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Dancing through adversity: The kinetic symbols of Greek dance "Zonarádikos" as a dance movement therapy tool for the promotion of social support, social cohesion and community resilience

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Abstract

Multiple collective crises have been reality for Greek society for over a decade now. Recent literature highlights the importance of social support, social cohesion and community resilience in the field of addressing and preventing mental health deterioration amongst populations that have faced crises. This study aims at proposing dance movement therapy as an alternative way of intervention in communities that have faced crisis. Four kinetic symbols of the Greek dance "Zonarádikos" are presented and proposed as dance movement therapy tools for an intervention aiming at community empowerment: the circle, the spiral, the escalation and de-escalation, and the net (crossed arms). A qualitative approach through interpretative phenomenological analysis was employed, in order to explore the feelings that these symbols provoke to participants, as well as the relevance of these feelings to the concepts of social support, social cohesion and community resilience. Five participants were interviewed. The results revealed direct relevance between the kinetic symbols and the concepts of social support, social cohesion and community resilience. Finally, one more symbol of the dance, the group yell, emerged from the interviewees' answers as a possible tool.

Introduction

This study aims at proposing a set of kinetic symbols derived from Greek dance "Zonarádikos", as a tool for dance movement therapists who wish to facilitate dance movement therapy (DMT) group interventions in community settings, with the aim of strengthening social cohesion, social support and resilience within communities that are facing crisis, or are at the process of recovering from it. Inspired from the current socio-political context in Greece, the article discusses the importance and the role of community in the field of mental health, and aims at promoting DMT as an alternative, embodied approach in helping communities recover from collective crises and increase their resilience.

Collective crises in Greek society

According to Boin and Hart (2007), "crises occur when core values or life-sustaining systems of a community come under threat" (p. 43). As crises can be considered a variety of traumatic events that can happen in the life of a community, like natural disasters, financial collapses, war, terrorist attacks, epidemics/pandemics and infrastructural tragedies. Crises strike and challenge core values of a community, such as the feeling of security and safety, welfare, justice and equality (Boin & Hart, 2007).

Over the past fifteen years Greece has faced numerous crises, including the 2008 financial collapse followed by strict austerity policies, the 2015 refugee crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These crises have led to a generalized recession, social and political upheaval, instability and deterioration of living conditions. Environmental challenges, such as prolonged heatwaves and disastrous wildfires and floods, keep

straining resources and impact living conditions negatively. A deteriorating housing crisis further complicates life quality lately, particularly for young people. This "vicious circle" of crisis has led to deterioration of living standards, burdening already existing risk groups while creating new ones (Tsamparli & Kounenou, 2013). Finally, the devastating railway tragedy of 28th of February 2023 highlighted systemic issues in the country's rail infrastructure, triggering more social insecurity and distrust towards the welfare state.

Social support, social cohesion and community resilience

Apart from the material necessities, the concept of an individual's mental health includes and is directly affected by various aspects and social values that are related to their life as part of a community, such as equity, sense of security, hope for the future, social support, collaboration and will for social change (Boin & Hart, 2007; Castellanos-Montenegro & Hills de Zarate, 2023; Ottemiller & Awais, 2016). From the ecological perspective that the field of community psychology proposes, a lot of mental health problems are related to social, cultural, economic, political, environmental and international influences, thus the integration of all these factors is necessary in order to promote positive changes, overall well-being, prevention and empowerment, both at individual and systemic levels (Jason et al., 2019; Lainas 2023). According to the principles of community psychology, mental health providers can expand the reach of their services beyond an individual focus, emphasizing on prevention of mental health problems before they arise, rather than just treating them afterwards, and focus on actively involving the members of a community in the process of positive change (Chavis & Newbrough, 1986; Jason et al., 2019; Tsamparli & Kounenou, 2013).

According to Chuang et al. (2013) and Lainas (2023), cohesive communities characterized by strong mutual relations and increased social capital for their members demonstrate better health indicators and resilience against psychosocial problems. Similarly, Bowe et al. (2020) underline that cohesive communities can be vital sources of solidarity, support and collective resilience during shared challenges, buffering individuals -especially the more vulnerable ones- against the traumatic effects of crisis on mental health, while Hanna (1990) stresses that "curing in many societies is a mobilization of personal networks" (p.124).

