

Reflections on occupation, cultural identities and social transformation¹

Reflexiones sobre ocupación, identidades culturales
y transformación social

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ABSTRACT

When I was so kindly invited to the XVI CCTO conference this past year in Medellín, one of the lasting impressions of that short visit was the folk cultural content, using music and dance, of many of the presentations. This made it a very different experience to other occupational therapy conferences I have attended. The significance of cultures seemed integral to practice, for example with indigenous people and with people living in rural areas, as well as to the positioning of occupational therapy in its historic place within recent Colombian history. What was very different to me as a British person was that these performances involved something that everyone seemed to know and to be able to participate in. The strength of this shared aspect of culture, which may reflect some aspects of the rich variety of traditions in Colombia, was impressive. It led me to reflect on the community focus of human purposeful occupation as the 'collective doing' that constitutes culture. This reflective paper will discuss some aspects of occupation and culture as the product of collective doing for the community focus of human purpose. It will consider occupation and culture against the background of the use of occupation for health, and as a basis for socially transformative practices. It will draw on some aspects of Colombian and UK folk cultures and some of the reasons why practitioners might be careful to respect the integrity of these assets, as well as their capacity for innovation, adaptation and change as living culture.

KEY WORDS

Occupation, culture, folk music, personal narratives

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RESUMEN

Cuando fui invitado con tanta amabilidad al XVI Congreso Colombiano de Terapia Ocupacional el año pasado en Medellín, una de las impresiones más fuertes de mi corta visita fue el contenido de folclor cultural, a través del uso de la música y la danza, en muchas de las presentaciones. Esto hizo que fuera una experiencia muy diferente a la de otros congresos a los que he asistido. El significado de las culturas parecía ser una parte integral de la práctica profesional, por ejemplo con comunidades indígenas y con poblaciones en áreas rurales, así como del posicionamiento de la Terapia Ocupacional dentro de la historia colombiana reciente. Lo que resultó muy distinto para mí como británico fue que las manifestaciones de música y danza eran algo que todo el mundo parecía conocer y en lo cual todos podían participar. La fortaleza de este aspecto cultural compartido, el cual refleja algunos de los aspectos de la variedad de tradiciones en Colombia, fue cautivador. Esto me llevó a reflexionar sobre el enfoque comunitario de la ocupación humana con propósito, entendido como el *hacer colectivo* que constituye la cultura. Este artículo de reflexión discute algunos aspectos de la ocupación y la cultura como producto del hacer colectivo para el propósito humano de la comunidad. Se consideran la ocupación y la cultura en oposición a los antecedentes de uso de la ocupación para la salud, y como fundamento de las prácticas socialmente transformadoras. Se esbozan algunos aspectos de la cultura popular de Colombia y el Reino Unido, y algunas razones por las cuales los profesionales deben ser cuidadosos en respetar su integridad, así como su capacidad para la innovación, la adaptación y el cambio como cultura viva.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Ocupación, cultura, música folklórica, narrativas personales

Introduction

Bonder, Martin and Miracle (2004) illustrate the significance of understanding the nature of culture as something which is learned, develops over time, enables evaluation, and is based and transmitted in interaction for occupation based practices. Socially transformative health interventions can be based in popular cultures such as folk song and dance as well as vernacular writing practices. I will consider these practices in relation to the idea of social movements (which it can be argued would be true of some understandings of folk culture and working class writing and community publi-

shing) and the implications this might have for a socially transformative practice. Music is a cultural form which is often associated with narrative, both through its structure and through the lyrical content of the songs it may accompany. It is, amongst other things, a means of accessing memory, histories and experiences, both personal and communal in their significance and because of their content and context, both potentially engaging and limited and excluding (García, 2014). Much of the exploration of music as an intervention (and of the arts more generally) has been from a top down perspective García (2014). There is a need to evaluate these processes and

understand them from a grass roots perspective. I will conclude by exploring human libraries as an occupation based means of working with narratives as a dialogue.

