THE TANGO PHILADELPHIA STORY: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF BUILDING COMMUNITY, ENHANCING LIVES, AND EXPLORING SPIRITUALITY THROUGH ARGENTINE TANGO

A Dissertation
Submitted
to the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT
Title: The Tango Philadelphia Story: A Mixed-methods Study of Building Community, Enhancing Lives, and Exploring Spirituality through Argentine Tango
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Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
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Doctoral Advisory Committee Chair: Joellen Meglin, Ph.D.

Tango invites communication and creativity, it offers growth and community, and, in Philadelphia, it draws a unique cohort of dancers. What forces have driven growth of the Philadelphia tango community, who exactly are its members, and why do they dance tango? This qualitative and quantitative study recounts the community’s history, reveals the people at its core, and explores what the dance means to them. It is a mixed-method, multi-layered integration of dance history, community profile, and individual narrative.

Twenty-six instructors and event organizers provided data on the community’s history. More than 100 dancers participated in a survey that gathered descriptive and demographic data, and nine dancers gave interviews on their lived experiences of tango.

The community grew steadily from 1991 through 2006. Early local entrepreneurs modeled an ethos that placed a premium on tango’s community-building capacity. This ethos remained a central force in the community’s growth, drawing a unique cohort of dancers. Compared to Philadelphia census data, tango survey respondents were fifteen years older on average, more likely to be divorced or to have been born outside of the continental United States, better educated with higher incomes, and more likely to work in the arts.

Ethnographic, quantitative, and mixed methods analysis reveals how tango may serve these unique cohorts and how many dancers perceive that tango enhances their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social lives. Phenomenological inquiry explores dancers’ concepts of
spirituality and how some made spiritual meaning from tango experiences. Four central themes that emerged—tango music, tango dance, interactive experience, and internal experience—can be theorized to intertwine in a cycle wherein tango invites human interaction that leads to internal growth, which improves one’s capacity to dance tango, thus creating a more satisfying interactive and internal experience.

This research represents the first comprehensive study of tango in Philadelphia. It documents the creation of a popular social dance community in a major U.S. city and offers new data and theories on community building. It is also the first study to explore intersections between spirituality and tango and offers new insights into how tango improves adults’ health and well being.
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I heartily thank Karen Bond for introducing me to the world of phenomenology, encouraging me to tackle mixed-methods research, and providing insightful feedback at many stages along the way. To Elaine Yuen I offer thanks for her thoughtful review of draft chapters and for modeling the grace of daily meditation. I thank Beth Bolton for her constructive critique of my quantitative analysis, which will help tremendously in turning this opus into a book.

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To my research participants, thank you una y mil veces for your honesty, sincerity, time, and enthusiasm as you traveled down the path of inquiry with me. I thank all my wonderful tango friends in Philadelphia, Burlington, VT, and Montréal for dancing and laughing with me. You made the solitary hours of writing possible (and bearable).

And finally, I thank Bonnie Farrow for providing a nurturing place to finish writing; dear michi Mowzer, who appeared on my doorstep just when I needed her little spirit and purring the most; and the new people, places, and opportunities calling me hacia el futuro.
Dedicated to souls dancing everywhere.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Research Problem

Though Argentine tango has been danced regularly in the Philadelphia area* since the late twentieth century, and the number of dancers in the tango community has grown steadily since then, little or no formal research has been conducted (to my knowledge) on the history of the community; the demographics, characteristics, behavior, motivations, and desires of its current members; and how and to what degree dancers perceive that dancing tango affects their lives. In collaboration with local tango event organizers, I estimated that there were 400 active dancers in the community from diverse backgrounds and levels of previous dance experience in early 2007.† Dancers could attend three to five milongas (social tango events) per week and numerous tango classes and prácticas (tango practice sessions). From 2002 to 2007 as a member of the tango community, I organized numerous monthly milongas, directed two large tango fundraising events, and conducted small research projects that involved interviewing tango teachers, performers, and dancers. Through these experiences, I witnessed the strengths and weaknesses of the community on an aggregate scale as well as the joys and challenges of individual dancers.