Social support is defined as the practical, emotional, and informational assistance that individuals accept from their social networks, and it has been positively associated with reducing stress and the risk of mental disorders. Papadaki and Kalogeraki (2017) stress that the engagement of community members in social support actions demonstrates a vivid community, which is capable of actively responding to crisis, protecting its more vulnerable members and promoting overall well-being. Studies support that individuals who receive sufficient levels of social support are less likely to develop depression (Choi et al., 2023). Particularly evident during international crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, strong social connections helped mitigate the effects of social isolation and stress (Bowe et al., 2020; 2020; Saltzman et al., 2020; Quinn et al., 2023)

Social cohesion is defined as the trust, shared values, and connectedness among members of a community. It has been found to positively influence mental health by fostering a sense of belonging and security. Environments with high social cohesion have lower rates of mental health issues, especially among vulnerable populations, and offer emotional and practical support which buffers their members against the adverse effects of stress, enhancing resilience (Chuang et al., 2013; Donnelly et al.,

2016). Social cohesion is not only a marker of community strength, but also a vital preventive factor against mental health deterioration (Lainas, 2023; Quinn et al., 2023).

Finally, according to Norris et al. (2008), resilience within the community refers to the ability of a community to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adverse situations. It includes the collective capacity of individuals and systems within the community to cooperate, leverage resources and implement strategies that reduce vulnerabilities and foster sustainability, well-being, and long-term recovery. Resilience is not just about "bouncing back" from disruptions, but also about the community's ability to adapt, reorganize, and potentially transform as a response to challenges (Manyena et al., 2011). According to Svensson and Elntib (2021), by focusing on prevention, communities can reduce the rate of mental health problems before they actually occur, reinforcing both individual and collective resilience.

Community-based interventions

The term refers to interventions that aim at improving health levels, preventing dysfunction and promoting general well-being of specific population groups within a defined local community (Oregon State University, n.d.). According to Mc Leroy et al. (2003), the term "community-based" can signify community as setting, target, agent, or resource. As *setting*, the community is defined geographically, and is the location in which interventions are applied. Community as *target* refers to creating healthy community environments through systemic changes in public policy. Finally, the models of community as *agent* and *resource*, closely related to one another, emphasize on reinforcing the natural adaptive, supportive, and developmental

capacities of communities. These concepts reflect different conceptions of the nature of community and the way of addressing community issues, and appear interconnected within the practice of community-based health promotion (Mc Leroy et al., 2003).

DMT in the community

One of the basic principles of DMT is the assumption that the creative process per se is inherently therapeutic (Stanton-Jones, 1992). Extending this assumption from the individual level to a collective level, establishing a "creative community" can be a healing factor, both for the individuals and the group as a whole (Timm-Bottos, 2006). Dance Movement Therapy, as a psychotherapeutic technique based on the creative process of using the body, its non-verbal expression and dance, allows the exploration of new ways of relating and the development of social skills that can lead, through movement, to changes in the psyche, thus promoting overall well-being for individuals (Castellanos-Montenegro & Hills de Zarate, 2023). Moreover, movement, by fostering a symbolic way of self-expression, allows individuals to explore and communicate emotions and experiences that may be repressed or difficult to articulate (Koch & Fuchs, 2011), which is quite possible to happen after experiencing a traumatic event.

As wellness and prevention are growing trends in health care, and the medical model expands to include physical and mental health more holistically (Jason et al, 2019; Lainas, 2023; Ottemiller & Awais, 2016; Tsamparli & Kounenou, 2013), creative arts therapies would benefit from redefining themselves too (Ottemiller & Awais, 2016). This shift or broadening of definition would allow for more diverse and inclusive

ways of practicing, meaning that creative arts therapists can offer their services to a wider range of people in need or at risk, through interventions that embrace both community and individual wellness rather than focusing on pathology (Bräuninger & Bacigalupe, 2017; Ottemiller & Awais, 2016). According to Bräuninger and Bacigalupe (2017), DMT can play a significant preventive, rehabilitative and promotional role in healthcare, addressing societal challenges. However, community work is still an area very rarely addressed and researched in the DMT literature, as it can become quite difficult to retain a "typical" practice within community settings (Karkou, 2006). According to Ottemiller and Awais (2016), there is a multifaced set of requirements for effective application of creative arts therapies outside of the traditional clinical settings; most importantly, therapists should engage in a social justice framework that promotes social change at the community level, observe and critically analyze social issues, be specific about their role in the intervention and set clear therapeutic goals that align with both individual and collective needs, be trauma informed and aware of the challenging group dynamics that will quite possibly emerge, and have skills in conflict resolution.