Hammell (2009) argues that occupational therapy intervention should be respectful of cultural context, but that the profession makes assumptions about meaningful activity which have not been supported by cultural investigations. For example, Hong, Heathcote and Hibberd (2011) describe many culturally based activities for working with older people, but although they are set out with plans that take into account clinical considerations, there is almost no discussion of the cultural depth identified by Bonder, Martin and Miracle (2004). This might be required in eliciting narratives from people as the basis for arts or reminiscence. However, from the perspective of developing writing activities, for example, Goldblatt (2007), Mathieu, Parks and Rousculp (2012), Williams, (1996), all describe the significance of cultural practices with different communities, and set out how to give people ownership of their creations.

Other oversights could undermine the use of cultural media for intervention. García (2014) warns against a naive application of music genres in Colombian reconciliation projects. She points to the simplistic association of music with healing, whereas it can have complex content and associations, especially if it has been harnessed to political objectives, or expresses the perspectives of victims. The powerful work of victims of the Colombian conflict revealed by Juan Manuel Echavarría in his film *Bocas de*

Ceniza (Mouths of Ash, 2004) has people chanting their stories to the camera. The performances are full of pain and suffering. These songs, for all the truth they bear, may be very difficult material to work with. They cannot be adopted without respect to the performers and some consideration for the experiences of those who may hear these voices, especially if they may have been the perpetrators of these outrages. As a person who has had no experience of conflict I can hear them both in relation to the British folk songs I know of disasters, some of which may have eye witness content in their composition, and the experiences of people I have known who survived second world war bombing, or episodes of the Northern Irish conflicts (e.g. Sitzia and Thickett, 2002). Practitioners cannot tell in advance how people will respond to content and what may cause a person to reflect on something they were involved in previously and react. Occupational therapists are often working with people who have challenging histories that cannot be repaired. Clients may also have long term conditions for which there may be no resolution but to enable people to live well (Pember-ton, 2014). Such interventions need to be capable of sustaining engagement, to convey depth and meaning, to offer aspects of ownership of participation.

Culture and community

The history of folk and vernacular culture in the UK is different to that of Colombia or of other countries in many respects. Although the relative socioeconomic differences are significant the historical relationships between UK cultures, particularly English culture,

and the legacy of imperialism are also sources of political tensions. These relationships are complex. They contain popular elements which belong to obscure and sometimes reinvented traditions that have been used to exemplify nationalist perspectives (Spracklen and Henderson, 2013; Palmer Heathman, 2016), but they can also be interpreted in progressive ways (Bose, 2004; Rappaport, 2004). Some communities in Colombia have developed musical expression in a way intended to shape and express their identity in resistance to conflict through narrative vehicles such as rap or vallenato (García, 2014).

It is important to first make a connection between culture and community. Hield's (2010) discussion of the 'folk community' in England describes activities carried out in a community defined by its shared interests, rather than a geographical location. She refers to Bauman's (2001) suggestion that 'community', even in the present, relates to an imagined community of a rather indefinite past. Hield (2010) argues that the community of folk music is bounded "through the practice of singing an elusive body of songs on which they [the singers] have placed significance" (p.52). It is through this repertoire of folk music that these people seem to base their identity and sense of belonging to a community. It is a preference with which they identify, rather than the folk music being a product of their identity. Often they are floor singers, contributing their few minutes of song to an evening of performance, or perhaps organisers of a 'session' in a pub with a small audience (Hield, 2010). I have sometimes taken part in such gatherings, and the performances by community publi-

shing groups and writing workshops to which I belonged had a similar feel. Such performances, whether of original material or well known songs have an intimacy, often there is no technology involved, for no microphones are needed, and as regular events in the calendar of performance they become part of a community of narratives.

Intimacy and exchange

The ability to make performances personal, the situation of folk song or any other medium in a wider narrative (even if this is partly imagined and idealised, as will be explored) is a key part of culture. This personal exchange of narrative is an important aspect of human connection, of building rapport, and I will return to this later in the article. In each of these communities of exchange, whether they involve performances of song, poems or stories, people might have the sense of browsing through the contents of a human library. The Human Library (Little et al 2011; Little and Abergel, 2013) is itself an approach to generating community and managing differences in a way which might address some of García's (2014) concerns, but first it is worth exploring how narratives that might be contained in such exchanges are linked to some traditional elements of culture.

