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"Dance is My Dragon Point": Spirituality among Professional Dancers

Using bodylore concepts of kinesthetic empathy in conjunction with spirituality scholarship, this research works to demonstrate the blurred boundaries between secular and spiritual activity in a particular occupation. Despite the vast range and popularity of professional dance jobs in America, currently social science discourse, such as that in folkloristics and anthropology, have paid little attention to the field, a problem this work seeks to resolve by interviewing professional dancers directly about what they experience internally when they undertake such a bodily occupation.

Keywords: dance analysis, staged dance, spirituality, communitas, ritual dance

DANCE, ALTHOUGH STUDIED IN SOME FIELDS of anthropology and folkloristics for its secular cultural uses, has otherwise primarily been analyzed for its religious implications or, at times, the relationship between the two. Dance anthropology and cultural study remains more or less an underground field, a neglect that dance scholars attribute to three major complications: a lack of familiarity with dance elements like space and rhythm, ethnocentric and puritanical attitudes towards the body, and the difficulty of applying scientific methodology to the arts (Hanna 1973, 38).

Although dance study has grown since Judith Hanna's call to action in the 1970s, attempts to validate the study of dance by linking it to religion have ignored a vast and eclectic sphere within contemporary American dance practice: that of the professional dance community. While the cultural dances of marginal and minority groups have been examined as a lens through which to understand their vernacular cultures, American professional dance work—including fields like music videos, nightclubs, musicals, and fitness trends based on upbeat dancing—is a secular field that remains largely uninvestigated by social scientists working in the arts and occupational culture. If, as dance anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler claims, "an adequate description of a culture should place the same emphasis on dance as that given it by the members of that society" (quoted in Pype 2006, 297), the importance of dance research not only to the larger American culture but to professionals in the field of dance lies in understanding the relationship between the activity and the lives of those involved.

Despite the predominant Western philosophical assumption that the mind and body are "two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances […], each of which inhabits its own self-contained sphere" (Grosz 1994, 6), dance is far from lacking in the metaphysical attributes it is expected to elide because of its physical nature. Bodylore scholars like Deidre Sklar have attempted to conceptualize the intertwining relationship between these two spheres, claiming, "the bodily works its way up into the conceptual via imagination" (Sklar 1994, 12). Those familiar with dance are vocal regarding this false dualism. Sabrina Misirhiralall writes, "even though physiologically dance is a type of exercise that helps the human body remain healthy, dance also involves expressive movement based on thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the physiological being and the psychological being of the dancer are linked" (2013, 75). Claims like those made by Sklar and Misirhiralall pointedly negate the assumed dichotomy of the two spheres.

Rather than remaining purely physical, moments of comfort and catharsis frequently occur while dancing, exhibiting Victor Turner's concept of "flow,"[1] a state in which the dancer loses their self-consciousness and becomes fully absorbed in their body, the activity, and the environment around them (Jorgensen 2012, 18). Patricia Sawin argues that the achievement of flow is often "an end in itself," providing a primary motivation for participating in activities, like dance, which induce such states (Sawin 2002, 36). This altered state of consciousness resembles that of "ecstasy," itself a goal of spiritual practice, defined as "a range of experiences characterized by being joyful, transitory, unexpected, rare, valued, and extraordinary to the point of often seeming as if derived from praeternatural sources" (Laski 1990, 5). While the two may be similar, a primary difference between flow and ecstasy resides in their dependence on belief; while Laski understands ecstasy as being connected to "praeternatural sources," flow, according to Turner's view and its reimagining in the works of Sawin and others, is achievable in non-religious contexts.

As Sawin comments, "to understand the place of folklore (construed as uncommodified, esthetic, small-group communicative interaction) in contemporary culture, we also need to go farther 'inside,' to explore psychological and emotional dimensions of the experience of the performance event" (2002, 30). Despite their varied religious identifications, those interviewed for this project continually provided descriptions of altered states of consciousness, which mirrored both Turner's sense of flow and Laski's description of ecstasy. Their understandings of these phenomena were not based in a particular ideology but in a larger cultural understanding of what a "conscious" state should look like. These individuals described their emotional experiences by comparing differences in their everyday presentation of the self to their perceptions of their selves in motion—literally explaining the ways their consciousness is altered by emotions and movement. Whatever the specific style of a dance may be, spectators and researchers should be careful not to assume a performance's intent from a third-person perspective. The ability to achieve flow and catharsis, no matter the

space in which the dancer is performing or the assumed goal of the act, means that *intent* is the only clear distinction between secular and sacred dances. This can only be identified by speaking to dancers about their experiences.

This project examines the relationship between the physical and metaphysical aspects of professional dance as they relate to the dancer's spiritual beliefs, demonstrating the ways in which spiritual feeling is created within a secular occupation, how these feelings are negotiated on an individual level with regard to a person's religious identification, and the ways in which these negotiations affect the enactment of the occupation itself. While professional dance may be perceived as separate from religious spaces, performers in this study report experiencing spiritual occurrences that are not subject to any one religious observance.

Key Concepts

Two key themes of this research, professional dance and spirituality, must be outlined. Anthropologist Judith Hanna defines dance as "human behavior composed of purposeful—from the dancer's perspective—intentionally rhythmical, and culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movements other than the ordinary motor activities" (1988, 284). Secular dance, divorced from intentionally religious use, involves a wide range of movements and forms that are often stylized and contextually linked to musical accompaniment or the intentional lack thereof. To dance requires intention and culturally determined aesthetic movement (Hanna 1973, 39). Professional dance, as a corollary to this definition, is the receiving of payment for dance activity, usually in a performance venue. Occupations that comprise this field are highly variable, and interviewees for this project include dance teachers, a cancan dancer at a Wild West theme park, former cruise ship performers, and individuals on national theater tours.

The second theme of this research is spirituality. Pointing out the difficulties in defining spirituality itself, Catherine Albanese claims it as the personal experiential element of religion but concedes to the American classification of "spiritual but not religious" in that "religion" requires institutionalization (2001, 10). In the mind of the American public, spirituality relies on belief in a way which is separate from, and often contrasting to, organized religion.

Catholic historian John Farina examines the relationship between religion and spirituality in depth, suggesting that, by emphasizing action, "spirituality" has become the personal and internal component of belief, while "religion" has become ideologically focused on institutionalization. Religion and spirituality, Farina explains, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but have the potential to coexist as two sides of one theological system (1989, 18). To this end, he writes, "whatever it may mean, spirituality is used to connote the way humans live out their faith, or at least their moral commitments. Both the attitudes engendered by their relationship to those ultimate

values and the actions that flow from them are the stuff of spirituality" (30). While religion and spirituality are related, for my informants there is an institutional aura to hierarchical organization and a defined deity that is not ascribed to spirituality, mirroring Farina's separation of the two. As this project specifically investigates these individuals' perceptions of the relationship between their occupations and beliefs, I defer to their understandings of the term "spirituality" as it contrasts with "religion."

Methods

As demonstrated in the chart below, eight professional dancers were interviewed for this project. These individuals presented a variety of strong spiritual or religious alliances, allowing for an interesting comparison in analysis.

Name	**Interview age**	**Religious affiliation**	**Dance occupation**
Alana	23	Mennonite Brotherhood	Amusement park cancan dancer
Ashleigh	30	Loosely Christian	Instructor/ general stage performer
Chuckie	30	"spiritual, but not religious"	Stage performer for traveling musicals
Gabriel	24	Agnostic	Latin dance/ hip-hop instructor
Melody	39	Latter Day Saints	General instructor
Schuyler	24	Nontraditional Christian	Stage hip-hop dancer/instructor
Bertha	25	Christian	Musical theater dancer for stage shows/amusement parks
Paul	43	"agnostic neutral with a side of humanism"	Primarily belly dance

Table 1: An overview of the individuals interviewed for this study. Informants' religious identification is reported as claimed at the time of the interview. Information regarding occupation is based on the researcher's familiarity with each informant's work as well as the self-reported occupational status of the informant.

Since dance work often requires a mobile lifestyle, interviewing these individuals in person proved difficult. While two informants were able to complete the interview in person, most of the discussions with my interviewees occurred over Skype calls while I took notes with a voice recorder. Due to time constraints and busy rehearsal schedules, two dancers were sent the questions via email so that they could respond at their own pace. Once the interviews were completed, responses were compared for

similarities in theme and keywords. Drafts of the analysis were later sent to those who were interviewed to offer feedback, allowing for full reflexivity on the part of the researcher and the informant and further cementing the reciprocal bond intrinsic to effective ethnographic research. Despite whatever difficulties the interviewing process presented, my informants were patient and excited to help and I am grateful to them for their support.

What Is It That Dancers Feel?

Although dance scholars have explored how dancers feel when performing, their studies have focused primarily on the physical nature of dance rather than the emotional experiences of performers. The emotional is closely linked to the physical for many dancers, however, and should not be discounted. For my interviewees, dancing professionally means performing in front of a stationary and inactive audience, often requiring a theatrical component. Chuckie, for instance, performs in tours of musicals like *Cats!* and Alana and Bertha both appear as characters at their respective theme parks. Such theatrical practice is not a requirement of all occupational dance, and dancers like Gabriel, Paul, and Schuyler are able to perform as themselves. In many cases, even when theatrical performance is not involved, some dancers must think of the work as acting in order to, as Melody says, "let themselves go there," to locate and translate the feeling of a piece to the audience. Dancers must find and expose the intended emotions in order to achieve a performance that successfully engages the audience in its narrative.

Successful performances are often characterized by their ability to make the audience "feel something." This phenomenon of linking the dancer's movement to the viewer's emotions, known as kinesthetic empathy, is "the capacity to participate with another's movement or another's sensory experience of movement" (Skylar 1994, 15) and allows audience members to experience feelings of participation in both the physical performance and the emotion with which it is imbued (Carroll and Seeley 2013, 178).[2] This process, however, is highly contextual and can be influenced by a number of factors[3] and should not be subject to universalizing interpretations (54). Audience members must understand both the cultural and artistic contexts behind a performance and be able to analyze the dancer's choice of action to fully connect with the emotion the dancer wishes to incite (Carroll and Seeley 2013,180). Such notions of performance imbue even seated and passive audiences with agency. Folklore performance theories since Albert Lord's 1960 *Singer of Tales* have interrogated the influence audiences have on the performance itself, becoming "enshrine[d]" within the study not as inactive voyeurs but coparticipants in the performance event" (Sawin 2002: 35). Through this lens, professional dance performance becomes heavily oriented towards community. Like the audiences of Lord's epic singers, dance audiences are able

to contribute to the event's production through their own desires and interpretations; this dynamic places the activity succinctly within the realm of performance studies.

In her research on spiritual dance, Judith Hanna writes, "intense, vigorous dancing can lead to an altered state of consciousness through brain wave frequency, adrenalin, and blood sugar changes. These actions provide a fatigue that abates rage or alleviates depression. Rapid motion may induce catharsis and turning, a state of vertigo" (1988, 284). While these altered states of consciousness are usually attributed to ritual and shamanistic dancing, Hanna's description of the dancer's physical experience is echoed throughout my informants' explanations of what it is they feel when they dance, even if the actual transition of consciousness is less obvious than that of a ritual. While professional dancers may not experience an alteration of consciousness that fully removes them from their usual state of being, these individuals still report experiencing the physical changes Hanna describes and can effortlessly detail the cathartic elements of dance that relieve both anger and sadness.