In order to address these challenges effectively, creative arts therapists should engage in continuous professional development, interdisciplinary collaboration and a community-centered approach, ensuring the application of good therapeutic practices, while also staying adaptive to the fluid group dynamics of community environments. Karkou (2006) highlights the importance of further discussion and research in order to address community work in DMT more specifically, developing theory and practices that embrace current tendencies, while remaining sensitive to community principles.

Socio-political functions of dance

As a cultural phenomenon, dance does not remain static and unaltered through the years, but forms a dynamic process, historically determined and continuously evolving under social and political manipulations and negotiations (Panopoulou, 2008). Kaeppler (2000) defines dance as "cultural forms that result from the creative use of human bodies in time and space" (p. 117), while for Giurchescu (2001) dance is, in essence, a particular form of social interaction. Dance is not only what we see and hear, but also the invisible, underlying processes that produce both the product and the socio-political context (Kaeppler, 2000). According to Giurchescu (2001), dance serves multiple functions, such as strengthening ethnic identities, reinforcing behavioral patterns and promoting social integration. Within socio-political contexts, it can also serve as a powerful symbol of completely different fields of activity, such as politics, war and economics. Moreover, she states that dance can contribute to structuring, maintaining or changing people's behavior, their patterns of interaction and the perception of the surrounding world, affecting a whole social system. Hanna et al. (1979) proposed that dance can be a unique tool for both reinforcing and changing existing socio-political structures through the use of the body as a symbol and means of power.

Greek dance within Greek culture

According to Fuchs (2017), there is a strong connection between culture and embodiment. Thus, Greek dances carry an important personal meaning for the people who dance them, and play an integral role in Greek culture (Hunt, 2004; Kalogeropoulou, 2016). According to Loutzaki (2001), lyrics, melody and movement

have a long, creative history and connection with Greek society; through this inseparable trinity, Greeks effortlessly give kinetic expression to their feelings and mental reactions to life circumstances and events. Almost all Greek dance events express at some point social reality, social protest or social aspiration (Loutzaki, 2001). Finally, Loutzaki (2001) gives specific examples from modern Greek history, explaining how dance can be transformed from a "public cultural event" to a "public political event", through the manipulation of the three cultural symbols mentioned above. She also states that Greek dance, viewed as a symbol, can include a wide range of polysemy. In recent years, Greek folk music and dance have turned into a modern trend, regaining more and more space as a way of entertainment, expression and socializing, especially amongst young people. Thus, a quite active and enthusiast community sharing a common love and interest has been formed.

Socio-historical context and structural-morphological analysis of "Zonarádikos"

Zonarádikos is one of the most common and popular Greek dances. It belongs at the dance repertoire of the north borderline Greek region of Thrace. During the years 1919-1930, Thrace formed a "multicultural mosaic", consisting of a great number of different populations and minorities. A significant amount of them were immigrants from Pontus, Cappadocia, Eastern and Northern Thrace. Consequently, Zonarádikos was danced by all ethnic groups of Thrace, demonstrating local variations that relate and bring out issues of constructing and maintaining local cultural identities (Filippidou, 2023).

Due to the number of different populations who used to dance it, there are quite a few local variations in different features of the dance. One of the most common structures

is described below. First of all, dancers, men and women, form an open *circle*, facing right. The dance's name "Zonarádikos" derives from the Greek word "zonári", meaning "belt", because dancers originally hold each other from their belts. Nowadays, dancers are usually held with their *arms crossed*, at the level of the pelvis. The dance consists of two basic dance phrases that repeat (Filippidou, 2023). The first phrase's steps are slower and more grounded, while in the second phrase the speed and the energy of the dance *escalate*, in correspondence with the music. Right before the beginning of the second phrase, the dancers may also emit a specific yell altogether. Usually, more or less at the middle of the dance, the escalation of the music provokes the tension of the dance to climax too, and the original circular spatial formation changes to a *spiral* formation; the leader, who starts and guides this transformation, "closes" the circle into a spiral formation, before "opening" it back to the original formation of an open circle. On that point, the position of the arms also changes from crossed to holding each other from the shoulders. Zonarádikos then gets the sobriquet "kuluriastós" (from the Greek verb "kuluriázo", which means "to curl up, to coil").