All of these processes, the folk music event, a writing workshop or community publishing performance, and Human Libraries suggest a democratic intimacy. This is important to community, even if these activities will actually depend on some people being committed to the organisation of them, and

may operate complex rules in order to be sustainable (Hield 2010). Those areas of culture which are materially established in technologies and commercial organisations are discussed by Burgess (2006) as having become not more democratic, but demotic. There are however, many low-tech cultural expressions which circumvent some of the consumer market processes but few areas of cultural expression are fully independent of some element of mainstream technology, dissemination or distribution. The control of the processes of dissemination, editing, and aspects of performance are manipulated by the owners of the media through which they are distributed. On-line game players are invited to develop content but along the lines determined by the media owners. Burgess (2006) gives digital storytelling as an example of the ways in which individuals can produce their own narratives and forms of expression. She points out that digital stories contain elements of intimacy even though they employ common themes, and are specifically individual acts of communication, but even these are limited and controlled in their distribution to an audience since they are accessed through digital storytelling sites. Similarly, in the UK, folk music has become a particular interest of a community of people. They are inclusive, but operate various clubs or 'sessions' which have rules for performance, behaviour, and even content, although there may be a range of ways in which personal significance can be expressed (Hield, 2010). Hield's study suggests that the locality of some of these audiences may be an aspect of belonging to a folk music community, their regularity and the communal feeling of participation something that their

regular members value as an essential component of their everyday lives, and so operate some rules to preserve their community.

Application and consciousness

Folk music and dance have been employed in occupational therapy practice (e.g. Connor, 2000; Heathcote and Hong, 2009) and participation in traditional music has been a topic of research for occupational scientists (Adrian, 2013). The Anglophone literature is quite sparse, but dates back to the 1950s (Wittkower and La Tendresse, 1955). Spanish language sources indicate some application of these forms, for example teaching flamenco, (De Las Heras, 2009); and ethnographic investigation of music as socially and occupationally important component in the lives of indigenous communities (Arango-Peláez, Nieto-Martin, and Rincón-González, 2013). As Hammell suggests (2009), there has been little concern with the cultural content of these media in the application of music and the arts in occupational therapy, the focus has been on the clinical aspects of intervention. For these approaches to be useful in leading to sustainable changes, it is important to understand them in their context, give some proper consideration to the significance folk music and culture may have for communities and groups, and to respect the knowledge and tradition that may be being conveyed with them. Whether cultural media are to be used as part of a social intervention, or for clinical work, a concern with authenticity applies whoever the practitioner is working with, whether indigenous people, or residents in a nursing home.

Thus Ramirez and Schliebener (2009) have argued the need to articulate an occupational consciousness which is located in the specific realities of everyday life reflected in a Latin American cultural context. Dehays, Hitchin and Vidal (2012) have argued this necessity in relation to practice centred in occupational justice, for example in meeting the needs of young mothers with learning difficulties and facilitating the social inclusion of both them and their children; Castro (2012) in relation to constructing life stories with psychiatric service users and Muñoz (2013) in wellness working with older adults. A feature of such studies is the identification and the establishment of connections with communities with complex needs arising from socio-historical, economic and geographical factors. For example, Zerda (2004) has pointed out that many older people in Latin American communities are remote from and unable to access services such as occupational therapy. Cultural vehicles are an important means for sustaining engagement and overcoming some of the obstacles for other clinical interventions which arise from the needs and conditions for which occupational therapists might be expected to find solutions.

