstract level occurred with the theoretical sorting phase. Sorting, comparing and integrating memos helped me to construct the initial conceptual framework and to begin a draft of the written report. At this stage, I also used diagrams as a valuable strategy to create visual images of the emergent theory (Clarke, 2005; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

Theorizing is the ultimate aim of grounded theory and the "potential strength of grounded theory lies in its analytic power to theorize how meanings, actions, and social structures are constructed" (Charmaz, 2006, p.151). A definition of theorizing presupposes "stopping, pondering, and rethinking anew". Constructing theory through theoretical sensitivity means looking at the data from multiple vantage points, making comparisons, following leads, and building on new ideas

(p.135). Reaffirming the interpretive standpoint, Charmaz (2006) states that generating a theory is intrinsically linked to the interaction between researcher and data (p.129).

## 4.6　Establishing evaluation criteria

There are several paths available which allow qualitative research to be evaluated (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested four criteria to evaluate good quality research that are more congruent with naturalist research and are particularly influential in the social sciences: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Highlighting the importance of resonance and relevance for assessing qualitative research, Finlay (2006) suggests five dimensions: clarity, credibility, contribution, communicative resonance, and caring (p.322). In grounded theory, Glaser (1978) proposes the criteria of 'fit' ("the categories of the theory 'fit' or match the data") , 'workability' ("the theory explicates, predicates and interprets what is going on in a substantive area"), 'relevance' to a substantive area, and 'modifiability' (pp.4-5) . Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) suggest seven attributes for assessing grounded theories: 'the importance of fit', 'theory integrated at diverse levels of abstraction', `reflexivity', 'documentation', 'theoretical sampling and negative case analysis', 'sensitivity to negotiated realities' and 'transferability' (pp.105-108). Specifically linked with the constructivist version, Charmaz (2005; 2006) proposes the criteria of credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness for evaluating the grounded theory process as well as the product.

After considering the various established criteria to evaluate qualitative research, I opted to use the criteria proposed by Charmaz (2005; 2006) as I deemed them to be particularly significant and aligned with the methodological framework of this study. Therefore, each criterion will be discussed in this section, for later, in the discussion and conclusion chapter (chapter 9), to be considered in relation to my research study.

For Charmaz (2006), 'credibility' is the first benchmark for evaluating the research journey and its contribution to knowledge. Six elements have been proposed for assessing this level: familiarity with the setting and/or topic; data sufficiency (range, number, depth of observations); systematic comparison between observations and between categories; presence of a wide range of empirical observations; strong link between the data gathered and the analysis; enough evidence for the claims (p.182). The second level is related to 'originality'. Charmaz (2006) suggests taking into consideration four points whilst evaluating the study: categories offer a fresh and new insight into the topic; the analysis provides a new conceptual framework grounded in the data; the social and theoretical significance of the study have been addressed; the proposed grounded theory extends current ideas and practices in the related fields (p.182).

'Resonance' relates to the breadth and depth of the data. For this level, it is proposed that the researcher reflects on the following aspects: categories which portray the fullness of the studied experience; a study which reveals taken-for-granted meanings; links considered between larger collectivities and the individual lives; that the grounded theory makes sense for the respondents and that the analysis offers "deeper insights about their lives and worlds" (p.183). The 'usefulness' of the study refers to its contribution and relevance to existing knowledge. At this level, the researcher should: examine if "the analysis offers interpretation that people can use in their everyday worlds"; consider the extent to which the analytic categories suggest "generic processes"; identify the need for further research in other substantive areas and evaluate the contribution of knowledge (p.183). According to Charmaz (2006), a "strong combination of originality and credibility increases the resonance, usefulness, and the subsequent value of contribution" of the grounded theory study (p.183).

## 4.7  Overview of the theoretical model

The process of analysis culminated with the development of three major categories which represent the meanings and experiences of circle dance participants, teachers and training coordinators and one core category (figure 15). The first major category named *"I can't imagine life without it"* illustrates the experience of participants and their perception of the benefits of circle dance to their everyday lives. Sub-categories were constructed in order to define the properties of this major category:  (a) "unique experience of being engaged in circle dance"; (b) "feeling part of the ethos of circle dance"; (c) "circle dance helping to overcome difficulties in life";  and (d) "teaching impacting on circle dance experience". This category will be reported in chapter 5.

The second major category *"Opening that door"* is related to the teachers' perspectives and incorporates aspects relevant to the didactic elements, motivational factors to becoming a circle dance teacher and their perceived roles. From the process of analysis, sub-categories were generated: (a) 'becoming a circle dance teacher', (b) 'facilitating processes', and (c) 'teachers' perceptions of the impact of circle dance on the participants'. A further exploration of this second major category will be given in chapter 6.

'Providing quality' is the third major category and represents the viewpoints of the teacher training coordinators. The inclusion of the coordinators' perspectives through the theoretical sampling process made it possible to explore the multiple levels of circle dance and the avenues available for those who want to be engaged in this activity as teachers.  The conditions in which this category emerged will be presented in the following sub-categories: (a) 'designing the course', (b) 'learning about teaching and leading' and (c) 'giving and receiving feedback'. 'Providing quality' will be presented in chapter 7.

From the intersection of the three major categories, a core category was generated and named by an in-vivo code *"There is a place for everybody"*, reflecting the diversity of practices and experiences and summarising the idea of inclusiveness identified throughout the three major categories.  A discussion of the core category will be presented in chapter 8.

**Figure 15 The three major categories and the core category: the theoretical model**

| | |
|---|---|
| Unique experience of being engaged | |
| Unique ethos of circle dance | **"I can't imagine life without it"** *(participants)* |
| Teaching style impacting on experience | |
| Helping to overcome difficulties in life | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Becoming a circle dance teacher | |
| Facilitating processes | **"Opening that door…"** *(teachers)* |
| Teachers' perceptions of the impact of circle dance on the participants | |

**"There is a place for everybody"**

| |
|---|
| Circle dance incorporating diversity |
| Circle dance creating possibilities |

| | |
|---|---|
| Designing the course | |
| Learning about teaching and leading | **Providing quality** *(coordinators)* |
| Giving and receiving feedback | |

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# Chapter 5 *"I can't imagine life without it"* : the experience of the participants

The analysis of the participants' data generated a major category "*I can't imagine life without it [circle dance]"* which provides a window into the experience of the participants, the meanings and purposes they attributed to circle dance, and reveals how the participants perceived the benefits of circle dance. Condensing elements around the centrality of this occupation in the participants' lives, this category incorporates aspects related to how participants found satisfaction and a sense of self-fulfilment through engagement in circle dance. The participants referred to circle dance as a necessary and integral part of their lives. This major category also revealed that for many participants long-term involvement in circle dance brought rewards, which motivated them to continue, thereby to deepening their involvement with circle dance.

A number of conditions in which this major category occurred will be detailed in the following sub-categories: (a) "unique experience of being engaged in circle dance"; (b) "feeling part of the ethos of circle dance"; (c) "teaching impacting on circle dance experience" and (d) "circle dance helping to overcome difficulties in life". Some overlap between the sub-categories was considered and taken into account. Quotes are used, when appropriate, to illustrate the findings (quotes are identified by respondent number and presented in italics, indented and with double quotation marks). Figure 16 illustrates the relationship between the major category and sub-categories.
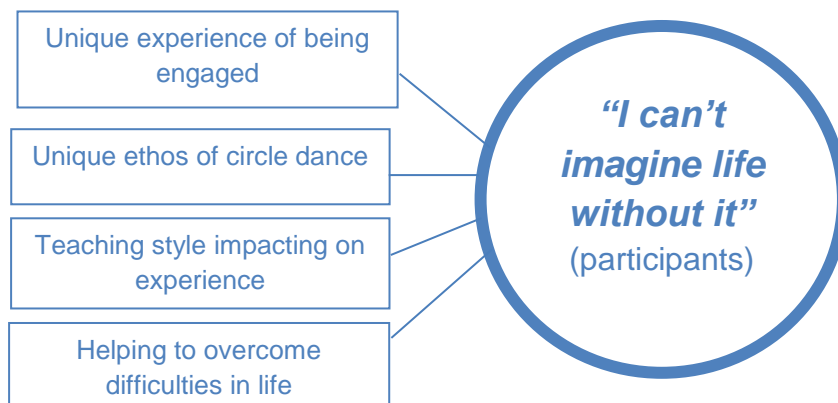
The first sub-category will be discussed next, explaining how the participants perceived circle dance as a unique occupation.

## 5.1  Unique experience of being engaged in circle dance

Being engaged in circle dance was perceived as a unique experience and distinct from other everyday occupations.  For the participants, meanings were gained through the experiential nature of circle dance, encompassing elements which influenced their sense of well-being and also promoted the quality of their experience. With the purpose of clarifying the components of this sub-category, the following sub-sections will be presented: "self-investment, self-development", "feeling transformed", "feeling transported" and "spiritual dimension of circle dance".

### 5.1.1 Self-investment, self-development

Circle dance was acknowledged by the participants as a form of self-investment or self-development as they find deep fulfilment, enjoyment and self-enrichment

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[46] To see this figure in context, please refer to figure 15 (theoretical model).

by engaging in it. For many participants, circle dance occupied a special place in their weekly schedule as they can attend on their own, independent of other important members of their families (partners, children, grandchildren). A female participant (R14) illustrated this in a clear statement:

> *"I call it [circle dance]: 'My [her name]'s time'…it's …for me, at that moment, there's a lot about identity, it's about reinforcing who I am and getting in touch with that sense of self…because I'm not there being the [job role], or [X]'s partner or [Y]'s co-parent. It is just me…and I'm doing one of the things that I like doing best. So it's…something about myself, but it's…I don't see it as being a selfish thing to do. Almost like self-investment…"* (R14)

Another female participant (R32) echoed this participant's view by saying that circle dance became *"an oasis"* as she created a space in her routine just for herself, where she can attend circle dance on her own, without having to worry about other people in her family or in her professional capacity, leaving her free to pursue an activity which was deemed to be very precious for herself.

One female participant (R16) provided an interesting perspective when she stated that circle dance was an opportunity to balance her work life, as her job involved both managing and looking after other people. Being engaged in a shared occupation like circle dance, gave her the opportunity to create a space for herself and at the same time be with people in another capacity, as a participant. It was interesting to note that, although the nature of circle dance implies a shared occupation, in which the participants perform the dances within a group to which they make their individual contributions, they related to it as a period in their routine where they can dedicate time just for themselves, a time away from the demands of family and work. In a similar way, another female participant (R21),

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who had undertaken a circle dance teacher training course, reflected on her option not to start teaching. Although she acknowledged the collective nature of circle dance and the role of cooperation, she referred to it as her own space in which she could nurture herself and feel relaxed, and not to "*have to be responsible for the well-being of others".*

Engagement in circle dance was also related to self-development as it provided participants with the opportunity to improve their dancing skills and their knowledge about the dances. This aspect was expressed by one female participant (R31), who had been dancing for twenty one years and who still regarded circle dance as a continuing and exciting learning opportunity which promotes personal growth. Another female participant (R25) explained how the continuing learning process present in circle dance, especially whilst learning more complex and challenging dances, helped her to develop a sense of competence in the activity.

As engagement in circle dance constellated the idea of creating a space for self-investment and self-development, the participants pointed out the perceived implications of not attending circle dance sessions. A female participant (R14) spoke from her experience:

> *"… if I don't circle dance, I just get really grumpy and my body gets grumpy and my shoulders become tense, because I'm not fully living really, I'm not using my body and connecting in the same way and I miss it, so I think the lack of dancing has a detrimental effect on my well-being …It is not just something that I can walk away from and not feel the effects…" (R14)*

Reinforcing this idea, a female participant (R32) described how vital it had been for her to be able to have free access to the group for the past fourteen years:

*"It [circle dance] is a very important part [of my life]…and if it wasn't there it would be a real loss to me, if I couldn't tap into that. So just knowing that they [the circle dance group and teachers] are there, even though I might not be able to get to them very often, is really important."* (R32)

## 5.1.2 Feeling transformed

Experienced as a transformative occupation, many participants referred to circle dance as a way to feel revitalised and refreshed (regenerated), a respite from the concerns and stresses of everyday life, including work. For several participants, feeling transformed means to experience a different state of mind, often associated with relaxation (physical and mental relaxation) and a renewal process, influencing positively their mood and stimulating feelings of happiness and contentment. A male participant (R10) described how he perceived the process in which transformation takes place whilst circle dancing: by immersing himself in the dances and concentrating on the learning process required, he can forget his problems and concerns, the worries of everyday life, and reach a state of relaxation, accompanied by feelings of happiness. By attending the circle dance sessions in the evening, this participant emphasised that this transformation process, marked by a sense of relaxation and feelings of happiness, contributes to easing the stresses of the day and helps him to sleep better. Similarly, a female participant (R12) acknowledged that, after attending circle dance sessions, she often feels more relaxed and happier. For her, the concentration required in circle dance and the fact that it involves mind and body working together were the key elements to helping her forget about her everyday problems and to achieving a state of relaxation.

Feeling revitalised following a circle dance session was part of the discourse of several respondents. A female participant (R26), who had resumed her involvement with circle dance five years ago, referred to the process of transformation as being invigorating, *"washing away"* her tiredness after a day's of work and at the same time offering her an opportunity to experience a state of quietness, calmness, during her busy week. Knowing that she would feel better after attending a circle dance session, this participant expressed the reasons for her regular attendance:

> *"…I very rarely think: 'I'm not going to go' because I know that I will be transformed by the experience. So I always go happily…"*

Another respondent (R33) talked about how she observed the impact of circle dance on other participants who attend her local group. She remarked that her fellow participants, very often at the end of the circle dance sessions, described how circle dance contributed to modify their mood positively and their general sense of well-being:

> *"And I would have to add to that the fact that people often say at the start of the evening [that] they are not feeling well enough to stay … they do stay and at the end of it, they feel good and they say: 'I'm glad I stayed. I feel so much better.' "* (R33)

Engaging in circle dance was referred to by many participants as a way to positively alter their mood.   A female participant (R3), who had danced regularly for thirteen years, commented on the positive impact of circle dance on her mood and how this fact had reinforced her commitment to circle dance for all those years.

*"… I know when I go to circle dancing… it is likely that if I'm stressed or I'm distressed I will come away in a different mood… so, for me, it is mood changing and it is mostly mood changing in a very positive way." (R3)*

Feeling uplifted and enriched by the experience of circle dance was described by another female participant (R36). For her, moving together with other people in a *"rhythmical way"* has a restorative effect on her mood and attitude. Despite feeling tired physically at times, this participant stated that the feeling of being refreshed and uplifted by the experience encouraged her to pursue circle dance for twenty five years.

A female participant (R21), who had been dancing for twenty years, explained how circle dance has played a unique role in her life, facilitating transformation and bringing out positive feelings in her:

*"When I have been to a circle dance group, either the evening group or a weekend or our residential group, I just feel so much lighter and so much happier inside, better in myself…and it is physical as well because, I mean, the sheer exercise is good for me and that has a good impact. But also I have been around such wonderful people and dancing with them makes me feel good! And I don't get that anywhere else to the same extent". (R21)*

Using a metaphor, another respondent (R14) related the transformative aspect of circle dance as:

*"… a gateway to being something else whilst I'm also being myself. It's quite an intense experience for something that looks so … I don't know, simple really, but it's much more than that… so I think it helps me to get an inner peace, really. So it's becoming. " (R14)*

### 5.1.3 Feeling transported

Attending circle dance represented an opportunity to transcend the routine of everyday life. Circle dance, as a structured occupation, involves concentration and attention in order to learn the steps in rhythm with the music and coordinate the movements within a group. Several respondents talked about how dancing, listening to the music and sharing the same pattern of movements in a collective way can make them experience a unique state of mind, sometimes occurring only occasionally, but intense enough to be significant for those involved. Being absorbed by the movements, the music and the dances, participants referred to similar experiences related to one of the *elements* of '*flow'* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) namely, the loss of self-consciousness. The idea of feeling transported to another level, transported to a place away from everyday life experience, an opportunity to step out of ordinary everyday experience, was often commented on by the participants. A male participant (R10), who had been circle dancing for seven years described his experience thus:

> *"… when I'm doing circle dance, sometimes it transports you… it is like magic really… it is a bit difficult to explain … you are doing it and then, first you are thinking about what you are doing, and then… eventually… I find that it is almost hypnotic… and I float along… and I can feel like… good feelings, you know? You feel fantastic… you feel it [the dance] flowing through your body, it is amazing really… it doesn't happen all the time… I don't know why it happens sometimes and it doesn't happen at other times… but sometimes the dance just flows and you just flow with the dance and you feel really good then…"* (R10)

A similar idea was expressed by a female participant (R5), who had been dancing for more than three years. Although this participant took part in other leisure occupations, she described her experience of *"being transported"* as unique and

only occurring whilst circle dancing. For her, this state of mind derived from "raising her consciousness" and reaching the point in which she can be completely immersed in the dance and intense feelings of lively and cheerful joy were experienced, which she described as getting *"a real buzz"*.

Feeling transported to another level of consciousness was also compared by several participants to a meditative state. Illustrating this aspect, two female participants (R20 and R21), used the metaphor of reaching a 'quieter inner place' whilst circle dancing:

> *"… I've experienced it taking me to other 'places' as well, a kind of deeper, more meditative place, or a deeper, a quieter place in myself."* (R20)

> *"It is a feeling of being complete…I guess it is a place that some people get to through other types of meditation…I guess it is like meditation. For me, that only happens in circle dance with other people."* (R21)

From the participants' perspectives, feeling transported whilst circle dancing also means to be present to the here and now and not to think about the past or the future. This sensation of being present in the moment was also accompanied by a feeling of being safe in the environment and with the group. By trusting people and being totally taken up (or immersed) in the dance, participants mentioned that they can close their eyes whilst moving. This unique experience was expressed by a female participant (R26):

> *"I love when I can close my eyes and I feel as though I am completely in my body. There are some particular dances and often it's those dances when… you are tightly next to people… I feel it is very easy then to close my eyes. The group carries you as well. I love that! I feel that I can go entirely into my body. It helps me be completely present to the here and now … I'm just dancing."* (R26)

Complementing this particular aspect, a male participant (R30) described his experience as occurring only in the circle dance environment:

*"…it's that feeling of total trust, that you're completely safe, because you're holding hands, you're not going to bump into anything, you're not going to fall, nobody's going to walk into you … I suppose that was a sense of freedom, in a way, that you could actually close your eyes and move … it's a bit extreme to say [but] it's a bit like flying, it's almost one of the unique bits of the experience. We'd probably all held hands in circle at some point in our lives, but moving with our eyes closed was something I'd never done before…a very unique experience."* (R30)

## 5.1.4 Spiritual dimension of circle dance

In attempting to define one of the elements of circle dance, a number of participants referred to terms such as 'spirituality', 'spiritual experience' or simply 'extra dimension'. I had not anticipated the significance of this element until a number of respondents, including participants, teachers and coordinators, explored this theme.  For the purpose of this study, spirituality is defined as "a pervasive life force, manifestation of a higher self, source of will and self-determination, and a sense of meaning, purpose and connectedness that people experience in the context of their environment" (CAOT, 1997, p.182). Spirituality "resides in persons, is shaped by the environment, and gives meaning to occupations" (CAOT, 1997, p.33).  It is also relevant to differentiate spirituality from the concept of religion as the participants made this differentiation. Religion "refers to corporate, more formalized, aspects of spirituality, such as belief, dogma and ritual" (Howard and Howard, 1997, p.181). "One can experience the spiritual within a religious context, but also outside of it" (CAOT, 1997; p.3).

Rather than classify or try to put a name to it, several respondents described the experience of being in contact with a dimension which is not tangible or easily defined. A sense of spiritual fulfilment, derived from the engagement in circle dance, was portrayed in the experiential accounts of many participants. Spirituality was considered as a multifaceted aspect, experienced outside the religious context. A female participant (R32), who had danced for fourteen years, articulated clearly this issue:

> *"Spiritual for me is distinct from religious. It is not a religious experience. But something about going onto a different sort of level, which is distinct and removed from everyday life, where I might feel connected… it is like getting in touch with the 'divine', whatever that might mean. So it is quite like a sacred space to experience something that's maybe not easily understood. Maybe that it's not important even to understand it." (R32)*

The nature of spirituality experienced by many participants was described as a way to feel connected with something greater than themselves, with the larger matrix of life, or the 'divine' as referred by the last participant (R32). For a female respondent (R36), dancing had always been the means to be in touch with *"something bigger, which has no name"* and to enable her to "*have a great sense of being more alive"*. Similarly, another respondent (R20) mentioned the personal fulfilment derived from her experience of being connected *"with the universal life force"*.

Circle dance as a way to provide spiritual nourishment was cited by some of the respondents. A female participant (R24) commented on how encountering circle dance twenty years ago helped her to fulfil a spiritual need both at that time and since then. Similarly, another participant (R21) remarked that her first experience with circle dance had a very significant impact on her life: she recalled that

moment as the *"first real introduction to spirituality"*. Her dedication to circle dance for the past twenty years was described as a way of *"connecting back to that original feeling"*. Referring to circle dance as part of her spiritual life, one female participant (R31) compared her experience with circle dance to the act of praying: *"It [circle dance] is not different from a prayer; it is a prayer, which is what it is for me, because prayers come in different forms…"*. Another female participant (R36) complemented the idea by saying:

> *"…it's almost as though through dance you are offering up a prayer, you have a great sense of being more alive than you are normally and you want to say: 'thank you' for having that moment of awareness about how wonderful it is to be alive and to be moving and to be listening to beautiful music and to be sharing that with other people."* (R36)

## 5.2  Feeling part of the ethos of circle dance

Capturing the element of belonging, the participants perceived the constellation of a specific ethos of circle dance as a motivating factor for attending groups and suggested that circle dance provided an opportunity for them to develop and maintain connections with others. As a definition offered by Stebbins (2007), an "ethos is the spirit of community of serious leisure participants, as manifested in shared attitudes, practices, values, beliefs, goals and so on" (p.12). From the participants' points of view, the ethos of circle dance played an important role in sustaining their engagement and also, in many cases, attracting them to expand their involvement. Due to the widespread dissemination of circle dance, it offers the participants opportunities to navigate from local groups, workshops and events in the U.K. to international ones. The components of this sub-category

were divided into: 'supportive environment' and 'fostering connections'. An exploration of these components will follow.

## 5.2.1 Supportive environment

The idea that circle dance promoted an environment of mutual respect and support was emphasised in the discourse of the participants. Feeling supported by the other members of a circle dance group and acknowledged whilst maintaining one's individuality were aspects remarked upon by several participants. The supportive environment appeared to be constructed around the idea that circle dance attracts people with similar characteristics and who share similar interests (circle dance, world music). A female participant (R1), who had been involved in circle dance for fifteen years, commented on the fact that people who were attracted by this activity seemed to share similar characteristics and a common set of values. Being welcoming, inclusive and friendly were some of personal attributes of circle dance network members to be mentioned by the respondents. A female participant (R24), who had danced for twenty years, observed that this fact helped her, throughout the years, to feel comfortable enough to extend her approach to circle dance by attending workshops in other locations in the U.K. Another participant (R33) talked about feeling very welcomed by her local group when she first started circle dance fifteen years ago and how, at present, newcomers to her group often comment on the same aspect.

A female respondent (R31), involved in circle dance for twenty one years, described the quality of the relationships developed through circle dancing, emphasising the mutual respect and the common set of values which permeate the activity. For her, a '*special friendship'* can be developed from the shared experience of dancing together:

*"It is that special friendship I think …I don't know…because for people who really, really enjoy the same way and get a lot from it, you know, you develop a special bond somehow, you feel a sort of…of warmth of spirit, you are moving together and you know that you don't spoil that special time, there are things that you wouldn't do in a quiet, meditative dance , we all understand that and when we stand together at the end …it is a very special relationship really…"* (R31)

Similarly, another female participant (R26) described her perceptions about the circle dance environment as being warmth, friendliness and supportive. She observed that in the circle dance sessions people seemed genuinely happy:

*"It [circle dance] brings warmth. I like that. And as I say, with a lot of people, I mean, I don't even know if I would get on with them, or would have much in common with them, but this is what is really nice, the fact that we're dancing together, brings a real warmth feeling of friendliness. It makes everybody have a smile on their faces or seem happy. There's a genuineness which is really nice."* (R26)

For some respondents, the qualities of support and acceptance seemed to transcend words or verbal communication, coming from the physical aspect of holding hands in a circle. This idea was articulated by a female participant (R5), who started attending circle dance shortly after her husband died. For her, the fact that circle dance implies holding hands in circle and moving together as a group, provided her with the necessary comfort at that time and counter- balanced the sense of loneliness due to a bereavement, despite  the support of her family and friends. Similarly, another female participant (R3), who had attended regular circle dance groups for thirteen years, stated that the physical connection with people in the circle had made her realise how supportive this can be.

The meanings of dancing in circle were also explored by some of the participants as a facilitating factor in creating a supportive environment. A female participant (R24), who had been involved for twenty years, mentioned how the shape of the circle conveys qualities of acceptance and inclusion:

> *"…there's something about the circle … its shape … it contains all we come with … different emotional baggage, psychological states that we are in when we arrive … it is somehow contained within the circle. You don't really need to know the ins and outs of what's going on in people's lives. It's a sense of acceptance … there is something about the circle that is very powerful for that."* (R24)

### 5.2.2 Fostering connections

'Fostering connections' explores the social dimension of circle dance as portrayed by the participants. Essentially a group activity, circle dance was perceived as unique in the sense that it is a shared occupation and it is performed in a circle, enriching and instigating the development of relationships. The participants talked about layers of connections which can be fostered in the social world of circle dance: feeling part of a group, of a local community (regional or national level) and of a wider community (international level). Participating in a shared occupation means to align occupational performance with others in order to achieve a common goal and, ultimately, to share similar experiences. A male participant (R18), who had been circle dancing for nine years, talked about how *"the pleasure of matching the movements to the rest of the group and to the music"* made him feel part of the whole, an integral part of his group. For him, this experience generates feelings of *"emotional enjoyment"* derived from the collective action of dancing together.

One female participant (R32) articulated a similar idea, focussing on the sense of joy which arose from dancing in a group context. For her, to take part in circle dance was to be open to everybody's experiences and, at the same time, to contribute to the collective energy generated from the group as a whole. In the attempt to relate this idea to a psychological approach, she stated: *"I'm thinking about that Gestalt[47] term: the sum of the parts being greater than the individual...".* For her, this fact was what characterised circle dance as being *"quite special and unique".*

Feeling part of a group, sharing the dances and the movements were perceived by many respondents as key elements to promote a deeper connection between people. One female participant (R24) remarked that circle dance appeared to facilitate a sense of trust between people and therefore a *"real sense of friendship"* can be fostered. For her, qualities such as honesty and openness permeate the friendship instigated in the social world of circle dance.