Kinetic symbols of Zonarádikos

Four specific kinetic symbols of Zonarádikos' structure are presented below. This does not exclude the existence of other symbols and important features of the same dance. The selection of these four elements was made due to time and complexity limitations. Also, the author's background in Greek dance, as well as in psychology and DMT, contributed to the selection of the elements that were considered the most "symbolically charged".

The Circle. The circular formation is the spatial formation of most Greek dances. Thus, the shape of the circle has a special and acknowledged meaning in Greek folk dance, but also in the field of DMT. According to Karampoula and Panhofer (2018), Schott-Billman (2000) stresses that the circle is 'a powerful movement metaphor that has been used by mankind since ancient times in dance' (page 3). Amongst other symbolisms, the circle universally carries the following meanings: unity, continuity, wholeness, and harmony, as well as creation and mobilization of hidden or restrained forces (Karampoula & Panhofer, 2018). Finally, the circle creates security, equality and reciprocity (Da Costa & Cox, 2016; Thacker, 2024).

The Spiral. The spiral is another powerful symbol, whose great spiritual meaning and importance could be regarded as universal. Vastly encountered in art, architecture, mathematics and nature, it is often linked to progressive growth, developmental processes and evolution. It also carries meanings like birth and rebirth, healing, transformation, creation and continuous movement. Fraleigh (1996) relates spiral with self-healing and self-regulation.

Escalation and De-escalation. Escalation and de-escalation within the specific dance could be considered a symbolism for what Chavis and Newbrough (1986) call "collective problem-solving" and "community competence", which are both central factors of community well-being. In Zonarádikos, the whole group of dancers carries responsibility and control of the constantly changing rhythm and energy level, which could be seen as a symbolism of self-management and self-sufficiency of the group, as well as a symbolism of the capacity to manage social systems in order to bring social change.

The Net (crossed arms). Giurchescu (2001), referring to a folk dance from neighboring Romania, mentions that people tightly connected together is a symbol of social closeness. Karastresses that the majority of references concerning physical contact in DMT refer to socially based motivations. Crossed arms in Greek dance create both the visualization and the embodied feeling that the whole body is being contained by a "supportive net". The image of a "net" can also be viewed as a metaphor for "community"; a strong, solid net reflects a cohesive and empowered community.

Rationale and research question

Based on all the above, it can be argued that DMT can serve an effective, alternative and embodied approach to addressing and preventing mental health deterioration amongst members of communities that are facing adverse collective circumstances. Drawing inspiration from Greek dance Zonarádikos and its four kinetic symbols presented above, the rationale of this study is to discover the potential effectiveness of these symbols within a group DMT intervention, with the purpose of strengthening social support, social cohesion and community resilience. Thus, the two following research questions emerged; Firstly, what are the feelings that the kinetic symbols of Zonarádikos provoke to individuals? Secondly, based on the feelings that they provoke, which of the symbols would be relevant to the aim of strengthening social support, social cohesion and community resilience?

Method

Given the study's interest on individuals' experiences and perceptions, a qualitative, exploratory approach through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed. IPA allows an in-depth exploration of how individuals make sense of their personal experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). A semi-structured interview schedule consisting of open-ended questions was designed, as a method consistent with IPA's emphasis on permitting free expression of the interviewees' experiences, while also ensuring the interview's focus on key research questions (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The questions were focusing on the emotional reactions, bodily sensations and symbolisms that Zonarádikos in general and its four kinetic symbols in particular provoke to the participants. The last question allowed participants to talk freely about any other element of the dance that they considered meaningful to their experience.

Participants

Five participants were contacted directly by the researcher, face-to-face. They satisfied the following inclusion criteria; Greek adults who had the experience of dancing Zonarádikos. All five participants who were initially asked to participate in the research accepted. This could be explained by the fact that the researcher also forms part of the Greek dance network, which facilitated recruitment of participants, establishing trust and willingness to participate in the research. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and anonymous, and provided informed consent form prior to participation. The consent form is presented in the Appendix, translated into English, while the demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1 (page 16).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants *(N=5)*

Variables	n	%
Sex		
Female	3	60
Male	2	40
Age		
18-25	1	20
26-35	2	40
35-50	1	20
≥ 51	1	20
Nationality		
Greek	5	100
Other	0	0
Years of experience		
in Greek dance		
≤ 2 years	1	20
3-5 years	1	20
> 5 years	3	60

Procedure

All interviews were conducted by the author face-to-face, in a public yet private space. In order to avoid affecting the participants' answers, a quite general explanation about the research's goal was given prior to the interview. A specific video on YouTube, clearly demonstrating the structure and all the important elements of the dance, was available for participants to watch between the questions, in order to help them recapture the feeling of dancing Zonarádikos. Each interview lasted between fifteen and nineteen minutes, and was audio-recorded.