Recognising these broader issues has not been part of the training of occupational therapists, but other professional groups such as social work are beginning to explore lenses such as cultural-history activity theory (CHAT) to link practice issues to a complex social perspective (Foot, 2001; 2014). CHAT considers humans as acting collectively, co-operating in an "activity system" (Foot, 2014), a term which refers to an entire and complex process, not

merely component behaviours. Thus, since people communicate by doing, develop tools for learning and communication and have a community focus to everything they do, the implication of this is that there are many elements which make up activity. Foot (2001; 2014) describes how CHAT takes account of the ways in which experiences were felt and embodied by people. The mediation of experience occurs in communities through such tools as language, and ultimately forms of cultural expression. CHAT offers a means of systematically and critically understanding the relationship between culture and a practice like occupational therapy, and the kinds of practices which evolve in specific interest communities such as those involved in folk music in the UK. For occupational therapists a simplistic application of an activity such as writing (Pollard, 2004) towards a therapeutic outcome may ignore other important elements it may have in the mediation of experiences. CHAT is a vehicle for exploring the dialogical contradictions and tensions which might arise in the use of a cultural form such as music or dance in a clinical activity system. In particular, it offers the potential – since an outcome for this use is likely to be the production of change – to consider future developments from a perspective of evolution over time. These considerations are important if practitioners are to examine how an object like music can be employed as an activity, and what their roles may be in implementing it (Foot, 2014).

Organic process

Although these considerations are significant, here I specifically want to

discuss the organic elements of the folk process in relation to personally significant occupation. A person who adapts their own version of a folk song is doing something that is a natural part of this organic process, for example the adaptation of content or performance to audiences and purposes in the experience of the singer. As Hield (2010) describes, a song can become locally acknowledged as the property of certain singers through a process of making it their own through rehearsal and performance in community spaces. Eyerman (2002) explores how traditional forms became adapted through several stages and generations to their eventual use in the US Black civil rights movement. Drawing on such a body of traditional knowledge that is historically possessed by the people is a source of strength. It enables a process through which “organic intellectual” (Rappoport, 2004, p.113) interactions can occur with other groups of “new intellectuals” working for what Gramsci (1971) called “the political society” or the “civil society” (p.12). New intellectuals were both carrying out the functions required by civil society but at the same time enabled to take a critical distance because of their mediating position. The deliverers of occupational therapy, for example continue the functions of hegemonic structures, like health and care systems, but are also responding to the experiences of people to whom that care is delivered. In a similar way, perhaps, Peloquin (2010) points to the ethology of occupational therapy, which is a set of guiding beliefs based in needs generated by, but also be a sense of commitment to the real world.

A limitation of Gramsci’s (1971) thinking is that it assumes that the peo-

ple the intellectuals are working with are not themselves capable of objectifying and critiquing their experiences. It would be inadvisable to retain this perspective to working with any group, as Mathieu, Parks and Rousculp (2012) indicate in regard to community publishing. Goldblatt (2007) describes how getting this wrong can produce some difficult reactions from community members, requiring some work to re-establish trust. Indigenous perspectives of the real world are apt to require a committed understanding, not just in terms of language, but across a whole life perspective (Rappoport, 2004). Cultural forms such as music are an important part of social transformational processes, and folk music has long been a vehicle for articulating critical, alternative or as in the example of *Spencer the Rover* below, marginal perspectives. This kind of work however soon reveals a host of issues where a vernacular culture meets with would-be agents of change and their attempts at transformation. The organisation, development and sustainability of these arrangements requires negotiation with the owners of some of the spaces. The formal skills of communication, appropriate presentation and financial accounting may be less familiar to the people whose cultural traditions are to be the vehicles for a new critical tradition. The power relations which result from some people having these abilities and others not having them can be a source of suspicion and hostility, especially where it may be necessary to employ people to organise the work instead of relying on volunteers. As Woodin (2007) found with working class writing and community publishing, there can be a suspicion of middle class people taking over the creative work of working class

members and exploiting it for their own interests or as Bose (2004) argues, of intellectuals putting their arguments into others' voices, raising questions of legitimacy and supplantation (Eyerman, 2002).