Another female participant (R14) talked about how empathy and identification with others can be cultivated through the non-verbal communication present in the practice of circle dance. She stated:

> *"…there's something about the non-verbal connection, because of dancing in the group, through holding hands… catching eye contact across the circle … and you are standing still and you know that someone is having a similar experience to the one you're having. But you don't have to talk about it; it's just something you experience together..."* (R14)

For her, implicit meanings were generated from this experience, embracing new possibilities to reach people in life. A male participant (R30), who had been

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[47] "The closest translation of Gestalt (a German word) is 'whole', pattern or form. It has the sense that meaning cannot be found from breaking things down into parts, but comes from appreciation of the whole, in other words, holistic" (available from  http://gestaltcentre.co.uk/what-is-gestalt/).

involved in circle dance for eighteen years, remarked that a large proportion of his personal acquaintances had come through circle dancing:

> "*It's one of those things [circle dancing] that does pretty much make you forget all your mundane work stuff and moves you into a different kind of atmosphere and then…there is that sense of community, of being with a group of like-minded people who enjoy doing the same thing who, over the years, have all, well not all, but to a large extent all become very good friends. A large part of my close friends have come from circle dance…"*
> (R30)

Interrelated with the idea of circle dance fostering connections, the participants frequently referred to the fact that circle dance promotes a sense of community. A female participant (R2), who had danced for twelve years, observed that circle dance, as a shared occupation, instigates a sense of cooperation, of being needed, generating a greater sense of community. Speaking from her own experience, this participant stated that people in circle dance tend to leave their everyday problems aside in order to create a different kind of atmosphere and work together towards common goals: learn, perform and enjoy the dances and the company of the group. For another participant (R20), to take part in circle dance meant to achieve a sense of belonging, of being part of a community of people who are "*willing to share and help".*

One female participant (R1) mentioned how circle dance can represent a way of expanding the view of individuals to the more communal aspect of life, as it links people who have a common interest in other cultures and traditions:

> "*… It means an involvement, obviously, with other people. It means an interest, a world interest, you know, in hearing music from so many other countries, and therefore there is a link, you know, with a wider community,*

*other than yourselves, it is not inward looking but outward looking, so … it is all those things to me, but it is … about being in a group with people, and it is amazing! …[circle dance] does link you to so many other traditions and cultures, where people come together spontaneously and dance."* (R1)

Gaining a sense of community through circle dance, the participants expressed the feeling of also being connected to something larger, greater, a wider community which affords alternatives for change and brings possibilities.  The fact that circle dancers have their own journal (*The Grapevine*), which lists all available groups in the U.K., means that they can go to other groups and workshops, which are in different geographical locations. If a participant moved to the other side of the country, it is very likely that she/he would find a local circle dance group and would be able to continue her/his engagement with this occupation. A female participant (R17), who had been circle dancing for nine years, talked about her experience over the years of attending circle dance workshops in other locations, away from her local area. As she started attending more workshops, she realised that she became part of a wider community:

*"…after the first one, the next one you go to there will be somebody that you've met before. Yes, that's quite nice. And if there is somebody that you've never met before, then in the first dance you join hands…well, then that's alright! You don't need to know people to dance with them."* (R17)

Another female participant (R5) used the metaphor of *"feeling part of the big world"* in order to describe her experience with circle dance. For her, engaging in circle dance meant to be connected with others:

*"… it is because circle dance makes me feel part of the big world because I spend a lot of time on my own, which I'm very happy about, but I also like*

*being with people and it is a way of being in a group and the dancing together, and being together and doing a shared activity… so that's make me feel…I can't put a price on how beneficial it is to my sense of well-being.* "(R5)

## 5.3 Teaching impacting on circle dance experience

It became evident throughout the analysis that the pedagogy of circle dance had implications for the way in which participants experience circle dance as a fulfilling and meaningful occupation. Reflecting the respondents' narratives and their experiences of how they are taught, this sub-category reveals how they perceived the roles of a circle dance teacher and the elements which enhance their participation. The following components were identified in order to understand the impact of teaching on the participants' experience: 'providing a positive and enjoyable learning experience' and 'meeting the individual's and the group's needs'. It is important to note that the participants in this study were all adults, some of whom with no previous experience of other forms of dance prior to their involvement with circle dance.

### 5.3.1 Providing a positive and enjoyable experience

As the practice of circle dance implies acquiring skills in order to be a participant it is relevant to understand the viewpoints of the participants and the perceived implications of the role of the teachers for them. Providing a positive and enjoyable learning experience was referred to by the participants as being of the upmost importance and a way to influence and enhance their involvement with circle dance. The participants described the role of the teacher as a facilitator with explicit skills, such as teaching the steps, planning the sessions, selecting the

dances, and implicit or more subjective ones, such as the teacher's personality, commitment and enjoyment to dancing and teaching and charisma. Both components were considered essential to enriching their learning experience.

One of the teachers' explicit skills identified by the participants was the ability to use a variety of strategies to accommodate their different learning styles. During the interviews, the majority of the participants[48] described their learning styles according to the VARK - Visual (V), Aural (A), Read/Write (R) and Kinesthetic (K) - model (Fleming, 2001; Hawk and Shah, 2007), using the terms visual, auditory or kinesthetic. Whilst discussing this point, a female participant (R17) recounted her experience with her first circle dance teacher, who used visual strategies *only* to teach the dances. She stated:

> *"I had often felt that I wasn't a good dancer because my first teacher had been a visual teacher and, for me, I need the words as well…so for me, it is very helpful if they [the teachers] say [the steps] and not just show them."*

Being mainly auditory, this participant (R17), like others, illustrated that her experience can be negatively affected if the teachers do not use mixed modality presentations, including, at least, verbal and auditory techniques. One female participant (R14) reinforced the same idea by saying:

> *"I always needed to hear the words, because I can remember the words quite well, so if somebody said: 'it's three steps to the right, beginning on the right foot, then side behind' I would remember, but if it's only demonstrated to me…then it's very difficult."*

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[48] Only one respondent (R16) used the Felder-Silverman Index of Learning Style (Felder and Silverman, 1988) as she described herself as active learner.

Having identified her learning style as visual and kinesthetic instead, another participant (R21) mentioned that she needed to watch and do the steps at the same time in order to learn the dances. For her, if teachers were using mainly verbal descriptions of the steps, she could not learn effectively enough.

Reinforcing the relevance of teachers using a mixed modality approach to teaching, a female participant (R33) observed that:

> *"…how it [circle dance] is taught really does matter. I know from talking to other people that it is really helpful if somebody [the teacher] gives you a brief excerpt of the music, shows you the steps before people have a go at doing the steps, speaks clearly."*

One female participant (R5), drawing from her own experience as a former special needs teacher, highlighted the importance of transmitting the dances in different ways in order to help people to improve their performance and thereby achieve a high level of satisfaction.

Another aspect mentioned by some participants was related to the pace of teaching. For them, if they feel that the teacher does not explain the steps thoroughly or does not allow time for them to practise the steps, then this can negatively impact their experience. A male participant (R18), who had been dancing for nine years, reported his teaching preference thus:

> *"I like it when a teacher assumes that I know nothing and just starts from the beginning. I prefer it if teachers give the amount of time I need so I can be sure of the steps. I feel I can't move the rest of my body apart from my feet, until they are moving in the right way."*

Sharing the same preference, two other respondents (R10 and R5) added that this teaching style can compromise the engagement of new participants and affect their decision to pursue / persevere with circle dance.

As circle dance includes a comprehensive repertoire of traditional and contemporary dances, the participants stated that the teacher had the responsibility of selecting the dances and, most importantly, planning their sequence. Illustrating this aspect, a female participant (R31), who had been dancing for twenty one years, commented on the importance of the teacher's choice of programme, offering the participants a variety of dances, ranging from simple to more complex choreographies, and purposively being prepared to include simple dances at the beginning of the session, building up to more energetic ones and "*slowing down, gently, coming to the end*" with meditative dances. Another participant (R33) also reinforced the relevance of the teacher presenting a combination of dances to accommodate the demands of a mixed ability group of participants.

In addition to the explicit skills of the teacher's role, the participants talked about the implicit or more subjective ones, which also influenced their experience. Several participants suggested that the teacher needed to be able to create a safe environment and a relaxed atmosphere in which learning can take place; this was fundamental to their experience.  A male participant (R10) remarked on the importance of the circle dance teacher having a relaxed approach in order to make the stages of learning accessible to everybody. For him, his teacher's attitude impacted positively on his decision to pursue circle dance as a leisure activity, especially as she did not put pressure on the participants and she respected their different learning styles and the fact that some were slower than others at learning the steps. Complementing the same idea, a female participant (R1) who had been dancing for fifteen years, stated that this approach to teaching was specifically helpful when she started circle dancing, as it made her feel relaxed, knowing that she could improve her performance by being continuously involved  and by attending the circle dance sessions regularly.

Acknowledging that the key role of a circle dance teacher is to facilitate learning, a female participant (R20), who had been involved for twenty years and who had recently started co-teaching , reported that the teacher should be actively involved *"in creating an environment where people feel at ease"* in order to facilitate their learning of the necessary skills. Several participants stated that the teacher's ability to create a relaxed atmosphere was directly related to their personal attributes, for example their capacity for being empathic or patient. A female participant (R21), who had been dancing for twenty years, explained that a successful learning experience for her was linked to "*a feeling of safety",* which ultimately derived from the teacher's personality and his/her capacity to "*hold a safe space".*

Feeling welcomed and being accepted in a non-judgemental way by the teacher as a valuable member of the group were cited by some respondents as important elements to their learning processes. A female participant (R32) stated that *"the calmness of the teacher and the pace at which he/she teaches"* in addition to non-verbal elements such as eye contact, facial expression, supporting their welcoming and inclusive attitude, can positively affect her learning experience. In this context, the teacher could then help people to feel that "*they're part of something and they belong to something and they have a right to be there"* and therefore promote a positive and enjoyable learning experience amongst the participants.

Despite her specific learning preferences, a female participant (R16), who had been engaged in circle dance for seven years, talked about the importance of the teacher having a positive attitude towards the participants and being confident that they will learn the dances at their own pace. She stated:

*"If I [as a teacher] say: "You probably won't be able to manage this [the dance]." Then you won't manage it. But a teacher who says: 'We'll get there in the end: we might have two or three goes but we'll get there'. And, immediately, that sends a different message to you. And you think: "yes, I can get it, because the teacher thinks I can."*

Several participants also expressed the relevance of having a good rapport with the teacher as a way to facilitate their learning process. One participant (R16), who had been dancing for seven years, stated that having a good emotional connection with the teacher had been fundamental for her in acquiring new skills and learning effectively. Another participant (R25) related the quality of their learning experience to the rapport established with the teacher, saying: "*I think that if I went to a [circle dance] class and I didn't like the teacher, I think I would find it very hard. But as yet, I haven't come across that situation".* Being a primary school teacher herself, a female participant (R26) remarked that:

*"I need to feel, like the kids at school, that I like the teacher, that they are sympathetic, understanding, tolerant, a bit of fun as well … all those qualities. I think, well, yes, that's important to my well-being, otherwise I wouldn't enjoy the session as much. It wouldn't be as successful for me. I can't think of many circle dance teachers who wouldn't be like that because the people who choose to teach circle dance have these qualities."*

Another interesting insight related to the teachers' subjectivity was provided by a female participant (R21), who had been dancing for twenty years. For her, the experience of being taught by someone who clearly enjoys dancing and teaching can have a very positive impact on the participants' learning process. She described such teacher thus:

*"…they are obviously really enjoying themselves, people who you can tell they love doing it and that shows through what they are doing…it is not just a job, it is their passion."*

The participants' perceptions of the circle dance teacher's role in meeting the individual's and group's needs will be explored in the next sub-section.

## 5.3.2 Meeting the individual's and the group's needs

The participants highlighted that one of the roles of a circle dance teacher should be to address individual's and group's needs. Underlying their discourses was the notion that, as circle dance is a shared occupation, the teachers should be aware of the individuals within the group as well as the group as a whole, dealing simultaneously with both levels in order to fulfil their leadership role. A female participant (R17) commented on how the teachers needed to respond to the different demands of the individuals within the group in order to facilitate the participation of all. She remarked that:

*"…the teacher has a huge role:  the teacher has to manage the good [member of the group], the quick [learner] and the more physically able with the people who are less physically able or struggling to learn it. To manage the different paces of learning, to manage the different styles of learning…"*

Another female participant (R24) remarked that, considering that most of circle dance groups include people with mixed abilities and different stages of involvement, a *"good teacher will be more available to the less experienced dancer"*, using strategies like demonstrating the steps in the middle of the circle so that all can see the teacher and/or holding hands "*with the person who is the least experienced*" in the circle. For her, this scenario exemplified a "*quietly,*

*experienced and sensitive teacher",* who demonstrates an awareness of the needs of the individual with a view to facilitating his/her integration into the group as well as helping the group to dance together.

In a similar context, other participants highlighted the role of the teacher in incorporating newcomers to the groups, offering them the required support to facilitate their participation. Two female respondents (R17 and R31) mentioned that teachers should be particularly receptive to new members, giving them special attention by providing reassurance when needed and teaching suitable dances to help them to be familiar with circle dance and to achieve a "*high level of enjoyment"* (R17).   Reinforcing this point, a female participant (R31), who had been dancing for twenty one years and plays an important role in her local group, stated:

> *"… because new people can feel so anxious, can't they? Then, again in our group, we can try to take some responsibility for that but I suppose in most groups, that's the teacher's role, to ensure that new people feel that they are doing OK and don't feel embarrassed."* (R 31)

Apart of dealing with the individual's needs, several respondents stressed the importance of the role of the teacher in establishing rapport with the group as a whole.   A female participant (R16), who had been dancing for seven years, observed that when the teacher was able to bond with the group and looked after the individuals in a collective context, he/she could then create a caring atmosphere, stimulating a sense of cooperation in the participants. For her, a good teacher was considered to be  the one who establishes "*the culture of the group and the dynamic of the group and the rapport between team members… so that people feel comfortable and safe in that environment, safe with themselves and safe with the teacher".* From another perspective, a male participant (R30)

acknowledged that the quality of the bond established between the teacher and the group can produce a different atmosphere for all. Speaking from his own experience as a member of a regular circle dance group, he stated:

*"It is just that they [the teachers] have a very different style and the feeling can be very different. With one teacher it can be a much more, almost fun type of thing, it's much more light hearted and just a fun thing to do, maybe a lot more laughter and joking. And then, with another teacher, it might be in some senses much more serious, much quieter, more meditative, so the atmosphere of the group can certainly be different with a different teacher…"*

The ability of the teacher to take into consideration the needs of the group was also identified by the participants as an important aspect. A female participant (R14) mentioned that the teacher should "*be able to connect with the group and understand the needs of the group*" to respond appropriately, modifying the teaching style or altering the order of the dances if necessary, in order to enrich the experience of all participants. To illustrate the relevance of this attribute, the same participant talked about a circle dance event which she attended in the past and its negative impact on her. She recounted her experience thus:

*"We did one weekend with [name of the teacher] and I just felt he didn't do that enough, he was just presenting what he'd prepared and we would get it irrespective of how we responded to it…so, for me, there was something missing and I got a bit grumpy about it…I just felt he was removed from the group and that was what I disliked the most."* (R14)

Providing the opposite scenario, the participants' discourses revealed that a circle dance teacher was seen as the one who is attentive to the needs of the group,

which is situated in time and space, and is prepared to adjust or alter the programme of the dances according to that and not in spite of:

*If you're with a true circle dance teacher, then whilst they are interested in getting the steps and the dance right, there is this extra dimension that I'm sure they are all aware of about, the sense of the feeling of the group, that sense of the community of the group and how people are feeling and what's the right dance to do… I suppose that most circle dance teachers probably have that sense as well of the kind of feeling of the group, they're not just there to teach dances, it's more than that."* (R30)

## 5.4 Circle dance helping to overcome difficulties in life

Circle dance has helped many respondents to overcome difficulties in their lives, including depression, stress, anxiety and bereavement. I had not anticipated the importance of this element until it started to recur in many interviews, from the early ones to the focused and latest ones.  It is also relevant to note that this sub-category was generated from the interviews conducted with participants and teachers as this theme was common across both narratives. The teachers' discourses are related to the period when they were participants only and prior to the commencement of their role as circle dance teachers. The respondents described various levels in which being engaged in circle dance became the support and the means to manage difficult circumstances in life as well as to overcome conditions such as severe depression and others.

A female respondent (R32), who had been involved for the previous fourteen years, remarked how her local circle dance group represented an "anchor-point" for her, providing a sense of security and stability.  Knowing that she could always

attend the circle dance group due to its regularity in terms of frequency (weekly), time and venue, this participant regarded circle dance as "*a sanctuary*", a constant activity in her life, a space which she could always rely on, with her circle dance friends there to help her in any circumstance. Whilst assessing the impact of circle dance on her sense of well-being, another participant (R14) realised that it had been specifically helpful during difficult periods in her life. Like the other participant (R32), she mentioned the relevance of preserving circle dance in her routine and having the freedom to attend or return to it whenever necessary.

Some of the respondents had encountered circle dance while recovering from depression, stress or bereavement. A female participant (R33) talked about her circumstances fifteen years prior to my interview: *"I was off work with depression for two months and I thought: 'I need to find ways to wind down'."* As she had always enjoyed dance as a physical activity and had previously had one enjoyable experience with circle dance during a Yoga weekend, she eventually found out about a local circle dance group and started attending it. The same participant also observed that her pathway to circle dance was very similar to other people's in the network:

> *"I don't think I'm unique in a lot of things I've said there. I've talked to a lot of people at circle dancing who've said to me that they were, possibly, unwell or depressed when they first started and they were looking for something that would help them to unwind. I know a lot of people who have mentioned that sort of thing." (R33)*

Another female participant (R3), who had been involved in circle dance for thirteen years, mentioned that, although she first experienced circle dance as part of a conference and was aware of the existence of circle dance group not far from

her residential area, it was only many years later that she started to attend it regularly, when she was recovering from a bereavement. She stated:

> *"… it was a very bad time in my life… I had triplets, and unfortunately two of them were stillborn and this was about a year later. I was still heavily grief stricken for the babies I lost and … at some level, I kind of knew that I needed a little bit of time for me, away from the [baby] who survived and away from my family… just to be with myself and my grief… And I needed a bit of exercise as well …"*

For her, being engaged in circle dance on a regular basis had a positive impact in her recovery. One female teacher (R13) recalled her involvement with circle dance as a turning-point in her life, as she was experiencing severe depression at that time (fifteen years prior to the interview). Going through this very adverse and hard time in her life, she was, almost unexpectedly, drawn to take up this form of dance. She stated:

> *"… just before we moved to* [location], *about three people, within the space of a couple of weeks, mentioned circle dance to me and I'd never heard about it…So I made enquiries when I got there and who should I find there? [Name of the teacher]: one of the most experienced dance teachers in the network and she was just absolutely brilliant… So, that was how it [circle dance] found me. I don't think I found it, I think it found me... Well, at the right time, I really believe, it was brought to me at the right time for me."*

By bringing a new purpose in her life, this respondent believed that the encounter with circle dance happened *"at the right time"* and played a very important part in her recovery process. Similarly, another teacher (R23) mentioned the impact of her first experience with circle dance, twenty nine years ago, when she was

suffering from agoraphobia[49]. The significance of this event was so intense that she referred to it as a positive marker of transformation in her life. She stated: *"I'm a different person since I started doing circle dancing…".* As a consequence of these deep experiences, both respondents decided to pursue circle dance as a career.

For other respondents, it was the long-term and continuous involvement with circle dance which helped them to ease physical and emotional problems. One male participant (R18), involved in circle dance for nine years, explained the impact of dancing on his state of health. Experiencing physical symptoms derived from inflammatory arthritis[50] and ankylosing spondylitis[51], he attested that whilst circle dancing he can feel the positive effect of it on alleviating these symptoms.

A female participant (R2) emphasized how being engaged in circle dance had assisted her in dealing with anxiety:

> *"For me, very personally, …because as a child I was quite an anxious child…I had to work through [in therapy] my young adult life, in particular, to free myself of that anxiety and I've done very well  except, of course, that I haven't freed myself completely [laughs]… and……what I find about circle dancing is two things really: that at first I was very anxious about it, …but in time it has helped me to elude that anxiety, I can still feel it, sometimes, when I make a mess of it, …but mostly, I can feel, and that's*

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[49] Agoraphobia: " Marked and consistently manifest fear in or avoidance of at least two of the following situations:
(1) crowds;(2) public places;(3) travelling alone;(4) travelling away from home" (ICD-10, p. 108 http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/GRNBOOK.pdf?ua=1) .

[50] Inflammatory arthritis is a type of arthritis where the body's immune system produces inflammation that causes joints to become swollen and damaged. This can often occur for no obvious reason and can affect ligaments surrounding the swollen joint. A common example is rheumatoid arthritis, which affects around 400,000 people in the U.K. (http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/conditions/arthritis/what-is-arthritis.aspx#sthash.CuI8sJVk.dpuf)

[51] Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is a type of arthritis that mainly affects the back.  It causes inflammation in the joints of the spine, leading to pain and stiffness (http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/conditions/arthritis/what-is-arthritis.aspx#sthash.CuI8sJVk.dpuf).

*why I really want to do it more, I can feel that the anxiety, which is inborn*

*in me, for one reason or another, diminishes, it diminishes through circle*

*dancing."*

Having recognised the positive aspects and the benefits for their own lives, participants and teachers suggested that circle dance should also be disseminated among people who are experiencing difficulties in life. The female participant (R33), who herself encountered circle dance whilst undergoing a depressive illness and had been actively involved since, stated:

*"I really, really, do think that when people are depressed or unwell or*

*whatever, I really think that circle dance is a great antidote. It ought to be*

*prescribed in every doctor's surgery…So the more I talk about it, the more*

*I think that it should be definitely prescribed on the National Health*

*Service."*

Another teacher had this to say (R38)

*"I think that it* [circle dance] *is very important and more people would*

*benefit from it. I really do. One of our group's participants has been*

*through quite a traumatic time at work and she has given us feedback that*

*dancing has really supported her through that…so I think that it is a very*

*good thing to do…"*

A teacher (R8) who is also a therapist highlighted the therapeutic value of circle dance:

*"…from a psychotherapeutic [point of view], I think that [circle dance] has*

*an incredible potential…to bring in people who are normally very much…*

*who have not just difficulties generally speaking, but who have extreme*

*difficulties…to bring them together and let them communicate with other*

*people."*

## 5.5  Summary

This chapter discussed the experience of the participants, revealing the meanings and purposes attributed to circle dance and the perceived benefits of circle dance from the participants' viewpoints. The participants' narratives revealed that being engaged in circle dance was perceived as a unique experience, generating opportunities for "self-investment, self-development", "feeling transformed", "feeling transported". The ethos of circle dance also played an important role in sustaining their engagement.  Reflecting the respondents' experiences of how they were taught, the sub-category "teaching style impacting on experience" revealed how the participants perceived the roles of a circle dance teacher. 'Providing a positive and enjoyable learning experience' and 'meeting the individual's and the group's needs' were considered fundamental elements which facilitate and enhance participation. A discussion of this major category in relation to the literature will be presented in chapter 9. The next chapter will present the second major category, the experience of circle dance teachers.

# Chapter 6 *"Opening that door…"* : the experience of circle dance teachers

The major category "*Opening that door"* (in-vivo code) reflects the experience of circle dance teachers and reveals that their deep satisfaction and self-fulfilment gained through their positive personal experience with circle dance both motivated and inspired the majority of these respondents to pursue a career as circle dance teachers. Choosing to share an occupation that had been nourishing them in many ways, teachers wanted to offer the opportunity to other people to experience an activity which had been of such importance for them at a personal level. It also includes the perceived roles of a circle dance teacher. Sub-categories were generated in order to define the properties of this major category: (a) 'becoming a circle dance teacher', (b) 'facilitating processes', and (c) 'teachers' perceptions of the impact of circle dance on the participants'. These sub-categories helped to clarify and understand not only the motivational factors and the processes involved in being a circle dance teacher but also revealed how the respondents perceived the relevance of this activity for themselves and others. Figure 17 was designed to illustrate the correlation between the major category and the sub-categories.

**Figure 17 Teachers' major category and its sub-categories[52]**
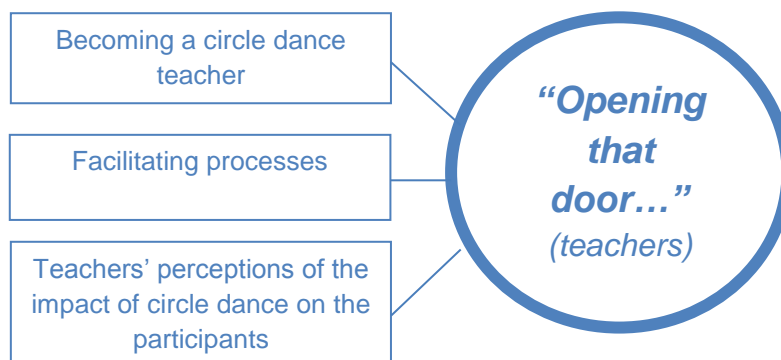


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[52] To see this figure in context, please refer to figure 15 (theoretical model).

## 6.1  Becoming a circle dance teacher

The teachers' narratives revealed that their commitment to circle dance generated an opportunity to construct a new or additional role in their lives as teachers, leading to the development of new skills and also modifying their level of involvement with the circle dance world. For many respondents, circle dance teaching was considered a part-time job commitment or an extra role as they continued their careers in another area. Some respondents became full-time circle dance teachers. With the purpose of clarifying the components of this sub-category, the following sub-sections will be presented: "motivation", "pathways to becoming a circle dance teacher" and "developing teaching skills".

### 6.1.1 Motivation

In the discourse of the respondents, their decision to become a teacher was informed both by their personal experience and through coming to understand the potential value of circle dance as a life enhancing activity. Rather than seeing circle dance teaching as merely a work commitment, several respondents reported that their motivation for pursuing a career as a circle dance teacher represented a two-way dynamic process in which, by taking this activity to other people, they were also gaining personal and social rewards. A female participant (R4), who had been teaching for nineteen years, remarked that circle dance had influenced her life positively and had brought her significant personal rewards. For her, the possibility of inspiring other people to get involved with circle dance and sharing a meaningful occupation had greatly motivated her to become a circle dance teacher. She stated:

*"I just love it [circle dance] so much myself …and I get so much from it that I want to be able to share that with other people… I just think it's wonderful to be able to share and pass on and open this door [circle dance] which I had opened for me so many years ago, which has been such an important part of my life ever since … I do love opening that door…"*

Other respondents were drawn to becoming circle dance teachers through their passion for and commitment to circle dance itself. One female teacher (R15) remarked that her main motivation for starting to teach was to make circle dance accessible to other people, helping them to enjoy the dances and to benefit from them. For her, the deep experience of sharing circle dance with other people had sustained her involvement for nearly twenty years.