Chuckie's claim, "I feel like when you dance—when you really give into it and let it take over, it's almost an out of body experience," demonstrates the possibility of altered states of consciousness in secular dance practice reminiscent of Turner's idea of flow. Ashleigh's explanation, that dancing offers balance and a sense of peace, is captured in her statement:

> In college, we learned about something called a dragon point. A dragon point in, like, Chinese culture, religion, is the point where all of your elements are in balance. In that culture, the dragon point they talk about is an actual physical location and it's usually a cliff overlooking the sea because on a cliff you're closer to wind. You're still on the ground, so you have earth, you have wind; fire is within the earth so you're always connected to the fire when you're connected to earth. And then the cliff overlooking the sea is the water. They call it the dragon point because it's where all of your elements are aligned and where you are the most at peace. To me, dance is my dragon point, where all my elements are aligned.[4]

Gabriel, a Tejano Latin dance instructor, claims a similar sense of peace that relates to his heritage, reporting, "It makes me feel that I'm not displaced. It makes me feel home." Even Schuyler, who primarily performs hip-hop says, "I feel it in my chest, that's all I can say. That's all I can explain. It's more of a dead center, caving feeling of just uplifting." This comment describes not only exactly *what* he feels, but its location within his body. Further, the contradictory notions of "caving" and "uplifting" demonstrate the incredible difficulty of fully defining the relationship between physical movement and emotion. While this description seems concise and clear to Schuyler, those who do not share this feeling can be left in wonderment at the combination of

these descriptions and the way in which such experiences play out in a positive way on the body.[5]

Schuyler's comment reveals something further regarding the emotions a dancer feels when performing. Often, specific movements can be linked to particular feelings. For Schuyler, "the emotions trigger or provoke the movement." Although this phenomenon is by no means universal, the relationship between emotion and movement is commonly accepted, as each individual I interviewed referenced either feeling their movements create emotion, or the inverse—their emotions creating movement. It is this connection between affect and motion which suggests the spiritual implications of professional dance. The fact that secular dance styles may instigate or draw from the emotional reactions of the performer demonstrates a deeper emotive component to the field than simply the physical movement of the body.

Although the sample size for this research is small, it is significant that the entirety of the group voiced some sort of relationship between emotion and movement. Exactly which motions exhibit such importance, however, varies by person. Alana identifies leaping as the movement which makes her feel the most content and at peace and Chuckie explains how leaping and turning both help him connect to deeper emotive processes: "Leaps are always freeing. I don't think I'm great at them, but there is something about that feeling of being suspended in air. Also turns; I feel like you can get so much aggression out with turns. Just turn and turn and let it all go." Paul's explanation of the relationship between movement and emotion demonstrates the intertwining and complex nature of the two. While he attests that it is the movements that initiate the emotionally fulfilling moments he looks for when dancing, he also admits that the desire to feel such emotions often leads him to complete movements that he knows will incite the sought-after feeling. For Paul, the movement initiates the emotion, and enacting that movement is a demonstration of agency—a notion Deborah Kapchan claims is implicit in the choice to perform (1995, 479). Performing is a reflexive and intentional undertaking and the choices of movement within the performance must exhibit a similar decisiveness.

Paul is not the only individual in this study to strategically choose movements based on the emotional states they create. Dancers and choreographers depend on a phenomenological knowledge of the emotional capacity of movement in order to create the kinesthetic empathy that marks a performance as a successful connection to the audience. As Carroll and Seeley report:

> The take-home point here is threefold. First, the formal-compositional practices of choreographers (and dancers) are explicitly and intentionally directed at the production of sensorimotor cues diagnostic for the content of their works. Second, crossmodal sensorimotor processes are critical to the role these diagnostic cues play in our capacity to perceive, recognize, and understand these works. Finally, we can intend to

> communicate things without knowing what makes the communication possible. (2013, 182)

While Paul and others may intentionally enact moves known to induce particular emotions in order to connect with the audience, they are not always aware of how such a transfer is possible. In these instances, the dancer must rely on their own internal feelings if they hope to simultaneously affect the viewer. Accordingly, what the performer feels and how they cue such emotions become highly important factors, as those are what make a performance successful.

It should be noted that while each of the dancers I interviewed references a feeling of peace and catharsis when dancing, none of these comments are explicitly linked to a religious discourse. Like Albanese's description of the difference between religion and spirituality in America, dancers in this study who experience this type of emotion do not see it as being linked to their religion but to a spirituality that involves the inherent energy of the self. While these dancers do practice strategies of belief enactment and can speak to the catharsis of their occupation, the emotional release of dance is not related to their individual religious affiliations.

This analysis correlates with Misirhiralall's evaluation of the rhetorical treatment of dance in media in which she claims, "articles that use the term 'religious' discuss dance in connection to a cosmic being. The term 'spiritual' is used in the media to portray dance as a way to self-develop, as well as gain an epistemological understanding of the world" (2013, 91). Rachel Kraus echoes this classification in her examination of Christian belly dancers: "many belly dancers consider belly dance to be spiritual because it helps them connect with themselves, relax, and feel peaceful" (2010, 475). While the feelings a dancer experiences may be reminiscent of religious discourse, those who report such emotions apply them to self-development rather than institutional religious needs.

These connections to self and feelings of peace demonstrate that while professional dance may be intended for secular purposes, participation allows performers to experience a spiritual release of energy which does not have to be subject to any one religious observance. In this way, professional dance that is based in theater becomes not only reliant on performance but is performative of belief itself by physically embodying metaphysical themes (Jorgensen 2012, 5). Through motion, each dancer demonstrates important values and embodies peace with disciplined movement. By expressing their bodies and values in a performance setting that requires its own language of movement, professional dancers demonstrate themselves as members of a unique community, thus using their occupational skills to enact cultural values related to belief on an internal and personal level.

Kraus's work demonstrates the role of spirituality in dance by pointing out that "many dancers also consider the dance to be spiritual because it helps them to connect with other people" (2010, 475). While the dancers I interviewed were able to identify

personal emotions in connection with their art, several also claimed that these feelings connect to something beyond themselves. These outward links are contextual and often depend not only on the style of dance but the audience for whom the dancer is performing. For example, while Schuyler sees the emotions of his performance connecting him to a power "bigger than" himself, which has given him his dancing ability, Alana claims to be connected to primarily the audience. Melody explains, "I think [the connection] is a little bit of both [external and internal forces]. Internally, you find how you connect with [the dance], but then, externally, you have to share it with your audience."

Descriptions like Melody's detail the varied methods of emotional connection available to the dancer and how strict, dichotomous distinctions can often become nebulous in praxis. While some dancers may feel only an outward or only an inward connection, it is far more likely that the individual will experience components of each while in motion, thereby making such connections not a singular product, but a constant process. This process ultimately leads to the emotional connection that enthralls an audience and creates a successful performance; the dancer continually reaches both inward for emotion and outward for connection, and this triggers the same process within the viewer (Reason and Reynolds 2010, 68).

No matter where these individuals' practices led their emotional connection to dance, a common theme of community with audiences and other dancers ran through my informants' reports. When dancing, individuals can reach a state of what Victor Turner calls existential *communitas*, "the direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities which tends to make those experiencing it think of mankind as a homogenous, unstructured and free community" (1974a, 69), although this feeling commonly ends with the dance and does not bleed into other aspects of the individual's lives. Dance not only represents the notion of communitas by presenting a visually homogenous and egalitarian community in motion, but also can create this communitas interpersonally between those who are performing (Pype 2006, 34).

Communitas*,* Kapchan points out, is created in spaces of liminality wherein the body undertaking the ritual experiences a change (1995, 480). Such space is characterized by Turner as "a period and area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo" (1974b, 57), in which the individual undergoing a transformation is physically separated from the community at large and is often forced, via masks or costuming, into anonymity and conformity (59). Each of these characteristics of the liminal period can apply to professional dance performance as well; dancers are physically separated from their communities in order to have the physical space for the performance, and troupes commonly wear identical or similar costumes, contributing to both the ambiguity and uniformity of the body. Despite these similarities, however, dance performance is largely "liminoid" in that it "resembles without being identical with 'liminal'" (64), in that the secular dance performance is *not* a ritual with spiritual intentions. Unlike liminal spaces which require a transformation to occur through the ritual process, liminoid

zones act as an "independent domain of creative activity" (65), appearing on the surface to be liminal but without the long-lasting philosophical effect expected of ritual. While dancers may experience incredible feelings of catharsis when dancing, this feeling seldom lasts past the end of the event, returning the performer to his or her usual state of consciousness.

The ability of dancers to achieve communitas further aligns the profession to spirituality in its dependence on liminality and the liminoid. Dancers who report feeling connected to those with whom they share the stage experience empathy for their coworkers as they undertake and move through the liminally marked space of the performance event. This feeling often extends to the audience as well as they become "by-proxy participants" of the performance (Reason and Reynolds 2010, 54) through the process of kinesthetic empathy, creating a microcosm of community that is artistically and intuitively based. This community creation is different from ritual communitas, however. Turner writes, "'Flow' may induce communitas, and communitas 'flow,' but some 'flows' are solitary and some modes of communitas separate awareness from action—especially in religious communitas. Here it is not teamwork in flow that is quintessential, but 'being' together, with being the operative word, not doing" (1974b, 79). Merely "being" together is not enough, but rather the existential community is created through the teamwork of the dancers' bodies in motion.

This creation of communitas negates the inherent hierarchy behind Cartesian mind/body dualism by sympathetically and unconsciously connecting each individual as an equal actor in a homogenizing process that is both bodily and metaphysical (Jorgensen 2012, 14). Ashleigh's comment, "I don't think about it [building a connection with others] when I'm doing it," demonstrates the unconscious nature of communitas creation in both ritual and professional contexts. The power of this connection can draw in bystanders who only view the dance, making the audience part of the community of dancers rather than voyeuristic bystanders. This egalitarian distribution of authority further empowers the interpretive stance of the audience through kinesthetic empathy (Reason and Reynolds 2010, 68).

Dancers call upon the ability to create communitas in order to engage an audience. Although highly personal and individual, the spiritual cathartic emotions related to a particular dancer's feeling are often the very component which can define the success of a piece. It is these emotions which draw the attention of viewers and connect an audience to a performance, heightening both an understanding of the emotional themes of the work and the art's entertainment value.

Negotiations of Religion and Dance

Professional dancers express a variety of relationships between dance and religion, as dancing allows performers to connect to their innermost feelings as well as

the feelings of those around them in ways similar to spirituality. Despite this, many dancers must negotiate between two worlds with highly divergent values, since the aesthetic focus of dance does not always align with some of the conservative ideas of Western religions. Although dance is highly spiritual in its reliance both on catharsis and communitas, this does not always translate to an allegiance with religious practice.

Issues with the appropriateness of dance are not uncommon in American religious discourse. Cathy Grossman, senior national correspondent for Religion News Service, attributes the Puritanical separation of dance from religion to sexism, as dancing, like women, was pushed "into the background" of society (Misirhiralall 2013, 91). Although Ashleigh claims she never experienced such conflicts, she tells a moving story regarding a girl she knew as a child:

> I had a friend who I grew up taking ballet with who had a very hard life, and she was a foster child, and she only took ballet, which is—of all styles of dance—it's the most tame, it's the most controlled. There's nothing dirty about ballet. And she was foster familied by a family who were not accepting at all of the fact that she danced. They called her, like, "hellspawn," they ridiculed her. To continue dance, a social worker would pick her up to take her to dance because the family refused to take her.

This young girl's plight is mirrored in the concerns of Kraus's Christian belly dancers, who must negotiate between their dance practice and members of their religious communities. While Ashleigh admits that some faiths are disapproving of dance, it is the ways in which other Christians react to dancers, rather than any canonical stance, which presents the need for conflict negotiation between a dancer's beliefs and occupation. As one of Kraus's informants states, "it's not really the church so much as the people in the church" who cause problems to arise (2010, 469).

Among those I interviewed, Melody in particular voiced issues of negotiation between her lives as a dancer and as a Mormon. Melody's dilemma however, centers on her personal interpretation of faith rather than the church's perception of dance. She says, "it was never 'the church didn't like dance,' it was never that. It was always a personal level of 'am I maintaining my spirituality the way I should?'" Dance and belief are both important elements of Melody's life that she is passionate about, yet she views them as separate. The conflict between the two lies not in the appropriateness attributed to dance by her religion, but rather in the amount of time she can spend in each sphere. Her personal religious feelings only conflict with her passion for dance when she feels she is neglecting one aspect of her personality for the other.