* For the sake of brevity, I use the terms “Argentine tango” and “tango” interchangeably. My use of the word “tango” should not be construed to mean “ballroom tango,” “International tango,” or “American tango,” which differ in history, aesthetics, culture, and technique from Argentine tango. Also, in this research, “the Philadelphia area” includes Princeton, NJ, and all cities and towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey within a 20-mile radius of Center City, including Blue Bell, Camden, Cherry Hill, Collegeville, King of Prussia, and Media.

† A detailed account of how I came to this figure appears in a footnote on the first page of Chapter 4.
For example, beginning in 2002, I believe there were steady increases in the number of instructors and event organizers, the number of dancers, and the number of tango activities being offered regularly in the Philadelphia area. In contrast, I also witnessed unpredictable attendance at milongas; loss of dancers who relocated, turned their attention elsewhere, or became frustrated with the local dancing; and the difficulty instructors faced with keeping newcomers engaged long enough for them to reach a level of proficiency that made dancing tango enjoyable to them.

On the individual level, I found evidence of benefits to dancers, including increased physical strength, coordination, stamina, balance, and flexibility; enhanced problem-solving, and spatial memory; increased emotional joy, confidence, satisfaction, self-expression, friendship, and love; and enhanced spiritual awareness and/or experience. On the other hand, some dancers complained that the level of dancing was too low, that the venues for dancing were inadequate, and that there were too few dancers. For the benefit of the tango community in the Philadelphia area in particular and to contribute to the field of dance research in general, I felt compelled to conduct formal research on the community’s history, its membership, how dancing affected dancers’ lives, and what dancers wanted for their community.

To my knowledge, no one has conducted research on the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area, nor has anyone compiled demographic or other descriptive data on local participants. However, I identified two research studies in other North American cities on how dancing tango affects dancers’ physical, mental, and/or emotional lives. A study conducted by Patricia McKinley et al. (2007?) at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, found that Argentine tango provides physical and mental benefits to seniors, and a doctoral dissertation conducted in New York City showed that the social networks created through Argentine tango can improve Argentine immigrant members’ access to health care (Viladrich 2003). To my
knowledge, these are the only two English language research studies that have explored the benefits of dancing Argentine tango.*

Given this dearth of research in English, I broadened my review of literature to include other dances that share common characteristics with Argentine tango, like swing, Latin, and ballroom dance. For the purposes of this dissertation proposal, I call these dances “social pairs dances” because of their common characteristics, which include dancing in pairs, following a code of movement that allows dancers to dance in close physical contact with each other, dancing in a rhythmic fashion to music, dancing in a prescribed pattern in the room to avoid bumping into or inhibiting other pairs of dancers, and dancing primarily for enjoyment (as opposed to competition or performance). A study in 2003 of nearly 500 seniors aged 75 or older at the Albert Einstein Center in the Bronx showed that subjects who danced or participated in other activities that engage both mind and body were less likely to develop dementia (Vorghese et al. 2003). Though the study did not indicate which types of dance that subjects engaged in, given subjects’ ages, it is likely that choices would have included swing, ballroom, and other forms of social pairs dance that were popular in the 1940s and 1950s. Subjects who are now in their mid-70s would have been in their teens and twenties during those decades, a time when learning social pairs dances was a central component of young adult culture.

I have identified no peer-reviewed research on how dancers perceive that social pairs dances or dancing tango, in particular, affects their spiritual lives. However, in popular

---

* Studies certainly exist in other languages. For example, On May 5, 2008, I presented at “Couple, identité, société : le tango argentin comme facteur de développement” (Couple, identity, society: Argentine tango as a factor of development), a one-day colloquium at the annual conference of L’Association francophone pour le savoir (Francophone Association for Knowledge) in Québec, Québec, Canada. Sixteen presenters spoke in French on tango research related to psychology, health, community, and other topics, and I know that many of them are published authors. I noted that none of the presenters discussed spirituality as it might relate to tango.
literature, Chan Park (2004) instructs dancers on how to apply the principles of Zen Buddhist meditation to their tango dancing, and Johanna Siegmann (2000) guides readers on applying the Taoist construct of yin (masculine) and yang (feminine) to dancing tango in order to find harmony and balance between one’s male and female sensibilities. Drawing parallels between tango and Eastern religious traditions, these two authors explore how spiritual principles and practices can enhance one’s tango experience, and how tango can deepen one’s spiritual well-being. A third author, Jay Emerson Johnson (2005), uses dancing tango or other social pairs dances metaphorically to describe one’s relationship to God.