It was also interesting to note that, for some teachers, circle dance was such a vital and elemental part of their lives that teaching fulfilled a necessity on a personal level. This was exemplified by one female teacher (R28) who had been teaching circle dance for twenty eight years. She explained why teaching circle dance had become a full-time commitment:

*"… [circle] dancing is so intrinsic to whom I am in that way, that I'm expressing myself and therefore I'm happy. It's something I need to do really, to share in that way."*

Similarly, another female teacher (R13), who was able to overcome personal problems through circle dance, expressed her deep appreciation for her encounter with it and for being able to take it to others by saying: *"I do really feel absolutely blessed to have been led into something that it is so inwardly nourishing."*

Another motivational factor presented in the discourse of the respondents was related to the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction they can get from observing their participants enjoying themselves and expressing contentment. A female teacher (R8) commented that, very often, her participants mentioned how much pleasure and happiness they experienced whilst circle dancing. Reiterating the same idea, another teacher (R29) mentioned that much of her enthusiasm for starting to teach eighteen years ago came from her perception that:

*"I think it [circle dance] makes people happy. It's something about bringing people together and seeing their happy faces … enjoying themselves … and they really want to keep coming out, even on cold nights, because they know they are going to enjoy themselves."*

From a similar perspective, a male teacher (R22), having been a qualified teacher in other subjects all his life, stated that his main motivation to teach circle dance sixteen years ago derived from "*the pleasure of watching people get better at it and develop themselves*".

Whilst discussing the aspects which stimulated their involvement as teachers, an interesting insight was given by two respondents (R34 and R37). For them, teaching circle dance provided them with a sense of belonging and an enhanced perception of being part of the circle dance social world. A male respondent (R37), who had been teaching for seventeen years, explained that the most important reason for being involved as a teacher was due to both the culture of circle dance and to his strong identification with other members (Unruh, 1979). He stated:

*"I think it's because to me it's a family, it's a support system, like a community I feel I belong to…[W]ith circle dance, I feel that the group I do weekly, that's a little family of people that I see regularly … you walk*

*through the door, you automatically feel at home, they're all circle dancers,*

*so they're like a family to me…"*

In addition to this, another teacher (R34) remarked that what had most attracted her when she started teaching was the idea that by "*bringing a group of people together and forming [another circle dance] group"*, she was, somehow, contributing both to maintaining and advancing the circle dance network and, therefore, enhancing her sense of belonging.

## 6.1.2 Pathways to becoming a circle dance teacher

During the interviews, the respondents talked about the pathways to becoming a circle dance teacher and how a new role in their lives was created. It was very interesting to note that all of them necessarily started off by being a participant; it was only after having a personal experience, that the respondents had opportunities or were inspired to pursue a career as circle dance teachers. For some of the respondents, the transition from being a participant to becoming a teacher happened almost unintentionally. A female teacher (R27), who had been teaching for twenty five years, remarked that she was prompted and encouraged by other participants, as they noticed that she was a competent dancer and had the necessary skills and abilities. After taking the first steps into teaching, doing it on a *"small scale"*, her career, as a circle dance teacher, developed and became a full time job. Another teacher (R4) mentioned how her first experience as a circle dance teacher, which occurred "*completely and utterly by accident"*, informed her decision to continue teaching on a part-time basis in this additional professional role. Being asked to replace another teacher at a particular event, this respondent recounted its impact on her:

*"I practised all the dances that I knew, which weren't many at that time, and went to this group and they were lovely and I loved showing them the dances and seeing how they responded to it…"*

Like that respondent, another teacher (R28) mentioned how a significant event in her life had led her to create an unexpected, but rather fulfilling and meaningful role. Whilst recounting her story, this teacher mentioned that, after attending circle dance workshops at Findhorn Foundation, she was prompted by a close friend to share the dances with other friends. She stated:

*"And that was what encouraged me to create a workshop… and it was the basic dances, and I enjoyed that workshop so much, preparing for it, teaching the dances, and I really felt alive when I was teaching that day. It was the first teaching I'd done and, being me, I jumped straight in with a full day's workshops and everything…I was launched almost without realising it."* (R28)

The impact of this first experience and the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction derived from it were so important that she was encouraged to pursue a career as a full-time circle dance teacher for twenty eight years. For other respondents, starting to teach was instigated when their own local teacher moved to another geographic area and subsequently the members were left to decide whether to carry on with the group or not. To ensure the continuation of their local groups, some of the respondents were called to step into that role. One female teacher (R19) mentioned that three aspects encouraged her to take on that responsibility at the time. She had been involved with circle dance for eight years and had enjoyed her experience as a participant. She had taught Scottish dance in the past, which gave her enough confidence at the time to commit to the new role. Lastly, another member of the group offered to help with the administrative

tasks. Being in a similar situation, another teacher (R9) explained that her decision to become a teacher was greatly influenced by her professional background. She stated:

*"… being an occupational therapist, did definitely factor my decision to become a dance teacher and it has helped me to be able to do it and know what I was doing, thinking about group processes, you know, and how to make the most of the therapeutic aspect of it."*

For her, the skills that she acquired working with people, understanding the value of occupation in promoting well-being and running groups in an occupational therapy context had facilitated her new role at that time and contributed to her long-term involvement as a circle dance teacher (eleven years prior to the date of the interview).

Another route which got some of the respondents into teaching was to establish a circle dance group in their residential area. A determination to promote circle dance and to reach out to other localities were elements which inspired some of the respondents to start new circle dance groups around the U.K.. For example, a female respondent (R29), after being involved as a participant for five years, moved to an area where there was not a circle dance group. For that reason and as she had had some sporadic teaching experience at other people's events in the past, this respondent had decided to establish a group, which she had since been running for eighteen years. During the interview, whilst reviewing her initiative at that time, she stated:

*"I quite reluctantly started it, because I was keen that there should be a group that I would want to go to. I didn't really see myself as a dance teacher for a long time. I just thought I was filling in until a proper teacher came along."* (R29)

Likewise, another respondent (R34) introduced circle dance in the locality where she moved to. She remarked that by creating a group at her new residential area at that time, she could then give continuity to her involvement with circle dance and extend the opportunity to other people as well.

Permeating all pathways to becoming a circle dance teacher described in this study was the idea that circle dance was perceived as an important, enjoyable and meaningful activity and teaching represented a fulfilling and rewarding experience.


## 6.1.3 Developing teaching skills

As the professional background of the respondents varied significantly, it was important to explore how the teachers had been developing their teaching skills in order to offer good quality sessions and workshops for the participants. Coming from different areas and experiences, the teachers' backgrounds included the fields of education, social work, health (including occupational therapy), law, accountancy, drama and the creative arts (see appendix 3). From fifteen respondents, four of them (R8; R15; R22; R23) had teacher training in other subjects and three respondents (R13; R19; R34) attended a formal circle dance training in the U.K.. For the majority, informal training came from attending other teachers' workshops, using transferable skills from their different backgrounds and, mainly, from learning on the job.

Being highly committed to her role as a circle dance teacher for eighteen years, a female respondent (R29) remarked on the importance of continuing her professional development in order to maintain good standards for the circle dance network and in order to offer to the participants "*a good, positive experience".* Aware that her participants were "*investing their time and money"* in circle dance

and conscious of her responsibility as a teacher in providing a quality product to them, she stated:

*"That's what I try to do: I've always tried to improve from one year to the next. I'm still trying to improve. I'm always asking for feedback, I'm always looking for new ideas, new ways of doing things."* (R29)

For many teachers, the opportunity to attend other circle dance workshops, especially with more experienced teachers, represented a valuable way to gain insight into other teaching strategies. A male teacher (R37), who had been teaching for seventeen years, stated that taking part in workshops with experienced teachers and observing their teaching skills helped him to incorporate new components into his teaching style. Similarly, one female respondent (R15), having been a qualified teacher all her life, reported that, although she had not taken part in any formal circle dance teacher training, being a participant had increased and improved her knowledge basis over the past fifteen years. She expressed this idea thus:

*"I think one of the things that has helped me to develop my teaching and modify [my teaching style] was the opportunity I've had to dance as a participant with a whole range of different teachers … All of them have taught me a great deal and, once you are a teacher, you can never divorce yourself from the fact that you're teaching, so that when you're being taught, you're picking things up: 'Well, that was very helpful; that made it really difficult' …"* (R15)

It was pertinent to note that, for the respondents, attending circle dance workshops with more experienced teachers had been serving different purposes: from acquiring a new repertoire of dances, experiencing and learning about other teaching strategies, to mastering their ability as dancers. The latter was

specifically pointed out by a female teacher (R23), who had been teaching for twenty eight years. Whilst improving her skills as a dancer, she was gaining a better understanding of the learning process. This in turn enhanced her teaching style and, therefore, allowed her to provide a better experience for her participants.

Attending formal circle dance teacher training was also an important way to develop and improve teaching skills. For those respondents (R13; R19; R34) who had the opportunity to take part in teacher training courses, the experience was valuable in many different aspects. A female teacher (R19), who had a qualification in teaching and also had attended a circle dance teacher training course, mentioned that she found the latter very useful and relevant for her practice. Although she had taught circle dance for nearly five years when she undertook the training, she gained, amongst other skills, more confidence, which, consequently, had a positive impact on her teaching practice. At that time, she had prioritised attending the training course as it implied a "*continuous and developmental*" programme "*with the same group of people [participants and teacher]*". Following a different path, another female teacher (R13) remarked that it was only many years after attending the teacher training course that she had decided to commence a career as a teacher. Whilst talking about her development as a teacher, she noted that, if it had not been for the experience and skills she had acquired by attending the teacher training course, she would not "*ever have dared step into teaching*".

From another perspective, coming from a teacher who had developed her skills largely by learning on the job, one female respondent (R27) pointed out the significance of undertaking a teacher training programme and how this could have helped her, especially in the early stages of her career.

## 6.2  Facilitating processes

On defining their role as circle dance teachers, the respondents (teachers) described levels of responsibilities and skills (explicit and implicit ones) which were embedded in their role. Creating possibilities, enabling people to acquire and improve their dance skills, facilitating development and growth were some of the aspects related to the practice of teaching circle dance. In order to elucidate the elements pertinent to this sub-category, the following sub-sections will be discussed: 'being a facilitator', 'facilitating learning processes', 'structuring the sessions' and 'integrating newcomers'.

### 6.2.1 Being a facilitator

The teachers' discourses supported the idea that their role was best defined as a facilitator,  the one who takes a leading role by organising and transmitting a set of skills in order to enable people to learn and perform the dances in a group context, making the experience meaningful and enjoyable to all participants. It was important to note that, although several respondents referred to the transmission of the dances as of critical importance, other factors were moreover considered fundamental and an integrative part of their role. For a female teacher (R29), who had been teaching for eighteen years, being a facilitator or a focaliser was to be able to *"provide the space for people to come together and dance together and lead them in dance"*. For that reason, various elements needed to be integral to this role. She stated:

> *"[As a facilitator], you've got to put your material across as clearly as possible and be aware of other people – are they taking it on board? Whether they're keeping up and whether they're lost entirely. I think there's a lot of overlap. It's people skills, it's awareness of other people*

*and how they're learning and whether your teaching is being effective, really."*

For her, the role of facilitator included necessarily the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used and how the participants were responding to them. The importance of having an awareness of the individuals within the group context and the group as a whole was also highlighted by other teachers. For a very experienced female teacher (R23), beyond the task of teaching the dances, a facilitator should be aware of the needs of the participants, as individuals, and the group as a whole, in order to respond appropriately and provide a good experience for all. Similarly, another teacher (R13) remarked that, by recognising and acknowledging all the members of the group and being responsive to them, the facilitator can then prepare and transmit "*the right assortment of dances, so that there is always something accessible*" for everybody.

Another significant element of the role of facilitator was related to the group formation which is constellated in a shared occupation like circle dance. As circle dance involves all participants coming together to accomplish a common goal, performing the dances as a group, synchronising the steps and movements, a group can be established. A female teacher (R15) remarked that a vital component of being a circle dance facilitator was helping the group to be formed and to constitute a unity. She expressed this idea thus:

> *"…it's not about dealing with a collection of individuals: there is a group dynamic that grows, which can be carefully fostered, helping the group to trust each other, learn from one another…all the teaching is not coming from you…"* (R15)

For her, being a facilitator also meant to be able to create the circumstances in which group cohesiveness, collaboration and joint responsibility for the welfare of all can be developed, encouraged and nurtured in the circle dance environment. This in turn can foster a sense of belonging and self-worth within members of the group.

The respondents also considered the following to be integral elements of their role as facilitators: 'facilitating learning processes', 'structuring the sessions' and 'integrating newcomers'. I will discuss these in more details in the next sub-sections.

## 6.2.2 Facilitating learning processes

Facilitating learning processes was described by the respondents as a component of paramount importance, as circle dance necessarily involves the acquisition and development of certain skills. In order to support the learning process, the teachers cited two main aspects which were considered fundamental: (a) understanding the learning needs and styles of learning related to skill acquisition and (b) providing a positive and enjoyable learning experience. The same elements were also pointed out by the participants.

Aligned with the participants' discourses, several teachers mentioned the importance of using different strategies in order to respond to their members' learning needs. The description of the learning styles used by the teachers were based again in the VARK – Visual (V), Aural (A), Read/Write (R) and Kinesthetic (K)  model proposed by Fleming (2001). A female teacher (R8), who had been teaching for eighteen years, illustrated the various techniques used whilst teaching:

*"…so I always demonstrate it with the music first, then …I break it down into the steps and verbalise them … really, there are a lot of different styles so people can take on board the steps… I will often sing when I'm doing the steps and also I talk the pattern through as well because a lot of them would like to know numbers and things…so I always start by demonstrating, first of all, the dance, … sometimes not the whole dance, it depends, but at least a good section of it so people have seen the dance and heard the music to begin with and then I break it down to manageable little bits."* (R8)

For her, by providing different teaching techniques, she was acknowledging the various learning styles and, therefore, making it easy for all members of her group to acquire the necessary skills to perform the dances. Complementing this idea, one male respondent (R22) pointed out that, although he used a mixed modality presentation, he would include more or less verbal, auditory or kinesthetic techniques depending on the characteristics of his participants. He stated:

*"So I try to adapt to what I think are the learning styles of people rather than to have a teaching style of my own… So I do whatever seems to be working for the people I happen to have with me."*

It was important to note that in the teachers' discourses, using a mixed modality approach to teaching as well as being attentive to the learning needs of the members of the group were highlighted as fundamental aspects of their role. Some teachers emphasised the importance of providing the opportunity for the participants to build up their vocabulary of dances and steps gradually. This idea was illustrated by two respondents, R9 and R15, who had been teaching for eleven and fifteen years, respectively. For them, grading the instructions and allowing more time for practice were effective teaching strategies to be used,

especially with dances which were more complex, with long sequences of steps, arm movements and unfamiliar rhythm. Describing this technique as *"layering"*, one of the teachers (R15) mentioned that:

> *"… there's also a technique that I would use that is best described as 'layering', which is that you start with something that has the rhythm and it's very simple … you may then add a variation on the steps;  you may then add the arms. That layering can also be a very useful technique. So I do a variety of things. I think the thing I like to do most, especially with inexperienced people is to show them the  dance first, so that they hear the music , because … if you hear the music, you get something of the rhythm straight away."* (R15)

In order to support the learning process, the teachers also stressed the importance of providing a positive and enjoyable learning experience. This concept appeared to be embedded in the practice of the circle dance teachers and was consistent with the ideas presented by the participants. Based on her experience as a therapist and qualified teacher, a female respondent (R8) expressed how she perceived the correlation between acquiring new skills and the conditions which can enhance this process:

> *"…for me it is very important that it should be a very relaxed atmosphere for people to take the teaching on board…because I always feel that, in any teaching type of work, and I teach other things as well, that when people are relaxed [and] they are enjoying the situation that they are in, they learn very quickly…"*  (R8)

Reinforcing this notion, another teacher (R15) mentioned that the atmosphere in which learning takes place was of paramount importance and, therefore, it was part of the facilitator's role to create the conditions in which "*people feel*

*comfortable, accepted, where they aren't judged"*.   Complementing this idea, some of the teachers stated that their attitude whilst teaching can have an impact on the participants' learning experience. Aware of this aspect, a female teacher (R13) pointed out that one of her priorities with her groups was "*to make people feel welcome"*. Other teachers (R13; R22; R28; R29) said that they used humour to lighten the atmosphere in their groups with the aim of helping people feel more relaxed so they could enjoy the process of learning. Another important insight was suggested by two teachers (R15; R29). For them, by providing an enjoyable experience for their participants, they were also building people's confidence and providing them with a sense of achievement:

> *"You're providing a learning experience. You're teaching them a skill … as well as something enjoyable, it's a skill in itself. People start off being very doubtful about whether they can dance at all. They get more co-ordinated by being enabled to dance and … It's a confidence building thing as well, because people come along and say: 'I can't dance. I've got two left feet' … and eventually they can dance. So they've gone through a process which astonishes them as much as anything. It's a real boost to them to feel that they've achieved something and I think because it is sometimes a slow process, that people realise that they are achieving something more significant. If it was something you could do instantly, you wouldn't feel that sense of achievement. So you're making people feel better about themselves …"* (R29)

### 6.2.3 Structuring the sessions

The structure of the circle dance sessions was discussed by the teachers as an important aspect of the facilitation process. According to them, the sessions were designed to include a variety of simple or complex dances, slow or energetic in

pace, traditional or choreographed dances, providing structure for the participants. It was important to note that, beyond the task of selecting dances and arranging them in some kind of order, the teachers discussed many aspects which can determine and influence the structure of the sessions. Whilst discussing these aspects, the majority of the teachers were referring to their regular groups (many teachers also offered circle dance workshops and events as part of their teaching programme). Most of the circle dance groups described by the respondents were offered in venues such as community halls, church halls, occurring weekly at different times of the day (morning, afternoon or evening), with the duration varying from one hour and thirty minutes to two hours.

One of the elements pointed out by the teachers was related to the framework of the sessions. As circle dance is essentially a physical activity, a fundamental consideration for all teachers was to plan the sessions, so that a framework was provided in which the dances were selected to allow a gentle introduction to movement at the beginning of each session, followed by a gradual increase in the amount of physical energy required to perform the dances, to, eventually, end the session with slow dances. This generic pattern of the sessions was illustrated by a female teacher (R9):

> *"…so I start with more simple dances and then I like to build up the amount of energy required for the dances slowly, so…we start with simple dances, simple steps, nothing too vigorous, and then I tend to have the more energetic dances in the middle and then sort of slow it down at the end and help people to feel more calm and grounded perhaps before they go home."*

By starting the sessions with simple and gentle dances, this gave the participants the opportunity to warm up their bodies, preparing them to be physically active.

This was perceived to be an important thing to do. A female teacher (R15) indicated that another reason for choosing easier dances at the beginning of the sessions was to help the participants make a gentle transition from the demands of everyday life into the dance itself.

The progression from simple dances into more energetic and complex ones was also perceived by the teachers to be an important aspect when they were planning the sessions. This also gave the participants the opportunity to develop their dance skills by increasing the level of complexity of the dances and offering something more challenging. Usually, the more complex dances also tend to be the more energetic ones, and it makes more sense to wait until the dancers' bodies are "warmed up" before proceeding to those ones.  One female teacher (R15) explained how she always planned a dance which she referred to as "*the scholarship dance*" with the purpose of advancing the participants' ability to dance. She expressed the value of this element for her participants thus:

> *"And people like that … because of the effort they will put into something that will just give you that sense of satisfaction when you finally do get it."*

Similarly, another teacher (R8) also remarked on the importance of selecting dances which were more complex  (maybe due to unfamiliar rhythms, long sequences of different steps or arm movements) reiterating the idea that the participants, by learning more difficult dances, can get a sense of achievement and satisfaction from mastering them.

Just as the dancers started with easy dances and progressed to faster and more complex ones so, at the end of each session, the teachers included slow dances. A female teacher (R14) mentioned that, by choosing "*much quieter, stiller and more reflective dances*" for the last part of her sessions, the participants could then become quieter, more still and even in some cases achieve a more

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contemplative state. For another teacher (R13), this aspect was fundamental as a way to provide a balance between building up the overall energy of the group in the first half of the session and offering a quieter period at the end, helping participants to feel more relaxed.

Many teachers expressed the importance of having a break for two reasons: one, for their participants to have a physical rest and, secondly, to provide a space for them to interact and socialise. One teacher (R23) pointed out the fundamental importance of providing the opportunity for her participants to have a rest. She did not think that they would be able to dance for two consecutive hours without stopping half-way for fifteen-twenty minutes, especially after performing the more energetic and faster dances. In addition to this, having a break was seen by many teachers as a valuable strategy to facilitate social interaction between the participants. One female teacher (R19) explicitly remarked on the importance of structuring the circle dance sessions so that there was a break:

> *"I do see it as an important way to build up relationships as well. So I wouldn't want to teach a class that didn't have a break for a drink and a biscuit, for instance. Because I think that people can then come together and share bits of their lives and it is very important."* (R19)

Reinforcing this idea, another teacher (R29) mentioned that the twenty minutes break became *"an important part of the ritual"* for her participants as they can talk to each other, get a drink of water or juice, and, occasionally, have a conversation with the whole group about their common interest: circle dance. A female teacher (R34) observed that it was during the break that her participants had the chance to get to know one another; it was also an opportunity for her, as a teacher, to see her group interacting in a friendly atmosphere.

## 6.2.4 Integrating newcomers

The teachers' accounts revealed another common and highly relevant theme - that of the need to integrate newcomers. Most of the circle dance groups were offered in an open format or established in a way so that beginners could be incorporated at any stage. For this reason, it was relevant to understand how teachers perceived their role in helping new members to engage in circle dance and the impact of this element on the structure of the group. Although some of the teachers expressed their preference to be contacted prior to the sessions in order to facilitate their task of planning a suitable programme of dances, they pointed out that this was not always achievable. The strategies used by the teachers to integrate newcomers will be discussed in this sub-section.

One of the approaches used by most of the teachers was to change and/or adapt their programme of dances with the purpose of helping beginners to engage in circle dance and, thereby, have a positive experience. A female teacher (R4) remarked that, because she had been teaching for nineteen years, she had enough experience and repertoire of dances to switch her programme, whenever necessary, to engage any new members. The use of simple dances at the beginning of the sessions was also mentioned by this teacher as a good strategy to observe how the newcomers were coping with the dances and instructions. A male teacher (R22) reiterated this idea stating that, very often, the initial dances were used to informally evaluate the level of assistance a new member would require, which in turn would guide the choice of the next dances.

In a similar way, another teacher (R9) commented that she always prepared extra dances, usually simpler ones, so she could adapt her programme to accommodate new participants at any time. In addition to this, she would also dedicate more time to explaining the basic steps. Whilst discussing this aspect, one female teacher (R34) pointed out the importance of not just assuming that a

new member would require more assistance to learn and perform the dances, as people come from different backgrounds: some of them, might have very little or no previous experience with other forms of dance and movement, whilst others could be very skilled in dance and therefore pick the steps up very easily.

Although the intention of the teachers when adapting the programme was to facilitate the engagement of newcomers, the respondents expressed the importance of tailoring the sessions to accommodate people with mixed abilities and experiences with circle dance in the same group. The following quote clearly illustrated this matter:

> *"The weekly group has been going for about seventeen years and some of them have been coming since day one. So they have been dancing with me for seventeen years. But we've always got beginners; we had three beginners last Monday. People are aware that … the experienced ones are aware that you've got to go back so the beginners can cope … but you can't do beginners' dances all evening, otherwise I'd lose all the advanced dancers. So you have to get a balance, really."* (R29)

Another teacher (R27) reinforced the idea of having to create a balance between "*teaching the people who are really adept and really experienced and who know all the basic steps, and keeping them interested, and also not putting off the people who've just come for the very first time*". For her, this can be very challenging but a necessary part of their role as circle dance teachers. One of the approaches to overcoming this situation was mentioned by a female teacher (R29). For her, it was important to make clear the structure of the session for all participants: *"in the first half, the dances get progressively more difficult and in the last one, before the break, it is going to be an advanced dance; in the second half, it is more meditative dances and it's easier again"*. By doing this, she stated that

the beginners, as well as the existing members, knew what to expect, had the choice just to watch or to learn difficult dances and, more importantly, that their different abilities had been taken into consideration. In addition to this, a male teacher (R22) remarked that, from the point of view of new members, it was also important "not to tailor the [dances] just for their level", teaching only easy dances; otherwise they would not be able to appreciate the diversity of dances offered and, thus, they would have a better idea of what they can aim for if they decide to go further with circle dancing.

Some teachers referred to a mutual agreement established between them and the existing members to facilitate the inclusion of new people. A female teacher (R23) commented on how the welcoming attitude of her participants towards new members can encourage the latter to persevere with circle dance and adhere to the group. Sharing the responsibility of integrating newcomers with the existing participants appeared to be an important aspect for the teachers. This matter was remarked upon in the discourse of a female teacher (R15) thus:

> *"So the whole group is really good at welcoming new people in, so it's not just down to us as the teachers. The whole group is very active in being inclusive of people and wanting people to enjoy it, because the core group are fellow devotees. They are as passionate about dancing as we are, so they want newcomers to enjoy themselves. There's a great deal of active support for any newcomers, both during the dancing and the social bit, where we're having a small break and something to drink and sometimes something to eat."*

For her, providing a positive introduction for beginners was considered to be of vital importance as this, in the long term, promotes and sustains the circle dance network itself.  It was interesting to note that having active support from existing

members was perceived not only as a way to help the teachers in practical matters whilst integrating new participants, but also in establishing a support system between all members of the group. Another female teacher (R29) mentioned that one of the initiatives derived from her groups was to create a "*[buddy] system where somebody helps the beginner: somebody takes them under their wing and dances next to them, encourages them*". She also designed a *"welcome sheet"* containing a summary of basic and relevant information about circle dance: for example, definition, history, existence of *The Grapevine*, useful websites.

## 6.3  Teachers' perceptions of the impact of circle dance on the participants

The teachers talked about their perceptions of the impact of circle dance on their participants. For the teachers, circle dance was perceived as a leisure occupation which can fulfil the needs of their participants at various levels, enhancing their sense of well-being. In order to discuss these aspects, it was important, initially, to explore amongst the teachers the characteristics of the participants of their groups. The perceived benefits of circle dance from the teachers' point of views will be presented in the following sub-section.

### 6.3.1 Characteristics of the participants

In order to understand the teachers' perceptions of the impact of circle dance on their participants, it was relevant to explore first the characteristics of their groups' members. Gender and age group were the main variables which the teachers used to describe their participants. Some of the teachers also made reference to the general work status (currently working or retired), professional background and the duration of involvement with circle dance. Some factors that might have

influenced the characteristics of their participants were also discussed throughout the interviews.