Others in this study report positive relationships between their faith and dance practice. Regarding the Mennonite Brotherhood, Alana says, "they definitely embrace [dance]. It's not something that's considered bad." Despite such openness within her

religion, Alana, like Melody, feels that her faith and occupation are completely different aspects of her personality, yet even she is unclear of the distinction between the two and how they may relate, demonstrating the complicated nature of the relationship. While the two may be considered separate, they are nevertheless connected, often fulfilling similar cathartic tasks but in different ways. Fully defining the boundaries of each is often a difficult or even impossible task for religious dancers.

Schuyler has taken the relationship between his faith and dance one step further, both performing with a specifically religious purpose and taking secular dances into sacred venues. He claims, "a lot of the dance studios I've danced with in the past have always—go back to the church and dance for the church before we have to perform." To Schuyler, the relationship between his religion and dance practice is so important that he feels the need to connect the two in one clearly defined space. Not only does he "go back to the church" temporally by keeping his faith in mind when he dances, but he literally returns to a site associated with religious connotation to both honor and strengthen that connection.

The intertwined nature of religion and dance relies heavily on the individual's belief system and is more common in some religions than others. As Hanna states, "considering humans to be God's creation, some people believe the language of movement is God-given and both the progression of a dancer's training and the perfection of performance reveal God's achievement. Within this orientation, dancers accept their calling as a gift from God" (1988, 298). While Hanna's interpretation is one to which Schuyler ascribes, this opinion is in no way universal, as Ashleigh's tale indicates.

Even further, some religious systems not only accept dance but consider it integral to religious practice because of its "God-given" nature. Hanna's work comments "within the Franciscan view that God is present in good works and in the creative force of the arts, the Roman Catholic Church sanctions dance-rituals throughout Latin America" (1988, 298) by way of example. Gabriel acknowledges not only the ritual aspects of dance associated with the Catholic practice of his ancestors, but also uses his own performances as way to recall social dancing that occurred at church events in his childhood. Gabriel's particular relationship between dance and belief includes a further connection to his ethnicity. His Tejano heritage, blending aspects of Texan and Mexican history and social values, presents a strong connection to both Catholicism and dance as a social pastime, which also exhibit unique ties to one another. Dance for Gabriel is not merely spiritual but also social and used for community building.

Influences of Religion on Dance

My informants, while careful to disassociate their religious practices and feelings about dance from one another, demonstrate a range of ways in which the ethics of their

beliefs influence their work. This habit was most evident in the realm of dance instruction. Of those interviewed, three identify dance instruction as their current primary occupation and each openly acknowledges the ways in which morals, rather than religious ideology, influence their pedagogy in practical ways. This practice is far from novel, however, and has been written about regarding some of the field's most famous choreographers like Virginia Tanner, whose work has been explicitly described as "expressive of community values and religious belief" (Dils 2000, 8).

Ideas of what is morally appropriate influence instructors' choices of music more so than those of choreography or costuming. Schuyler notes, "I use [dance] as a way for me to express my beliefs, or Christianity, whether it's editing music and making sure there's no bad lyrics that, you know, may go against my beliefs. Especially with hip-hop music. I make sure I'm censored with the music I play." This same focus on appropriate music is voiced by Ashleigh who reports she prefers using music with only positive messages when working with children. Ashleigh further defines herself as "very, very rigid with any kind of sexual content with kids," an attribute, she claims, of her conservative Christian upbringing.

Paul, the most clearly divorced from organized religion of my informants, claims that his choices of costuming rely on his spirituality in order to be empowering rather than restrictive. He comments, "My beliefs are about BEING oneself, and I have a strong opinion that the aura you project around yourself creates a certain filtered reality. People accept who you are if you project outward a strong sense that this IS who you are" (emphasis original). For Paul, then, costuming choices which make him feel the most thoroughly himself are considered belief enactment, strengthening the ties between his personal beliefs and dance practice.

Like both Ashleigh and Schulyer, Melody selects and rejects songs based on the appropriateness of their content yet does not identify this as being connected to her religious beliefs. Rather, Melody feels the influence of her religious morals in discussions with her students. Melody admits, "I'm on my soapbox all the time," and tries to instruct her dancers on what is appropriate regarding sexuality and substance use. In Melody's experience, "you're privy to more information than probably [the students'] parents are," and she attempts to transmit morals to her students which are important to her as both a mother and a Mormon. It is not the theological values particular to Mormonism that Melody presents in her dance class, but rather broader ethical judgments which can be applied to any religious system.

Carrying this idea of ethical pedagogy into a larger context, a theme of community outreach through dance is a common thread in dance pedagogy. Jill Green explains the unlikely pairing of dance and sociopolitical work, stating that dance can be "an agent of social change by helping students facilitate a creative process that releases their disruptive energies in response to their disempowerment" (2000, 136). By teaching students the ways in which bodies may be "socially manipulated, controlled, and habituated," they are able to take ownership over their bodies and counteract such

oppression (136). In this same vein, Gabriel specifically identifies his professional dance work as activism, stating, "one thing I'm trying to do is bridge the two cultures; the Latino and American, primarily white culture […] so that they can understand that [Latinos] are not all the same and we don't all sell drugs or pick at farms." This aim for adequate cultural representation inspired Gabriel to found *Paso a Paso*, a non-profit organization connecting Latin youth with their cultural heritage through dance.

The desire to communicate values associated with, but not dependent upon, religious belief has been exhibited throughout the history of dance and seems to only be gaining interest. In discussions of modern dance productions in the United Kingdom, Peter Brinson claims, "youth dance is opening eyes, breaking prejudice, demonstrating the role of dance as an expression of social conscience and as a communicator, not only for young active people, but also for those with disabilities and the elderly as well as each of us" (1992, 695). While this concept ties most explicitly to themes of community integration, with individuals like Gabriel and Melody who feel close ties to their religion, it is impossible to completely disassociate cultural values from religious morals. Through teaching one, dance instructors demonstrate the other, and practiced cultural values become representative of held religious ideologies. This use of art for social action, however, changes the intent of the performance. No longer merely an expression of cultural aesthetics, activist art must assume a stance which is accessible and relevant to local audiences, thereby becoming '"accountable' to a community and its standards" (Sawin 2002, 33).

Unfortunately, relaying these values to others does not mean dancers feel the metaphysical connection which drives them when they are teaching. By far, those I interviewed stressed the importance of freestyling, or improvisational dancing initiated without prior design, to locate emotion rather than teaching. The practice of freestyling is highly important in a variety of cultures and dance styles, as Lois Ibsen al Faruqi states: "…since choreography in the dances of the Muslims is not pre-planned to follow a programmatic or mood content, performers are "free" (within culturally determined limits) to invent and combine the steps as they perform" (1978, 8). This "free" feeling, while restricted by cultural tenets of morality and aesthetics, allows dancers to experiment and express themselves in ways that are exciting and cathartic but also relevant and culturally appropriate.

The acting component of performing Melody enjoys over instructing is the same element Gabriel dislikes about his career. By contrast, Gabriel locates the emotions which make dance important to him in improvised social dances with other passionate individuals:

> The passion gets kind of directed to the music and the music kind of takes you higher and eventually that flame bursts and just bust out of your body like "bam!" and then you're like "what was that? I don't know, let's keep doing it!" And that's something you don't really get with

> performance because you put in so much time and effort and sweat into doing those steps that are preplanned that all you're thinking is "smile big, and here I turn, and turn my partner. Smile! Everyone see? Okay, great." It's not something for you, it's something for the people who might be judge you or might see you.

Ashleigh, too, claims to have an easier time accessing the emotions she loves while freestyling and stresses the vast number of dancers who mention a "creative flow" when discussing freestyle dance. It is important to recognize, however, that dancers claim only that it is *easier* for them to find emotional connections when freestyling, not that this is the only method by which these connections are made. Once the emotional possibility of dancing has been realized, it is easier to attain across genres and methods of presentation. While freestyling may be the easiest way to connect to what makes dance important to these individuals, it is by no means the only way. In effect, finding such connections in any form of dance has the possibility to influence both the method and intent of an individual's dance practice.

Conclusion

Popular dance in America, while primarily considered non-religious because such performances take place outside of religious centers, provides individuals with catharsis and a sense of profound community. These elements of the occupation illustrate a strong spiritual component within a field commonly thought of as devoid of religiosity. As Pype points out, "it would be spurious to make clear-cut distinctions between secular and sacred dances" (2006, 315), as it is the intention behind the movements which qualify them as one or the other rather than the particular style or motion.

There is no clear-cut distinction between intentions in professional dance, just as there is no singular method of negotiation between the occupation and spirituality. While some must create clear boundaries between their religion and dancing and feel guilty when allowing more time for one than the other, others see these two fields as inextricably linked and argue that dance should be used in service to spirituality, as it is belief which makes an individual successful. It seems, however, that no matter what the relationship between a dancer's occupation and beliefs may be, ideas of spiritually both effect and influence concepts of appropriateness, particularly for dance instructors, and often lead to practices of outreach on a community and cultural level.

There is still, as Hanna writes, a "relative lack of systematic study [into dance] by any of the social science disciplines" (1973, 37), although this has begun to change in recent years. As American culture continues to exoticize this occupation in its support of pop culture, more investigations should be completed into its importance and the ways in which its practitioners navigate a society that only views their

occupation as a form of entertainment. Styles of dance can be representative of group, and the ways these productions are approached by mass media can be telling regarding the treatment of those groups by the culture around them. Without research into the emotional component of secular dance, those interested in both understanding and participating in the practice lose valid information regarding its cathartic and emotional importance.

Deborah Kapchan's argument that "performance genres play an essential (and often essentializing) role in the mediation and creation of social communities, whether organized around bonds of nationalism, ethnicity, class status, or gender" (1995, 479) demonstrates the importance of occupational dance studies to both professional dancers and the American public, even if this practice was not her intended focus. Dance, even that of purely secular practice, is a valid form of spiritual and cultural expression and cultural researchers should begin advocating for its treatment as such by not only acknowledging the connections between its physical and emotional elements, but the importance of these to maintaining both group and personal identity. Studying only religious dance is not enough as this is not the only use to which the practice is applied. Islamic and Pentecostal dancing and the negotiation of belly dance and Christianity, while important studies, are only part of the picture. Valid expression happens beyond the sphere of religious dance and deserves to be studied with as much attention.

Notes

[1] Flow is defined as the "experience of merging action and awareness (and centering of attention) which characterizes the supreme 'pay-off' in ritual, art, sport, games, and even gambling" (Turner 1974b, 79).

[2] This empathy is created through what dance critic John Martin refers to as metakinesis, in which the muscles of audience members contract and release, thereby "dancing" sympathetically along with the movement, and become registered by sense receptors which ultimately engage an emotional response. (Carroll and Seeley 2013, 178)

[3] Factors which can influence the production of kinesthetic empathy include, but are not limited to: the mood of the audience member, their own expectations of what they will get out of the performance, their familiarity with the style of dance and/or music, their comfort within the physical space of the venue, and their desire to *want* to connect to the performance (see Reason and Reynolds 2010, 50).

[4] While I could find no reference to this folktale or its origin in my research, I think its importance in describing Ashleigh's feelings is paramount. Whether or not this tale truly has roots in Chinese folklore, the narrative has stuck with Ashleigh for years and is the clearest way she can conceive of describing her relationship to dance. The "dragon point" narrative is a clear method of visualizing the ways in which dance makes the informant feel at peace and whole.

[5] My own assumption here could prove illustrative. In my understanding of Schuyler's description, the body feels to be both pulled and lifted from behind, from between the shoulder blades. This feeling is often referred to as a "meat hook," referencing the large metal hooks used to hang and dry animal carcasses. This conceptualization displaces the dancer's weight into the center of the back and forces the rest of the body to rise from that point, feeling both caved and uplifted.