Data collection and analysis

All the data were collected during March and April 2024. As all interviews were conducted in Greek, the data analysis was also done in Greek, and only the results were translated in English by the researcher, as well as the participants' direct quotes

that are presented below. The transcription of the interviews was done manually and clean verbatim, allowing the production of a more readable and coherent text, while the coding of the data and the analysis for common themes across cases was also done manually, permitting deeper engagement with the data. For a proper qualitative data analysis process, it was followed the framework described by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012). This framework includes the following stages; immersion to data through listening and reading them multiple times, taking initial notes, transforming notes into emergent themes, looking for connections across emerging themes and clustering them, and proceeding to the presentation and interpretation of the results, exemplifying them with extracts of the interviews and analytic comments by the author.

Results

It became evident that the symbols of the dance provoke similar emotional reactions to different individuals. The participants mainly connected Zonarádikos and all four kinetic symbols with feelings and social values that are closely related to the concepts of social cohesion, social support and resilience. This answers the second research question, regarding the relevance of the symbols to the aim of strengthening these three concepts.

All participants mentioned that dancing Zonarádikos in general provokes feeling of togetherness, unity, equality and solidarity with the rest of the group. Also, all of them generally referred to the values of coordination, cohesion and responsibility for a common goal. Nonetheless, each one of them also described that the dance provoked

to them pleasant feelings of joy and enthusiasm. The results regarding each one of the kinetic symbols are presented below.

Circle. Four out of five participants mentioned that the circular formation of the dance provoked to them feelings of togetherness, a sense of belonging, equality, acceptance and cohesion with the rest of the individuals. Furthermore, the circle was associated with the principles of respect and compliance with the common rules, equal and shared participation in the action, as well as with a challenge for fulfillment. F (woman, 28 years old) shares: "*It is a circle which is not complete but tends towards completion. [...] It urges and intrigues me to complete, to unite the circle*". Finally, as it was described by three of the participants, the circular formation of the dancers, in combination with the repeated basic step, visualizes and embodies the concepts of symmetry and normality. Nonetheless, one participant mentioned that the circular shape provoked to him the sense of oppression, in the face of a need to "keep the rule".

Spiral. Four out of five interviewees mentioned the principles of "responsibility" and "evolution". As described by three of the participants, when the spatial formation of the dance changes from circular to spiral, that is not something easy to do and keep, since it requires good technique and very careful coordination among the dancers. Thus, it provokes to them feelings of great responsibility towards the persons next to them and the whole, and makes them try their best to keep the shape of the spiral fixed and coherent.

 S (man, 44 years old) states:

"*The spiral part gives me a feeling of even greater responsibility towards your neighbor and in relation to the whole, and creates a feeling that, while something is*

about to break down, coherence must be maintained and recreated, reborn… It's like a constant effort; while something is about to break down, you're trying tooth and nail to keep it tied and alive".

E (man, 24 years old) shares:

"I'm fascinated by the fact that a group of people in this particular formation moves in a way that requires everyone to "do their part". It requires that the first one is responsible for coordination and geometry, the next are responsible for maintaining that coordination, distances, etc. […] If someone doesn't participate or doesn't understand it, it breaks down".

Regarding the "evolution", three out of five participants mentioned that the spiral symbolizes will and challenge for evolution. E comments: "*It's a very lively thing, you suddenly become part of a living organism that changes form, that evolves into something else, and everybody has to be part of it*".