From a gender perspective, all teachers suggested that circle dance appeared to attract predominantly female participants in the U.K.. One female teacher (R27) described her evening group as having between sixteen to twenty five people attending weekly, in which the vast majority being women, with two or three men joining in only sporadically. Similarly, another teacher (R8) mentioned that in her afternoon group, although it had been constituted only by women for many years, previously it had had three regular male attendees, who, for different reasons, had moved to other locations and, therefore, had left the group. In contrast, her evening group had been a *"women's group"* since its creation, even though this happened spontaneously. A male teacher (R37) stated that it seemed to be typical of circle dance groups to be composed mainly of female participants and his group was not an exception to this. It was interesting to note that many teachers remarked that they had marketed their groups to both genders; however, it appeared that circle dance had been chosen primarily by women. This was also consistent with the demographic details of the respondents in this study.

In general, the teachers stated that the age profile of their participants tend to range from forty five years old to seventy years old, with variations between the groups. One female teacher (R19) remarked that, in one of her groups, the youngest member was reaching sixty years of age and the oldest was in her early eighty's. It was interesting to note that some teachers stated that the age distribution of their groups had changed over time due to long term involvement of their participants. One female teacher (R27), who had been teaching for fifteen years, illustrated this matter thus:

*"It [the age group] has gradually got older and older and now I would say that I'm in my fifty's and I'm one of the youngest people in the group and the other people are in their fifty's, sixty's, seventy's or even eighty's and we very rarely get young people."*

Similarly, a male teacher (R22) commented on the fact that the majority of his participants had been attending his group for over twenty years; therefore, apart from some younger participants who had attended the group in the past and for different reasons had had to stop, his group's members were mainly in their seventy's. In contrast, another teacher (R23) mentioned that, although her core group was constituted of participants over sixty five years old, she had had a recent *"influx of younger people"*, possibly in their late forty's. Some teachers (R4; R37) stated that their groups had participants, who were predominantly between fifty years old and sixty years old. It was significant to point out that the idea that circle dance in the U.K. tended to draw people who ranged in age from minimum forty five years old to seventy years old or even older appeared constantly throughout the interviews. Some teachers (R8; R9; R22; R27) also commented on the fact that the age profile of the circle dance network in the U.K. had changed dramatically over time, especially when compared with the period when they first started circle dancing or initiated their careers as teachers. Another reason cited by the teachers was related to the long-term involvement which characterised the type of participation in the circle dance network.

In terms of work status, the teachers referred to two main categories of participants: the ones who were currently working and those who were retired. The proportion of the two categories in the teachers' groups varied. One teacher (R34) explained that the main reason to continue offering evening groups was to accommodate those who were working during the day, even though the majority of her participants were retired. For a female teacher (R13) by setting up two

groups, one occurring during the day and the other in the evening, she could then facilitate the engagement of retired people (day time group) as well as accommodate the needs of those who were working. Similarly, another teacher (R8) commented that her evening group was constituted mainly by people who were actively working (age ranging from fifty years old to sixty years old), whereas her afternoon group, or *"the oldest group"*, as she referred to, had predominantly participants who were retired and would also prefer to engage in a day time group. It appeared that the teachers were well aware that their choices of setting up circle dance groups during day time or evenings would clearly affect the characteristics of their participants, facilitating or impeding the engagement of people. For example, a female teacher (R19) remarked that, when she first established one of her weekly groups, which was set up in the morning, she knew that, by advertising a day time group, she was *"immediately [cutting] out people who work"*. This teacher also commented on the significant number of retired school teachers she had in her groups; a fact that, in her opinion, also reflected the profile of other groups which she attended as a participant and the correlation with circle dance being a shared occupation. She stated:

> *"I think it is to do with the profession; you look at the participants, you will find a lot of teachers in there…and quite a lot of social workers type or lecturers. I suppose people who have been used to relating to others in their work [environment]."*

Having discussed the characteristics of the teachers' participants, a presentation of the perceived benefits of circle dance will follow.


## 6.3.2 The perceived benefits of circle dance

The teachers alluded to the fact that circle dance can benefit their participants in various ways, as it provides an opportunity to engage in a form of physical

activity, to take part in a shared occupation and, in many cases, to foster a sense of being transformed by the experience on various levels. It is important to note that these aspects echoed the narratives of the participants who were interviewed for this study and were extensively detailed throughout the presentation of the major category *"I can't imagine life without it"* and its sub-categories.

In the discourse of the teachers, one of the perceived benefits of circle dance was related to its physical aspect. Providing an opportunity for people to engage in dancing as a form of exercise was seen by some of the teachers as an important and valuable outcome. A female teacher (R28) remarked that, on a physical level, circle dance offered an enjoyable form of exercise and *"gentle movement"* for her groups' members. As the majority of her participants had been engaged in circle dance for many years, she stated that it had become part of their exercise habits. Other teachers (R8; R29; R34; R38) observed that, for their participants, circle dance represented an alternative and pleasant way to be physically active. One of the teachers (R8) remarked that, very often, her participants commented on the positive physical effect of circle dance saying: " 'I *can feel my body working! '* [or] *'Yeah, this is good exercise and it's fun and it's lovely'* ". For her, this aspect was of fundamental importance as it had encouraged many of her participants, especially the older ones, to persist with an active lifestyle and get the benefits from it.

Another aspect revealed in the teachers' discourses was linked to the idea that circle dance can have a positive impact on the participants' mood and attitude. For a female teacher (R15), who had been teaching for fifteen years, this aspect had been repeatedly cited by the attendees of her groups:

> *"…that's what people [groups' members] say to us about circle dance more than any other thing … that they don't really want to make the effort*

*to come out … but they think: 'I ought to, really, you know, I know that it will do me good.' And then they find that it does, that they come in tired, weary and fed up with things and all that is released by the end of the evening and they go out refreshed."*

In her opinion, this fact had contributed significantly to motivating her participants to pursue circle dance. In a similar perspective, another teacher (R23) observed that circle dance appeared to help her participants "*to forget all the problems that they've got".* She reported that very often, at the end of the sessions, her participants seemed to be happier and revitalised by the experience. For her, the continuing involvement in circle dance can foster significant changes in people's lives. The perception of circle dance helping people to improve their mood was also reinforced by another female teacher (R27) who observed that, at the beginning of the session, some of her participants *"can be feeling a bit down or not very happy and, usually, something happens by the end of the evening that, in some way, changes that [feeling] or shifts it".* It was interesting to note that some of the teachers (R8; R15; R23) reported that this aspect was also related to their experience. One of them (R15) illustrated this by saying:

*" 'If I haven't  any [desire] to dance in me, if I don't want to go and teach this group tonight ... I do not want to dance …I'm too tired' and [yet] you go... and something amazing happens, because, by the end of the evening, you're restored, refreshed, you're ready to go back into the hurly-burly, or back into whatever it is that you need to be doing and that's been exhausting you…"*

The perceived effects of circle dance as a form of stress relief for their participants was another aspect pointed out in the interviews. A male teacher (R37) stated that, as most of his participants were working full-time, they often mentioned that

circle dance had helped them to "*immerse themselves in dancing and not to worry about things that have been going on at work*" and to cope better with the stress derived from their jobs. Similarly, another teacher (R34) remarked that many of her participants had acknowledged circle dance as "*a very good stress buster*", particularly due to the fact that, whilst they concentrated on the dance, they were leaving the demands of everyday life behind them.

Acknowledging the social dimension of circle dance as a group and shared occupation, many teachers remarked that their groups' participants can derive a sense of belonging. One female teacher (R28) observed that for many of her participants, in particular for those who had been attending her group since its formation (25 years), circle dance had generated "*a network of people and friends*" and created a support system which was characterised by "*companionship and friendship*". From the feedback this teacher had received over the years, the sense of belonging and "*the security of the group*" , derived from engagement in circle dance, had helped those participants to enhance their sense of well-being. Likewise, another teacher (R29) stated that the "*social element*" and a passion for dance had both benefited and motivated many of her participants who had been dancing together for many years.

Engagement in circle dance was observed as fostering friendship between members of the groups and, therefore, a way to expand their social network. One male teacher (R22) commented that some of his participants became close friends, "*[meeting] each other in different circumstances, outside of circle dancing; a couple of them go sailing together, for example…*". From another perspective, a female teacher (R8) mentioned how the community aspect of circle dance had helped  a number of her female participants, who had started circle dancing after being widowed, to overcome "*a state of great grieving*"  and, ultimately, to enhance their quality of life. For them, the social support derived from their

engagement in the group and the opportunities presented in the circle dance network to extend their participation had been of fundamental importance. This teacher (R8) commented that:

> *"The great thing about circle dancing is the sort of community aspect of it and the fact that there is such a network around the country and you can go on holidays and you can do all this sort of things, which, for a lot of people, it is not just the dance, it is doing something enjoyable with a lot of people, it is a supportive atmosphere…"*

Echoing the participants' findings in this study, the teachers also referred to a transcendental or spiritual aspect derived from the practice of circle dance. Similar to the participants' narratives, the teachers acknowledged that this dimension was not easily described and it was distinct from the concept of religion. In this context, the teachers talked about how some of their participants had found in circle dance an opportunity for creating meaning and purpose in their lives and fulfilling a need for spiritual expression and growth. A female teacher (R28), who had been teaching for twenty eight years, spoke about the feedback she had had over the years:

> *"… I think that it [circle dance] does awaken something in the human spirit …(silence), the need to experience spirit, our spiritual life. We are bodies, we are minds, we are feelings and we are spirit, I think, and there's not too many outlets out there, where people can actually just feel that bit of themselves, awaken it, not in any formal way, we don't have to give it a name but there's something towards the end of an evening, something's been awakened that is part of ... So this is what I'm interpreting what people say, how people feel, much to do with that feeling of [being] enriched or at peace or all those words. So I think that it does awaken*

*something…from what people have said to us over the years really, they've had fun and joy and the group and, hopefully, a lot of them just keep coming back for that [spiritual] experience."*

Developing this idea, some teachers mentioned the fact that circle dance can direct people to a point beyond the task of performing the dances, the steps and movements. In the narrative of the respondents, there was an understanding that people can take circle dance further to meet their spiritual needs if they wish. The following quotations exemplified this idea:

*"I [circle dance] think it puts a bit of ritual into people's lives if they want. It has that capacity or that power to be something more than dance."* (R29)

*"I think that another dimension for me is … the spiritual connection that we have as we dance, and what that resonance is, it is not just steps and music, there is a deeper thing going on, I hope.  The dance articulates that, we don't have to articulate it with words."* (R28)

The teachers mentioned that, although they don't impose their own beliefs, the participants usually get a sense of spirituality. A female teacher (R4) and a male teacher (R22) explained that:

*"People come [to circle dance] for all sorts of different reasons. I don't emphasise the spiritual or the sacred. But if that's what people find in it and often they do and they'll say so…and again, I love that too."* (R4)

*"…it's nice when people think of it as a spiritual activity when you haven't suggested to them that it might be."* (R22)

Another female teacher inferred a different value to this topic:

*"There are things that are intangible, you can never articulate them, that's the whole point of it, it is not to do with words, if you could define it, you wouldn't need to do it… They [participants] would feel the benefit, they would feel that something interesting was going on, they would not necessarily need to find it…I mean the spiritual aspect of it, the greater aspect, of being something greater. For me, it is tapping into something archetypal and big, that's to do with the surrender, when you let go of the ego and something very amazing is happening. But I wouldn't articulate that to every group I was teaching."* (R28)

## 6.4  Summary

This chapter reflected the experience of circle dance teachers, illuminating aspects related to the pedagogy of circle dance and revealing the motivational factors of the teachers and the processes involved in pursuing a career in circle dance. This chapter also discussed the teachers' perceived benefits of circle dance for themselves and for others.  The role of facilitation was comprehensively explored, suggesting that the practice of teaching circle dance incorporates elements related to enablement, cooperation, and highlights the relevance of creating an environment in which learning can be experienced as enjoyable and stimulant.  The teachers' narratives also stressed the relevance of developing teaching skills in order to offer good quality sessions to the participants. The relevance of this major category in relation to the existing literature will be presented in chapter 9. The following chapter will discuss the perspectives of the teacher training coordinators which are encapsulated in the third major category.

# Chapter 7 Providing quality: the perspectives of teacher training coordinators

This major category was developed from the analysis of the interviews with teacher training programme coordinators. At present, there are two existing programmes in the U.K.. For this study, a coordinator (R11) and a co-coordinator (R39) from each training programme were interviewed. This category focuses on the commonalities and diversity of the existing teacher training programmes as well as the experience of the respondents. The inclusion of the coordinators' perspectives through the theoretical sampling process made it possible to explore the multiple levels of circle dance and the avenues available for those who were engaged in this activity. It was also relevant to understand the perspectives of teacher training coordinators and the contribution of their programmes towards the pedagogy of circle dance, enabling trainees to understand and master the art of teaching circle dance and, therefore, ensuring good practice. It is also relevant to notice that some of the respondents in this study, both participants and teachers (see appendix 3), had undertaken teacher training courses. In order to clarify the properties of this major category, sub-categories were generated from the data: (a) 'designing the course', (b) 'learning about teaching and leading' and (c) 'giving and receiving feedback'. Figure 18 provides a visual illustration of the major category and its sub-categories:

Figure 18 Coordinators' major category and its sub-categories[53]
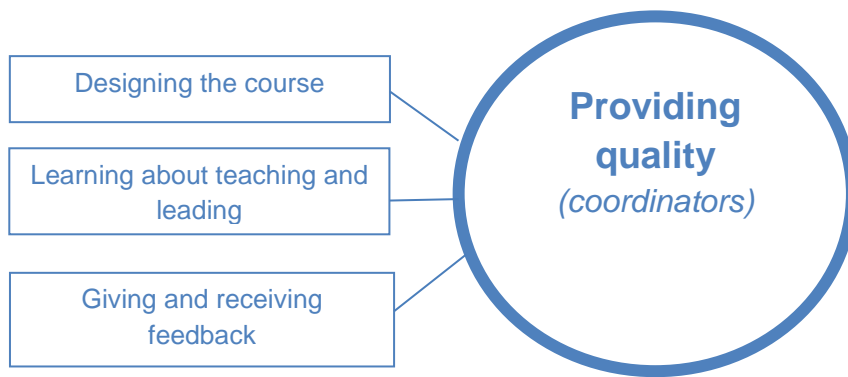
# 7.1 Designing the course

This section explores the motivations of the coordinators in creating a training programme, the content and duration of their courses as well as the characteristics of their trainees. Designed for all people who intend to teach or to use circle dance as a tool in their professional area, the training courses incorporated pedagogic elements as well as practical elements related to the creation or maintenance of community groups.

## 7.1.1 Motivation

During the interviews, the respondents were prompted to talk about their motivation for creating a teacher training course or for getting involved as a co-coordinator in an existing programme. Coordinator (R11) explained that she was inspired and encouraged by a renowned international circle dance teacher to design a training course with the purpose of providing quality teaching and relevant knowledge for circle dance teachers and, therefore, of contributing towards improving the standards of teaching. Having a professional background

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[53] To see this figure in context, please refer to figure 15 (theoretical model).

in physical education and comprehensive experience as a circle dance teacher for more than fifteen years prior to becoming a coordinator, this respondent (R11) remarked that her inspiration for devising a training programme was very similar to her teaching approach:

*"…I like to try and help people be better than they thought that they could be, developing in a way that they didn't think they could and to just bring out the best in people…"*

For her, this additional role as a teacher training coordinator derived from her professional commitment to teaching circle dance for twenty seven years. She defined her involvement as a teacher and a teacher-trainer as being *"a life-time's work and passion"*:

*"I am an experienced teacher, I'm an experienced teacher-trainer…I'm highly professional, I'm passionate about teaching"*

Following another route, the co-coordinator (R39) mentioned that her motivation for taking part in an already existing training course came from her own personal experience as a trainee. Inspired by a well-known and pioneer teacher who was coordinating the course at that time, the co-coordinator (R39) was invited by her to help to design a more comprehensive training programme:

*"I actually worked with [name of the teacher] and we created a programme… a more full training programme: two weeks of [training] and then we'd send them [the trainees] off for six months and they would come back and do another two weeks. So I came along as the support and the vision really was to share the joy and the beauty of the dances … particularly for [name of the teacher] as well the sense of the sacredness of the circle, the wholeness of the circle, the healing quality that came with it, that very much came with Bernhard Wosien in those early days… We*

*did two of these extensive trainings, with six months in between where people went off and practised and they came back and did another two weeks."*

## 7.1.2    Shaping the training

The respondents talked about how the courses were shaped in terms of duration, format and the content.  It is relevant to note that one of the courses had been established as part of a limited company (R11) and the other one had been part of the programme of a community/organisation (R39). Based on the experiential nature of circle dance, both courses were embedded in a practical approach, in which the trainees were invited to acquire knowledge through practising, reflecting on their experience and discussing relevant points with their peers and coordinators.  The coordinator (R11) explained that her course was designed to be completed within twenty one days, divided into modules of four to five days, spread over the year, in order to offer a gradual learning process for the trainees. The course was offered as a closed group, where the same group of people complete the training programme together. Guest teachers were included in her programme to teach specific components. The content of her programme was based on her own experience as a circle dance teacher, focussing primarily on teaching skills and also incorporating other relevant and practical elements, from book keeping, advertising, booking halls to first aid. Looking back on her own experience when she started teaching circle dance, the coordinator (R11) explained that the course was designed to facilitate not only the pedagogical practice but also the task of setting up a circle dance group in the community.

*"I looked at all the elements of my job as a circle dance teacher and then I sat down and I just wrote out  everything I did in that job and every element that it covers: book keeping, advertising, booking halls …I mean,*

*in a way the dance teaching was the last part of it …and so I looked at all*

*these things and then I could group some of them together and look at…*

*also any areas that I did that I felt that I wish I've known more about when*

*I started..."* (R11)

Sharing the coordination with another renowned circle dance teacher, the respondent (R39) described the format of the updated version of the training course as an intensive and compact one, with the duration of fourteen consecutive days (offered every two years). The sessions were carried out by her and the other coordinator. The content of the course incorporated teaching and leading skills as well as practical elements which were relevant for the new teachers: book keeping, insurance, public liability. Following the former training course content, the co-coordinator explained the training course was also embedded with the values and practices of the organisation to which they were linked.

A more detailed discussion about the components of the training courses will be included in the sub-category 'Learning about teaching and leading'.

## 7.2  Learning about teaching and leading

As an essential component of the training courses, the respondents (R11 and R39) discussed how the trainees learn about teaching and leading based on an experiential and reflective approach. Intertwined with this component, this section begins by revealing how the respondents interpreted the role of a circle dance teacher, for then to discuss the specific elements related to learning, teaching and leading.

### 7.2.1 Being a circle dance teacher

The coordinators' viewpoints about the role of a circle teacher appeared to delineate and support the main aspect of the training courses: teaching and leading. The co-coordinator (R39) remarked that a circle dance teacher was better defined as a facilitator or a 'focaliser' , as one of her/his main role was "*to hold the focus for it, to hold the intention that people will experience the dance, people will have access to the dance and enjoy their experience".* However, as an essential part of their role, circle dance teachers or facilitators should:

> "*…know the material well, teach the material well, and then you can share your own joy and what the dance means to you in the way you are showing it and teaching it…so yes, you are there to enthuse people, in one way with the dance, to bring the spirit of the dance."*

Bringing another perspective, the coordinator (R11) referred to the importance of adapting the teaching strategies to respond to the group at a specific time and context, having the ability to respond creatively and appropriately to the group. More than just put a programme of dances together, the circle dance teacher should be a facilitator and provide a good experience for the participants. Highlighting the idea that each group demands from the teacher a different and unique approach, the coordinator (R11) stated:

> "*I think a true teacher adapts their teaching to the groups they have…if you are truly teaching the people in front of you, there is a huge difference … and that's I think where real teaching happens, where you have the skill and the ability to step outside of the box."*

> "*… I think teaching is such an art … the way a teacher can craft a session … a teacher who can do that, it's the difference between being able to*

*give a really wonderful experience to the group or just a series of dances*

*put together. I think it's a beautiful art."*

## 7.2.2    Learning and teaching

As a fundamental element of the training courses, the respondents (R11 and R39) mentioned that their programmes were designed to help the trainees to understand, establish and implement teaching approaches to facilitate skills acquisition. In this context, the trainees were offered the opportunity to appreciate and identify different learning styles and to select and use appropriate teaching strategies in order to respond to the learning needs of the participants. It is important to emphasize that the participants' and the teachers' findings also revealed that this element was considered vital for enhancing the quality of experience with circle dance. Similar to the participants' and the teachers' narratives, the coordinator (R11) and the co-coordinator (R39) also referred primarily to the VARK – Visual (V), Aural (A), Read/Write and Kinesthetic (K) model, proposed by Fleming (2001), to describe different learning styles. The coordinator (R11) explained the importance of making the trainees aware of this matter by offering a practical session in which they were expected to learn different dances following single modes of teaching. She stated:

*"Because so often people don't appreciate that we have people who learn*

*visually, people who learn verbally, people who learn by feeling and that*

*there are lots of other types of learning as well…so I do a session where I*

*teach a dance only by speaking and not moving…and then I teach a*

*dance only by moving and not speaking. And then I teach another dance*

*without putting any rhythm in my voice so I might say "it's right left, right*

*left – side close, side close or side lift, side lift" without any rhythm … so*

*they understand the importance of dynamic, rhythm… and it is a dance*

*that they all know but they don't recognise it until the music comes on because there's no clue there."*

She prompted her trainees to reflect on their own experience in that session and a group discussion was also instigated. These proved to be effective strategies for providing an awareness of the diversity of learning styles, which allowed them to explore different teaching techniques in order to facilitate learning. The co-coordinator (R39) remarked that understanding the learning needs of the members of a circle dance group and making use of *"different ways of demonstrating the dances"* were considered an important part of the training course.

Learning how to balance instructional strategies to accommodate different learning styles appeared to be a necessary and central component of the teacher training courses. However, other constituents were also recognized as important in order to support the task of teaching circle dance. The coordinator (R11) remarked that, as the circle dance repertoire includes "*a diverse collection of musical styles and rhythms"* and traditional dances from different countries, the trainees should *"understand these rhythms and how to teach them"* as well as be aware of the similarities and the relationship between the traditional dances.

As circle dance has its own dance notation style, which was developed by a renowned teacher, Anna Barton (2006; 2011) from the Findhorn Foundation, both training courses incorporated this component as part of their programmes. The backgrounds of the dances as well as the history of the circle dance movement were also considered relevant components related to the teaching task (R39).

Putting all these components into practice and experiencing 'being a circle dance teacher' in a safe environment were described by the respondents (R11 and R39) as an important part of the trainees' journeys during the training courses. From

the coordinator's (R11) viewpoint, this aspect was of fundamental significance in order to guide the trainees into their teaching practice. For her, it was relevant to demystify the teaching process very early in the training course and, for that reason, all trainees were invited to teach one dance in the first weekend of the course. The coordinator (R11) remarked that the reason for that was twofold: to help the trainees to overcome "*the fear of teaching",* as most of them would be teaching circle dance for the first time, and to understand the value of all components of the course for developing their teaching skills. Later on, the trainees were expected to teach a longer session, for approximately one hour, and to receive constructive feedback both from their peers and the coordinator.

Working in a different way, the co-coordinator (R39) mentioned that her trainees were asked to share the task of teaching in two existing weekly circle dance groups, one for beginners and another one for advanced dancers. However, prior to these sessions, the trainees had to concentrate on learning the dances well enough to be able to teach them and also to plan a suitable session for the target group. She stated:

> *"They [the trainees] had to create a programme or we created a programme together. We discussed what would make a good programme with an advanced group, what would make a good programme with a beginners' group. They also have to learn then how to introduce the dance, to finish the dance, how to pass onto the next teacher."* (R39)

For her, this arrangement provided an opportunity for the trainees to work together as a group, which for some people would represent a unique experience, apply the knowledge acquired throughout the training course and receive feedback from their peers as well as from the coordinators. The format of the

feedback sessions used in both training courses will be further explored in the sub-section 7.3.

The respondents' (R11 and R39) discourses revealed that their training courses were also based on the principle that the role of a circle dance teacher incorporated leading and facilitating aspects. A presentation of these aspects will follow.

## 7.2.3    Leading and facilitating

Consistent with the teachers' and participants' narratives, leading and facilitating were considered by the coordinator (R11) and the co-coordinator (R39) important components which were embedded in the role of a circle dance teacher. In this context, the trainees were prompted to understand the value and the importance of planning the sessions, to be aware of the need for the group to be taught as a whole as well as of the individuals within that group, of integrating newcomers and also of reflecting on their forthcoming role as facilitators.

As alluded to by the participants and the teachers, integrating newcomers represented an important aspect related to the facilitation role of a circle dance teacher, which was also incorporated in the programme of the training courses. One interesting practice was remarked upon by the coordinator (R11), who encouraged her trainees to gain an understanding of this matter from an experiential perspective. For that reason, the trainees would learn, during her training course, an unfamiliar or a new physical activity involving movement but distinct from circle dance. Working with a guest teacher who integrated the programme, the coordinator (R11) explained that:

> *"The reason for that is twofold: the first is to remind people what it is like to be a beginner in a circle, because we all forget what it's like to be a*

*beginner; to remember what it's like being a beginner and how disempowering it can be; but also, she [guest teacher] comes in for a session every weekend, and, by the end of that time, they're a bit more proficient at it …"*

It appeared that, by having the opportunity to experience an unfamiliar form of physical activity, the trainees could then gain a better understanding of the relevance of planning strategies to support and facilitate the inclusion of beginners in circle dance as well as to be aware of the amount of time and practice (repetition) required to achieve proficiency whilst learning a new skill. This in turn would have a positive impact on the trainees' ability to empathise with beginners and to facilitate their engagement in circle dance.

As with the teachers interviewed for this study, the coordinator (R11) and co-coordinator (R39) commented on the importance of the trainees learning about how to plan the circle dance sessions taking in consideration aspects related to the characteristics of the participants (e.g. age group, able bodied, beginners or advanced dancers), the type of the event (regular groups, workshops). The co-coordinator (R39) explained that there was a session on "*creating a programme",* in which they discussed with the trainees how to design a circle dance session considering the type of groups and participants, which dances were "*suitable for different stages of life"*, how to begin and to end a session, how to "*follow one dance after another, when to bring in partner dances".* She added that, with the repertoire of dances learned during the training courses, the trainees would have enough scope to "*make a couple of programmes"* in order to accommodate the requirements of their potential groups.