Overall, formal research in English on how dancing tango affects dancers physically, mentally, and emotionally is quite limited, and none has addressed how dancing tango may affect dancers’ spiritual lives. In an informal study that I conducted of the Philadelphia area tango community in the fall of 2004, I found that the majority of dancers were between the ages of 40 and 60, which led me to wonder about the intersections between dancing tango, aging, and spirituality. Authors in the fields of theology, psychology, and health agree that matters of spiritual significance, like life purpose, life meaning, immortality, and impermanence, grow in importance to people as they age (Jewell 1999, Mackenzie 2006). In addition, medical researchers have found that an active spiritual and/or religious life can help seniors cope with the stresses of aging (Ai and Mackenzie 2006). In this research, I explore whether dancing tango might be of spiritual significance to dancers, particularly those facing the challenges of aging. Indeed, one-third of the total U.S. population will be over the age of 60 within the next 30 years, and “…successfully caring for the aging US population will be a major challenge for health care professions in the 21st century” (Ai and Mackenzie 2006, 273). I have identified no studies on how dancing tango may be of spiritual significance to people facing age-related questions and
issues. Such research is needed to better understand how tango could serve adult health/well-being and growth, both for individual and for societal gain.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to better understand the history of the Argentine tango community in the Philadelphia area, including its current membership and how dancers perceive that dancing tango affects their lives. Mixing quantitative and qualitative methods, I use questionnaires and surveys to gather historical, demographic, and descriptive data on the tango community and to investigate how dancers perceive that tango affects them physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and/or spiritually. I also use phenomenological interviewing to explore dancers’ lived experiences of tango and the meaning they make of their experiences. In the analysis phase of this study, I explore whether and how data may intersect with and extend previous research and theoretical paradigms on dancing, health/well-being and growth, aging, and spirituality.

Research Questions Addressed Through Mixed Methods

The primary research question is, “What is the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area, who are its current members, and how do these dancers perceive that dancing tango affects them?” Within this question, I address the following research subquestions.

1. What is the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area? What roles have particular teachers, event organizers, regular events, and special events played in this history?
2. Who are the members of the Philadelphia Argentine tango community, and what are their backgrounds and demographic characteristics? What is their level of involvement in tango and what motivates them to participate? What would dancers like to see happen in the community in the next 5-10 years and can they recommend resources to support these changes?

3. Do dancers perceive that participating in Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area affects their physical, mental, emotional, social, and/or spiritual health/well-being or growth? If so, in what ways?

4. What are dancers’ lived experiences of dancing tango?

5. What are dancers’ religious or spiritual traditions, and do dancers make spiritual meaning in and/or through dancing tango?

6. What are the implications of this research for the Philadelphia area tango community and other tango communities? What are the implications of this research for adult health/well-being and growth?

In *The Craft of Research*, authors Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2003) define *pure* research as that which adds to our understanding of a subject or phenomenon without pointing to any specific action to be taken and *applied* research as that which addresses a practical problem and indicates what should be done to address it (64). This research is both *pure* and *applied*. It is *pure* in that I seek to understand the history of tango in the Philadelphia area and the lived experiences of those who dance. It is *applied* in that I use data from the questionnaire and survey to make specific recommendations to instructors/organizers to how they may expand, 

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*I use the term “instructor(s)/organizer(s)” to mean those who: a) teach ongoing tango classes; b) organize (host) tango activities (e.g., milongas and prácticas); and/or c) play both roles. I indicate clearly when referring to those who just teach or those who just organize events.*
strengthen, or otherwise improve the tango community. I also suggest how dancers may use tango to enhance their health/well-being and/or growth.

One way to address the pure and applied nature of this research is to use quantitative and qualitative research methods, as described by Creswell (2003) in Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. Creswell (2003) writes that mixed methods approaches (combining quantitative and qualitative methods in one study) are becoming more widely used in the social and human sciences because they enhance researchers’ options for understanding, analyzing, and presenting complex data (208). In this research, using quantitative methods to gather data on the history and participants of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area provides a rich foundation and essential context within which to understand the subjective experiences of individual dancers. The intersections among multiple forms of data offer rich opportunities for understanding the tango community in the Philadelphia area and for exploring new theories regarding tango’s implications for adult health/well-being and growth.