Tradition and invention

English culture is imbued with many years of tradition, but often what is conveyed as emblematic of the country are the associations with elite pomp and ceremony, much of which was actually invented to establish a British identity in the 19th and 20th century (Cannadine, 1983). Much of the traditional culture of the ordinary people was not static or fixed either. Folk music collections such as that edited by Hall (1998) indicate a considerable range of form and style, but centuries of intermingling has obscured many of the origins. Although there are not the enormous varieties of indigenous form and tradition represented in Colombia (Gil, 2011), Hield (2010) and Cressy (2004) suggest a pattern of continuing reinvention largely transmitted orally and through performance. English folk music, morris dancing and carol singing traditions continue amongst some communities, but the relationship between the singing and a wider everyday culture suggested by the term 'traditional' refers to an idealised past (Hield 2010).

Folk music is rooted in the experience of the communities to which it belongs and the expression of occupational narratives. One of the most common themes of that expression concerns change. Folk music often records journeys or the more personal

experience of transition, and this is a common element in the experiential and autobiographical nature of working class writing (Ragon, 1986; Vincent, 1981). Ragon, writing about the emergence of a proletarian literature in France during the late 18th and 19th centuries, explains how it was stimulated directly by the experiences of industrialisation and an increasing confidence amongst some workers, but also experiences of poverty and disenfranchisement. These are issues with which much folk song may have affinity - although the authorship of many traditional songs is uncertain. The theme of returning home frequently recurs in folk song and narratives and is an evocation of the idea of life as a journey.

Spencer The Rover "who had travelled Great Britain and most parts of Wales" (Pollard, 1969, p.67) is a widely recorded English ballad, a song that tells a story (Roud, 2011). Spencer's story of transition and change may originate during the early 1800s, perhaps associated with having been discharged from the army, or losing a job at one of the new factories in Yorkshire. These circumstances may have resulted in his alienation, mental distress, resolution and reconciliation, described as "been so reduced which caused great confusion/ And that was the reason he went on the roam", estranged from his wife and children. The song's outcome as he arrives home and is nonetheless accepted by his family again is almost biblical, like the tale of the prodigal son, which in some respects it resembles in that Spencer is forgiven by his family for wasting his wealth, and recognises that relationships have more significance than

material wealth. It is a personal favourite - my father often sang snatches, having learned it from a record, and included it in a compilation of British folk songs for schools which he published in the 1960s, but it seems like an actual testimony. *Spencer the Rover* is from a time which, despite increasing industrialisation, was more rural, one in which it was more possible and even acceptable to 'go on the roam' and live as a vagabond seeking work as you found it, during the early era of industrialisation, when many people were moving to the cities in search of work. It would be much more difficult to do today. Today's Spencer would be asked to move on.

Spencer the Rover offers a rather idyllic and romantic transformation from the troubled destitute to the accepted and contented family man. In some ways it sums up one of the beliefs behind much cultural intervention that in some way, if a basis of communal expression can be discovered, a utopian community and felicity will result, as in former times. The historical evidence is much more troubled as even Spencer indicates. Others in the wider traditional folk canon, (e.g. Hall 1998; Roud, 2011) describe transportation, poverty, a wide range of crime, poor and harsh working conditions and the forced conscription being some of the dangers experienced by working people, as well as exposure to disaster and other extremes not far away from the voices explored by García (2014) or Echavarría (2004).

The conservative elements of English folk music can make it a contested aspect of British culture and it remains a difficult vehicle to employ in the su-

perdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) of contemporary UK society. Interest in folk cultures has undergone several revivals since the end of the 19th century. Some have tended to interpret folk music in terms that serve the more contemporary or idiosyncratic interests of the revivers (Brocken, 2003). English folk music, for example has been adopted as emblematic of a nationalistic expression by some folk music revivalists. Some 1920s and 1930s collectors tried to reclaim traditional song and dance forms for a far right perspective of 'whiteness' and a robust and rural Englishness, sometimes combined with an esoteric association with 'white magic' (Spracklen & Henderson, 2013; Palmer Heathman, 2016). This, and a popular portrayal of folk music enthusiasts as obsessive and marginal rejectors of the modern world, remains a hindrance to the acceptability of traditional English folk expression. The need to emphasise English here is because there are a number of different folk traditions in Britain, Scots, Gaelic, Welsh, and Irish as well as English, with regional variations and a large amount of shared material. Distinctive rhythms, melodies and content are evident, but there has – perhaps for the reasons described – been a tendency for a popularised Irish folk in particular, despite its' sometimes romantically couched nationalist and sectarian lyrics, to be heard more often than English traditional song, even in England (Smyth, 2004), a phenomenon that may have developed through the music sessions of emigrant Irish musicians in London in the 1950s (Kearney, 2007). This tradition survives in the Irish pubs of Sheffield for example, but has reached out to the world.