Discussions around the use of circle dance with specific populations, such as elderly people, children, teenagers, people with mental health problems, with

learning disabilities, were also included in the training courses in different ways. It appeared that the previous or current experience of the coordinator or co-coordinators in using circle dance with these specific groups had determined the emphasis given to one or another target clientele. For example, the co-coordinator (R39) mentioned that, as the other co-coordinator had significant experience in teaching circle dance to a specific age group, they were able to provide the trainees with more information and material related to structuring the sessions, selection and adaptation of dances to meet the needs of that specific target group. In contrast, the coordinator (R11) commented that:

> *"…because I have a huge amount of experience working with various special needs groups, so I talk about how dances can be adapted, how to work with special groups. There are some common things to all groups, so we talk about that and, then, there are specific things for specific groups."*

For her, it was also important to offer the trainees the opportunity to practise how to adapt the dances depending on the target group and how to teach them using a role play during the training course. This would help them to reflect on the similarities and differences between teaching able bodied people and those with special needs and how to effectively plan sessions to facilitate the engagement of specific populations with circle dance. Moreover, being aware of the needs of the group as a whole as well as of the individuals within the group was also identified by the coordinator (R11) as an important aspect of the role of a circle dance teacher. It is relevant to note that this aspect was also reiterated by the participants and the teachers in their discourses. Of course, the needs of each particular group and its component individuals will therefore be different each time. In this context, the coordinator (R11) remarked that, for her:

*"…each circle dance environment is different. Each one makes different demands on me as a teacher. So it's never the same. I'm never teaching from the same place, each group asks me to teach from somewhere else."*

Similar to the teachers' discourses, whilst referring to their perceptions of the impact of circle dance on the participants (presented in the sub-section 6.3.2), the coordinator (R11) also highlighted the importance of making her trainees aware of this matter. However, her trainees were expected to understand that their role in leading a group was not about being a therapist:

*"So on my training course I say [to the trainees]: 'Just be very wary, because you are not a counsellor, you're not a therapist' …"*

Being aware of the potential impact of circle dance on people and being sensitive to the different needs of the individuals in order to support their engagement were considered important aspects, provided their approach was appropriate to their role as circle dance teachers. This aspect was considered to be particularly important as the trainees' professional backgrounds varied largely and not all of them had previous experience as therapists.

As alluded to by the teachers, it appeared that creating possibilities, enabling people to have their own experience, being aware of the needs of the group and the individuals within the group were some of the aspects related to the essence of what it means to be a circle dance teacher/facilitator, which were encapsulated by the following quotes from the co-coordinator (R39) and the coordinator (R11):

*"…and I think that what is great is that you really want to share dance as well, because not only you do love dance but also you love sharing it with people and you are happy for people to learn and experience dance in their own time or way."* (R39)

*"My approach to teaching is no different with children, with the elderly, with a group who are at a wedding, with a group here. I teach who is in front of me and I teach, hopefully, appropriately, to what I see happening in front of me."* (R11)

## 7.3  Giving and receiving feedback

As the training courses were designed to prepare trainees to embark on the task of teaching circle dance, it was important to explore, in the interviews, how the coordinator (R11) and the co-coordinator (R39) perceived their roles in evaluating the performance of their trainees and which methods were in place to do this. In the structure of both courses, appraisal related to the trainee's teaching and facilitating skills was incorporated in the form of feedback from the coordinator or co-coordinators and also from the peer trainees. No formal assessments were included as part of the training courses - the reasons for that will be presented at the end of this section.   The coordinator's (R11) and co-coordinators' (R39) discourses revealed similarities and differences about how to incorporate feedback and the methods used to do so.

The coordinator (R11) remarked that the feedback sessions were considered fundamental in the process of learning about teaching. She explained that these sessions were incorporated into the slots where the trainees were invited to teach their peers and the coordinator for approximately one hour. Initially working in small groups before returning to the whole group for a further discussion on the topic, the trainees were asked to complete a feedback sheet designed by the coordinator *"with questions about the teaching that they've just received from somebody on the course".*   For her, this practice would help the trainees to understand the different needs of individuals as they were learning as well as

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providing constructive feedback for the improvement of their teaching and leading skills. The coordinator (R11) stated that:

*"Because how you receive a teaching experience and how I receive a teaching experience is so different, so it helps them [the trainees]… so that's actually when most of the learning about teaching happens because they are talking about and saying things like "I'm actually the receiver and that's what I needed and I didn't get it" or "I like that idea" or someone would say "that didn't work for me" …so there is a discussion around the teaching…"* (R11)

It appeared that by facilitating and structuring the feedback sessions in this way, providing an in-depth discussion about this topic, the quality of teaching and learning could be ensured.

Providing the trainees with the opportunity to give and receive constructive feedback was perceived as an integral part of the training courses. The co-coordinator (R39) mentioned that her trainees were offered a feedback session following their shared teaching practice in the two existing weekly circle dance groups. In this session, the trainees were encouraged to discuss their performance whilst teaching, emphasizing, for example, "*what worked well for them, what they might want to improve".* Although the other trainees were also involved in providing feedback to their peers, the co-coordinator (R39) stated that a more specific and detailed feedback related to the trainees' teaching performance was given only by the coordinators. For her, the feedback given to the trainees should also help them to make a more accurate decision about teaching circle dance. She stated:

> *"We [the coordinators] trust that with the feedback, with the peer feedback and ours, they will sense if they can pursue their teaching desire to be circle dance teachers …"*

The final appraisal of the trainees was also one of the topics explored during the interviews with the coordinator (R11) and the co-coordinator (R39). For both, a certificate of attendance was given to their trainees, as no formal assessment was carried out to certify the knowledge and skills acquired during the training courses. As there is not yet a professional registered association/body related to circle dance which can approve the educational/training programmes, the trainees received only a certificate of attendance:

> *"So it is simply a certificate of attendance…it's not possible in two weeks to have an assessment process, it would be too complicated and too difficult…"* (R39)

> *"Everyone gets a certificate at the end. On my headed notepaper it says: 'This is to certify that so and so has attended and successfully completed the following components' of the circle dance teacher training course… all the main components are listed and depending or not, whether or not they've completed or attended."* (R11)

The issue of gaining accreditation for the training was raised by the coordinator (R11):

> *"The problem with this is: when I first devised the course I wanted to get formal accreditation from an organisation. So I contacted several organisations to see what needed to be done and they had no idea what circle dance was; the target groups; the fact that it is a leisure activity, it's not marked, it's not graded … it's none of these things. So to give their accreditation they had several things that had to be completed on the*

*course. When I looked at what had to be completed on the course it would have taken too large a percentage of my course time for things that were completely unnecessary and irrelevant for circle dance teaching. So I decided not to go through formal accreditation."* (R11)

## 7.4  Summary

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of the experience of the teacher training coordinators, highlighting the relevance of their role within the circle dance network. The findings also suggested that teacher training programmes constitute a path for development of expertise and proficiency in teaching circle dance and revealed their contribution towards the pedagogy of circle dance. The sub-category 'Designing the course' explored the motivational factors which inspired the respondents to create training programmes and discussed the characteristics of the programmes as well as the profile of the trainees.  'Learning about teaching and leading' revealed that the teacher training programmes are linked to broader concepts of facilitation, enablement, and based on an experiential and reflective approach.   This sub-category highlighted that the use of effective teaching strategies was considered vital to the enhancement of the quality of the circle dancers' experiences. Furthermore, the relevance of supporting and facilitating the engagement of newcomers as well as of meeting the needs of a particular group was addressed. This chapter also presented how the coordinators perceive the role they play in evaluating the performance of their trainees and the methods that they apply. This major category will be further discussed in relation to the existing literature in chapter 9.  The core category will be presented in the next chapter.

# Chapter 8 *"There is a place for everybody"* : the core category

This core category, named by an in-vivo code, represents the intersection of the major categories, the culmination of the perspectives of the participants, teachers and coordinators, integrating insights gained from the analysis as a whole. As the analysis progressed, it was evident that there were commonalities in the discourses of the respondents, which linked the three other categories (as an overarching category). The concept of '*There is a place for everybody'* reflects the diversity of practices and experiences in circle dance and elaborates the idea of inclusiveness as a common phenomenon revealed in the discourse of the respondents. The notion of inclusiveness perceived in the practice of circle dance incorporated elements related to diversity, levels of commitment and engagement and the constellation of new opportunities and possibilities in the respondents' lives. The conceptual definition of this core category integrates the following sub-categories: (a) circle dance incorporating diversity and (b) circle dance creating possibilities. A detailed description of these sub-categories will be given.  Figure 19 illustrates the core category and its sub-categories:

**Figure 19 The core category and its sub-categories[54]**



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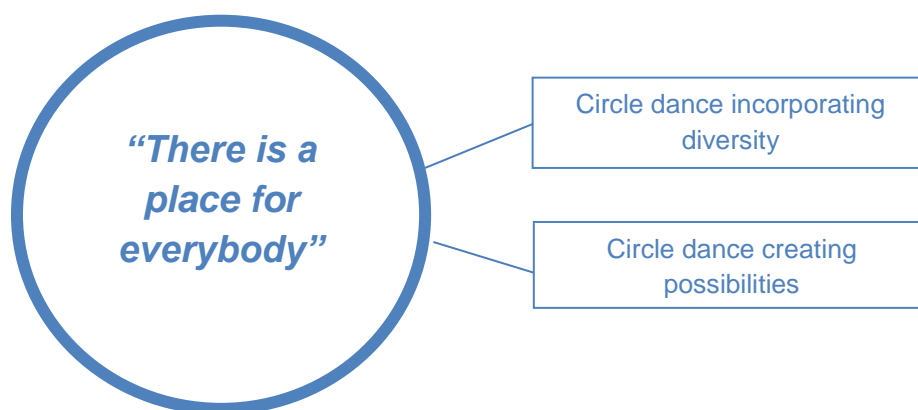
[54] To see this figure in context, please refer to figure 15 (theoretical model).

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## 8.1 Circle dance incorporating diversity

The respondents' narratives revealed that their exposure to circle dance was permeated by diversity throughout the repertoire of dances, the different teaching styles and the choices available to those who get involved in the circle dance network. The respondents acknowledged that circle dance created opportunities for them to experience a variety of traditional folk dances from around the world and a range of modern choreographies based on the same principles. This aspect was best exemplified by one of the female participants (R14):

> *"I think one of the reasons that I find it [circle dance] so inclusive is that it is so varied and I am somebody who likes variety; but, certainly, when I started circle dancing about twenty years ago with lots of Bulgarian and lots of Greek and Macedonian dances…so traditional dances. Then, I had this big gap and when I started dancing again, with [name of the teacher], I thought: 'What happened here? Am I doing the same thing?' And after that, circle dancing with [name of the teacher] and [another teacher]; it was meditative movements…so the dance itself is so varied… there are so many different styles of dancing… I find [circle dance] really intriguing because there is a place for everybody! So you can choose to go to a workshop which is this particular style, but you also have a full range and I think that's democratic and I think there's quality in that. So that resonates for me as well."* (R14, participant)

Referring also to the variety of physical expressions and movements which characterised different styles of folk dances, the same participant (R14) stated that the contrast of movements required to perform particular circle dances (e.g. slow and meditative dances in contrast to fast, energetic ones) produced specific physical and emotional reactions, bringing up *"a very different feeling"*. For her,

this experience had helped to expand her body awareness as well as the range of her movements. Complementing this idea, a male participant (R10) stated:

> *"I remember we did things like coordinating our hands with our feet in one dance…and I had never, ever done anything like that before!  And, then, I first thought: 'I can't coordinate my hands with my feet'.  But, at the end, I did it…I was doing it… and it was almost like my brain was kind of developing… and…obviously your brain is developing because you are learning that coordination…"* (R10, participant)

For other respondents, the exposure in particular to the variety of traditional folk dances represented the opportunity to feel connected with part of the history of different people and cultures, leading to a better understanding of the meanings and cultural values associated with  this form of expression (Snape, 2009), as well as broadening their experience of  circle dance. For a male participant (R30), by performing traditional folk circle dances, he experienced this as a way to connect with "*part of our heritage, or part of somebody's heritage*" and get "*a feeling of continuity*".  Complementing this idea, a female teacher (R27) remarked that experiencing traditional folk dances can bring to light "*something special*" as these dances have been performed "*for a very long time in communities on special occasions and had survived for particular reasons*". Recalling one of her first experiences with traditional folk dances, this teacher (R27) stated:

> *"When I first heard Bulgarian women's singing, it was just such an extraordinary thing, I'd never heard anyone singing like this before… a sort of power, feeling, that  just conveys…it is extraordinary, something that I find very touching…"* (R27, teacher)

Acknowledging diversity also meant to identify preferences, respect differences and, more importantly, have choices available which could fulfil the respondents'

needs. This applied not only to the repertoire of dances but also to teaching approaches. From this perspective, a female teacher (R38) commented that the "*greatest strength and potential challenge*" of circle dance was its "*inclusivity*", as "*anyone can dance, anyone can be a teacher*", there were not "*lots of certificates, and studies and tests*" involved in the process of becoming a circle dance teacher. However, as highlighted by the participants in this study, she remarked that the individual's experiences with circle dance would be also shaped by the variety of teaching approaches. Illustrating this point, a female participant (R14) stated thus:

> *"One of the reasons I don't dance in [geographical area] at the moment is that I can't find a group that works for me. So the nearest one, they're all lovely people and the venue is lovely…and the teacher is lovely, but it just doesn't work for me….Teaching is really important for me, definitely."*
> (R14, participant)

Diversity incorporated also the idea of circle dance being an appropriate and non-competitive form of dance available for a range of people, no matter what their age, gender and, in particular, dance skills. Referring to circle dance teaching as a way to embrace "*people of all abilities*", a female teacher (R13) acknowledged that the sense of community[55], derived from engagement in circle dance, could be generated whatever an "*individual's prowess with the dance*" might be. From the perspective of a newcomer, a female participant (R5) explained the significance of this aspect when she first started circle dancing:

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[55] As presented in the sub-section 5.2 - 'Feeling part of the ethos of circle dance'.

*"…even though I was uncertain what to do, I didn't put pressure on myself because it felt such an accepting environment … it was that sort of harmony that I picked up the most from circle dancing, that harmonious sharing feeling…"* (R5, participant)

An interesting insight was given by two participants (R1 and R33) who observed that circle dance appeared to be *'unusual'* (R33) as it could sustain, for many years, the engagement of people despite their level of competency or proficiency in performing the dances:

*"One of the things that I think is very different is that I don't think that it makes you feel that you are doing it wrong. Or that you are making an idiot of yourself. You know, if you are learning some hobbies, you might give up because you think: 'Oh, I'm not getting the hang of this!' But there is something very different about circle dance to do with that…So obviously, as we talk about it, I'm realising it must give people something more than what many hobbies do. You can actually be part of it and not be very good at it. Don't you think that's unusual?"* (R33, participant)

The perceived accepting and non-competitive environment seemed to provide a satisfying feeling of sense of belonging, playing an important role in encouraging people to persevere and thereby supporting long-term involvement. Underlying the discourse of the respondents was also the notion of the non-judgemental aspect of the circle dance community, offering the possibility of having people with a range of skills in the same group, including newcomers. The integration of newcomers was a common theme across all respondents - participants, teachers and coordinators - and highlighted the importance of the pedagogical strategies used in circle dance in order to support, maintain and enhance the participation of a variety of people.

Another significant aspect related to diversity revealed in the respondents' narratives was the coexistence of various levels of engagement and commitment in circle dance. From a practical point of view, the respondents referred to the existence of possibilities of attending regular groups, workshops in various formats (from one day workshops to weekends or workshops lasting a week), festivals (both at national and international levels) and events. This was best illustrated in the discourse of a participant (R31) and a teacher (R8). For both, the freedom of participating in different circle dance events around the country can broaden the sense of belonging ,as discussed particularly in the sub-category "Feeling part of the ethos of circle dance" (4.1.2). From this perspective, the participant (R31) stated:

> *"I suppose there aren't many things in life where you know that wherever you are in the country, if there is a group, you could go to and feel part of …"* (R31, participant)

Allowing participants, teachers and coordinators to navigate between local groups, workshops, events both at a national and international levels, circle dance seemed to afford a social identity for those who become involved in the circle dance network and share the passion for this form of dance, generating possibilities and choices for all. Different ways to be committed to the circle dance network appeared to help people to have choices, respecting and acknowledging differences. The frequency of involvement and dedication to circle dance seemed to be influenced by personal circumstances and by different stages in the lifecycle. For some respondents, their involvement patterns had changed over the years due to personal circumstances, altering the frequency or diversifying their participation. A participant (R21) exemplified this by saying that she had been attending a local group on a weekly basis for twenty years; however, recently, she had also started attending workshops at weekends as she managed to create

more space for herself, outside family commitments. Another participant (R26) was very committed to circle dance when she first started in 1988 for approximately five years and, for personal circumstances, she had to stop. However, she had become involved once more, attending a weekly group in her local area for over five years. Similarly, another participant (R14) remarked:

> *"I used to do a lot but at the moment, I think I've danced twice in this calendar year, but I've been to big events. I am dancing on Saturday, which is good. I've got a lot more things booked this year… but they're all at least one day workshops or a weekends. That's my pattern at the moment."* (R14, participant)

For other respondents, the levels of engagement were related to the meanings attributed to their involvement.  As described particularly in the sub-category 'Teachers' perceptions of the impact of circle dance on the participants' (6.3), circle dance seemed to serve multiple purposes in people's lives. The comments of a female teacher (R28) illustrated this:

> *"I really know over the years how much it [circle dance] means to people and to be able to give that and to serve and offer that is a huge privilege because it's important to people. I know it's important to people because I've had so much feedback over the years that it's important…And the levels in circle dancing … I know you can go from a very light social level to something very profound, or to something half-way… to have that range and depth is very fulfilling..."*  (R28, teacher)

It appeared that the provision of an environment in which people can choose how far and what depth they want to pursue circle dance, could foster a sense of freedom and support multiple levels of involvement.  Complementing this idea, the coordinator (R11) stated that "*there are so many dimensions that you can take on*

*in circle dancing if you choose to".* Imbuing the life of the respondents with richness and diversity, circle dance appeared also to create new possibilities and opportunities.

## 8.2  Circle dance creating possibilities

Throughout the construction of the three major categories, it became clear that circle dance was perceived as a way of generating new prospects in life. Active involvement with circle dance appeared to open up possibilities for the respondents, creating new pathways and even new careers in their lives. This was specifically exemplified by the teachers (sub-category "Becoming a circle dance teacher" - section 6.1), of whom, most had begun circle dance teaching after first participating in a circle dance group. The comments of a teacher (R13) illustrated this aspect:

> *"I never thought I'd become a teacher, but I've actually learned that I'm actually quite a good teacher and it's wonderful just to see other people reacting to something that you are bringing to them …"* (R13, teacher)

From the coordinator's (R11) point of view, the notion of inclusiveness derived from the idea of exploring possibilities and providing opportunities for all people to create meaning and purpose throughout their learning process and, therefore, to improve the quality of their experience. As extensively discussed in the three major categories, the pedagogy of circle dance had connotations that went well beyond the sphere of solely teaching the steps. Reflecting this aspect, the coordinator (R11) provided an insightful comment:

> *"I'm a nurturer, what I want to do is to give everybody the possibility of being better than they thought they could be. Like when we were working*

*today, when I said to the lady in the wheelchair: 'I bet you never knew you
were going to do 4 minutes of dancing today!' Because adults are
choosing to come to circle dance, very often they are more willing to go on
a journey."* (R11, coordinator, 2nd interview)

For her, the "*journey"* of being engaged in circle dance can create opportunities to
facilitate development and growth if the participants wish to do so.
Complementing this notion, the co-coordinator (R39) remarked on the importance
of providing a supportive environment in which people could experience circle
dance in their own way, fulfilling their own needs as individuals, and making their
journeys singular and unique.

The quality of the experience appeared to evoke sometimes the individual's
interest in participating in the circle dance network in a different role; for example,
participants becoming teachers[56] or teachers creating and designing training
courses, becoming coordinators[57]. It became evident throughout the construction
of the three major categories that pathways in circle dance were constellated,
representing dynamic choices available for participants, teachers and
coordinators. These fluid and flexible pathways allowed respondents to navigate
from one point to another depending on their interests, expectations and personal
circumstances. This aspect is particularly coherent with the concept of *'social
world'*, proposed by Unruh (1979; 1980):

> Generally larger than groups or organizations, social worlds are not
> necessarily defined by formal boundaries, memberships lists, or spatial
> territory… a social world must be seen as an internally recognizable
> constellations of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have
> coalesced into a perceived sphere of interest and involvement for

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[56] As presented in the sub-category "Becoming a circle dance teacher" (section 6.1)
[57] As presented in the sub-category "Designing the course" (section 7.1)

participants. Characteristically, a social world lacks a powerful centralized authority and is delimited by … 'effective communication and not territory' nor formal group membership (Unruh, 1979, p.115).

Generating new opportunities, participation and commitment levels can be adjusted, modified, ensuring multiple choices, not only in terms of geographical reach but also changing role or navigating between roles , groups, workshops, creating networks from local groups to international ones and contributing to long-term involvement. Primarily an experiential practice, circle dance seemed to give the opportunity to participants, teachers and coordinators to engage at different levels. Circle dance involvement appeared to be considered by the respondents a very important and a central occupation in their lives. Illustrating this idea, a male teacher (R22) stated:

*"I can't imagine not teaching circle dance now and I can't imagine not doing circle dance now."* (R22, teacher)

## 8.3 Summary

This chapter presented the core category, capturing and integrating elements derived from the analysis as a whole. It also identified commonalities in the discourses of the respondents, which linked the three other categories. The core category suggested the notion of inclusiveness as a common phenomenon in the practice of circle dance, incorporating elements related to diversity, levels of commitment and engagement and the constellation of new opportunities and possibilities in the respondents' lives. The sub-category 'Circle dance incorporating diversity' discussed the coexistence of various levels of engagement and commitment within the circle dance network and revealed that the perceived accepting and non-competitive environment can facilitate a sense of belonging

amongst participants. The quality of diversity experienced by the respondents was also related to the variety of choreographies, music, rhythms, physical expressions and movements found in the practice of circle dance. The sub-category 'Circle dance creating possibilities' suggested that engagement in circle dance can generate new pathways and prospects in people's lives.  The next chapter will discuss the theoretical model proposed in relation to the literature.

# Chapter 9 Discussion and conclusion

## 9.1 Discussion

This section discusses the study findings in relation to the research questions and the literature and explores new theoretical understandings related to the experience of the participants, teachers and coordinators. For the purpose of providing reader guidance, the central research question and its sub questions will be restated. The headings of the next sub-sections (9.1.1, 9.1.2, 9.1.3, 9.1.4 and 9.1.5) are linked to the research questions (both central and sub-questions) and I will discuss the findings in relation to them and to the extant literature.

The central research question for this study was:

A. What are the subjective occupational experiences of people who engage in circle dance?

The sub-research questions were as follows:

1. How do participants perceive the benefits of circle dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being?

a. What are the meanings and purposes that participants attribute to circle dance?

b. How can circle dance, as a shared occupation, facilitate a sense of belonging amongst participants?

2. To what extent could circle dance pedagogy facilitate a sense of achievement of occupational well-being?

a. What are the experiences, background and motivation of circle dance teachers?

b. To what extent does circle dance teaching facilitate a qualitative sense of achievement of occupational well-being amongst participants?

## 9.1.1 The experience of circle dance participants: meanings, purposes and perceived benefits of circle dance

In this exploration of circle dance as a medium for promoting occupational well-being it was important to understand the meanings and purposes that participants attribute to circle dance (sub-question 1a). Being focused on the subjective experiences of the respondents, the major category *"I can't imagine life without it"* and its sub-categories revealed that circle dance constituted the mechanism through which participants were able to gain a sense of occupational well-being. For the participants, meanings were gained through the experiential nature of circle dance, encapsulating a dynamic relationship between the components of doing, being, belonging and becoming, which influenced their sense of well-being and promoted the quality of their experience.

Being engaged in circle dance was perceived as a unique experience and distinct from other everyday occupations , as it created opportunities for "self-investment", "self-development", "feeling transformed" and/or "feeling transported". For the participants, the opportunity to dedicate quality time to themselves appeared to provide a sense of fulfilment and regeneration which influenced other areas of their everyday lives (e.g. improving their performance at work as cited by

participants and teachers). This view of quality time or self-investment emphasised the richness of experience derived from being engaged in circle dance and its contribution towards enhancing their sense of well-being (doing, being, becoming and belonging components). The participants referred to experiences closely related to one of the elements of '*flow'* defined as loss of self-consciousness, in which "[p]eople become so involved in what they are doing that the activity becomes automatic; they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.53). For the participants, the intense focus and concentrated attention on the movements, the music and the dances created opportunities which allowed them to feel transported into a new reality. The sense of unity derived from the experience of collective movement in which one participates voluntarily, was identified by the participants as another element which contributes to the sense of being transformed. It could be argued that circle dance provides people with the opportunity to experience "a ritual of shared time and space" (Pemberton and Cox, 2013, p.4).

In this study, the participants evoked a transcendental state derived from the experience of being engaged in circle dance, and an increased awareness expressed as a sense of being more alive and connected with something bigger than themselves. It was evident that for the participants spirituality was closely related to self-fulfilment and self-enrichment derived from the practice of circle dance. This aspect suggests parallels with the concept of spirituality in occupation, which has been described by many authors in the field of occupational therapy (CAOT, 1991, 1997; Urbanowski and Vargo, 1994; Hammell, 2001). The sense of spirituality found in circle dance appears also to be connected with the idea that traditional folk dances have a religious and ritual background associated with their origins (Sharp 1924, M.G. Wosien, 1995; B.

Wosien, 2006). From the serious leisure perspective, Stebbins suggests that contemplation and spirituality are part of some forms of serious leisure activities such as Yoga, Tai Chi, and Transcendental Meditation (Stebbins, 2009, pp.72-73). As Bernhard Wosien (2006) states, circle dance can be seen as meditation through dance as it "signifies a movement, leading from an inner awareness to outer perception" (p.18). Supporting earlier research on circle dance conducted in Brazil (Heblings, 2004), it could be suggested that spirituality is considered as part of the rewards of being engaged in circle dance.

Aspects of the components of 'being' and 'becoming' associated with "the notions of potential and growth, of transformation and self-actualisation" proposed by Wilcock (1998a, p.251) can also be related to this sub-category. The central significance of this sub-category (unique experience) helps to explain the dancers' motivation for sustained engagement in circle dance.

The perceived benefits of circle dance are complemented by the riches offered by the circle dance social world, which was explored in the sub-category 'Feeling part of the ethos of circle dance' and helps to understand how circle dance, as a shared occupation, can facilitate a sense of belonging amongst participants (sub-question 1b). This sub-category appeared to have parallels to the concept of *serious leisure* (Stebbins, 2007), in particular, with one of its distinct qualities (unique ethos and social world – discussed in section 2.1.2.2). It was clear from the participants' discourses that the social rewards of circle dance were central to sustaining their engagement. As the nature of circle dance implies group effort in achieving a common goal (learning and performing the dances), a sense of cooperation, a sense of helping, being needed were constelled in the practice of circle dance. Capturing the component of 'belonging' (Wilcock, 2007), the participants suggested that circle dance provided an opportunity for them to develop and maintain connections with others. Once immersed in the ethos of

circle dance, participants appear to gain a social identity as 'circle dancers' which allows them to circulate between various events, regular classes or workshops. It could be argued that the social support found in the circle dance network encourages participants to sustain their engagement, providing opportunities for social integration.