Building a Pyramid: A Visual Model

Overall, the study builds on itself like a pyramid with Chapter 4 at the foundation comprised of the community’s history, themes in its creation, and description of its unique creators. Moving up the pyramid, Chapter 5 describes the community’s creators in more depth as well as the dancers themselves and presents fledgling theories on why tango may appeal to specific cohorts. Together, these first two data-driven chapters provide the context and human narrative that drive research questions addressed in subsequent chapters. At the third tier, Chapter 6 explores dancers’ motivations and personal experiences of tango, including how they perceive that it affects them physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. At the
fourth tier, Chapter 7 interprets phenomenological data on dancers’ lived experiences of tango, including the meaning they ascribe to tango and hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry into tango’s spiritual dimension. The final chapter at the pyramid’s apex gazes back down at the study as a whole, exploring research implications and the future of tango in the Philadelphia area. “Figure 1. Research Design” illustrates these layers, which are described in more detail in Chapter 2. Research Methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Research Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future of Community</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Mixed Methods (Multiple sources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring Lived Exp. esp. Spirituality</td>
<td>9 Dancers</td>
<td>Herm. Phenomenological Inquiry (Interviews)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Lives</td>
<td>100+ Dancers</td>
<td>Mixed Methods (Survey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Is Dancing?</td>
<td>100+ Dancers</td>
<td>Mixed Methods (Survey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Community</td>
<td>26 Instructors and Event Organizers</td>
<td>Historiography (Questionnaire)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Research Design

The study progresses from communal history involving hundreds at the base to uniquely individual experience near the summit. Broad context grounds exploration of individual experience, and, in turn, individual experience enriches and informs understanding of group
phenomena. Combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies provide structure and integrity to this research pyramid, creating a uniquely contemporary architecture.

**Significance of the Study**

This research represents the first formal, large-scale study of tango in Philadelphia. It documents the creation of a popular social dance community in a major U.S. city and offers new data and theories on community building. It is also the first study to explore intersections between spirituality and tango, and it is part of a wave of new research blending quantitative and qualitative methods. To professionals in arts advocacy, dance, education, health, and theology, it offers new insights into how practicing tango may improve adults’ health and well being. To social science researchers, it offers further exploration of the merits and challenges of mixing methodologies. Finally, to Philadelphia tango dancers, it offers a chronicle of their stories and a guide for shaping their community’s future.

**The Researcher in the Research**

In this section, I present background information on my heritage, education, employment history, involvement in dance, and explorations of spirituality, all of which form a context for understanding my role as researcher and subject. I also explore key biases and assumptions and how I managed these while conducting this research.

**Heritage and Educational Background**

I am a Caucasian woman in her mid-forties born of an upper-middle class family and raised primarily in northern New York State and New England. I completed a bachelor’s degree
at Cornell University in 1985 with a major in social relations—a combination of anthropology, sociology, and social psychology. Fourteen years later, I completed a master’s degree in education at the University of Vermont in 1999 with a focus on jazz tap and modern dance. My master’s thesis, entitled “Transforming Movement Limitations into Creative Inspiration: A Study of Dancers’ Experiences and Implications for Education,” was a qualitative study of four female modern dancers and four female jazz tap dancers who faced movement limitations to due aging or injury. The thesis included a component on spirituality because a number of subjects made spiritual meaning from their movement limitations.

After divorcing in the year 2000, I felt freer on many levels to expand my dance pursuits and, by the fall of 2002, was enrolled in the master of fine arts (MFA) program in the Department of Dance at Temple University, thinking that what I really wanted to do was dance more than to read and write. I chose Temple for geographic and personal reasons, but also because it offered both MFA and doctoral programs. That was a wise choice because I quickly discovered that I did not enjoy choreography or performance enough to sustain me through an MFA and that I missed the rigors of intensive reading and writing. I was also fully immersed in dancing swing, salsa, and Argentine tango in Philadelphia, which appealed to me far more than the modern, improvisation, and African dance forms central to the MFA program. I needed a program that would help me develop my expository writing skills and also embrace (so to speak) my love of social pairs dancing. Given that Temple’s doctoral faculty were known for supporting students’ unique scholarly interests, I enrolled in the doctoral program in the spring of 2003, focusing my research on salsa and Argentine tango.
**Employment History**