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Jared L. Schmidt

"Hometown Cooking": Layering Values, Mass-Produced, and Garden-Raised Foods in Tater Tot Hot Dish in Southwest Minnesota

Hot dishes, or casseroles, are popularly conceptualized as meals comprised merely of mass-produced ingredients. Through a close reading of Tater Tot Hot Dish, this article challenges this perception by examining how a single meal preparer, the author's mother, incorporates locally grown ingredients, reflecting her idea of "hometown cooking." This essay suggests how this ubiquitous meal in Southwest Minnesota represents not only individual and family values, but also those of community as individuals make critical food-related choices.

Keywords: foodways, family folklore, Upper Midwest, community

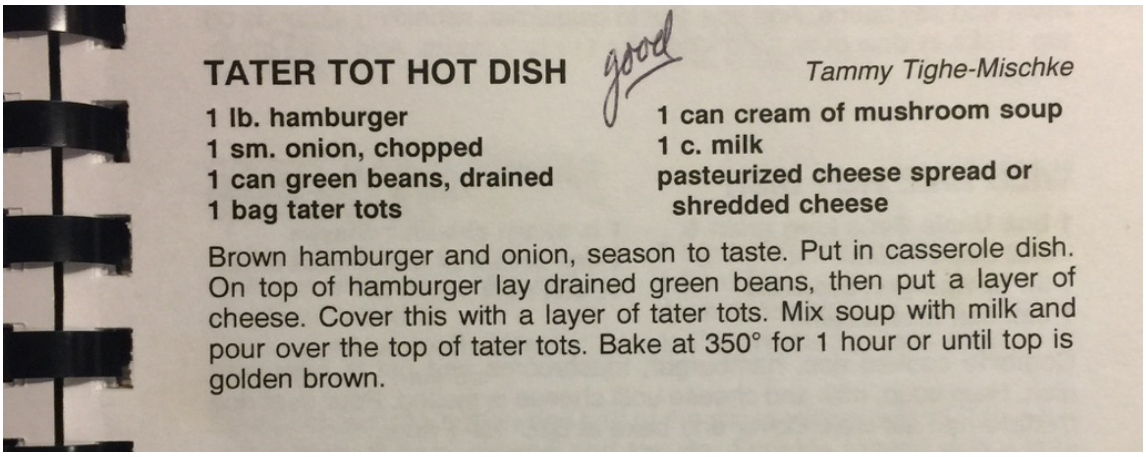
Introduction

As the sun descends towards the snowcapped prairie horizon, Kris Schmidt's kitchen fills with the warmth of a hot oven and stove. The space is permeated by the rich scents of freshly browned onion and hamburger combined with the saltiness of slowly cooking tater tots and bubbling cheddar cheese. It smells like grilled hamburgers and breakfast all at once, or, in Kris's words, "kind of like you're home." Kris's description of flavor, much like the Tater Tot Hot Dish she is preparing, is multilayered. On one level it is a sentimental statement about me, her son, returning to my hometown of Westbrook, a rural community of 755 individuals in Southwest Minnesota. This area is comprised of small agricultural communities surrounded by alternating fields of corn and soybeans and farmsteads dedicated to raising cattle and pigs. The landscape is peppered by wind turbines dwarfing groves of trees. Kris is also speaking to what she refers to as "hometown cooking," which entails "using healthy ingredients from scratch. Using practical ingredients," with an emphasis on family cohesion and monitoring what ingredients her children and husband are consuming.

Kris's idealized conceptualization of "hometown cooking" is embodied in the meal she is preparing, Tater Tot Hot Dish. Cookbook author Ann Burckhardt defines hot dish as a "casserole-like food common in the Midwest; normally consist[ing] of a

starch, a meat, and a vegetable mixed together with a sauce, often canned soup" (2006, 9; see also Cassidy and Hall 1991, 1125–1126). Widely referred to as casseroles throughout the United States, this all-in-one concoction is regionally known as "bakes" in Northwest Ohio and "carry-ins," "covered-dish dinner," and "hot dish" in Minnesota and pockets of Michigan, North Dakota, and Wisconsin (Long 2007, 35; Burkhardt 2006, 9; Cassidy and Hall 1991, 1125; Shortridge 2003, 90). Once considered a "cultured" manner of food preparation and presentation,[1] casseroles became more prevalent through their capacity to stretch resources with minimum production effort as Americans experienced food shortages and rationing during the Great Depression and World Wars (Eighmey 2010; Marling 2006, 5; Villas 2003, xi). A sense of convenience associated with casseroles was perpetuated through heavy promotion and advertising by brand name producers, like the Campbell Soup Company, and increased access to industrialized canned and frozen goods during the 1950s and '60s (Burckhardt 2006, 1–2; Eighmey 2010; Long 2007; Villas 2003, x–xi). Both Kris (b. 1956) and her husband, my father, Jim Schmidt (b. 1956), recall hot dishes as prevalent meals during their youth, sometimes four times a week in Kris's family. Lucy Long observes that today, casseroles are a pervasive symbol of the Midwest, and that "[t]hey connote communal eating, sharing, and generosity" (2007, 29-30).

In her research on Green Bean Casserole in northwestern Ohio, Long (2007) observes how this particular meal speaks to Midwestern sensibilities in everyday and celebratory meal behaviors. Made from green beans, fried onions, and cream of mushroom soup, Green Bean Casserole functions as part of a "foodways aesthetic," which she defines as a "system of evaluating the quality, pleasingness (or tastiness) of a food and the activities surrounding the preparation and consumption of that food" (2007, 30). This aesthetic is connected to a "foodways ethos," which "refers to the moral and social values attached to food and eating" (2007, 30). This essay builds upon Long's research by focusing on an individual meal preparer, Kris. Folklorists recognize that in order to perpetuate traditions, individuals must act to draw on them as both process and resource (Cashman, Mould, and Shukla 2011). As such, focused attention on Kris as a representative of a rural, Upper Midwestern, middle-class family of Euro-American background allows me to construct her worldview and foodways ethos as one shaped by overlapping spheres of family and community. Through the layering of mass-produced and home-grown ingredients, this essay demonstrates how Kris's Tater Tot Hot Dish symbolizes her negotiation of the cultural and economic values of her family and social networks as learned by and expressed through community cookbooks (Figure 1).



TATER TOT HOT DISH *good* *Tammy Tighe-Mischke*

1 lb. hamburger
1 sm. onion, chopped
1 can green beans, drained
1 bag tater tots
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 c. milk
pasteurized cheese spread or shredded cheese

Brown hamburger and onion, season to taste. Put in casserole dish. On top of hamburger lay drained green beans, then put a layer of cheese. Cover this with a layer of tater tots. Mix soup with milk and pour over the top of tater tots. Bake at 350° for 1 hour or until top is golden brown.

Figure 1: Recipe for Tater Tot Hot Dish used by Kris. This recipe comes from the Westbrook Women's Club's (2003) compiled cookbook, *Recipes and Remembrances* (pg. 33).

Kris has been actively involved with this research throughout its multiple stages.[2] Together we have discussed my notes, interpretations, and revisions, reflecting what Elaine Lawless (1991; 2000) terms reciprocal ethnography. Reciprocal ethnography becomes particularly salient when conducting fieldwork with members of one's own family, as Claire Schmidt (2017) observed when researching occupational humor among Wisconsin correctional officers. Providing her family/collaborators opportunities to provide feedback, she gained further insight into the worldview of these individuals while making necessary corrections throughout the early drafts of the text. Like Schmidt, who grew up with the stories told to her by her family, I, too, feel deeply connected to the recipe, and its associated memories, that Kris has shared with me. Through engaging in recording and interpreting folklore associated with my own family, I, like Kim Miller (1997), am aware of the question of "ownership" of the given material due to the intimacy of these relationships. Engaging in reciprocal ethnography with my mother provided invaluable insights and face-saving corrections, while allowing me to work through questions of who "owns" what with this piece of family folklore. Over time, Kris and I have embraced our roles as folklorist and collaborator/son and mother while *sharing* this part of our family's foodways.

Michael Owen Jones observes that folklorists have approached foodways scholarship by examining the symbolic connection among the performances of differential identities (2007, 129–130). He suggests three categories through which folklorists have analyzed this multilayered relationship: how/what one eats, "food choice," and "social categories" which can symbolically represent an individual's regional identity (2007, 142). One could suggest that the presentations of regional, ethnic and individual identities are, by the very nature of performance, symbolic. Much like how the pasty in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (Lockwood and Lockwood 1991),

coneys in Detroit, Michigan (Lockwood 2012), and Cincinnati chili in Ohio (Lloyd 1981), have transcended ethnicity, becoming markers of regional or local consciousness, so too does hot dish appear to connect individuals across ethnic lines, aligning them to a place like Minnesota rather than their ancestral heritage. Today hot dishes can be found at fairs,[3] competitions,[4] as tourism merchandise,[5] and specialized cookbooks[6] serving as powerful markers of group identity as expressed in folk and popular culture (Gutierrez 1984). Minnesota humorists have also glorified the dish in murder mysteries (Cooney 2013, 2014, and 2016) and tongue-in-cheek guidebooks (Mohr 2013). Perhaps because Tater Tot Hot Dish is so unassuming, it represents an important esoteric value for Minnesotans.

Tater Tot Hot Dish also illustrates Jones's second category, food choice, wherein the "…consuming of provisions figure largely in symbolic discourse regarding identity, values, and attitudes" (2007, 129). Don Yoder argues that the foods we prepare operate as an expression of identity—an idea that is especially apparent when different groups have access to similar ingredients (1972, 329). Jones builds on Yoder's idea: the choices people make in food, from production to presentation and consumption, demonstrate the identity of "who they want to appear to be" in public (2007, 135). Hot dishes possess values through the choices a food preparer makes. In the production and consumption of meals, identities are expressed through what Charles Camp refers to as the "food event" (1989, 56). A "food event," he states, "includes both everyday and special occasions, and their proper study must consider public and private life" (1989, 56). Camp offers valuable criteria by which one may probe foodways in the food event, including specific cookware, the production process, and how these function in the performance and negotiation of identity in public and private spheres. Examining the production and consumption of Tater Tot Hot Dish, including the choices available to an individual cook, reveals explicit expressions of family and community values over time.

Roger Abrahams suggests that foods as identity markers are enacted in the homes of individuals, representing a form of choice, particularly when "outsiders" are present at the dinner table (1984, 20–21). Food as a performance allows one to examine the boundaries of an individual's community and degrees of psychological connection to different groups (Noyes 2003, 28, 33). Individuals operate within multiple, sometimes overlapping, groups, displaying differential identities. The identities that people choose to enact can guide them through their interactions within social spheres, defining a sense of community as distinct from others throughout the calendar year and life cycle (Bauman 1971; Santino 1994, 3–4). The useful notion of differential identity—and the acknowledgment that people make choices about ingredients, preparation and food preferences reflecting community values and standards—can help one see the construction and dissemination of cookbooks as an act of performing community (Kaplan, Hoover, and Moore 1986; Theophano 2002).