In the context of occupational therapy, Jonsson (2008) has defined a category of '*engaging occupations*' as being present in all arenas, including leisure, and having a direct link with the concept of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007). As discussed previously, 'engaging occupation' is seen as "both significantly contributing to well-being and a necessary part of a person's occupation" (p.6). Another category proposed by Jonsson (2008) is defined as 'social occupations' and described as "a very important part of life and the experience of well-being" (p.6). The participants' findings suggest that these two experienced-based categories described by Jonsson (2008) were combined and perceived as fundamental aspects related to their participation in circle dance. Correlations with both concepts of engaging occupation (Jonsson, 2008) and serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007) can be drawn.

It was evident that circle dance has helped many respondents to overcome difficulties in their lives, including depression, stress, anxiety and bereavement. The sub-category "circle dance helping to overcome difficulties in life" appears to have a correlation with the body of research related to physical activity and well-being (Faulkner, 2001; Faulkner and Biddle, 2001; Reynolds, 2001; Salmon, 2001; Biddle et al., 2003; McKenna and Riddoch, 2003; Faulkner and Taylor, 2005; Lee, 2007). Similarly, recent studies in occupational therapy (Alexandratos et al., 2012; Bacon et al., 2012; Bonsaksen and Lerdal, 2012; Froggett and Little, 2012; Northey and Barnett, 2012; Wensley and Slade, 2012) also support the relationship between health-enhancing effects and participation in physical

activities. This sub-category is also consistent with Christiansen's (1999) argument "that depression can be averted when people are given an opportunity to gain personal meaning from everyday activities, when their sense of optimism is renewed, and where they believe that there is choice and control in their lives" (p.555). It could also be suggested that the positive therapeutic effects of circle dance, as revealed in the discourse of the respondents, could be linked to Jung's comprehensive research into the symbolism of the circle or *mandala* and its functional significance in producing "an inner order, balance and wholeness" (Jung, 1968, p.384) in the healing process. This proposition could, thereby, open up another avenue for further research into circle dance.

As they found circle dance an intrinsically rewarding occupation, the participants referred to circle dance as being a very important occupation in their lives. The major category named *'I can't imagine life without it'* revealed the level of importance circle dance had for the participants interviewed. Placed in a position of high significance, circle dance appeared to be selected by the participants as a leisure occupation in which self-fulfilment, transformation, self-regeneration are some of the perceived benefits of engagement. The findings of this study strongly support the idea that engagement in circle dance creates meaning and can influence people's health and well-being. By expanding the literature related to occupation and its influence on people's health and well-being, this study has shown that circle dance has the potential to enrich the dynamic relationship which exists between the elements of doing, being, becoming and belonging.

## 9.1.2 The pedagogy of circle dance facilitating a sense of achievement of occupational well-being

The participants' narratives reveal their experiences of how they were taught. This is discussed in the sub-category "teaching style impacting on experience" which revealed that the role of a circle dance teacher as 'providing a positive and enjoyable learning experience' and 'meeting the individual's and the group's needs' was considered fundamental to facilitating and enhancing participation (sub-questions 2 and 2b). It is important to note that the participants in this study were all adults, some of whom had had no previous experience of other forms of dance prior to their involvement with circle dance. The insights gained from this study highlight the implications of the pedagogical practice for the richness of experience, suggesting that a safe and relaxed environment in which learning could take place, is fundamental to enhancing the participants' experiences and, ultimately, sustaining their occupational engagement and continued involvement. This appeared to be coherent with studies in occupational therapy (Yerxa et al., 1990; Kielhofner, 1995; Law et al., 1996; Rebeiro, 2001) which suggested the importance of the environment in enabling occupational performance. The establishment of a safe and supportive environment appeared to be fundamental to achieving a positive learning experience as pointed out by the participants.

For the successful participation and sustained involvement in circle dance, the role of learning and skill mastery also appeared to be important. Participants regarded circle dance as a continuing and exciting learning opportunity which promotes personal growth. For many participants, the continuous learning process present in circle dance, especially whilst learning more complex and challenging dances, helped them to develop a sense of competence and self-efficacy in the activity. Parallels can be drawn with the concept suggested by Csikszentmihaly and Csikszentmihaly (1988) that "*flow* forces people to stretch

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themselves to always take on another challenge to improve their abilities" (p.30). Similarly, Stebbins (2007) also states that the sense of achievement derived from engagement in serious leisure is evident and can contribute to quality of life (p.82). It could be argued that circle dance, as a structured occupation "in which the level of challenges and skills can be varied and controlled" (Csikszentmihaly and Csikszentmihaly, 1988, p.30) can facilitate the ability to experience *flow*, provided that the teachers plan the sessions according to their participants' levels of skills and that they are competent in incorporating pedagogical strategies into their practice. Another important element which facilitated learning was empathy which was seen to be central to the interactions between teachers and participants and between participants. In the participants' discourses, it became evident that the teachers and participants both co-create the right conditions from which occupational well-being could emerge, thus enabling quality of experience.

The sub-category 'Facilitating processes', related to the teachers' discourses, discussed the perceived role of a circle dance teacher as a facilitator, echoing the discourses of the participants and the coordinators. The findings indicate that the practice of teaching circle dance was permeated by principles of enablement, cooperation and mutual respect between teacher and learner. This appeared to be consistent with the concepts related to the methodology of Paulo Freire (1970; 1990; 1998a; 1998b) also known as a "dialogical method" in which teachers and students help each other mutually and grow together in a common effort to create new and meaningful knowledge (Freire, 1998a, p. 8). Coherent also with this approach, the teachers' narratives revealed that techniques or strategies are used as "means to facilitate teaching" (Freire, 1998a, p.67), to transmit the content knowledge and set of skills related to circle dance and to respond to the needs of their particular groups and individuals. The findings elucidated that the challenge of the facilitator is to have knowledge of the subject, plan how and when to

communicate this knowledge and also consider to whom the knowledge or set of skills will be communicated. This is consistent with Warburton (2008), who argues that, in the context of dance, the teacher should consider not only 'what' information and 'when' to present it but also 'how' to present it (p.8). However, this study extends this idea by considering to 'whom' this knowledge will be communicated, given that the learning needs of individuals differ from group to group. In this context, the findings suggest that the circle dance teachers need to be aware of the interdependency of these elements in order to plan the sessions and to respond to the needs of different groups. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) suggests that for creating a teaching environment in which *flow* can be experienced, the teachers have "the difficult task of finding the right balance between the challenges he or she gives to the students' skills, so that enjoyment and desire to learn more [are the] result" (p.175). Similarly, in the occupational therapy domain, Kielhofner (1995) also emphasised that the therapist/facilitator should create a *flow*-friendly environment by providing a range of opportunities for performance and the "right challenge between the skills of the individual and the demands placed upon the performance" (p.91). Moreover, the findings of this study revealed that, to maximise rewards and enhance participants' experience, circle dance teachers should be actively involved in creating sessions that provide a flexible yet structured enough programme of dances which challenges and stimulates participants. It is also imperative that the teachers acknowledge their role in facilitating engagement in circle dance and that they have a clear vision of what their role and responsibilities implie.

Similarly to the participants' findings, the teachers' narratives showed that the integration of newcomers into the group was stressed as relevant for the expansion and maintenance of the circle dance network. The findings suggested that integrating newcomers constitutes a primordial responsibility of the teacher

but also, to a great extent, of the group. In this context, it could be argued that integrating newcomers into circle dance groups is the mutual responsibility of teachers and participants. Considering the impact on the circle dance network, it could be suggested that the growth and the maintenance of the network depend on the successful integration of newcomers.

Another important aspect suggested by the teachers in this study was related to the role of enjoyment for both teachers and participants. Instilling an environment where joy is considered part of the learning process appeared to be imperative not only for making the participants want to continue learning but also for providing teachers with a basis of inspiration. This aspect is consistent with Freire's (1998) idea that creating "a pedagogical space in which joy has its privileged role" (p.69) is of fundamental importance for an educational practice which is based upon a democratic approach. For Freire (1998), the process of teaching and learning should be, by nature, a joyful experience, stimulating and creating meaning for the teachers and the students (pp.125-126). Similarly, Bernhard Wosien (2006) stated that the teaching environment in circle dance should be creative and filled with meaning for both teachers and participants: "[t]he joy of spending time together in a relaxed atmosphere is the most important thing here" (p.41). The significance of enjoyment in the circle dance environment highlighted in this study also reflects reciprocity with research evidence in the field of leisure (Haworth, 1997; 2004). It was evident in the teachers' narratives that the pedagogy of circle dance encompasses more than just teaching the steps, movements and positions as it is also linked with a broad conception of education (Dewey, 1916; 1934; Freire, 1970; 1998a; 1998b) where individuals can become qualitatively transformed. This is also consistent with Bernhard Wosien's (2005) idea that dance should be considered a tool for emancipation, for transformation,

for 'becoming': "[w]here people dance together, they train and educate themselves" (p.41).

## 9.1.3 The experiences, background and motivation of circle dance teachers

The major category *"Opening that door..."* and its sub-categories summarised the experience of circle dance teachers, discussed elements related to the teaching strategies utilised in circle dance and offered insights related to the perceived benefits of circle dance for the participants. The sub-category "Becoming a circle dance teacher" explored the respondents' motivations and pathways (sub-question 2a). It was clear that where respondents had decided to pursue a career in circle dance, their decision was informed by their strong identification with this occupation, a deep sense of self-fulfilment due to their engagement and their wish to offer this leisure occupation to other people. These aspects appear to have parallels with the concept of 'devotee work' or 'occupation devotion' proposed by Stebbins (2004), in which "the core activity (set of basic tasks) is endowed with such intense appeal that this work and leisure become virtually one and the same" (p.9). Similarities with the six interrelated criteria (presented in section 2.1.2.2) which generate 'devotee work' (Stebbins, 2004) can also be drawn from the teachers' discourses. For example, the nature of engagement revealed in the teachers' discourses seemed to create enough flexibility and freedom to allow "control over the amount and disposition of time put into occupation" (p.9), making it possible for the teachers to choose the type of commitment from full-time, part-time, to an extra career. This flexibility was also related to the fact that the teachers' level of commitment could be altered or modified without difficulty, according to changes in their lifestyle circumstances, for example, retirement. This could also indicate that bureaucratization was not perceived by the respondents as being present in their circle dance work. This

enabled them to have greater autonomy and freedom which were considered important aspects of their role as circle dance teachers. Teaching circle dance also appeared to give the respondents a sense of being part of the ethos of circle dance as well as of contributing to its maintenance and continuation, as they played their role as teachers and also as participants, offering the opportunity for them to pursue the core activity as well as to develop their teaching skills. The teachers' discourses also revealed that continual professional development was considered fundamental in order to offer a better quality of teaching to the participants.

It was evident in the teachers' discourses that circle dance was valued as a significant, rewarding and profound occupation in their lives. This fact was perceived by the participants as an important element as it could also contribute towards generating enthusiasm amongst them. Similarly to the participants' findings, teachers reported feeling transformed by the experience of being engaged in circle dance, suggesting that teachers also experience *'flow'* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) through teaching. The nature of the sessions described by the participants appeared to provide opportunities for creativity to be experienced and for a co-creation between teachers and participants to take place. This was also due to the existence of a comprehensive repertoire of traditional and contemporary dances, which could allow for the creation of a variety of programmes depending on the characteristics of the group and/or the purpose of the circle dance session.

The insights gained from the teachers' discourses highlighted that they engage in their new role as circle dance teachers by acknowledging their background and past experience and by using transferable skills which enable them to enrich the teaching-learning context. The findings also point out that the experience of being a learner in other circle dance workshops provided the opportunity to develop

their teaching skills as well their own dance skills.  In line with Freire (1998), this study revealed that the teachers bring to the teaching setting their own past experiences and that they also acknowledge those of their participants (p.9). The idea of reciprocal learning was also evident in the discourse of the teachers. This aspect is also consistent with innovative pedagogical methods in dance (Côté, 2006; Mainwaring and Krasnow, 2010) highlighting the fact that the process of teaching-learning can be seen as rewarding for both teachers and learners.

### 9.1.4 The contribution of teacher training coordinators towards the pedagogy of circle dance

The major category "Providing quality" offers insights into the experience of teacher training coordinators and their role in providing quality and support to circle dance teachers. It also offers an understanding of the circle dance training programmes available in the U.K. and their contribution to the circle dance network. The coordinators' perspectives suggested that training constitutes a path for creating the necessary conditions which will lead to the development of expertise and proficiency in teaching circle dance.  The training courses appear to offer trainees the opportunity to develop an understanding of their role as circle dance teachers and to acquire the necessary skills to teach. In this context, it could be argued that the coordinators were involved (in different ways) in contributing towards the effective practice of the dance teachers and to the improvement of the teaching standards within the circle dance network.

The findings of this study also revealed that teacher training programmes have helped trainees to become aware of and to discern what is involved in teaching circle dance. This aspect was shown in the discourse of some participants who had undertaken teacher training courses. It could be argued that the training courses provide the trainees with the opportunity to consciously re-assess their

decision to pursue a career as circle dance teachers by understanding their role and responsibilities as well as the possible dimensions that are part of the essence of this practice. In this context, parallels with the concept of devotee work proposed by Stebbins (2004) can be drawn, as the findings revealed that the training courses represent also an opportunity for experimentation, where trainees can test their aptitude to perform tasks related to their future role as circle dance teachers. Considering this aspect, it could be suggested that participation in training courses results for some trainees in being re-directed to the participants' routes (see appendix 8); for others, it provides the necessary skills and confidence to pursue a career as circle dance teachers. Analogies to Freire's (1998a) approach can also be made as Freire considers it fundamental to educational practice that teachers have clarity of their roles and responsibilities and an in-depth understanding of all elements involved in this practice (p.66).

The sub-category "Learning about teaching and leading" showed the training courses serve the purpose of expanding the trainees' domain of knowledge about circle dance as well as providing pedagogical tools for delivering and implementing circle dance sessions. It was clear from the coordinators' discourses that a fundamental element of the training course was for the trainees to be familiar with the main characteristics of circle dance, with the history of the circle dance movement, the circle dance notation system, the background of the dances as well as with pedagogical strategies. Essentially based on a practical and reflective approach, the coordinators' findings revealed that multiple demonstrations and discussions related to learning styles and effective strategies to enable skill acquisition and mastery were significant elements for guiding the trainees towards undertaking the task of teaching. In this context, it could be suggested that the training courses appear to open up the way for the trainees to become circle dance teachers (facilitators/focalisers). This aspect is consistent

with the field of dance pedagogy which emphasises that the training of dance teachers is of fundamental importance in order to inform their teaching practice (Côté, 2006). In this context, the findings of this study suggest that the experience and sense of control and confidence that trainees gain from attending training courses has a direct and positive impact on the growth and sustainability of the circle dance network, as many community groups have been created by the trainees who have completed the courses. Considering that the participants' discourses demonstrated that the pedagogy of circle dance has much to contribute to the quality of their experiences and has a positive impact on their sense of occupational well-being, this study shows that the skill-base of teachers is of the upmost relevance.

Similar to the teachers' narratives, the coordinators' findings also support the idea that becoming a circle dance teacher should be considered a practice which goes beyond the transmission of steps and movements (Warburton, 2008), requiring the development of a deep level of pedagogical knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in addition to the knowledge related to circle dance as a field of specialization.

## 9.1.5 The subjective occupational experience of people who engage in circle dance

The core category *'There is a place for everybody'* represents the intersection of the three major categories and offers an understanding of the subjective occupational experience of being engaged in circle dance (central research question), as revealed in the discourse of the respondents. Linked with the central research question, the core category provides also an understanding of the diversity of practices and experiences in circle dance whilst elaborating the idea of inclusiveness as a common phenomenon. Primarily an experiential practice,

circle dance allows participants, teachers and coordinators to engage in this activity at different levels. This study has identified a diversity of opportunities generated through engagement in circle dance and suggests that this multiplicity which is extant within the circle dance network appears to invite people to choose their own personal path (see appendix 8). This aspect appears to offer a sense of control and personal choice for those who get involved in circle dance, providing enough flexibility for them to continue being engaged in this occupation, whatever their life circumstances might be and/or whatever stage of their lifecycle they might be at. It could be argued that respondents find circle dance to be a fluid, dynamic occupation which allows for freedom and personal choice and therefore it supports multiple levels of involvement.

It was clear in the discourse of all respondents (participants, teachers and coordinators) that a sense of belonging was remarked upon as an important outcome of their engagement in circle dance. The perceived supportive and non-competitive environment appeared to provide a gratifying sense of belonging and to play an important role in encouraging people to persevere and, thereby, sustain long-term involvement. As a shared occupation, circle dance appears to foster a sense of community and a sense of togetherness. This study shows that inclusiveness, acceptance and full participation appeared to be constellated in the practice of circle dance. However, it was evident that the process of inclusion is greatly shaped by the quality of the teaching environment.  As discussed in the major categories, the teaching environment was an important consideration for meeting the expectations and the needs of the individuals, and their singularities, as well as the group as a whole. This study demonstrates that teachers play a fundamental role as enablers who facilitate the engagement of all participants. They are also considered to be co-creators by virtue of the fact that they provide the right conditions for occupational well-being to emerge. The relevance of

integrating newcomers into the circle dance groups and network was a common theme which permeated the discourse of all the respondents (participants, teachers and coordinators). It could be suggested that active support for beginners and new members appears to be an integral part of the practice and ethos of circle dance which contributes to the sustainability and growth of the circle dance network.

The sub-category 'Circle dance creating possibilities' has identified a diversity of opportunities generated through engagement in circle dance. This study found that active involvement appears to open up possibilities for the respondents, creating new pathways and even new careers in their lives. In the respondents' discourses (in particular those of participants and teachers), it was evident that their involvement with circle dance has helped them to overcome certain difficulties in their lives and it continues to be important in their recovery process. Engagement in circle dance has led some participants to take the route of becoming circle dance teachers, thereby fulfilling their need to pursue a new role in their lives. This study indicates that the notion of inclusiveness derived also from the idea of exploring possibilities and providing opportunities for all people to create meaning and purpose and thus to improve the quality of their everyday lives.

## 9.2  Conclusion

In this sub-section, I will first discuss the theoretical model applied to practice and its contribution to knowledge. The implications for occupational therapy practice that are borne out by this study as well for the circle dance network will be further discussed. The limitations of the research and the recommendation for future research will also be explored later in this sub-section. To conclude this chapter, the chosen evaluative criteria (Charmaz, 2006) will be considered and discussed in relation to my research study and a reflection of my doctoral journey will be presented.

### 9.2.1 The theoretical model in practice and its contribution to knowledge

The practice model has been developed through the theoretical model derived from the findings of this study (figure 15). It provides a schematic representation of the dynamics involved in the occupational engagement in circle dance, incorporating elements of the three major categories and the core category. Figure 20 illustrates the theoretical model in practice (practice model) developed from this study and represents the main contribution made by this study:

**Figure 20 The theoretical model in practice  (practice model)**
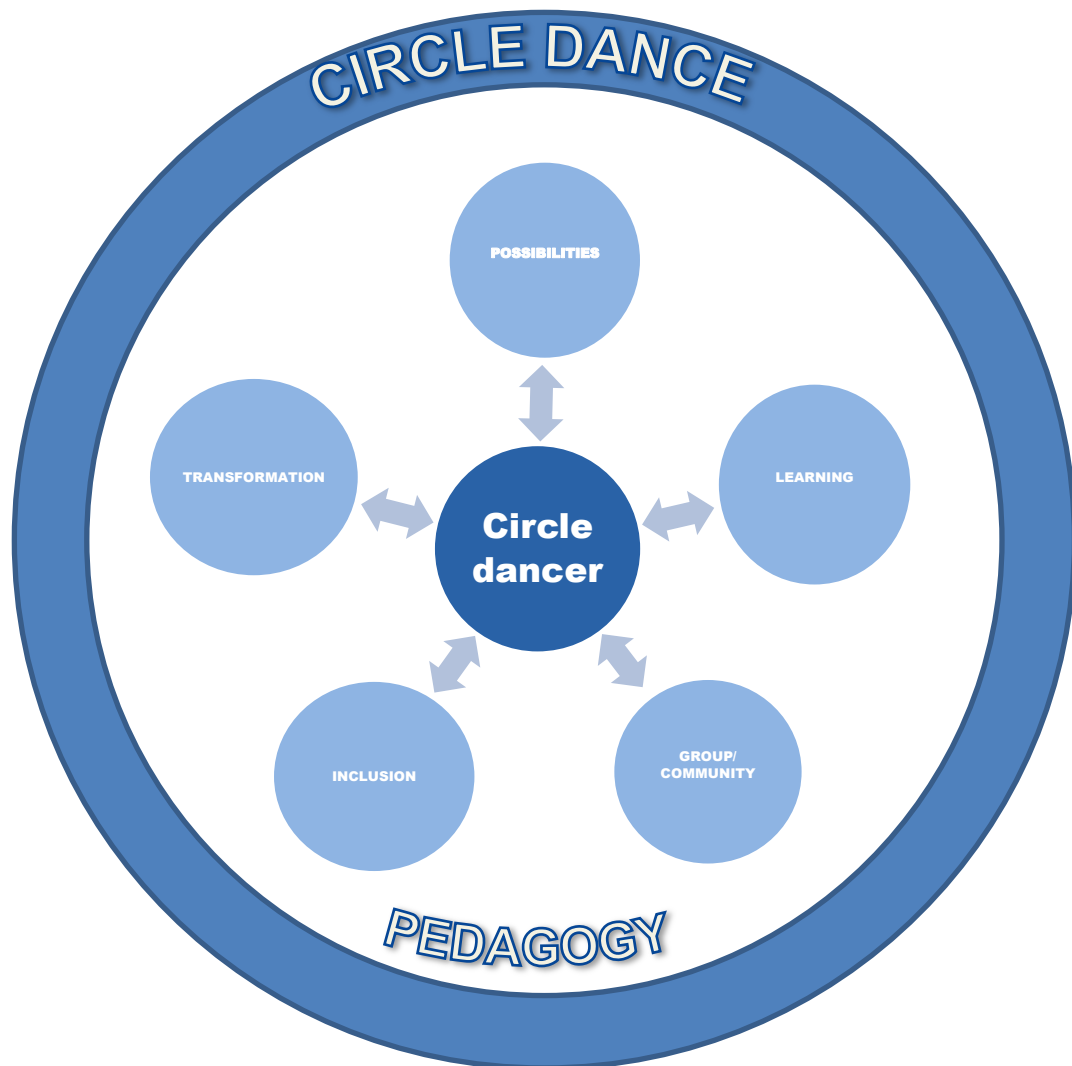


The outer sphere (dark blue) delineates circle dance as a human  occupation which encapsulates the elements of doing, being, becoming and belonging, as discussed in Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.1.2).  It is within this domain that the occupational experience can be contextualised. Entering this sphere, the circle dancer (the individual who engages in circle dance) occupies the central position in the diagram (represented by the central dark blue circle). The surrounding five circles (light blue) show some of the elements of the occupational experience of being engaged in circle dance which were highlighted in this study: 'possibilities', 'learning', 'group/community', 'inclusion' and 'transformation'. Each element will be

further summarised. The interactive process of being engaged in circle dance is represented by the double arrows, indicating a two-way influence. The emphasis on one or another element will depend on the circle dancer (and, possibly, on the stage of his/her engagement). The experience of the circle dancer is immersed in the pedagogy of circle dance (represented by the white background), emphasising the relevance of the role of the facilitator (as extensively discussed in sub-section 9.1.2).

The element 'possibilities' is related to the diversity of opportunities generated through engagement in circle dance and identified throughout the discourse of the respondents. Circle dance, as a fluid and dynamic occupation, supports multiple levels of involvement and offers a range of choices which can be pursued by the individual depending on his/her level of commitment and interest. For example, it was clear in the teacher's discourses that their careers were developed throughout their engagement as participants. A sense of control and personal choice are some of the rewards associated with this element.

'Learning' is associated with the importance of skill acquisition for the successful participation and sustained involvement in circle dance. It also emphasises that a positive and enjoyable learning environment, which takes into consideration different learning styles, can enhance circle dancers' quality of experience. This element brings an awareness that the development of skills acquired by long term involvement leads to a sense of achievement, competence and self-efficacy in the activity.

The element 'group/community' is associated with the sense of belonging derived from engagement in circle dance. Embodying the social dimension of circle dance as portrayed by the respondents, this element incorporates layers of connections which can be fostered in the social world of circle dance: feeling part of a group,

of a local community (regional or national level) and of a wider community (international level). As identified by the respondents, qualities of mutual respect, being supportive, cooperation and friendliness permeate the social world of circle dance. As a shared occupation, circle dance appears to foster a sense of community and a sense of togetherness and an opportunity to experience "a ritual of shared time and space" (Pemberton and Cox 2013, p.4).

'Inclusion' is another element captured in the respondents' narratives. This element is dependent on the extent to which participants feel included and integrated into the group in order to successfully engage in and continue to be involved in circle dance, this applies in particular to newcomers. As revealed in the respondents' discourses, the process of inclusion is greatly shaped by the quality of the teaching environment in which the individual's needs are considered within a group context.

The element of 'transformation' is connected with the sense of fulfilment and regeneration derived from engagement in circle dance and its contribution towards enhancing their sense of well-being. It also incorporates aspects of self-investment, self-development and feeling transported as portrayed by the respondents. Furthermore, this element is related to the experience of '*flow'* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), which contributes to the perception of circle dance as a unique experience (as discussed in chapter 5, section 5.1).

The pedagogical component of the practice model (represented by the white background in figure 20) brings an awareness that a teaching environment which facilitates learning, respects different learning styles and paces, and challenges as well as stimulates participants, leads to enhanced participation and quality of experience. This component highlights the role of the facilitator as the one who combines content knowledge and pedagogical strategies in order to create an

environment which is permeated by principles of enablement, cooperation and mutual respect between teacher and learner.  To summarise, the circle dancer (or the individual), facilitated by the pedagogy of circle dance, experiences various elements which contribute to the achievement of occupational well-being (doing, being, becoming and belonging components).

The practice model provides a tool to convey the occupational experiences, the meanings and purposes that the respondents attributed to their engagement in circle dance and the significance of the pedagogical component for the enhancement of the participants' experiences. By providing an overview and organising the knowledge generated throughout this study, the practice model enables an understanding of the dynamic process of being engaged in circle dance and its relation to occupational well-being. It suggests that the teaching-learning environment is of fundamental significance for the quality of the participants' experience and adds insight into the roles and responsibilities of circle dance teachers  in facilitating a sense of achievement of occupational well-being.

As a contribution to knowledge in the fields of occupational therapy and occupational science, this study supports the conceptualisation that a dynamic interaction between the elements of doing, being, becoming and belonging can be constelled through engagement in circle dance. It also emphasises the idea that the pedagogy of circle dance has much to contribute to the quality of the participants' experiences and its impact on their sense of occupational well-being. This study suggests that circle dance, as a multifaceted occupation, is of potential relevance to a healthy lifestyle and to the development of the person's full potential.