B (woman, 55 years old) says:

"*The spiral gives me a challenge. How something as simple as a circle can, with an extra movement, be transformed into something more interesting and more impressive. Something simple can go a step further, evolve into something more complex".*

Finally, two participants talked about feelings of hope and togetherness provoked by the spiral. D (woman, 27 years old) shares: "*It is the evolution of the circle: something that does not close, but has an endless flow. That makes me feel hopeful because life doesn't stop, it has a constant progression".*

F says: *"I love it when the spiral happens, because we unite more, the people who are in the front come inside, they come closer with the others, it becomes a big hug! Everyone joins with everyone else and it's very nice."*

Escalation and De-escalation. The main themes that emerged regarding this kinetic symbolism were about "activation" and "complementarity between activation and relief", as it was mentioned by three out of five participants. Interviewees described that the escalation of the dance requires the activation of both body and mind, promoting a conscious presence in "here and now". Three participants described that this switch from low to high tension of the dance and the opposite provokes a switch between the feelings of activation and rest, finally offering a feeling of fullness and balance that is associated with the alternations of life itself. B, for example, says: "*This is an alternation that I believe exists in life and that we need. To have moments of tension that alternate with moments of calm. That gives you fullness*".

Switching from low to high intensity and the opposite can also feel like "self-regulation" and "redefinition". E shares: "*It redefines what the cycle is like, where we are, we rest and then get back into it. And that repeatability is very, very beautiful*".

Finally, besides the concept of activation, the escalation was also associated with the concept of preparation for a change that is about to come.

Net. The relationship with the "neighbors" and the whole seems to be central in this symbolism. According to the participants, holding hands this way brings the dancers' bodies in a very close and direct contact, making each person's movement directly affect the movement of the persons next to them. That increases a lot the sense of

interdependence and trust between the persons dancing side by side, as well as the sense of safety and belonging to the whole.

B mentions: "*This way of holding hands reinforces the sense of teamwork and total dependence on each other. You're not an individual in this dance, you're part of the net*".

The feeling of mutual "holding", care and support between dancers was also mentioned by three interviewees as crucial.

According to S, *"The other person is holding you and won't let you either go or do the wrong thing, or even if that happens, the other person will be there to hold you"*.

 Similarly, E mentions: "*It gives me that sense of camaraderie, of shared purpose and common goal, and a sense of imperviousness. That "I've got you and you've got me*", *I support and I'm being supported*".

Furthermore, this way of holding hands seems to foster attunement, coordination and communication with the neighbor in the dance, as well as the commitment to the whole and the prioritization of it.

D describes this experience: "*If I were to call it something, I would call it "commitment". You see how your own action affects the other person, and that makes me think of how can I act with the intention of doing it in a positive way for the other person*".

Finally, one more element emerged from the last open question of the interview, where participants were asked to freely talk about any other element of the dance that they consider important in their experience of dancing Zonarádikos. Two participants referred to the group yell that dancers emit before the escalation of the dance.

Group Yell. Participants described that this element helps them release both physical and mental tension, bringing joy and euphoria. It was also related with coordination of the whole group and strengthening of team spirit.

B says: *"The yell is very important and necessary. It releases all this tension. It comes out in a very authentic and joyful way. [...] It expresses and evokes tension and joy at the same time. It's group work too, it's done by everyone at the same time, and I think that it's a very structural element of dance".*

Similarly, S explains: "*It creates a collaboration of sound, body and spirit…The mood it creates brings me euphoria of the soul, well-being, joy… It releases body and spirit"*.

On this last question, one participant referred to the repetition of the basic step, another to the position of the arms, and the last one to the rhythm of the dance.

Discussion

The research's results strongly imply that all the kinetic symbols presented can induce feelings that are closely related to the concepts of social support, social cohesion and community resilience, answering to the research questions. This finding supports the notion that specific dance structures can be handled in order to reflect and promote aspects of social life (Giurchescu, 2001). Thus, the integration of these elements in a community-based DMT intervention with the aim of enhancing these three components during stressful periods, can be considered relevant and purposeful.

As expected, the circular formation -vastly used in group DMT- was found to promote the sense of belonging, togetherness and group cohesion, supporting the existing

literature. Jerrome (2002) highlights the importance of circle dance as an important feature of community life, which enhances the feeling of togetherness and a sense of belonging, especially when facing adverse individual or collective circumstances. The work of Da Costa and Cox (2016) and Thacker (2024) also converges at the same findings. Moreover, it was shown that the circular movement of the whole group metaphorically represents equality and shared commitment to a common goal. Within a community, the existence of these factors indicates better mental health for its members (Lainas, 2023; Montenegro & Hills de Zarate, 2023). Finally, the symmetric shape of the circle was found to provoke a sense of normality. Restoring that sense of normality and stability is important during or after a turbulent period, since it restores a sense of safety. Nevertheless, it is interesting and, at some point, understandable, the fact that the "normative" function of the circle can also be experienced as oppressive by some individuals. This finding raises consciousness regarding the limitations and the possibly negative influence of the community on some individuals. However, the limitations of the current study do not permit deeper immersion to this specific topic.