Community, Cookbooks, and Cooking Repertoire

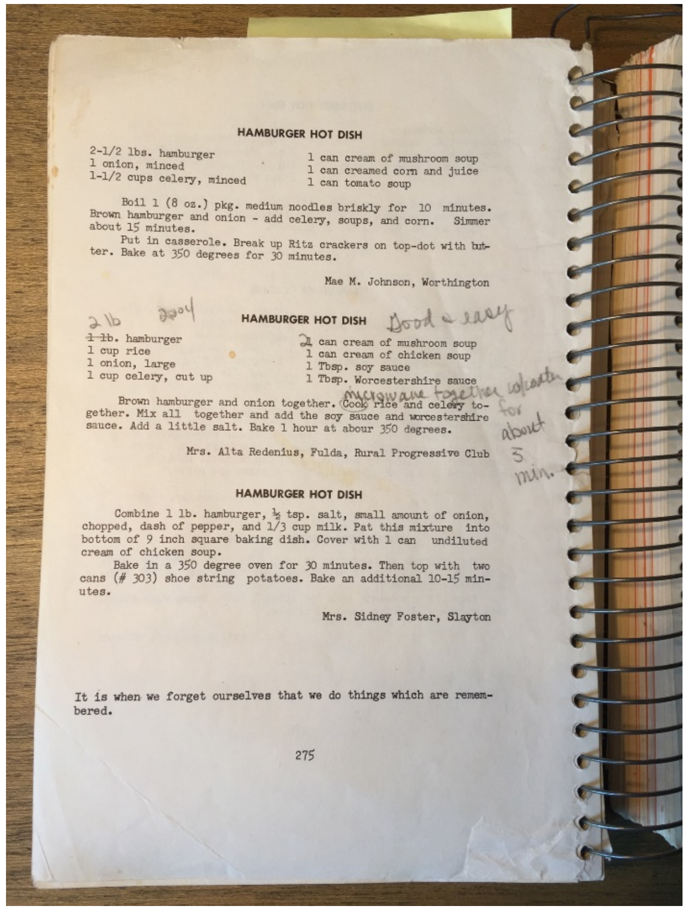
Community cookbooks, according to Lynn Ireland (1981), operate as mediums of community autobiography through display of realistic or idealized consumption practices. While reviewing hot dishes in Kris's cookbooks and talking about her favorite cookbooks, I observed how commonplace hot dishes are within the community. These cookbooks, with recipes authored by family, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers, put into place the "rules" of ingredients and preparation, and offer personalization (either through incorporation of newspaper and magazine clippings, or handwritten commentary). They engage notions of community both in and outside of the home.

Kris was born in Windom, the seat of Cottonwood County. The fourth of nine children, Kris grew up working with and watching her mother, Kathy Johnson (née Vrchota), and her grandmother garden, can foods, cook, and clean up after meals. Kris notes that her mother is a wonderful and talented cook and made everyday meals for an ever-increasing family: "From sauerkraut to jellies to minced meat pie, she could do everything." Kris learned how to cook and, perhaps most importantly, the values of producing one's own food and of cooking from "scratch." Cottonwood County has been home to Kris's family for multiple generations. Kris's father, Lynn Johnson, was born in Windom and operated a hardware store inherited from his father, which remains in the family today. Kris moved away to pursue her degree in education in Mankato, Minnesota in 1975. In 1979, she began a thirty-five-year teaching career in Fulda, Minnesota, in Murray County, immediately west of Cottonwood. In 1983, she married Jim and they began their life together in his hometown of Westbrook.

Kris and Jim have been, and continue to be, active with local and county organizations. Kris taught for many years, albeit in a different school system than the one where my younger sister, Audra, and I were enrolled: Westbrook Walnut Grove (WWG). However, because my sister and I were active in extracurricular activities, she constantly engaged with other parents and educators at events and fundraisers at our school. Currently, she teaches part-time in the WWG school district. Faith is a driving force in Kris's life, shaping her worldview and community engagement. She was baptized, confirmed, and married in the Lutheran Church. Since moving to Westbrook, she has been actively involved in Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, serving as a Sunday School Teacher, a member of the "serving group," and on the church board. She has also been a member of community-centered groups and maintains overlapping friend groups with whom she gathers regularly for coffee, day trips, or fishing excursions.

During college, her early public high school teaching career, and the first years of marriage to Jim, Kris spent a great deal of time building her cooking repertoire by looking through cookbooks and experimenting with recipes. Some of the major gifts she received at her bridal showers were casserole dishes and cookbooks, a number of

which were written by community organizations and church groups. Kris's cookbook collection also includes texts from wider publishing houses like Betty Crocker and The Gooseberry Patch. She regularly receives the monthly *Taste of Home*. She developed early on the habit of writing "very good," "good," "not good" or "yuck" by recipes to guide her to enjoyable dishes or to help her avoid others (Figure 2).



HAMBURGER HOT DISH

2-1/2 lbs. hamburger
1 onion, minced
1-1/2 cups celery, minced
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 can creamed corn and juice
1 can tomato soup

Boil 1 (8 oz.) pkg. medium noodles briskly for 10 minutes. Brown hamburger and onion - add celery, soups, and corn. Simmer about 15 minutes.
Put in casserole. Break up Ritz crackers on top-dot with butter. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

Mae M. Johnson, Worthington

2 lb 2004

HAMBURGER HOT DISH Good & easy

~~1 lb.~~ hamburger
1 cup rice
1 onion, large
1 cup celery, cut up
2 can cream of mushroom soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 Tbsp. soy sauce
1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce

Brown hamburger and onion together. Cook rice and celery together. Mix all together and add the soy sauce and worcestershire sauce. Add a little salt. Bake 1 hour at abour 350 degrees.

microwave together for about 5 min.

Mrs. Alta Redenius, Fulda, Rural Progressive Club

HAMBURGER HOT DISH

Combine 1 lb. hamburger, ½ tsp. salt, small amount of onion, chopped, dash of pepper, and 1/3 cup milk. Pat this mixture into bottom of 9 inch square baking dish. Cover with 1 can undiluted cream of chicken soup.
Bake in a 350 degree oven for 30 minutes. Then top with two cans (# 303) shoe string potatoes. Bake an additional 10-15 minutes.

Mrs. Sidney Foster, Slayton

It is when we forget ourselves that we do things which are remembered.

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Figure 2: Kris's handwritten notes for this recipe for "Hamburger Hot Dish" from the *Crippled Children's Cook Book*.

In Minnesota, the production, sale, and distribution of community cookbooks by local organizations "serve as a public relations device," raise funds for those organizations, and are important to the spread of recipe ideas (Kaplan, Hoover and Moore 1986, 8). Due to the communal nature of their construction, community cookbooks have the potential to reveal group membership, as well as a "composite picture" of what community members consume (Noyes 2003, 16–17; Ireland 1981, 108). Diane Tye (2010) constructed a biography of her mother by examining her recipe collections, many of which were largely filled with unassuming recipes. I similarly draw on specific hot dish recipes from Kris's cooking repertoire to illuminate her social

spheres and performance of identity by drawing from two compiled texts that I use to frame her approach to producing food that pleases both her family and community.

When asked if there was a cookbook that guided her the most in her development as a cook, Kris notes one compiled by the Crippled Children's School, Inc. (1982) of Worthington, Minnesota, which she received as a wedding gift from a Westbrook couple. She uses this cookbook more than any other. "It is a basic cookbook, nothing fancy. It is just a practical approach to cooking," Kris states. Her notes are most apparent in the chapters on main meals and salads. Other cookbooks in her collection are used for desserts and dessert salads. This cookbook is significant to a wider understanding of the area because it brings together recipes, mostly submitted by women, from communities predominately throughout Southwest Minnesota. Kris actively increases the intended scope of the text by taping recipes she cuts from magazines and newspapers onto blank pages of the cookbook. Kris's actions confirm Janet Theophano's contention that, "The past merges with the present as the cookbook and its user attract recipes from other women in the community and in the larger society, women connected to one another by virtue of religion, region, ethnicity, or common cause" (2002, 51).

Hot dishes are prevalent in the "Main Dishes" and "Time Savers" chapters of this cookbook. The "Main Dishes" chapter begins with "Baked Hot Dish" and concludes with "Zucchini Casserole;" the first 30 pages of this chapter consist almost entirely of hot dish/casserole recipes (260–292). Seven recipes are simply named "Hot Dish," and each includes ground beef, with variations in vegetables, creams, and starches (278–279). Variation is dramatically apparent over all the hot dish recipes, ranging from "Egg Noodle and Tuna Hot Dish" (290) to "Sauerkraut Hot Dish" (338). The "Time Savers" chapter features four hot dishes simply titled, "Easy Hot Dish" (424–425), as well as "Quick as a Wink Hot Dish" (425). Three Tater Tot Hot Dish recipes closely resemble the one Kris practices, save for one suggesting the use of raw hamburger (426).

What might this plethora of hot dish recipes demonstrate? Applying Lynn Ireland's contention that compiled cookbooks offer ways to read the autobiography of a community, these texts assist in "determining food habits of some groups…[and] can give insight into traditional attitudes, usage and consumption" (1981, 114). They represent idealized and actualized foodways, patterns of acceptance and taboo, what food and preparation methods are in vogue, and what marks ordinary from celebratory. Kris notes the recipes she turns to the most in these cookbooks are for hot dishes and salads: not because she prefers to make these for public meals, but because she is asked to make them. At church, for example, organizing groups ask Kris and other members to bring specific items. Thus, as Leslie Prosterman (1995) observes, Kris's participation in her Midwestern social networks reinforce and shape her idealized cooking repertoire and public presentation of self as a cook. In the case of my family and Westbrook, the variety and sheer number of hot dish recipes reveals the expectations and limitations

for busy, down-to-earth, working women. Similarly, as Theophano observes, cookbooks are often "a communal affair" and operate as "records of women's social interactions and exchanges" (2002, 10, 13). Cookbooks compiled by local organizations in Kris's collection serve as an entry point through which one can view not only the foodways of her hometown but also a sense of her community networks and identity.

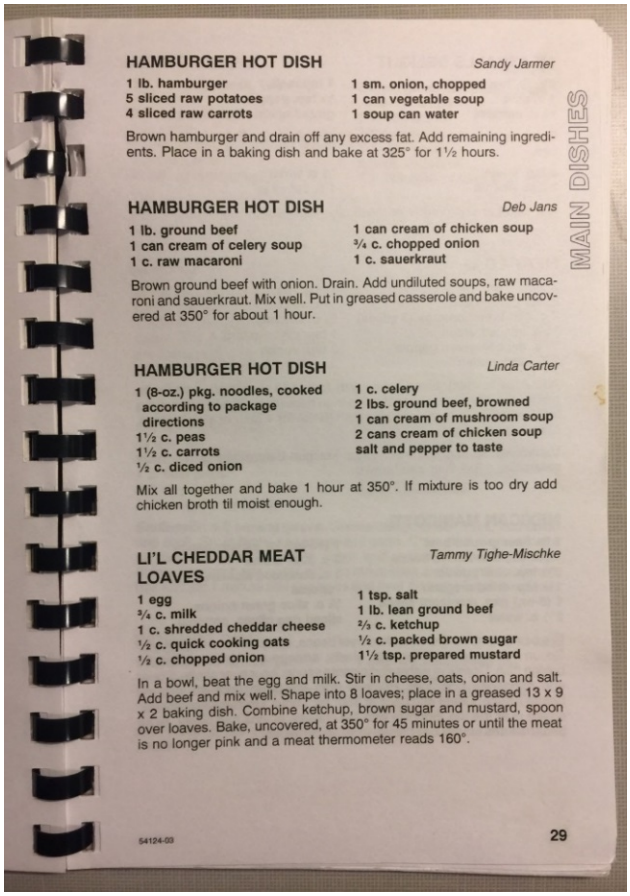
For Kris, trust is an important element in recipe selection, best exemplified by her frequent use of a cookbook compiled by residents from Westbrook. In 2003, the civic group Westbrook Women's Club celebrated their 20th anniversary by publishing *Recipes and Remembrances*, a complied cookbook that brings together recipes from the then twenty-two members into a seventy-eight-page, spiral-bound paperback. It features recipes ranging from pasta salad, meat loaf, and lemon custard bars, to Play-Doh. Tater Tot Hot Dish is on page 33 under the "Main Dishes" chapter. This chapter contains ninety-five total recipes, nineteen of which are hot dishes or casseroles. At the time of publication, Kris was not a member of the organization, having left in 1998 to pursue her MA in Education. She did not contribute a recipe but still purchased several copies. Kris recalls, "I knew each [member] and had been to many of their homes and knew them to be good cooks." If she cannot find what she is looking for in the *Crippled Children School's Cook Book*, Kris turns to *Recipes and Remembrances*, which she does a couple of times each month. She says that the best part about cookbooks like this one is that she can trust the recipes because each cookbook tends to note who submitted the recipe, and she, or Jim, know many of these individuals. "In a small town like ours," Kris says, "people don't want to have their name by a recipe that isn't good" (Figure 3). This sense of community and shared values expressed through food preparation is reflected in Kris's evaluation of what constitutes a desirable meal, or foodways aesthetic, both in terms of appearance and for the health of the family. She notes that these cookbooks contain, "a lot of good recipes—recipes that work. They are good examples of hometown type cooking or family cooking." Kris states, regarding hometown cooking, that "Some of these cookbooks nowadays have ingredients where I wonder, 'Where am I going to find that?'" This question of "finding" ingredients is important as many of the smallest neighboring communities, such as Dovray (pop. 67) to the west or Storden (pop. 214) to the east, do not have grocery stores. Westbrook's grocery store is tiny in comparison to those in larger communities.