### 9.2.2 Implications for occupational therapy practice

This study makes an important contribution to the growing research in occupational therapy and occupational science concerned with the relationship between occupation and well-being (Yerxa et al., 1990; Hasselkus, 2002; Hammell, 2004; Wilcock, 2006) by providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of circle dance on people's sense of occupational well-being. It supports the concept of circle dance as a meaningful occupation which incorporates the elements of doing, being, becoming and belonging (Hammell, 2004; Wilcock, 2006). The theoretical framework and the practice model proposed in this study might help to better understand the complex relationship that people may have when engaged in a physically active leisure occupation which is personally meaningful for them, and its impact on their sense of well-being.

The findings of this study are timely, given the current emphasis on the role of exercise and physical activity for health prevention and well-being. Occupational therapists are being encouraged to seize opportunities for developing exercise and recreation programmes for their clients and service users or for facilitating their access to affordable facilities (COT, 2005; 2008). The findings of this study suggest that circle dance could be an accessible, motivating and meaningful occupation to help people engage in physical activities. It also highlighted the positive aspects of circle dance related to social connectedness and the value of circle dance as a shared occupation in which people can experience a sense of belonging. Circle dance could, thus, represent a new avenue for extending services into health-promoting physical activity programmes into community. Occupational therapists working in clinical and community settings could play an important role in promoting circle dance amongst clients and service users. Pathways could be created in order to facilitate the engagement of service users in well-established circle dance community groups. Alternatively, new groups

could be formed to address the needs of specific target groups. For that, occupational therapists could work in collaboration with circle dance teachers in order to deliver circle dance in health services or voluntary sector or occupational therapists could also take part in circle dance teacher training courses in order to gain knowledge and use circle dance as therapeutic tool. By extending circle dance groups within a community for a diversity of people, this study would also open up other areas for further research, including circle dance in the field of mental health or other specific services. This study could also provide empirical evidence to support further projects in which circle dance might be used, for example, in cancer care or mental health, thereby advancing the knowledge about circle dance as a medium for promoting well-being.

It was clear in this study that circle dance was perceived as a medium through which people can learn a new skill and develop it further, creating opportunities for life-long learning. The theoretical framework draws attention to the importance of pedagogic strategies and the significance of the role of circle dance teachers in enhancing the participants' experiences and sense of well-being as well as in facilitating skill acquisition.  This study suggests that a safe and supportive environment is also fundamental to achieving a positive learning experience and sustaining the participants' occupational engagement and continued involvement. In this context, occupational therapists might be in a privileged position due to their underpinning philosophy of occupation in enabling occupational performance and facilitating and enhancing participation (Yerxa et al. 1990; Kielhofner, 1995; Law et al., 1996; Rebeiro, 2001).

As this study discusses correlations of circle dance with both concepts of engaging occupation (Jonsson, 2008) and serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007), another implication for practice is the fact that it would suggest a role for

occupational therapists in exploring leisure opportunities amongst clients and service users.

### 9.2.3 Implications for practice in the circle dance network

The theoretical framework proposed in this study clearly draws attention to the importance of pedagogic strategies. The findings of this research may raise awareness amongst circle dance teachers of the significance of pedagogical strategies for enhancing the participants' experience and may encourage teachers, in particular new ones, to undertake teacher training programmes in order to improve and/or modify their standard of teaching.

This study showed that inclusiveness, acceptance and full participation appeared to be constellated in the practice of circle dance. However, it was evident that the process of inclusion is greatly shaped by the quality of the teaching environment. This study suggested that active support for beginners and new members appears to be an integral part of the practice and ethos of circle dance which contributes to the sustainability and growth of the circle dance network. In this context, it is of paramount importance that circle dance teachers are aware of their responsibility in providing an adequate teaching environment in which participation can be facilitated and a sense of well-being enhanced.  Collaborative projects designed to implement evidence-based research within the circle dance network could be established.

### 9.2.4 Limitations and future research

The constructivist grounded theory method was considered to be adequate for the study. However, other qualitative methodologies such as the phenomenological approach, narrative analysis, ethnography (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Creswell, 2007) may well have raised other insights into the interplay between circle dance,

occupational therapy and well-being. The method of data collection in this study was primarily in-depth interviews. The addition of other sources of data could have expanded the categories. For example, a focus group might have revealed group opinions, refining and extending points generated in the in-depth interviews. The use of respondents' diaries could have also offered significant insights, exploring topics which were not pursued in this study. The insights gained in this study derived from a qualitative approach. The inclusion of quantitative data could have expanded the findings and enriched the theoretical framework. For example, a survey could be administered within the U.K. network to study motivation for engaging in circle dance. This would enable me to measure quantitatively and on a larger scale the rewards that people gain from circle dance. Specifically related to the conceptualisation of serious leisure, the use of the 'Serious Leisure Inventory Measure – SLIM' (Gould et al., 2008) could have been used to measure the six distinguishing qualities (Stebbins, 2007, p.36).

Despite its limitations, this study has provided a comprehensive exploration of circle dance as a medium for promoting occupational well-being. However, as Charmaz (1991) states: "any portrayal of a process may change and should not be construed as final or as an ultimate truth" (p.277). Hence, further exploration as well as refinement of my analysis are necessary in order to complement the findings of this study. The theoretical framework proposed allows for the major categories and the core category to be further investigated in future studies.

The findings of this study have concentrated on the rewards associated with the practice of circle dance. Further exploration of the constraints of participation and the costs involved in circle dance could help to investigate strategies to expand the engagement of other populations with fewer financial resources. This study has provided an understanding of circle dance in a wider context, within the general population. Further research is also needed to explore the value of circle

dance for specific target groups. Expanding research into specific groups could contribute to expanding the applicability of circle dance within clinical settings.

A comparative study of circle dance, investigating the experience of circle dance participants as well as of the teachers in two different countries (for example, the U.K. and Brazil) could reveal how meanings are constructed, taking in consideration cultural differences. Future research could also identify different types of participation in circle dance and evaluate their implications for quality of life.

Future research could also expand the teachers' perspectives by investigating how teachers evaluate their own performance or what could be considered as indicative that the teaching has been effective. Another possible longitudinal study would be to follow up new teachers who had just completed their circle dance teacher training course to see how they implement what they have learned within a circle dance group setting.

It may also be of value exploring how to inspire and to encourage future generations to undertake this form of dance thereby supporting continuity in the circle dance movement in the U.K. A longitudinal study to investigate phases of engagement could also shed light into the possible relationship between the length of participation and the rewards derived from engagement. It could also identify whether rewards differ depending on specific phases/ stages of participation.

## 9.2.5 Evaluating the research

The criteria proposed by Charmaz (2005; 2006) were selected for the purpose of evaluation as it was deemed to be particularly significant and aligned with the methodological framework of this study (discussed in section 4.6). Credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness were utilised to assess the value of this constructivist grounded theory study. In this section, each criterion will be considered in relation to this research study.

### 9.2.5.1 Credibility

Charmaz (2006) has proposed six elements for assessing the credibility of a study: familiarity with the setting and/or topic; data sufficiency (range, number, depth of observations); systematic comparison between observations and between categories; presence of a wide range of empirical observations; strong link between the data gathered and the analysis; enough evidence for the claims made (p.182).

This study presents familiarity with both the topic and the setting. As discussed in the sub-section 4.4 (Researcher's perspective), I approached this study from the perspective of an expert with extensive experience as both an occupational therapist and as a circle dance teacher which enriched my role as a researcher. In relation to my familiarity with the topic, I chose a multidisciplinary approach in order to review the literature from relevant academic fields - occupational therapy, occupational science, leisure studies, psychology, sociology, education, dance education – thereby expanding the knowledge about the topic of this research. The researcher's familiarity with the circle dance network in the U.K. facilitated access to both the field and to respondents. All the interviews were conducted and transcribed by the researcher (discussed in the sub-sections 4.1.3.2 and 4.3.2). The process of transcription, in particular the early interviews, was of

fundamental importance for exploring nuances of meanings and for being familiar with the data. For Charmaz (2006), "grounded theory methods work best when the grounded theorist engages in data collection as well as data analysis" (p.34) as the researcher becomes aware of why and how to gather rich data.

Data sufficiency was attained during the research process through theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006). Thirty nine interviews were conducted with three different groups of respondents: participants, teachers and teacher training coordinators from the U.K. circle dance network, which represented a broad range of perspectives, thus making it possible to explore the topic from various viewpoints.  Charmaz (2011) proposes that in a study in which "interviews are the only source of data, a sample of 30-40 interviews would provide a solid foundation for a detailed analysis" (p.171). The respondents varied in age, professional background and length of involvement in circle dance (see appendix 3 and figures 7, 8 and 9). The participants were recruited from various circle dance groups chosen from a range of existing community settings held throughout the U.K.. The teachers interviewed for this study were also teaching in different regions of the U.K.. In addition to that, the teachers had also diverse professional backgrounds, offering a comprehensive scope of experience and viewpoints.

Throughout the research process, sampling strategies were used to ensure the successful development of the theoretical framework. For that, convenience sampling, purposeful sampling and theoretical sampling were applied (fully discussed in section 4.2.1). The interviews lasted on average one hour. Each one being a lengthy interview with sufficient time to explore relevant points and topics related to the construction of the theoretical framework. In the process of analysis, I compared initial codes, focused codes and categories. Comparison was also facilitated by the fact that the interviews with the three groups of respondents occurred concomitantly, making it possible to compare what respondents said at

different points in time and which perspective they were representing (participants, teachers or coordinators). The comprehensiveness and coherence of evidence were strengthened by the use of direct interview quotes and the links with existing literature, which confirm the credibility of the analysis. Particular attention was given to providing a "rich and thick description" in the presentation of the major categories and the core category so that readers could share the experiences and meanings revealed in the respondents' accounts, whilst making their own judgments as to the trustworthiness of the research (Cresswell, 2007, p.209). Regular supervision throughout the research process was also vital to ensure credibility. In addition, research diary and memos were used as a way to facilitate self-reflection and the conceptual development of the study.

### 9.2.5.2 Originality

Charmaz (2006) suggests taking into consideration four points whilst evaluating a study in terms of originality: categories offer a fresh and new insight into the topic; the analysis provides a new conceptual framework grounded in the data; the social and theoretical significance of the study has been addressed; the proposed grounded theory extends current ideas and practices in the related fields (p.182).

The originality of this research is that it investigated the potential contribution of circle dance to well-being through the subject field of occupational therapy. Or, more specifically, the interplay between the three domains: occupational therapy, well-being and circle dance, which is represented in figure 1. This study proposes a new conceptual framework for circle dance grounded in the data and represented in figure 15 and figure 20. The theoretical framework (figure 15) synthesised the meanings and experiences of circle dance participants, teachers and training coordinators and proposed a core category which reflected the diversity of practices and experiences in circle dance and elaborated the idea of

inclusiveness as a common phenomenon revealed in the discourse of the respondents. The three major categories (*'I can't imagine life without it', 'Opening that door'* and 'Providing quality') and the core category (*'There is a place for everybody')* offer new insights into the process of being engaged in circle dance, the meanings which the respondents attributed to circle dance and the impact on their sense of well-being. It also revealed that the pedagogy of circle dance is of relevance to the participants' experiences. The practice model (figure 20) provides an understanding of the dynamics involved in the occupational engagement in circle dance, incorporating elements of the three major categories and the core category.

As presented in the beginning of this chapter (section 9.1), the findings of this study were discussed in relation to the current literature, extending the knowledge in the fields of occupational therapy, occupational science, leisure, physical activity, new theoretical understanding related to the experience of the participants, teachers and coordinators was also proposed. The implications for occupational therapy practice as well as for practice in the circle dance network have also been discussed previously in this chapter, addressing the social and theoretical significance of this study.


### *9.2.5.3 Resonance*

For this level, Charmaz (2006) proposes that the researcher reflect on the following aspects: categories which portray the fullness of the studied experience; a study which reveals taken-for-granted meanings; links considered between larger collectivities or institutions and the individual lives; that the grounded theory makes sense for the respondents and that the analysis offers "deeper insights about their lives and worlds" (p.183).

In this research study, theoretical sampling was applied until categories were saturated and no further new information was attained (theoretical saturation), ensuring fullness of the circle dance experience. Member checking (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) was also applied throughout the research study in order to assess its resonance. For this, validation during the interview was used in order to ensure that the meaning expressed by the respondent was clearly understood by the researcher and to improve the trustworthiness of interpretations and emerging categories. In addition, a full transcription of the interview was forwarded via email (as a pdf) to those who requested it. Respondents were asked to check for factual accuracy, to amend any passages and/or to add additional comments, if necessary. During the interviews and in the process of data analysis, taken-for-granted meanings were explored in order to clarify concepts.

Throughout the concurrent process of data collection and data analysis, the links between larger collectivities and the individual lives were considered. In this study, the experience of each respondent was deemed to be significant and valuable within the context of the circle dance network in the U.K.. The narratives of the participants, in particular, revealed aspects directly linked with the ethos of circle dance, providing a broad perspective and situating their experience within a larger context. The teachers' and the coordinators' discourses also offered insights into their role within the circle dance network.

The findings of this study offered deep insight into the individuals' experience as well as the ethos of circle dance in the U.K. Opportunities to provide feedback to respondents as well as to receive feedback from them and other circle dancers were pursued during the research process: two key presentations were given to circle dancers (see appendix 13) during workshops (2012 and 2013) ; informal conversations during circle dance workshops and events and a summary of key

findings to respondents helped also the researcher to assess whether the interpretation of the findings made sense for the respondents.

### 9.2.5.4 Usefulness

The 'usefulness' of the study refers to its contribution and relevance to existing knowledge. At this level, the researcher should: examine whether "the analysis offers interpretation that people can use in their everyday worlds"; consider the extent to which the analytic categories suggest "generic processes"; identify the need for further research in other substantive areas and evaluate the contribution of knowledge (Charmaz, 2006, p.183).

This study has identified aspects related to circle dance that can be applied to everyday situations. In relation to the pedagogy of circle dance, evidence from this study may be used by circle teachers in their everyday practice. For example, the importance of using a mixed modality approach to teaching was stressed across the discourse of all respondents. Similarly, the relevance of integrating and supporting newcomers for the maintenance and expansion of the circle dance network was clearly identified. Evidence from this study in particular related to the importance of the pedagogy of circle dance and its influence on participants' experiences may be applied by teachers.

Experiences that may occur more generally within the circle dance network were also clarified in this study. Generic processes of being engaged in circle dance, such as the role of facilitation, the relevance of the teaching environment in order to support and encourage full participation, have been identified across the experience of participants, teachers and coordinators. As an exploratory study, it has provided a foundation for future research into circle dance. The potential for further research was explored previously in the beginning of this chapter (sub-section 9.1).

The study offered a framework in which the relationship between engagement in circle dance and well-being can be better understood, thereby enhancing the body of knowledge related to occupational therapy and occupational science and emphasizing the link between occupation and well-being (Yerxa et al., 1990; Hasselkus, 2002; Hammell, 2004; Wilcock, 2006). As discussed in chapter 9 (in particular, section 9.2.1), this study supports the conceptualisation that a dynamic interaction between the elements of doing, being, becoming and belonging can be constellated through engagement in circle dance.

### 9.2.6 Reflections on the doctoral journey

My doctoral journey was one which brought many rich and rewarding experiences along the way, thereby promoting my own personal, professional and academic growth. It has enriched me as an occupational therapist, as a circle dance teacher and as a researcher.

Needless to say, having risen to the challenges which presented themselves throughout this journey, I was able to expand my knowledge-base in the fields of occupational therapy, occupational science, well-being, leisure and circle dance. Throughout the research process, I had the opportunity not only to develop my skills as a researcher but also to enhance and transform my practice, both as an occupational therapist and a circle dance teacher, by applying myself to the knowledge which was generated as the study advanced. For example, very early on during the process of data collection and data analysis, as I listened to the voices of my respondents, I became aware that my teaching methods and my comprehension of circle dance as a meaningful occupation were being directly influenced by my research. Time and time again, I found myself coming back to

my research diary in which I was able to reflect on my thoughts, ideas and discoveries.

I would like to bring my dissertation to an end by citing Paulo Freire whose approach is congruent with the way in which I have pursued this doctoral journey:

> *"Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly…Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth.  Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were"* (Freire 2002, pp.60-61).

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# Appendix 1 University Ethical Approval

University
of Bolton

## RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST

Form RE1

This checklist should be completed for every research project which involves human participants. It is used to identify whether a full application for ethics approval needs to be submitted.

Before completing this form, please refer to the University Code of Practice on Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants. The principal investigator and, where the principal investigator is a student, the supervisor, is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.

This checklist must be completed before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.

### Section I: Applicant Details

| 1. | Name of Researcher (applicant): | Ana Lucia Borges da Costa |
|----|----|----|
| 2. | Status (please click to select): | Postgraduate Research Student |
| 3. | Email Address: | Alb3mpo@bolton.ac.uk |
| 4a. | Contact Address: | Flat 30, 193 Hart Rd, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 7BA |
| 4b. | Telephone Number: | 01612487728 / 07979 296057 |

### Section II: Project Details

| 5. | Project Title: | An investigation of Circle Dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being |
|----|----|----|

### Section III: For Students Only:

| 6. | Course title and module name and number where appropriate | PhD via MPhil Research Degree |
|----|----|----|
| | School/Centre: | School of Health and Social Sciences |
| 7. | Supervisor's or module leader's name: | Prof Carole Truman, Dr Robert Snape |
| 8. | Email address: | C.Truman@bolton.ac.uk R.Snape@bolton.ac.uk |
| 9. | Telephone extension:: | 01204903722 / 01204903609 |

### Declaration by Researcher (Please tick the appropriate boxes)

| ☒ | I have read the University's Code of Practice |
|----|----|
| ☒ | The topic merits further research |
| ☒ | I have the skills to carry out the research |
| ☒ | The participant information sheet, if needed, is appropriate |
| ☒ | The procedures for recruitment and obtaining informed consent, if needed, are appropriate |
| ☒ | The research is exempt from further ethics review according to current University guidelines |

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| Comments from Researcher, and/or from Supervisor if Researcher is Undergraduate or Taught Postgraduate student: |
|---|
| |

## Section IV: Research Checklist

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box:

| | | YES | NO |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Will the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or who may be unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities, emotional difficulties, problems with understanding and/or communication, your own students)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 2. | Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group, residents of nursing home)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 3. | Will deception be necessary, i.e. will participants take part without knowing the true purpose of the study or without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 4. | Will the study involve discussion of topics which the participants may find sensitive (e.g. sexual activity, own drug use)? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 5. | Will drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, alcohol, nicotine, vitamins) be administered to or ingested by participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 6. | Will blood or tissues samples be obtained from participants? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 7. | Will pain or more than mild discomfort be likely to result from the study? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 8. | Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 9. | Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 10. | Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 11. | Will participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time be withheld or not made explicit? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 12. | Will participants' anonymity be compromised or their right to anonymity be withheld or information they give be identifiable as theirs? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 13. | Might permission for the study need to be sought from the researcher's or from participants' employer? | ☐ | ☒ |
| 14. | Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS? | ☐ | ☒ |

If ALL items in the Declaration are ticked AND if you have answered NO to ALL questions in Section IV, send the completed and signed Form RE1 to your School/Centre Research Ethics Officer for information. You may proceed with the research but should follow any subsequent guidance or requests from the School/Centre Research Ethics Officer or your supervisor/module leader where appropriate. Undergraduate and taught postgraduate students should retain a copy of this form and submit it with their research report or dissertation (bound in at the beginning). MPhil/PhD students should submit a copy to the Board of Studies for Research Degrees with their application for Registration (R1). Work which is submitted without the appropriate ethics form will be returned unassessed.

If ANY of the items in the Declaration are not ticked AND / OR if you have answered YES to ANY of the questions in Section IV, you will need to describe more fully in Section V of the form below how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your research. This does

not mean that you cannot do the research, only that your proposal will need to be approved by the School/Centre Research Ethics Officer or School/Centre Research Ethics Committee or Sub-committee. When submitting the form as described in the above paragraph you should substitute the original Section V with the version authorized by the School/Centre Research Ethics officer.

If you answered YES to *question 14*, you will also have to submit an application to the appropriate external health authority ethics committee, after you have received approval from the School/Centre Research Ethics Officer/Committee and, where appropriate, the University Research Ethics Committee.

## Section V: Addressing Ethical Problems

If you have answered YES to any of questions 1-12 please complete below and submit the form to your School/Centre Research Ethics Officer.

**Project Title**

**Principal Investigator/Researcher/Student**

**Supervisor**

**Summary of issues and action to be taken to address the ethics problem(s)**

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Code of Practice on Ethical Standards and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. **This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data**. Any significant change to the design or conduct of the research should be notified to the School/Centre Research Ethics Officer and may require a new application for ethics approval.

Signed: _Ana tuno Borges do Cab_ Principal Investigator/Researcher

Approved: _C A Tunney_ Supervisor or module leader
(where appropriate)

Date: _20|9|2010_

### For use by School/Centre Research Ethics Officer:

- No ethical problems are raised by this proposed study     -     Retain this form on record

- Appropriate action taken to maintain ethical standards

- The research protocol should be revised to eliminate the ethical concerns or reduce them to an acceptable level, using the attached suggestions

- Please submit School/Centre Application for Ethics Approval (Form RE2(D))

- Please submit University Application for Ethics Approval (Form RE2(U))

Retain this form on record and return a copy of section V to Researcher

Signed: _R W Rugard_

Date: _10/11/10_

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# Appendix 2 Cover letter, Participant Information Sheet, Informed Consent Form

University
of Bolton

___ /___ / ___

Dear_____

My name is Ana Lucia Borges da Costa. I'm a PhD research student at the Faculty of Well-Being and Social Sciences, University of Bolton, currently developing a research project on Circle Dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being. I've enclosed a participant information sheet to give you more details about the study. I would appreciate if could dedicate some time to read it and to consider if you would like to take part in this research project.

Yours sincerely,

_____
Ana Lucia Borges da Costa
Research Student

## Participant Information Sheet

**Title of the project:** An investigation of Circle Dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being

**Researcher:** Ana Lucia Borges da Costa

About the project:
I'm a research student at the Faculty of Wellbeing and Social Sciences, at the University of Bolton, currently developing a research project on Circle Dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being.
The proposed research intends to fulfil the following aims:
1. To investigate the perceived benefits of circle dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being.
2. To investigate the extent to which circle dance teaching can facilitate a sense of achievement of occupational well-being in the context of Occupational Therapy principles and practices.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Studies for Research Degrees. I'm interviewing participants and teachers of circle dance groups in the U.K. in order to gain an understanding of their experience with circle dance.

Do I have to take part?
No, taking part is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, you do not have to give a reason and you will not be contacted again.

What will I have to do if I take part?
If you decide to participate, you will be given a written consent form to read and sign. Following this first stage, you will be invited to take part in an interview of approximately 1 hour. Date, time and venue will be discussed with you in order to facilitate your involvement. The interviews will be audio-taped with your permission. I will also take some notes during the course of the interview.
I might contact you after the interview in order to clarify some points; however you will not be obliged in any way to do it or to participate further.
You will have the right to withdraw from this study at any moment, without any prejudice.

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### What happens to what I say?

All the information will be treated as confidential and be used for the purposes of this study only. No personal identifying information or names will be included in the dissertation resulting from this study. However, anonymised quotes will be used with your permission. You will have the right to refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time, as well as withdraw any unprocessed information previously supplied.

All the information and notes collected during this study will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's policy, in a secure manner and for no longer than necessary.

### Are there any risks involved?

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

### What are the potential benefits?

This study intends to make a significant contribution to knowledge in the field of circle dance and occupational therapy. This could help to establish more circle dance groups in communities as well in the health and the social services and in the voluntary sector.

### About the results of the study

A report with all the main findings will be sent to you following the final analysis of data. It might be also published in journals.

### What do I do now?

Please, think carefully about the information on this sheet and contact me on 07979 296 057 or alb3mpo@bolton.ac.uk if you require any further information and/or clarification.

If you decide to take part, please sign the consent form and send it using the stamped and addressed envelope provided. I will contact you to arrange a convenient date, time and venue for the interview.

Thank you very much for your help!

Yours truly,

_____

Ana L. Borges da Costa
Research Student

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**Informed Consent Form**

**Title of the project:** An investigation of Circle Dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being

**Researcher:** Ana Lucia Borges da Costa

Name of the participant: _____

Date: ___/___/___

1. I have read and understood the attached participant information sheet and have had the opportunity to request further information and to ask questions.
2. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any moment, without prejudice.
3. I'm aware of, and consent to the tape recording of my interview with the researcher. I'm also aware of, and consent to the researcher taking notes during the course of the interview.
4. I understand that the results of this study may be published; however I understand that I will not be identified in these publications at any time.
5. I give consent that I would like to be involved in this research project.