My employment has centered around higher education administration and program design, fundraising, writing, and copyediting. I began working in Latin American studies in Boston right after college, and connections I made there led to six months teaching English as a second language in Mexico City. I then relocated to Burlington, VT, where I spent two years as an administrator for a rural development consulting firm, followed by two years in various administrative positions in the College of Education and Social Services at the University of Vermont (UVM). Seeking to find work that was more meaningful to me, I followed my interest in organic and sustainable agriculture to UVM’s College of Agriculture, where I worked for ten years writing grants, designing and implementing educational programs, and producing publications. Intellectually, I was satisfied to be working in service of environmental and human health, but my soul was restless to make dance more than an avocation. I doubted that it was possible to make a living in dance, but after a year of puttering as a freelance writer and editor, I took the leap and moved to Philadelphia to attend Temple. The leap has served me well professionally. In June of 2003, I was hired as program coordinator for the fledgling NDEO*/Temple University Center for Research in Dance Education (CRDE) to help raise funds and support new programs. In that position, I created a few programs to provide dance in local elementary schools, but my primary contribution was to create and direct two large fundraising events in October 2004 and May 2006. Entitled “Dancing for Schools: A Tango Festival and Silent Auction to Benefit Dance Education,” the events raised funds for the CRDE, promoted the Temple Department of Dance, garnered public interest in Argentine tango, and drew the tango community together. As director, I collaborated intensively with Argentine tango teachers, event

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*NDEO stands for National Dance Education Organization, which is described in detail at www.ndeo.org.*
organizers, and dancers in Philadelphia, which strengthened my relationships with them and marked me as a leader in the community. These relationships and my role greatly supported my doctoral studies. They also required that I conduct myself with a very high level of integrity and increased my desire to give back to the community through my research.

Dance Background

My earliest memory of dancing was when I was about six years old in an improvisation class with a jovial German woman, who encouraged us to twirl, leap, and swoosh across the room to music and to our own internal rhythms. Though I remember few details beyond my maroon Danskin outfit, the woman’s warm face, and the large studio, I do remember feeling accepted and encouraged to be myself and to express myself through dance. (Thanks, Mom. You were right on target.) Later, while in junior high, I would run full tilt from wherever I was no matter what I was doing when my grandparents said the magic words, “The dancer is on!” I sat with my mouth agape and my eyes and ears drinking in the tap dancing of Bobby Burgess, Jack Imel, and Arthur Duncan on the Lawrence Welk Show, which aired on television in the 1960s and 1970s.* Their ability to simultaneously dance and create music was magical and mysterious to me, and while watching them, I knew that I was destined to dance.

But life can be both inspiring and cruel. During my one and only foray into ballet for eight weeks at age 13, it became painfully clear that I neither moved as well nor looked as beautiful as the other girls. While I struggled to do a split in our recital performance, my thighs wobbling three inches above the floor, I decided that I did not have the grace or the body to ever

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* The names of the tap dancers who performed on the Lawrence Welk show are listed in *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* by Marshall and Jean Stearns (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1994) p. 356. However, I was not able to determine exactly which dancers I saw on the program.
be a dancer. Instead, I devoted myself to sports and music through high school and college, including piano, choral and a capella singing, diving, soccer, and track and field. But my interest in dance never dissipated. For example, every time I sang doo-wop songs with my twelve-woman a capella group in college, I could barely restrain myself from jumping off the stage, grabbing a guy in the audience, and swinging out across the floor.