Hometown cooking also relates to Kris's idealized notion of family, rooted in structure and reflected by sharing meals together. Hometown cooking, to Kris, is also about dining in rather than dining out. She states that,

> Growing up, remember how we always sat down to eat as a family? I think this is extremely important. So along with that hopefully comes a home cooked meal. Is it hard sometimes to come home after work and make a home cooked meal? Yes. But is it worth it? Yes. It brings your family together. It gives you time to talk, you know what they are eating

> because you are watching them, what they are drinking, like water and milk versus pop. As you guys [Jared and Audra] got older you wanted more water. Even now when you come home I still make sure there is water, right?

Hometown cooking may appear to be "nothing fancy," but to Kris it means sharing convenient and enjoyable meals with family, neighbors and friends with the goal of creating and strengthening familial bonds through maternal care.



MAIN DISHES

HAMBURGER HOT DISH — *Sandy Jarmer*

1 lb. hamburger
5 sliced raw potatoes
4 sliced raw carrots
1 sm. onion, chopped
1 can vegetable soup
1 soup can water

Brown hamburger and drain off any excess fat. Add remaining ingredients. Place in a baking dish and bake at 325° for 1½ hours.

HAMBURGER HOT DISH — *Deb Jans*

1 lb. ground beef
1 can cream of celery soup
1 c. raw macaroni
1 can cream of chicken soup
¾ c. chopped onion
1 c. sauerkraut

Brown ground beef with onion. Drain. Add undiluted soups, raw macaroni and sauerkraut. Mix well. Put in greased casserole and bake uncovered at 350° for about 1 hour.

HAMBURGER HOT DISH — *Linda Carter*

1 (8-oz.) pkg. noodles, cooked according to package directions
1½ c. peas
1½ c. carrots
½ c. diced onion
1 c. celery
2 lbs. ground beef, browned
1 can cream of mushroom soup
2 cans cream of chicken soup
salt and pepper to taste

Mix all together and bake 1 hour at 350°. If mixture is too dry add chicken broth til moist enough.

LI'L CHEDDAR MEAT LOAVES — *Tammy Tighe-Mischke*

1 egg
¾ c. milk
1 c. shredded cheddar cheese
½ c. quick cooking oats
½ c. chopped onion
1 tsp. salt
1 lb. lean ground beef
⅔ c. ketchup
½ c. packed brown sugar
1½ tsp. prepared mustard

In a bowl, beat the egg and milk. Stir in cheese, oats, onion and salt. Add beef and mix well. Shape into 8 loaves; place in a greased 13 x 9 x 2 baking dish. Combine ketchup, brown sugar and mustard, spoon over loaves. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 45 minutes or until the meat is no longer pink and a meat thermometer reads 160°.

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Figure 3: Three recipes for "Hamburger Hot Dish." *Recipes and Remembrances* (2003, 29).

While the consideration of convenience and availability of certain ingredients in a rural area certainly affects Kris's choice in food preparation, a more significant, deeper consideration is her notion of "scratch." Kris defines "scratch" as foods that are "not already made—your basic vegetables or hamburger. It is not going to say, 'use macaroni and cheese.' It is from your basic foods. It is not a packaged source of food that you are going to be using, you are going to be using the baseline vegetables, dairy, or protein." Thus, she is not limited in her palette of ingredients. Cooking from "scratch" is about the choice and manipulation of individual ingredients as the cook prepares a meal like hot dish. Using "baseline" ingredients permits Kris a sense of agency with

recipes. While mass-produced foods have become a staple of Midwestern pantries, their inclusion does not create a separation from or disconnect between the cook and a sense of ownership or creativity.

What about recipes from these cookbooks that ask for a commercially produced soup or pasta sauce? Does the incorporation of these products neutralize the "scratch" component? "Not to me," Kris states. "What else are you supposed to use? Make them from the beginning is not how I roll, not how most cooks do. The working people…in my estimation people who use a cream of mushroom soup are going to use it. Are you going to make it from scratch?" It appears that there are multiple levels of scratch even within a homemade recipe. Regardless, even if Campbell's Soups are brought together with homegrown onions, this does not take away from a sense of the "home" in the concept of what is "homemade": "I still made it. I still made it from the basic ingredients." Kris maintains a sense of autonomy and creativity over a recipe through this understanding and, with it, the potential for modification of a recipe.

Negotiating Garden-Raised and Store-Bought Ingredients

Kris's production of Tater Tot Hot Dish represents a paradox of choices and values that, as Long notes, "seem to represent the traditional, but…also…the modern, an embracing of technology and corporate America" (2007, 39). On one level, this hot dish, as well as similar recipes, is appreciated for its emphasis on convenience, ability to stretch resources, and access to conveninent ingredients due to mass-produced food. On the other hand, some Upper Midwesterners, like Kris and Jim, have continued to raise, process, and preserve their own foods as meal ingredients. The Schmidts participate in the comparatively labor-intensive practices today of vegetable gardening and periodically raising beef and poultry. They preserve these through canning and freezing and incorporate them into everyday and celebratory meals, often as key ingredients for meals like Tater Tot Hot Dish.

A casual drive through Westbrook reveals a variety of resident gardens including raised beds, potted plants, and tilled earth plots. Camp states that, "In a larger sense, the notion of garden is deeply cultural, almost independent of what is grown or the need for growing it. The word is, after all, both a noun and a verb—a place and an activity with separate levels of function and aesthetics that often provide disguises for each other" (1989, 86). Although Kris and Jim come from a middle-class, trade, and business family background, gardening was an important component of their childhood. In 1984, Kris and Jim had a small garden at their first home, during which time she was in charge of its maintenance. As time progressed and properties changed, Jim took over and brought gardening into a more central role in the couple's lives. Today, their gardening practices demonstrate a "purposeful modification or change to the physical environment" combining aesthetic and utilitarian purposes (Rapoport 1990, 12; Anderson 1972).

Kris and Jim's example confirms Barbara Shortridge's (2003) observation that locally grown products remain important ingredients in Minnesotan's diets. In Southwest Minnesota, individual and cooperative family gardens may operate, as Camp notes, as forms not only of food production but also of economies, identity, and pleasure. Gardens can function to provide a sense of control of the "healthy" quality of food families put into their bodies as opposed to what chemicals may be found in packaged food at a store (1989, 86). Through gardening, Kris can enact a further sense of control over the ingredients her family consumes, having seen the vegetables go from seed to table. She is thus able to obtain the "baseline" ingredients necessary to cook from "scratch." Production of Kris's idea of "hometown" cooking, then, begins in their garden.

The size of the garden and the vegetable varieties the couple grow provides a clear message about the connection they both feel to the land. The Schmidts own three properties on the western edge of Westbrook—their home, an alfalfa field next door to the north, and a barnyard that consists of a large red tin-sided structure and open grounds located one house away to the south. The property was once owned by Jim's parents, Donna and Marlin Schmidt. Here, Marlin practiced carpentry and raised horses, goats, dogs, and geese. After Marlin's passing in 2005, Jim inherited the property. The family's food production largely occurs at the barn. The garden section currently comprises a 7,500 sq. ft. field that is rich and diverse with produce ranging from dill to pumpkins and sweet corn to peppers.

By harvest, the couple have a rich bounty of produce and protein which they preserve through canning and freezing. Kris and Jim have been canning produce from their garden since moving into their current home in 1993. Preservation permits Kris a sense of agency in which harvester and meal preparer become entwined. Due to their soft tissues, vegetables experience quick cellular deterioration following harvest. Canning ensures a longer shelf life, reducing spoilage with hermetically sealed lids on metal or glass containers that keep out microbes. They use transparent glass containers for canning which can withstand the extreme water temperatures and are aesthetically appealing (Jackson 1979; Larouse and Brown 1997; see also Christensen 2018). Although the couple works on canning together, there appear to be gendered tasks; Jim handles the more dangerous pressure cooker as he is tall enough to handle this operation and Kris focuses on the hot water bath method to preserve tomatoes and homemade jellies.

Depending on the harvest, the Schmidts may can anywhere from forty to fifty jars of green beans from their garden during the annual growing season (Figure 4). Their kitchen, at times, becomes a veritable canning operation as peaches, strawberries, and mulberries are transformed into jellies and jams, and onions, tomatoes, and peppers become salsa. They also pickle green beans, beets, and freshly caught fish. Meanwhile, they stock freezers with packages of cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, and rhubarb. Reinforcing Camp's contention that gardens also operate as a source of gift

economy, the couple distributes a significant number of these jars as gifts to friends and family (1989, 86).

Figure 4: Kris presents a can of sealed green beans which she is going to use in the hot dish. Photo by author. 2018.

The couples' gardening and preservation practices are significant as money-saving techniques, hobbies, stress relief, and gifts, and provide baseline ingredients for dishes such as Tater Tot Hot Dish. The recipe for Tater Tot Hot Dish used by Kris incorporates not only green beans and onions but also encourages participation in local, regional and global economies. Given the extensive amount of labor and resources that come from gardening, it may not be a surprise that, in her cooking, Kris rarely uses store-bought frozen or canned vegetables. These mass-produced food preservation techniques affected casserole-type recipes in the mid-twentieth century and were championed by large industrialized food processors like Clarence Birdseye (Smith 2014). "When I'm eating those preserved items," she states, "I'm wondering what I'm eating. I don't know where they came from. I know where they came from when I eat things we canned. I know that there is only a half a teaspoon of salt and water, and that is all that is in the beans." By using ingredients they grew and preserved, she exercises control over the products her family consumes at home. Kris comments that, "We have all these beautiful beans in the basement, so why not use them? Plus, all four of us like green beans…It's senseless not to preserve these vegetables so that they can be

enjoyed through winter." This notion of beauty alludes to not only the physical structure of the beans and the aesthetics associated with canning, but their taste. Over the years, the couple has developed palates that can differentiate between mass-produced beans and those from the garden: the local beans are firmer and have more natural flavor. Kris is also speaking to a desire not to waste food, especially what the family goes to great lengths to harvest and preserve.

Each year the couple also plants rows of onions, some of which Kris uses when cooking Tater Tot Hot Dish by browning them with the ground beef. By harvest time, the onions begin to "almost come out of the ground," revealing more of their bodies. Once harvested, these onions are stored in a gunny sack in the basement's fruit room where they are hung and allowed to "breathe." The couple uses these onions throughout the year, incorporating them into various meals as side dishes and ingredients. In 2017, however, Kris notes that they ran out of onions toward the end of spring, forcing her to purchase them from the grocery store. "It was really nice," she says, "to go down into the basement, grab an onion and there you have it." Her use of onions begins to demonstrate the negotiation between grown and purchased products, where substitution is not only acceptable but at times essential.

The potatoes grown in the family garden further reveal the paradox between the choice of home-grown or mass-produced ingredients. In recent years, the couple has harvested a variety of potatoes, such as Yukon and russet, for their everyday meals. However, Kris does not make her own tater tots. First released to American consumers in 1956 by the Ore-Ida Potato Company, tater tots were produced from leftover scraps from French fries, cut further and blended with "natural seasonings." Today Americans consume approximately 70 million pounds of tater tots (H. J. Heinz Company 2014; Ore-Ida 2015; Zorn 2014). Kris has no desire to learn how to make tater tots, stating that, "who wants to go to that much work when you can buy them? If I couldn't make tots and you told me I couldn't buy them, that hot dish would be gone [laughs]. I wouldn't be making it." The very existence of this hot dish in Kris's repertoire depends *entirely* on the availability of this mass-produced food stuff. Additionally, the uniformity of tater tots across decades has affected Kris's perception of what the dish is supposed to taste like. "You need that tater tot taste, that tater tot texture to finish it off and have a nice topping," she notes. Flavor and texture, then, are tied to the industrial process that creates the sense of satisfaction with Tater Tot Hot Dish and baking it from scratch. Their crunchy nature is one of the essential indicators that this dish is ready for consumption and adds a playful component to the meal as an eye-catching finger food.