Signature of participant: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

# Appendix 3 Table respondents' demographic information

| Respondent/ Interviewed as | Form of contact | Date | Gender | Age group | Occupational background | Participating in circle dance | Teaching circle dance | Qualification in teaching |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R1 participant | Face-to-face | Nov 2010 | Female | over 65 years old | Retired / social worker | 15 years | no | no |
| R2 participant | Face-to-face | Nov 2010 | Female | 56-64 years old | Retired / psychotherapist | 10-12 years | no | no |
| R3 participant | Face-to-face | Nov 2010 | Female | 46-55 years old | Psychotherapist | 13 years | no | no |
| R4 teacher | Face-to-face | Nov 2010 | Female | 56-64 years old | Retired / social worker / circle dance teacher (part-time) | 23 years | 19 years | no |
| R5 participant | Face-to-face | Feb 2011 | Female | over 65 years old | Retired / teacher community adult learning | 3 years 6 months | no | yes |
| R6 participant | Face-to-face | Feb 2011 | Male | 36-45 years old | Volunteer at the National Trust | 6 years | no | no |
| R7 participant | Face-to-face | Feb 2011 | Female | 36-45 years old | Carer assistant | 6 years | no | no |

| R8 teacher | Skype | Feb 2011 | Female | 56-64 years old | Therapist and teacher / circle dance teacher (part-time) | 28 years | 18 years | yes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R9 teacher | Face-to-face | Feb 2011 | Female | 36-45 years old | O.T. / gardening teacher / circle dance teacher (part-time) | 20 years | 11 years | no |
| R10 participant | Face-to-face | Feb 2011 | Male | 56-64 years old | Retired | 7 years | no | no |
| R11 teacher training coordinator | Face-to-face | July 2011 | Female | 46-55 years old | BSc Physical Education,Circle dance teacher + circle dance teacher training coordinator | 28 years | 27 years | yes |
| R12 participant | Face-to-face | July 2011 | Female | 56-64 years old | Retired P.E. teacher / teacher assistant | 3 years | no | yes |
| R13 teacher | Face-to-face | Sept 2011 | Female | 56-64 years old | Retired / Circle dance teacher (part-time) | 15 years | 9 years | yes – circle dance teacher training |
| R14 participant | Skype | Sept 2011 | Female | 36-45 years old | Social worker / charity manager | 20 years | no | yes – circle dance teacher training |
| R15 teacher | Face-to-face | Sept 2011 | Female | over 65 years old | Retired teacher/ circle dance teacher (part-time) | 20 years | 15 years | yes |
| R16 participant | Face-to-face | Sept 2011 | Female | 56-64 years old | Retired | 6-7 years | no | no |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R17 participant | Face-to-face | Sept 2011 | Female | 56-64 years old | University Senior Tutor/ Senior Lecturer | 9 years | no | yes – circle dance teacher training |
| R18 participant | Face-to-face | Sept 2011 | Male | 56-64 years old | University Lecturer | 9 years | no | yes |
| R19 teacher | Face-to-face | Oct 2011 | Female | 56-64 years old | Retired teacher / circle dance teacher (part-time) | 20 years | 12 years | yes – circle dance teacher training |
| R20 participant | Face-to-face | Oct 2011 | Female | 46-55 years old | Alexander technique teacher | 20 years | just started as a co-teacher | yes- circle dance teacher training |
| R21 participant | Skype | Oct 2011 | Female | 56-64 years old | Teacher | 20 years | no | yes – circle dance teacher training |
| R22 teacher | Skype | Oct 2011 | Male | 56-64 years old | Assistant College manager / circle dance teacher(part-time) | 21 years | 16 years | yes |
| R23 teacher | Skype | Nov 2011 | Female | over 65 years old | Retired /circle dance teacher (part-time) | 29 years | 28 years | yes |
| R24 participant | Skype | Dec 2011 | Female | 46-55 years old | Social worker team leader | 20 years | no | no |

| R25 participant | Skype | Dec 2011 | Female | Over 65 years old | Retired / secretary/gymnastic coach | 13 years | no | no |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R26 participant | Face-to-face | Jan 2012 | Female | 46-55 years old | Teacher (primary school) | 20 years/ 5 years(returned) | no | yes |
| R27 teacher | Face-to-face | Jan 2012 | Female | 56-64 years old | Circle dance teacher (part-time) | 30 years | 25 years | no |
| R28 teacher | Face-to-face | Jan 2012 | Female | 56-64 years old | Writer/ circle dance teacher (part-time) | 32 years | 28 years | no |
| R29 teacher | Skype | Jan 2012 | Female | 56-64 years old | Retired – computer projector manager/ Circle dance teacher (full-time) | 23 years | 18 years | no |
| R30 participant | Skype | Jan 2012 | Male | 46-55 years old | Computer programmer | 18 years | no | no |
| R31 Participant | Face-to-face | Jan 2012 | Female | Over 65 years old | Retired – social worker | 21 years | no | no |
| R32 participant | Face-to-face | Jan 2012 | Female | 46-55 years old | Psychotherapist | 14 years | no | no |
| R33 participant | Face-to-face | Jan 2012 | Female | 56-64 years old | Housing manager | 15 years | no | no |
| R34 teacher | Skype | Jan 2012 | Female | Over 65 years old | Retired – librarian/circle dance teacher (part-time) | 20 years | 15 years | Yes – circle dance teacher training |
| R35 teacher | Face-to-face | Feb 2012 | Female | 56-64 years old | Retired O.T. assistant / circle dance trainer (full-time) | 10 years | 10 years | no |

| R36 participant | Skype | Feb 2012 | Female | Over 65 years old | Retired – teacher / part-time sing facilitator | 25 years | no | no |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R37 teacher | Face-to-face | Feb 2012 | Male | 46-55 years old | Lawyer / circle dance teacher + folk dance teacher | 18 years | 17 years | no |
| R38 teacher | Face-to-face | Feb 2012 | Female | 46-55 years old | Accountant / Coach facilitator / circle dance teacher | 21 years | 19 years | no |
| R39 teacher training coordinator | Skype | April 2012 | Female | 56-64 years old | Circle dance teacher training coordinator / co-manager of the Education area/ member of the Foundation faculty . | 25 years | 20 years | Yes / circle dance training |

# Appendix 4 Interview questions participants

1. What does circle dance mean to you?

2. What was your first impression of circle dance when you started?

   - Did it change later? Has it changed in any way since?

   - Or now?

3. What motivates you to attend circle dance sessions?

4. To what extent does circle dance have an impact on your sense of well-being?

   - Level of stress?

   - Level of anxiety?

5. How do you feel / experience your body when you are dancing?

6. How do you learn the steps / dances best? What is your learning style?

7. How many circle dance teachers do you have leading your group?

8. How do you experience the different teaching styles of the teachers?

9. Do you think that the teacher plays an important role in improving the sense of well-being in the participants? Could you please describe how?

10. Do you go to the sessions on your own or with somebody else (relative, friend or colleague)?

11. Is the fact that circle dance involves dancing in a group important to you?

12. What do you feel you gain by dancing in a group?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add?  Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

# Demographic information for participants

1.  How long have you been engaged in circle dance?

2.  How many circle dance groups / classes / events do you attend?

3.  How often?

4.  Do you take part in any other recreational, leisure or physical activity?

5.  Have you done any other style of dance?

6.  What is your occupation / profession?

7.  Gender      (  ) male      (  ) female

8.  Group age:  (  ) 18-35    (  ) 36-45   (  ) 46-55   (  ) 56 – 64  (  ) over 65

# Appendix 5 Interview questions teachers

1. What is it about teaching circle dance that appeals to you the most?

2. What is, in your opinion, the main role of a circle dance teacher?

3. What do you aim to achieve through teaching circle dance?

4. Do you have a specific teaching style or methodology?

   - Could you describe it?

5. Is there any difference between being a circle dance teacher and being in another teaching role?

6. Do you think that an additional skill or skills could help you to improve or modify your role?

   - Could you describe it / them?

   - How could you achieve it / them?

7. How many circle dance groups or classes do you teach?

8. Characteristics of the programme?

   - Regularity?

   - Length of the sessions?

   - Community based?

9. Characteristics of the participants?

10. How do you plan your sessions?

    - How do you choose the dances and their level of complexity?

    - How do you assess your group / participants?

11. Do you know in advance if you will have new participants?

12. How do you welcome new participants? Do you modify your programme of dances when you have new participants? If yes, how?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add?  Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

## Demographic information for teachers

1.  How long have you been engaged in circle dance?

2.  How often?

3.  How long have you been teaching circle dance?

4.  Is teaching circle dance your full-time job? Part-time? Occasional?

5.  What is your occupation / profession?

6.  Do you have a qualification in teaching or in teaching circle dance?

7.  Gender      ( ) male     ( ) female

8.  Group age:  ( ) 18-35    ( ) 36-45   ( ) 46-55   ( ) 56 – 64  ( ) over 65

# Appendix 6 Interview questions coordinators

1. What was the main motivation which led you to create a circle dance teacher training programme?

2. When did you start offering the teacher training programme?

3. How did you design the training? What does your teacher programme involve?

4. Do you have other teachers assisting with the programme?

    5. Why did you choose these topics?

    6. What is the duration of the training programme? Any specific reasons for this duration?

    7. Who are you participants? Any characteristics in terms of age, gender, background?

    8. Any specific requirement to attend the training?

    9. How do you assess your students?

    10. How do you validate the qualification?

11. Are you aware of any other teacher training programme in the U.K.?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add?  Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

# Demographic information for teacher training coordinators

1.      How long have you been engaged in circle dance?

2.      How often?

3.      How long have you been teaching circle dance?

4.      Is teaching circle dance your full-time job? Part-time? Occasional?

5.      What is your occupation / profession?

6.      Do you have a qualification in teaching or in teaching circle dance?

7.      Gender    ( ) male    ( ) female

8.      Group age:  ( ) 18-35   ( ) 36-45  ( ) 46-55   ( ) 56 – 64

( ) over 65

# Appendix 7 Initial coding

| Initial coding | Data to be coded |
|---|---|
| | Q. First question: What does circle dance mean to you? |
| Describing levels of meanings | R3. It means a lot to me. Hum…there are many sort of aspects to that really….on a very sort of simple level, I see it, because I |
| Getting exercise | do it most weeks, once a week, I see it as an opportunity for exercise. And that is one thing but…I know that this a very simple level because it really goes much far beyond |
| Identifying as a place to get a balance | that what it means to me…It is a place, it is a place to go where I know if I'm stressed I |
| Feeling calm at the end of the session | will feel calm at the end, it is a place where if I was having a real problem with something, like a bereavement, it is place where I could go and put, you know, put the bereave person in the middle of the circle, and |
| Getting help from circle dance | mentioned that as a part of the check in. And … if you like, it helps me to grieve…I know that it has helped me to grieve in the past when I've experienced bereavement…because there is something about the circle, the other dancers… hum… sense… I do really feel a sense of |
| Feeling a sense of community | community. And in a lot of the circles that I |
| Describing characteristics of the participants | dance in, there has been quite often a quite number of women, that are a bit older, and it |
| Learning from other participants | felt quite often to me, like, particular when I first began, it is like I'm dancing with wise women. And that…you know, I learned a lot from the women in the groups I've been in. And I'm a bit older now because you know |
| Changing 'role' after 13 years | I've been dancing for 13 years now. And to |
| Enjoying the new role | a small extent I feel that I became one the wise women, which it is quite nice. Hum… (silent) So, another aspect that I know that it |
| Meditating in movement | is very helpful is the meditative aspect for |
| Letting body move | me. I love the dances where I can close my |
| Feeling connected to others and to herself at the same time | eyes…and just let my body move…and yet somehow I'm attached to the others in the group… so to be able to move with this and also be completely with myself, because I |
| Describing a unique experience when circle dancing | have my eyes closed, I don't know any…I don't know many other ways where I can do that. So, I think, I think these are the main ways that circle dance is important to me. |
| | Q. If you think about the first time you experienced circle dance, can you remember what did motivate you to continue? Why you are still engaged in this activity? |
| Experiencing circle dance for the first time | R3. I came across circle dance in a |
| Having a positive experience | conference initially… I thought that it was |

| | |
|---|---|
| Finding out about classes<br>Taking a while to decide whether to join<br>Going to circle dance class with a friend | great. And then I knew that there was a class not far from where I lived. And… it took a long time but then eventually I and a friend organised to go and… for me …I think…sorry, is it the question what motivated me to attend circle dance?<br>Q. Yes, yes. |
| Having a hard time (life circumstances)<br>Explaining circumstances<br><br><br>Grieving for her babies<br><br>Needing time just for herself<br>Needing time out<br>Needing time to be herself<br><br>Needing exercise<br>Needing time away from her baby | R3. I think that the time…it was a very bad time in my life… I had triplets, and unfortunately two of them were stillborn and this was about a year later. I was still heavily grieved stricken for the babies I lost and … I kind, at some level, I knew that I needed. I needed a little bit of time for me, away from the triplets that survived and away from my family… just to be with myself and my grief… And I needed a bit of exercise as well and so I think that they were the main motivating factors, that it was a little bit of a time out… of, of my week…because at that point, I think that it was probably the only time, actually, that I've had away from my little one. Hum… So, really, the motivating factor was to have a little bit of time for me.<br>Q. Hum, hum! How long have been doing circle dance? You mentioned 13 years?<br>R3. 13 years on a regular basis, yeah!<br>Q. Do you think that circle dance is beneficial to you?<br>R3. Yes, definitely yes.<br>Q. Could you please specify the benefits? I know that I've mentioned already some of them but if you could specify these benefits please? |
| Getting physical fitness<br><br>Getting a gentle form of exercise<br>Still circle dancing whilst recovering from broken leg<br><br><br><br><br>Building up strength<br><br><br><br>Not having to be 'super fit' to join<br><br><br><br>Getting a better balance, equilibrium<br><br><br>Grounding while dancing<br><br><br><br>Adjusting body position while dancing | R3. Ok. Certainly physical fitness, for me, a part of the beauty of circle dance, it is not too vigorous in terms of I don't have to be really fit to do it. So, even when I …like I broke my leg one point when I was circle dancer and it took me, you know, a while to get my fitness back... hum …but I was still able do some circle dancing. I might not be able to do every single circle dance at first but gradually build up my strength again so I think … so that's one of the beauties for me, because I'm not a very active person really, so … like what is lovely I don't have to be a super fit to join in and I can just missed out one or two fast dances if I'm not so fit or if my back is bad or… so I love that! I do have a sense that it helps with my balance and, again, on the physical side …hum… I think… I think, sometimes, I purposefully ground myself as I'm dancing, you know, making my feet flat on the floor and if I'm doing a dance where maybe you have, you know, to keep your leg up for a certain length of time and you could fall over a bit if you are not careful, hum… I, particularly on |

| | |
|---|---|
| Concentrating on being grounded<br>Staying in balance<br>Describing a unique experience | those dances, I really concentrate on being grounded and staying in balance… which again it is not something that I do anywhere else, so that's on the physical side…just… what is the question again? Just what are the benefits? Is it? |
| | Q. Yeah. |
| | R3. Ok, benefits, ok… that's the physical benefit, that's the physical things… hum…there is… I just... there is also, like human support side… there is something |
| Feeling supported by the group whilst holding hands | very supportive about holding on other people's hands really…particularly, you know, if you go to a circle dance regularly, |
| Getting support from some of the participants | you, usually, do have, at least some of the people in the group would be very supportive of you if you got a problem or anything, people often ask me, you know, how is your dad, or how is this…like they remember what I have said on a previous occasion… so that can be very supportive.. |
| Getting 'human support'<br>Getting 'spiritual support' | So that's kind of human support. Then there is… I feel that there is a spiritual support… partly what I told you before, to do with the meditative aspects, but sometimes, hum … I think, that's beyond that as well. I like the |
| Enjoying the link between dances and seasons | away like the circle dance follows the seasons, so, like, often the dances, they might be special dances for the harvest festival or for Christmas or, you know, and …often in the middle, some circle dance teachers, they will bring in things that represent this moment, in this season, then it might be, you know, a daffodil in spring or … and I love that, I love that! The link of the dance to the seasons… because I think… that's probably one of aspect of my life that's been under represented for me… you know, a kind of noticing of the seasons and what is in, you know… obviously this doesn't apply to circle dance but, you know, in a way, what vegetables are in season.. or, you know… circle dancing somehow brings my attention to the seasons… and also I think |
| Getting a sense of well-being from the music | that's… I get a sense of well-being from some of the music… you know, some kinds of music just help me just to calm down |
| Feeling the effect of the music | inside, I can feel my physiology dropping, so … that will not be for every piece of music that is played but certainly some music, for |
| Identifying a meaningful style of music<br>Enhancing well-being and sense of spiritual connection | me, particularly, some of the Celtic music, I just absolutely love it, and … I think that's more of spiritual level of well-being… And... I'm trying to see if there is anything else that I'm forgetting about… (silent) I talked about the physical, I talked about the spiritual and I suppose there is also, hum…a sort of |
| Enhancing mental/ psychological well-being | mental well-being, you know, psychological well-being, hum… some of their aspects I've already mentioned, as a support from |

| | |
|---|---|
| Feeling 'distressed'<br>Coming away in a different mood<br>Mood changing | people, also as a support, you know, I know when I go to circle dancing… it is likely that if I'm stressed or I'm distressed I will come away in a different mood… so , for me, it is mood changing and it is mostly very positive… mood changing. Sometimes what happens… and I think that this is positive although some people might not feel it, but … sometimes the music and the dance make me want to cry…<br>Q. Yes… |
| Getting in touch with other feelings | R3. But, for me, I think that is very positive because it helps me to get in touch with my feelings… and sometimes I think that it is very hard to cry… and I find very helpful if I can get myself to cry…. So, that's another aspect of that physical… sorry, the |
| Finding circle dance supportive | psychological and emotional well-being I've mentioned. So, I think that's the main ways that I find it supportive.<br> Q. Thank you! |

# Appendix 8 Pathways

**Circle Dance**

| Participants | Teachers | Training coordinators |
|---|---|---|

**Participants**
- Attend local groups
- Attend workshops with local teacher
- Attend workshops with other teachers, including international ones
- Attend festivals, events and workshops nationally and internationally

**Teachers**
- Teach local groups
- Provide workshops nationally
- Provide workshops and events abroad
- Take part and/or organize festivals, workshops and events nationally and internationally

**Training coordinators**
- Teacher training programmes
- Teach local groups
- Provide workshops nationally
- Provide workshops and events abroad
- Take part and/or organize festivals, workshops and events nationally and internationally

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# Appendix 9 List of publications and presentations

## Publications

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) 'Occupational therapy, circle dance and well-being: the need for research.' *British Journal of Occupational Therapy,* vol. 75, no. 2, pp.114-116

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) 'Circle dance: a leisure occupation promoting well-being.' *LSA Newsletter (Leisure Studies Association), no.* 91 (March), pp.25-26

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) 'An investigation of circle dance as a medium to promote occupational well-being.' *LSA Newsletter (Leisure Studies Association), no.* 92 (July), pp.43-44

## Conference presentations

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2013) '*Doing, being, becoming and belonging:* Circle dance promoting well-being.*'* Oral presentation at the 37th College of Occupational Therapy Annual Conference and Exhibition, Glasgow, June 2013

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2013) '*There is a place for everybody:* Circle dance, Leisure and Well-Being.' Oral presentation at the LSA International Conference, Salford University, July 2013

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2013) 'Circle dance promoting well-being.' Oral presentation at The Dancer Within Workshop, Ditchingham, Norfolk , July 2013

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2013) 'Leisure and health.' Educational TV Programme *Você em Foco,* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9bsCy_SHVI [23/08/2013], São Paulo, Brazil, August 2013

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) 'Circle dance: a leisure occupation promoting well-being.' Oral presentation at the SPARC, Salford University, June 2012

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) *'Doing, being, becoming and belonging:* circle dance promoting well-being.' Oral presentation at the Research and Innovation Conference, Bolton University, June 2012

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) *'Doing, being, becoming and belonging:* circle dance promoting well-being.' Oral presentation at the LSA International Conference, University of Edinburgh, July 2012

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2012) 'Researching circle dance: introducing the study and the initial findings.' Oral presentation at The Dancer Within Workshop, Ditchingham, Norfolk July 2012

Borges da Costa, A. L. (2012) 'Circle dance in occupational therapy.' Keynote presentation at the 8th Annual Conference of Integrative Practices, São Paulo, Brazil, August 2012

Borges da Costa, A.L.(2011) 'Circle dance, occupational therapy, leisure and well-being.' Oral presentation at the Research and Innovation Conference, Bolton University, June 2011

Borges da Costa, A.L.(2011) 'Circle dance, occupational therapy, leisure and well-being.' Oral presentation at SPARC, Salford University, June 2011

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2011) 'Circle dance, occupational therapy, leisure and well-being.' Oral presentation at the Leisure Studies Association International Conference, University of Southampton, July 2011

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2011) 'Circle dance in occupational therapy: an experience involving people with dementia and their carers.' Poster presentation at the 6th U.K. Dementia Congress, Liverpool, November 2011

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2010) 'Circle dance, occupational therapy and well-being.' Oral presentation at the Research Student Conference, Bolton University, June 2010

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2010) 'Circle dance, occupational therapy and well-being.' Oral presentation at the Research and Innovation Conference, Bolton University, July 2010

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2010) 'Circle dance: well-being journey.' Workshop at the Putting patients first in Health and Service Delivery, Bolton University, September 2010

Borges da Costa, A.L. (2010) 'Circle dance in mental health.' Health Promotion – PCT Manchester, October 2010

# Appendix 10 Copy of published article at the British Journal of Occupational Therapy

# Circle dance, occupational therapy and wellbeing: the need for research

*Ana Lucia Borges da Costa*

Circle dance derives from the tradition of folk dance and has historically been a popular form of dance throughout the world. As a form of physical activity, it can be explored in the context of occupational therapy principles and practices and the promotion of health and wellbeing. However, no literature is available to establish empirically the synergy between circle dance, occupational therapy and wellbeing. This opinion piece considers the use of circle dance as a tool for promoting occupational wellbeing and proposes that further research is needed to understand fully the perceived meanings attributed to this form of physical activity and its application in the context of occupational therapy.

## Introduction

Physical activity as a way to enhance wellbeing has been the focus of policies and recommendations in a broad range of public health concerns across many nations. A World Health Organization (2009) report shows physical inactivity to be a major determinant of the global pandemic of avoidable chronic disease, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancers (pV).

In the United Kingdom (UK), the Department of Health (DH) has developed various strategies to encourage participation in physical activities (DH 2009). Similarly, the College of Occupational Therapists (2005) recommended that promoting and providing opportunities for a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity, and supporting the provision of, or access to, affordable facilities and opportunities for exercise and recreation should be one of the key roles in the promotion of health and wellbeing.

From the point of view of occupational therapy, circle dance, considered as a form of meaningful physical and leisure activity, can provide opportunities for people to be physically active and for social interaction. This opinion piece is embedded in the growing recognition of the role of physical activity in improving wellbeing, enhancing quality of life and promoting participation in an active lifestyle. It considers the use of circle dance as a tool for promoting occupational wellbeing and proposes that further research is needed to understand fully the perceived meanings attributed to this form of physical activity and its application in the context of occupational therapy.

## Defining circle dance

Circle dance derives from the tradition of folk dance. Its repertoire includes traditional dances from different countries and cultures, in addition to contemporary choreographies. Whereas folk-dancing groups tend to restrict themselves to one particular (national) style, circle dance teachers can draw on the whole repertoire of folk dances from around the world. The participants hold hands in a circle and repeat a pattern of steps, following the rhythm dictated by the music and related to specific dances. The choreographies range from simple to complex arrangements of steps and can involve different group formations, such as dancing in a circle or in lines. As a shared occupation, the integration and inclusion of the participants is a fundamental

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aspect of circle dance. Like communal dances, circle dance emphasises the group dynamic. Self-expression is not the primary aim and 'the process of learning movements and positions takes place within a social and cultural context' (Norris 2001, p111).

In the UK, there are approximately 266 regular groups and 270 teachers offering sessions of circle dance to local communities. However, there have been few initiatives to use circle dance in the context of health, particularly in mental health. One of them, initially a partnership project between the National Health Service and Social Services, now an independent community group, offers fortnightly sessions for adults with mental health issues (Borges da Costa 2004).

## Wellbeing from an occupational therapy perspective

The concept of wellbeing is complex, with multiple meanings. In occupational therapy and occupational science, wellbeing is shaped by the idea that individuals gain benefits through engagement in meaningful activity (Wilcock 2006, 2007, Polatajko and Townsend 2007, Kielhofner 2008). This can be seen in established models of practice, such as the Model of Human Occupation (Kielhofner 2008) and the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (Polatajko and Townsend 2007), supporting the proposition that people need to 'actively make use of their physical, mental, and social capacities to enjoy wellbeing naturally and link this with their social needs for belonging' (Wilcock 2006, p315).

The definition of occupational wellbeing embraces doing, being, becoming and belonging (Wilcock 2007). *Doing* refers to the occupational performance, the traditional focus of practice models, where interventions are designed to enhance an individual's competency to perform occupations that he or she needs or is expected to do. *Being* is captured within the process of doing or the individual's occupational experience. *Becoming* is related to the 'ongoing evolution of an individual's occupational identities' (p5). The concept of *belonging* suggests that occupations provide opportunities for developing and maintaining connections with others, and with the social context in which occupation is performed (Wilcock 2007). The application of these concepts to circle dance is discussed below.

## Circle dance and wellbeing

The research evidence on the use of circle dance as a strategy to promote wellbeing is limited, with just a few qualitative studies discussing the application of circle dance in the field of mental health and education. Jerrome (2002) discussed a project undertaken in the UK with older people with dementia, evaluating the therapeutic use of circle dance. This has highlighted positive outcomes, such as a general sense of wellbeing, improved fitness and an opportunity to establish relationships within a group context. In Brazil, a group intervention using music therapy and circle dance was investigated within a mental health service for adults. Findings elucidated the subjective experience of the clients and the impact on the development of social identity and belonging (Leonardi 2007).

From the perspective of Jungian psychology, Hebling (2004) conducted a study with healthy students of art therapy, investigating the impact of circle dance on their quality of life and on their sense of spirituality. Results demonstrated an improvement in quality of life, positive modifications in body image and an impact on the participants' sense of spirituality.

Borges da Costa (1998) examined the introduction of circle dance in the curriculum of the School of Occupational Therapy at the University of São Paulo, evaluating students' perception of the therapeutic elements of circle dance, highlighting particularly its application in mental health settings. In another study, a recreational folk dance community programme for healthy women aged 50-80 years was briefly presented by an occupational therapist, emphasising the relevance of this initiative to the Australian health care system (Connor 2000).

Although these studies provide interesting insights, they do not address the interrelationship between circle dance, occupational therapy and wellbeing. Further research exploring the perceived experience of being engaged in circle dance, as well as highlighting its application in the context of occupational therapy, could build upon and enrich the present (limited) body of knowledge.

## Circle dance in the context of occupational therapy

The core of occupational therapy is the use of occupation as an agent of individual and collective change and the belief that people are innately active beings. This concept encompasses the idea that through being active we learn about ourselves, develop skills, maintain our physical and mental health, interact with others and construct and transform our reality (Peloquin 2011). In this context, circle dance is a modality that occupational therapists can use to enable people to be physically engaged in active occupations.

Considering the concept of occupational wellbeing as discussed above, the experiential aspect of circle dance could be translated as follows. *Doing* refers to the physical aspects of dance and the motor and process skills involved. The repertoire of dances and the patterns of movement can be adapted to meet the needs of individuals and of the group as a whole. *Being* refers to the process of learning the steps and experiencing the body in movement in a social context. *Becoming* refers to embodiment and the meanings attributed to the experience. *Belonging* refers to the sense of connectedness within a communal form of dance. As a shared occupation, circle dance requires participants to work towards a common goal as a group in a non-competitive

environment; the dances cannot be performed by an individual and the collective aspect is fundamental. From this perspective, it could provide opportunities for developing and maintaining connections with others, fostering a sense of belonging (Wilcock 2006).

## The need for further research

A contemporary occupational therapy philosophy based on the social model of health is embedded in a broader concept of occupation, which emphasises the importance of the balance between productivity, self-care and leisure, placing its impact on the promotion of health and wellbeing in a wider context. From this perspective, delivering and broadening occupation-focused practice to extend opportunities for all people to achieve their potential and improve their sense of wellbeing should be prioritised (Wilcock 2006).

The links between circle dance and occupational therapy have yet to be fully explored. The author would argue that the application of occupational therapy principles and practices to the pedagogical aspects of circle dance would facilitate the engagement of people in a meaningful physical occupation, improving their sense of wellbeing. Circle dance could also provide a new avenue for extending services into health-promoting physical activity programmes in the community. In this context, circle dance used as a physically active leisure occupation in clinical settings, as well as in non-institutional settings and community groups, can generate satisfaction and provide an opportunity to enhance self-esteem, motivation and socialisation. As a meaningful and fulfilling occupation it can, ultimately, help people to achieve a sense of occupational wellbeing.

## Conclusion

Further research into the interface of the three domains (occupational therapy, circle dance and wellbeing) would enhance theoretical understanding about the benefits of circle dance as a shared occupation and would inform professional practice in occupational therapy and circle dance teaching. By providing concrete examples of occupation-based programmes, prioritising physical activities and reflecting the occupational experience of a diversity of people, this research would suggest a new way to encourage physical activities.

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