Songs for social transformation

Palmer Heathman (2016) argues that the ideas of social transformation which were also represented in these movements were nonetheless based in an appeal to the past which could enable a utopian and communitarian future. She argues that folk revivals also aimed at generating a common bond between people inspired by the love of nation, a point that Kearney (2007) also makes in relation to a less formalised Irish emigrant tradition. A future depends on roots to come to life, and these roots were in tradition, nationality and community, indeed as Arango Peláez, Nieto Martín, and Rincón González, (2013) point out in their study of the Muisca people, music is used to celebrate the unity between a people, their environment and their cosmos. Although some of these connections may be obscure in the urbanised British uses of folk music, these roots can still be celebrated in common spaces with the purpose of creating community (Hield, 2010; Spracklen and Henderson, 2013; Palmer Heathman, 2016), just as in Colombia (Gil, 2011).

These community spaces are themselves the spaces of considerable change and global influence (Gil, 2011). Given the diversity of Colombian music traditions, his emphasis is on the enjoyment and appreciation of their variety and the new possibilities they present rather than being bound to tradition. This is certainly my personal experience of British folk performance in pubs, and perhaps of many performers, but it may still rankle in the organisations which favour traditional music over innovation (Hield, 2010; Spracklen and Henderson, 2013). Roo-

tedness is essential both to identifying change processes, and for the use of recognisable forms and structures as a medium. These cannot be authentically adapted without respect to their contexts, otherwise it is merely exploitative. For folk music there remains a living tradition, as will be explored later, but living traditions now have an uneasy relationship with the commercially driven forces which not only record and interpret them, but introduce new or imitative material into the repertoire.

Social movements and cultural practices

Both Brocken (2003) and Gil (2011) suggest that change and global influences have been a key factor in the development of folk music. The spread of some songs, rhythms and forms suggests that they are not fixed but the products of social changes. In the UK there has been some resistance to foreign and commercial influence resulting in what Hall (1998, p5) called "cultural moralism", an alienating insistence on a fixed traditionalism (Brocken, 2003). These tensions are part of a process in which change processes are linked to social movements, especially where they have a creative and cultural purpose around generating a collective identity (Melucci, 1985; Martín, 2002). Naturally such new formulations of collective identity are both complex and fragile social assemblages requiring their adherents to restate and define them in order to keep them going, such as the cultural moralism which certainly shaped my interest in music. While other 1960's kids grew up with the Beatles and Mo-

town; I grew up with the traditional folk music of the Watsons (e.g. 1965) and Shirley Collins (e.g. 1967). In the primary school music lessons in which we learned folk songs I was disappointed that we were expected to perform them with a conventional harmony, instead of the natural, sometimes deliberately 'natural', voices I was used to hearing on Dad's record player.

This kind of music is occasionally still performed in pubs, alongside more popular tunes which have been democratically adopted into a folk repertoire. 'Folk' defies easy categorisation (Hield, 2010). As Gil (2011) argues regarding Colombia, and Hield suggests for England (2010), the variety of traditions available through a globalised musical context invites the young to experiment, and the older generations to recoil at the dissonance.

Folk music is eclectic, it is all about variation. Multiple versions of songs exist, including some songs that appear to be mash-ups of standard verses. The same words may be shared in different lyrics, and other songs may be sung to different tunes. Like some folk tales, some folk songs have travelled around the world. Everyone who sings a song must be able to keep it alive through their own interpretation (Hield 2010), something my father called "the folk process" (Pollard, 1969). This changing, adaption and reinvention of the content itself as a social action (Eyerma, 2002; Gil, 2011), which in addition to the action of singing and performing, is an important cultural aspect of occupation (Guajardo and Mondaca, 2016) and the expression of the everyday, of important life events, and the experience of change.