The labor-intensive food production of ingredients necessary to produce Kris's Tater Tot Hot Dish also includes beef as the central ingredient. For several years, Jim raised a couple head of beef in the lot where Marlin once had horses. After butchering, he would "split" the beef among individuals who "paid into" the cost, thus contributing to local economies and supplying his home-raised beef to multiple kitchens. Farmers

in southwest Minnesota raise livestock, mostly cattle, pigs, and poultry (Hart and Ziegler 2008). This is reflected in Shortridge's Minnesota Special Meal survey wherein beef was the most common protein noted as main dishes by respondents (34%), followed by pork (21%) (2003, 76). Today, because of the labor and financial costs, the couple purchase their beef from a local farmer they know. Their participation in the local economy further demonstrates the couples' value in trust as they know how the cattle were fed, treated, butchered, and processed.

The Schmidts regularly incorporate purchased dairy products into their everyday and celebratory meals. Kris made sure milk was present as her preferred beverage for her children and as an ingredient, reinforcing the agricultural identity of the region and dairy's fiscal dominance and availability in local stores. This confirms the results of Shortridge's Minnesota special meal survey; milk was mentioned as a dominant beverage choice (70% of respondents), tied with coffee (2003, 78). In a state where milk has "near universal acceptance," dairy products are important ingredients for Minnesota cooks, and dairy wields a heavy agricultural influence on the state's economy (2003, 82–83). The national brand Land O'Lakes, which produces milk, butter, and other dairy products, is based in Minnesota (2003, 83).

Canned condensed cream of mushroom soup is another significant ingredient in Kris's Tater Tot Hot Dish that conveys her concerns for convenience and economic frugality. As she attests, "If the hot dish recipe asked me to make a soup first, I'd say, 'No.' All I have to do is go to the store and pick up a condensed soup. The nice thing is [hot dishes] are easy to make, they aren't super complicated, and they're not gourmet." Millions of homemakers across the country use Campbell's Soups as meals and as ingredients (Marling 2006, 6; Villas 2003, 249). Established in 1869, Campbell's developed condensed soup in 1897, making it widely available to American consumers in 1911 (Campbell's Soup Company 2019; Long 2007, 35; Sidorik 2009, 20). In 1934, Campbell's introduced its Chicken Noodle and Cream of Mushroom soups. Expanding the use of instant soups as an ingredient, in their test kitchen Campbell's created a Tuna Noodle Casserole version in 1934, and in 1955 they debuted Green Bean Casserole (Long 2007, 29–34).

While the couple purchase a variety of cheeses, Kris expressly uses cheddar in Tater Tot Hot Dish. "Yellow cheese looks better than white cheese would," Kris notes. "That and you and Audra liked Cheddar the best." Cheddar has an "intermediate" texture, with a mid-pH level, resulting in a protein structure that "assumes an increasingly more compact conformation and the cheese becomes shorter in texture and fractures at a smaller deformation" (Lawrence, Gilles and Craemer 1993, 22). This "intermediate position" may be part of the wide economic success of and consumer preference for Cheddar (1993, 222). This texture is accompanied by a flavor profile supported by milk fat and lactic starters which create a sense of "balance" in the cheese taste (1993, 25). Kris typically uses mass-produced Cheddar from low-cost producers like Kraft, purchasing it in brick form and shredding before use. The use of mass-

produced and widely distributed products draws on the timesaving, resource-spreading, and economical emphasis of hot dishes using easily purchased and ready-made ingredients. While the recipe calls for 1½ cups of cheese, Kris typically uses more as she does not want to go "chintzy" with her portion size, ensuring that all the green beans are covered by creating a layer of cheddar which acts as a "gooey" binder.

Kris's Tater Tot Hot Dish simultaneously unites mass-produced and locally grown ingredients while maintaining a foundational divide in her preparation of the dish. She begins with the locally produced ingredients, first browning a pound of ground beef with a chopped onion. Kris notes that, "Browning the onion at the same time gives really good flavor and helps give the beef that 'yum' factor." She then lays this thoroughly cooked mixture in the bottom of the casserole dish, spreading it evenly to cover the base. As the oven preheats, she strains the liquid from a jar of canned green beans before spreading a layer of them on top of the beef and onion, an aesthetic preference reflecting her palate and family resources—both in terms of food stocks and economics—distinguishing her hot dish from others' practices (Figure 5). Cookbook author Anne Burckhardt notes that Tater Tot Hot Dish, "is another of those hot dishes that is adapted and adjusted by every cook who regularly makes it. Some top the meat layer with grated cheese. Others mix canned mushrooms with the vegetable layer" (2006, 58) (Figure 6). Recipes for Tater Tot Hot Dish may also vary in the vegetable layer, often including corn and carrots.

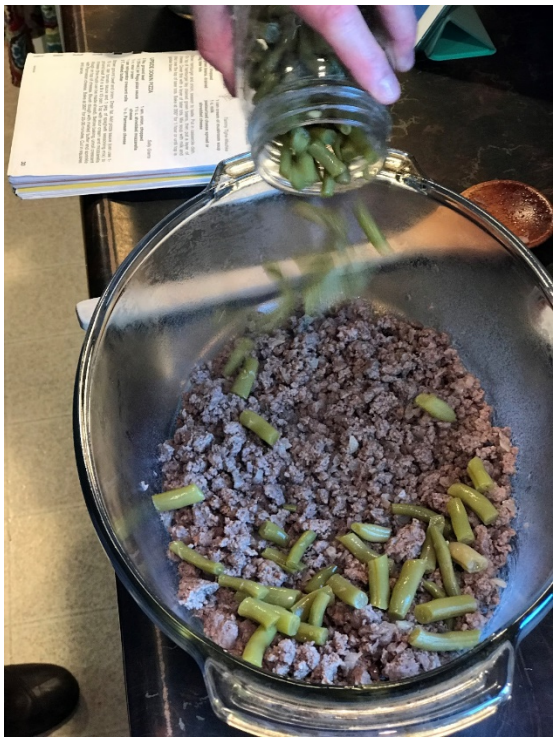

Figure 5: Spreading the drained green beans over the browned hamburger and onions into a casserole dish. Image by author. 2018.

Figure 6: Kris spreads the freshly shredded cheddar cheese atop the green beans. Image by author. 2018.

Kris does not create a "fancy" layout design with the tater tots; rather, "I empty the bag on top, take my hand and even them out. Sometimes I have a 'double-decker.'" The number of tater tots required to cover the dish depends on several factors: casserole dish style and size, audience, and tater tot quantity available (Figure 7). Casserole dishes vary in style and material—from circular and glass to rectangular and metal, and from enamel to disposable aluminum—and can vary in size (Villas 2003, 2-3). Having multiple casserole dishes, Kris chooses which to use based on the intent of the meal. Kris wants to ensure that "the whole top is covered, I like a whole solid layer of tater tots." Although the tater tots may appear in disarray, she believes that "if you have a whole thick layer of tater tots it looks nice." This aesthetic choice speaks to Kris's notion of "hometown cooking," emphasizing ingredients and community rather than a pretentious front. The last ingredient Kris adds is a mixture of cream of mushroom soup and milk. She pours it over the tater tots, where it will seep into and "bind" the distinct layers of local and mass-produced foods together (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Placing the tater tots atop the shredded cheddar cheese. Image by author. 2018.

Figure 8: Preparing the Cream of Mushroom Soup and milk mix. Kris uses the emptied can to measure the milk to achieve a desired soup to milk ratio which also "washes out" any soup not initially poured into the measuring bowl. Image by author. 2018.

Figure 9: After pouring the Cream of Mushroom Soup and milk mixture atop the tater tots, Kris uses a wooden mixing spoon to make sure the mixture is evenly distributed. Image by author. 2018.

For Kris, the distinct organizing principle for Tater Tot Hot Dish is that it must have layers, distinguishing it as a structured cultural item, one which, according to anthropologist Mary Douglas (1974), can be treated as art. As Kris places the ingredients from her garden beside those raised by a community farmer and purchased from the local grocery store on the countertop, she begins to construct her meal on a vertical alignment of horizontal layers. In the recipe featured here, the instructions note the word "layer" twice. The idea of hot dish as a food where ingredients are simply thrown into a pot and cooked, as a northeastern Ohio cook notes to Long, does not appeal to Kris nor her family (2007, 30).

Figure 10: Tater Tot Hot Dish fresh from the oven. Image by author. 2018.

Bringing a Dish to Pass

A sense of construction and appearance are important factors in Kris's public presentation of Tater Tot Hot Dish in her community. Outside of the family meal, Kris

often prepares Tater Tot Hot Dish for community potlucks—particularly those at her church. Much smaller in scale than festivals, potlucks are similar to food events like picnics, ice cream socials, and team meals, in what Lin T. Humphrey categorizes as "small group festive gatherings" (1979, 190). These gatherings share some of the same purposes as a festival, bringing groups together to celebrate or engage in ritual, build community, and produce a sense of enjoyment through the company of other individuals in festive environments (1979, 192). Kris strongly believes in the communal nature of potlucks at Trinity Lutheran Church which provides opportunities to share one's cooking talents and recipes outside the sphere of competition. She notes that she is, "just glad that I was able to make something that my family would have liked there for other people to enjoy. That is my main factor [for participating]." Kris observes that all the dishes at Trinity's potlucks are laid out all at once. Nothing is left in the kitchen. "You do not want to see that [an individual's] dish isn't out to be slighted—and that can happen." This notion of care for an individual's feelings and group cohesion is echoed by Camp who observes that it is socially unacceptable for individuals to take only from the dish they brought. "To do so is to say to one's neighbors that you prefer your own food to all others', and you refuse others' hospitality. To make such social statements within an event that is ***about*** fellowship is heresy" (1989, 72, bold and italics in original).

Kris prefers to bring Tater Tot Hot Dish to potlucks, which she refers to as her "go-to." "It is easy and people like it. I usually have the ingredients," she states. She suggests that she does not place a special emphasis on cooking presentation or ingredients for her family versus cooking for potlucks. "I just make sure there are plenty of tater tots and it is not skimpy. You want a lot of tater tots on the top. I like a lot of tater tots on top. Sometimes that is almost the best part…It looks better…it looks like you put a little more [effort] into it than finishing off a bag of tater tots on this one [laughs]." Kris's sentiment echoes Long's statement that "at such events, the casserole acts as a bridge between two realms, connecting public and private domains, making coworkers like family, and making family relationships somewhat more formal and ceremonial than they might otherwise be" (2007, 38).

There is a capacity for casseroles/hot dishes to operate not only as a bridge between public and private kitchens but also among the private kitchens of other families, particularly during periods of grief. For Kris, bringing food to friends and family experiencing the loss of a loved one functions as an extension of fellowship and neighborliness. By bringing food to someone's home, Kris transforms these items into a symbol of community and faith—what Camp refers to as a food gift (1989, 102). Kris notes that following the death of a loved one, the main family typically has a significant number of guests visiting or staying with them. These families are often unprepared for the sudden influx of visitors. Funerals are emotionally and economically wearing periods that disrupt regular life patterns as families face not only the physical and financial difficulties of arranging the funeral but the psychological impact of the loss.

During these periods of grief, the altered routines of life, as well as meals, push the body towards the periphery until "the body becomes an object of awareness" because of appetite and satiety (Kristensen and Holm 2006, 171). Kris states that, "Usually if you are having a lot of people coming over to your house, usually what you are needing are main dishes. If you want to be helpful, that is what you bring." Food operates as a conduit through which both community and body can be rebuilt and strengthened. Camp observes that providing a warm, comfortable meal validates grief by allowing the bereaved to focus on the matter at hand as opposed to hosting and preparing meals. Funeral food also "eschews the types of food ordinarily given" by neighbors through emphasis on practical meals as opposed to desserts (1989, 102).