The spiral spatial formation was maybe the most interesting and rich part of the interview, highlighting several feelings and social values, such as responsibility for the neighbor and the whole, and shared commitment and participation to tasks. Collective efforts consist important factors for community development and resilience (Chavis & Newbrough, 1986; Norris et al., 2007; Papadaki & Kalogeraki, 2017; Tsamparli & Kounenou, 2013). Apart from that, this symbol was shown to familiarize individuals with the concepts of constant change and evolution. As it has already been mentioned, resilience does not simply mean "bouncing back" from disruptions, but also accepting change and embracing it as a chance for progress (Manyena et al.,

2011). Finally, hope, which was also associated with the spiral, is strongly related to resilience (Castellanos-Montenegro & Hills de Zarate, 2023).

The pattern of escalation and de-escalation was found to provoke the feeling of balance and complementarity between activation and relief, the emotional and physical self-regulation of the whole group, as well as its preparation for change. Finding balance between activation and relief can be associated to the alternations that a community has to go through during or after crisis, and reflects the community's ability to demonstrate resilience. Similarly, feeling prepared for change and knowing that escalation is followed by calm, can help individuals feel safer and more hopeful for the future, when this sense of security has been disrupted.

Due to the intense metaphor that the symbol of the net (crossed arms) conveys, the connection between this symbol and feelings of safety, trust, group cohesion and mutual support was anticipated. However, the net was also associated with the values of commitment to the needs of the whole and prioritizing them over the individual ones, making it suitable for the aims of the current proposal.

Finally, as it has already been mentioned, the initial selection of four symbols was made due to time and complexity limitations of the study, without denying the significance of other elements of the dance. Consequently, the participants' referring to the group yell was not a surprising finding. This coordinated and joyful yell is indeed an important and distinctive feature of Zonarádikos. Releasing tension that naturally accumulates when facing hard times, and experiencing feelings of euphoria are pretty much needed during stressful periods, and the simultaneous yell was found to serve these purposes. Additionally, it is one more symbol that fosters coordination and cohesion amongst the members of the group.

In conclusion, we suggest that DMT can serve as an alternative approach to community well-being and collective mental health, especially during or post collective crisis. The kinetic symbols that have been described and researched could serve as embodied metaphors for feelings and values related to social support, social cohesion and community resilience, promoting and enhancing them.

Limitations and future recommendations

It is important though to address a few limitations of the present study, as well as addressing recommendations for future research. The first key limitation is the fact that the author, as member of the same social network as the participants (the Greek dance community), knew the interviewees before the interview. Thus, it is possible that the previous relationship has influenced both the data collection and the analysis process. Moreover, it remains unclear what effects and connection would the same symbols induce on individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Finally, actual application of the kinetic symbols in community settings with larger sample is recommended as a future step, in order to obtain empirical evidence regarding its efficiency. The example of Zonarádikos shows that employing a community's cultural elements in order to work therapeutically with its members, can not only serve as a source of enjoyment, but it is also expected that, with proper handling, these elements can act as powerful tools for building stronger, healthier, and more creative communities. This assumption opens the way to enriching DMT with tools and techniques based on different cultural influences, reinforcing the cross-cultural and intertemporal connection between body and mind, as well as the connection between the individual and the collective.

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Appendix

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

The interview in which you are about to participate is conducted by Erina (Aikaterini) Tzouana (etzouana@gmail.com), student of the **Autonomous University of Barcelona** (UAB), in the context of her thesis research project for the **Master's Degree in Dance-Movement Therapy**.

The research project is carried out under the supervision of **Iris Bräuninger, Ph.D**. (dancetherapy@mac.com).

By signing this form, you indicate your consent to the following:

- I consent to the audio-recording and transcription of my interview, knowing that the data will be used solely for the purposes of the thesis and future publication, and that the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be respected.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information and data, solely for the purposes of this study.
- I consent to be quoted directly.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Date _____

Name and Signature of Participant _____

Name and Signature of Researcher _____