Human libraries

This aspect of the discovery of new cultural possibilities and the acceptance and interest in diversity has been significant to other movements around cultural expression. The UK's community publishing movement was about the celebration of localities and the discovery of the cultures and the history within them, which took place in spaces such as community halls, pubs and bookshops (Morley and Worpole, 2009).

A more recent development which draws on the narratives of ordinary people is the Human Library. This dialogical approach has not been addressed in occupational therapy literature, although some public libraries have developed projects around community interventions. Little et al (2011) and Little and Abergel (2013) describe the Human Library as a means by which human 'books' can be borrowed by readers for short periods of time. The books can have titles such as 'drug addict', 'asylum seeker' or 'traffic warden', but these must be simple and convey the principal experience about which they are prepared to interact with readers. The process of 'borrowing' is mediated by a 'librarian', 'matchmakers' who match the books to readers and library assistants who explain the functioning of the library to would-be readers. Books are allocated to readers, but both can ask each other questions. People can learn about each other through conversation, the aim being to share perspectives and personal experiences, become aware of and to overcome prejudices and stereotypes the participants may hold. Human libraries offer interaction

through dialogues rather than stories, which may go some way to offsetting the concerns expressed by García (2014) in relation to the narrative content, but may not be applicable to some situations for example where people have recently experienced traumatic events. Human library events can be attached to occasions such as rock festivals or youth congresses, or associated with community events. Garbutt, (2016) describes the organisation of human libraries in association with a heightened nationalism in Australia around conflict in Afghanistan. There are no themes, library events are not organised around single issues, groups or ideologies; the approach allows anyone who may experience prejudice to take part as a book long as they are prepared to share their experiences with a reader. The emphasis is on inclusion over exclusion, but requires a capacity to share, to challenge prejudices and to be challenged, and therefore needs to be situated in a public spaces which allow multiple discussions to take place.

Goebel (2011) reports that it is important to have an orientation session for the people who volunteer to be books so that they can manage and rehearse the narratives they will tell of their experiences more effectively. It may be the first time they have recounted them and though they can refuse questions, these may take an unexpected turn. Little, Nemutlu, Magic & Molnár (2011) make it clear that the methodology of the Human Library has to be carefully followed and this is important for the safety of participants.

Human library events have been organised in educational settings with the

purpose of generating a wider perspective of potential information sources amongst students, and can be a precursor to other stakeholder processes in the development of community projects. A considerable advantage of this dialogic approach is that people do not have to be able to read or write nor do they need an excellent command of language. They require the will to share and exchange authentic experiences. One of my colleagues is organising human library events with local mental health users and carers around the Lincolnshire town of Sleaford. She has found that such groups may need to adapt certain parts of the process, for example, being a book for 15 minutes rather than the 30 suggested in the guidelines ensures a sufficient exchange without running out of conversation. Books may need to rest between borrowings, and frequent breaks increase the opportunities for networking. However, trying to estimate how many people will participate in such an event, which is circulated by word of mouth and low cost dissemination methods, is unpredictable. A planned flexibility is necessary, books' and readers' roles may need to be exchanged so that everyone participates in a number of ways. Managing such an event requires a commitment to an uncertain but organic process. It is an adventure, an exploration, the process itself requires an element of positive risk taking, and of trust. It may reveal organic intellectuals in the community.

Conclusion

Culture can be seen as the expression or product of collective doing as an outcome of the community focus of human purpose. Where occupational

interventions are being developed to promote for health it can be important that they are authentic to the experiences of the people they involve, especially that they seem real where they are to be allied to socially transformative practices, but not so much that they are restrictive. Colombian and UK folk cultures are distinctive, but it is important to appreciate the content and the integrity of these forms, as well as their capacity for innovation, adaptation and change as living culture.

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