The choice of what types of funeral food Kris brings to grieving families reveals a negotiation of food gifts associated with spheres of emotional connectivity, or "how close you are to these people." Kris notes that, "Sometimes I will bring a case of pop or paper goods, sometimes pizza. If you are really close to someone, you will bring something special, something that makes you go 'out of your way.'" Hot dishes may appear to be easy to prepare, but, in this context and in their association with hometown cooking, they demonstrate a deeper level of care. The families Kris brings hot dishes to are neighbors, close friends, and family. "[Hot dishes] are all made, ready for them to cook when they are ready. These are easy to reheat and very filling. They provide a home cooked meal." Given the sensitivity of this time in conjunction with the necessity to retrieve one's cookware, Kris notes that a few social mores have developed to avoid a potentially awkward social situation. Most people label their casserole dishes and pans, sometimes with an address return label or a piece of tape with their name written on it with the expectation that it will be returned. Another common solution is to purchase disposable aluminum foil pans which can be thrown away once the food has been consumed. Such variations in the tradition reveal an underlying value on the part of the community: those who are grieving need to be cared for and need to have their lives eased as much as possible. In rural Southwest Minnesota, Kris's production of hot dishes for her community can thus be viewed as an extension of her role as loving mother.

Conclusion

Through examination of the construction of this dish, as performed by Kris, I am able to view how each seemingly ordinary ingredient speaks to a larger sense of both calendrical and cultural time and community. Kris's approach to hometown cooking stresses control of ingredients best exemplified by her family's production of food. With each season, the Schmidts engage in a cycle of planting, harvesting, and preserving. Kris's Tater Tot Hot Dish is a meal imbued with intentionality and careful planning a year, if not more, in advance. Tater Tot Hot Dish also reveals Kris's participation with her community's multi-tiered conceptualization of time, an emphasis

on practicality, and the strength of community through celebration and grief. As a symbol of hometown cooking, this meal is more than just an assembly of ingredients. It is union of learned skills and economics oriented towards demonstrating love and care through a warm, and playful, meal.

Figure 11: Kris with her Tater Tot Hot Dish. Image by author. 2018.

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Notes

[1] The world "casserole" is rooted in 17th c. French culinary tradition of cooking *en casserole* (*casse* "pan," *casse-roles* "little *cases*"), or the European style (Villas 2003, xi).

[2] This study began at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in the fall of 2015, as a foodways course assignment. I had begun researching the culinary history of the Tater Tot Hot Dish, focusing on Kris's performance of this dish. As my introductory research continued, I expanded on her foodways and how her aesthetic and practical choices affected my home when I was growing up. These essays formed the foundation for my MA thesis for the Department of Comparative Literature and Folklore Studies (Folklore Option) at UW–Madison in 2017. This research was also delivered at the Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society and Association for the Study of Food and Society Annual Conference in Madison, Wisconsin, on June 13, 2018.

[3] At the Minnesota State Fair, patrons can purchase Tater Tot Hot Dish served to them on a stick, a common theme among festival food at "The Great Minnesota Get Together" (Dregni 2011, 23–26).

[4] In Tracy, Minnesota, the Pelican Pontoon Pussycats host an annual Tater Tot Hot Dish cooking competition to raise money for local charities (Buntjer 2015). Former Minnesota Senator Al Frankin (D) also hosted an annual hot dish competition amongst the state's members of Congress (Brody 2017).

[5] Hot dish-centered merchandise is becoming pervasive in Minnesota, from themed dish towels (Minnesota Historical Society 2018) and coffee mugs (Caribou Coffee 2018), to themed (in name at least) beer (Lift Bridge Brewing Company 2018) and wine (Carlos Creek Winery 2018).

[6] See Theresa Millang and Karen Corbett's (2017) *The Great Minnesota Hot Dish: Your Cookbook for Classic Comfort Food (Revised and Updated).*

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Reviews

Pinery Boys: Songs and Songcatching in the Lumberjack Era. Edited by Franz Rickaby with Gretchen Dykstra and James P. Leary. 2017. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. Pp. 356, glossary, index, illustrations, black and white photographs. $25.95 paper.

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In 1926, Franz Rickaby published his Ballads and Songs of the Shanty Boy, the results of his efforts to collect songs in the lumbering camps and towns of the upper Midwest. Over ninety years since its first printing, University of Wisconsin Press, Dykstra, and Leary have reprinted and updated Rickaby's book, making it once again accessible for the modern scholar and singer. In addition to the text of Rickaby's original work, the book includes four supplemental sections.

The first of these is an introduction by Leary providing an overview of Rickaby's "songcatching" work. Leary's introduction makes a case for why we should read Rickaby's work today. Leary writes that Rickaby's collecting activities suffered from not including sound recordings and ignoring areas such as the music of Native Americans and Scandinavians that also appeared in the lumber camps. However, Rickaby's work can be viewed favorably today in his understanding of songs as "living performances" (6) and his efforts to engage more than just a scholarly audience via public programming. Leary's introduction also traces the influence of Rickaby's work on the contemporary image of the lumberman in literature, music, and media.

Leary's introduction is followed by an extended biographical essay by Dykstra, Rickaby's granddaughter. Dykstra's essay is simultaneously a biography of Rickaby and a personal account of her own research to learn more about the grandfather she never knew. She weaves together events in Rickaby's personal life and research with the climate of folksong scholarship at the time and the history of the places in which he travelled to collect his songs. Dykstra's essay thus gives the reader a sense of Rickaby's motivations for his work and presents him as a three-dimensional figure with whom the reader can empathize. Dykstra also compares Rickaby favorably to his contemporaries, with his focus on how these songs relate to the lives of their singers, not simply as isolated pieces of poetry. My only critique of Dykstra's essay is her relative lack of in-text citations. While she gives a good list of references at the end, it is difficult for the reader to follow up on specific assertions she makes within her text.

Appearing after Dykstra's essay is the reprint of Rickaby's original text. This includes his introduction that gives a sense of the occupational and performance context of the songs, as well as his thoughts on scholarly debates of the day (e.g., folksong authorship). The majority of Rickaby's fifty-one songs deal topically with loggers, including death in the woods or on the river drives ("Gerry's Rocks"), occupational terminology ("The Shanty-man's Alphabet"), and romantic relationships with lumbermen ("The Pinery Boy"). Also included, however, are other songs and ballads which were sung in the lumber camps at the end of the nineteenth century. Each song is prefaced by notes, originally found in the back of the 1926 book. These notes describe Rickaby's sources for the songs and provide information about their historical or literary context or make comparisons to other songs in the

volume. Also reproduced from Rickaby's original work is his glossary of lumbering terms that appear in the songs, allowing an outsider to understand them better. The reader can thus learn about the lumbermen through their songs and about the songs through the description of the lives and performance practices of the lumbermen. Perhaps most lacking in this section is detailed biographical information about the singers from whom he got the songs, but this is not surprising given the time period in which he worked.

Rickaby's book was not only for the scholar and the reader but also for the singer. Indeed, he himself believed that ballads were useless without their tunes (64). With this in mind, musical transcriptions are provided for the vast majority of his songs. However, the inclusion of multiple texts of many of the songs, as well as the lack of "completion" of lyrics in the few places where lines are missing, means the integrity of the originals is not compromised in the name of the reader-singer's aesthetics.

The third supplemental section, at the end of the book, contains a selection of songs collected by Rickaby which did not appear in the 1926 publication but were in his archival notebooks. These include songs from occupations and ethnic groups not represented in Ballads and Songs of the Shanty Boy, but that were present in the upper Midwest at the time. Rickaby's notes in this section are supplemented by Leary, often giving more information about the singers of the songs. This is followed by an index of Rickaby's fieldwork notebooks, giving a sense of the breadth of his song collecting.

In conclusion, Pinery Boys is a work that sets Rickaby's original book into its historical and scholarly context while simultaneously showing us why the work has stood the test of time. With its reprinting, this volume also achieves what Rickaby would have wanted—greater access to these songs by the public.

The Folkloresque: Reframing Folklore in a Popular Culture World. Edited by Michael Dylan Foster and Jeffery A. Tolbert. 2016. Logan: Utah State University Press. Pp. viii+265, index. $27.95 paper.

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The Folkloresque: Reframing Folklore in a Popular Culture World—a volume edited by Michael Dylan Foster and Jeffrey A. Tolbert—offers up eleven essays that do just that; each author examines the relationship of folklore and popular culture through the theoretical frame of the folkloresque. Foster and Tolbert propose the folkloresque as "a heuristic tool. …a tool that encourages us to re-envision categories such as *folklore* and *popular culture*, to explore how they mutually influence each other, and to productively problematize distinctions between them" (4; emphasis in original). Thinking with the folkloresque allows the authors to 'pop the hood' on the metaphorical engine of culture and look not only at culture as a whole system, a cultural inventory, but at the specific junctures between folklore and popular culture, how popular culture views folklore, and how folklore influences popular culture. Applicable to all manner of cultural product, the folkloresque also serves as a label to indicate a particular relationship between folklore and popular culture—the folkloresque "like a Möbius strip in which folk culture and popular culture are magically, paradoxically, two different sides of the same surface, never intersecting because they are already intersecting" (26).

As perhaps my mixing of metaphors indicates, the folkloresque is a complicated and slippery term, and to help orient the reader, Foster and Tolbert have delineated three different categories of the folkloresque: *integration*, *portrayal*, and *parody* (15), into which the book is subsequently divided. Each category, outlined in Foster's introduction to the volume, is further explained by Tolbert in short essays that introduce each of the three sections. Each section is comprised of several wide-ranging essays illustrating the breadth of the applicability of the folkloresque.

The first section, "Integration," considers how producers of popular culture incorporate elements of folkloric forms and motifs into commercial products. Foster examines the allusions to folklore in the film *Spirited Away*; rather than incorporating references to motifs and forms, creator Miyazaki Hayao presents a film that is a "fuzzy allusion" that seems like folklore and is accepted by American audiences as having a sort of traditional authenticity. Tim Evans looks at intertextuality and the folkloresque, as elements of folklore integrated into the works of Neil Gaiman gives his writing a folkloresque quality. Paul Manning lays out the process by which pixies became integrated into nineteenth century fairy mythology. Daniel Peretti thinks about comics as folklore using Superman as a case study.

The second section, "Portrayal", contains essays that tackle instances of popular culture's emic perception of folklore and folkloristics. Tolbert writes about the depiction of folklorists and folklore in the horror videogame franchise *Fatal Frame*. Chad Buterbaugh examines how an actor with a stage routine came to represent the ideal traditional storyteller in Ireland. The section ends with Carlea Holl-Jensen and Jeffery A. Tolbert's essay on how folklore is understood to function in the world of Harry Potter, specifically through *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, a book of fairy tales published as a companion piece to the Harry Potter series.

The final section, "Parody", noted by the editors as "particularly complex" (18), provides the reader with instances of culture that are particularly self-conscious or self-referential. Folkloresque as parody is a form of metacommentary. The first two essays, fittingly for a section on parody, address jokes. Trevor J. Blank looks at jokes that require a specific cultural inventory and Greg Kelley presents jokes that are funny because they are self-reflexive and function as a metacommentary on joke forms themselves. Bill Ellis offers an analysis of the anime *Princess Tutu* and the ways that the show functions as a metacommentary on the act of storytelling itself. The volume concludes with Gregory Schrempp's examination of the folkloresque in popular science through a comparison of David Toomey's *Weird Life* and the creation of bestiaries as similar documentations of the monstrous and fundamentally anthropocentric endeavors.

This book is thought-provoking and a necessary part of the conversations on convergence culture, popular culture, folklore, and mass media. Particularly useful for folklorists working with subjects, texts, and contexts overtly connected to popular culture and mass media, this book also has utility as a theoretical work that articulates the relationship between folklore and popular culture, and thus helps us folklorists orient ourselves and our subject of inquiry.