It wasn’t until 1989 when I received the results from aptitude testing at the Johnson O’Connor Research Foundation* that I felt emboldened and courageous enough to pursue dance. The test results indicated that I had aptitudes in idea generation, three-dimensional visualization, music, and physical coordination, among others. The foundation counselor advised that I would enjoy teaching, writing, or working in the arts, but all I heard from the test results was “dance, dance, dance!” I began taking modern dance classes in my late 20s, but it wasn’t until I rediscovered my love of tap dancing at age 29 that I truly immersed myself in dance. The tap dance scene in Burlington, Vermont, where I lived, was somewhat limited, but I expanded my studies by attending tap festivals in Chicago and various New England cities. By 1997 at age 35, I was performing choreographed dances in the Bob Fosse jazz style, and from 1999 to 2002 as a member of Vermont Dance Theater (VDT), I co-choreographed and performed jazz dance and music shows at local schools and senior centers. A few months before moving to Philadelphia in 2002, I co-produced and performed in a one-hour jazz revue with VDT as part of the Burlington Discover Jazz Festival, which is attended by hundreds of jazz enthusiasts from around the world.

Though I thoroughly enjoyed jazz dance and music, I was hungry for more contact between dancers and more collaborative expression through dance. In 2000, I began to study

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* “The Johnson O’Connor Research Foundation,” states the foundation’s website home page, “is a nonprofit scientific research and educational organization with two primary commitments: to study human abilities and to provide people with a knowledge of their aptitudes that will help them in making decisions about school and work.” For more information about the foundation, visit www.jocrf.org/index.html.
Lindy Hop and East Coast Swing. Through these dances, I began learning about the roles of leading and following, maintaining a connection with a partner, and communicating effectively in a class setting (e.g., problem-solving with patience and humility). I also began to understand the norms and the emotional and physical boundaries required when interacting with others through social pairs dance. In 2001, I began studying Cuban salsa, which improved my balance, alignment, and responsiveness and sensitivity to my dance partner. I also enjoyed the mental challenge of complex salsa patterns, developed more confidence in my body and in my dance abilities, and began exploring the spiritual and community-building dimensions of social pairs dance. In salsa rueda (meaning “wheel”), couples dance in a circle, switching partners according to pre-learned patterns. While dancing rueda, I experienced moments of extreme joy, peace, and union with the other dancers that I had never felt before in any social activity. These moments set the stage for my curiosity about spirituality in social pairs dance.

From late 2001 through August of 2002, I studied competitive international ballroom dance, and though I found the precise technique interesting and the culture of competition fascinating, I realized that I valued improvisation and spontaneous creativity far more than I valued excelling in a competitive environment. It was while I was studying ballroom in March 2002 that I decided to apply to the Department of Dance at Temple University. I realized that I wanted a career in dance that was intellectual and physical, theoretical and applied, and that I wanted professional options that extended beyond teaching dance. I arrived at Temple in Philadelphia in September 2002, and though I did not find the Cuban salsa community I had hoped for, I did find a thriving Argentine tango community that became my home away from home and the driving force behind my doctoral studies.
In Argentine tango, I have found a level of technical complexity, improvisational freedom, interpersonal connection, community atmosphere, and spiritual growth that is extremely satisfying and endlessly fascinating. Of all the dances I have learned, it is my admitted favorite. I began to dance it in 2001, began organizing tango events in 2004, began performing in 2005, and began teaching in 2006. I have danced in fifteen cities in the United States and Canada and, in eight years, probably have gone no longer than a month without it. In the Spring of 2004, I was so enamored with tango and so determined to improve my technique that I reduced my doctoral studies to one credit so that I could study tango 15-20 hours a week. I would never have graduated if I had kept that up, so eventually I accepted the irony of the situation—while writing a dissertation about tango, my freedom to dance it would be limited. Although my artistic growth as a follower was limited by circumstance, learning to lead and to teach kept me challenged and deepened my understanding of the dance. It also taught me about relationships, intimacy, and love, which brings me to discussion of my spiritual path and how all of this information relates to the dissertation.

Spiritual Path

My earliest memories of organized religion were from childhood when I attended a small Congregational Protestant church in New England with my parents and maternal grandparents. At age 11, I decided that the concept of sinning was ridiculous, especially for a girl of my age, and entered a period of silent dissidence in which I closed my ears to all sermons to avoid what I considered certain brainwashing. Throughout high school, I argued with my best friend, who was a devout Lutheran, about the existence and definition of God. As a young adult and into my 20s, I wondered if I was an atheist, but in my early 30s I was reading non-denominational texts
on spirituality and integrating some of those theories into my master’s thesis. The emotional challenges of my divorce in my late 30s led me to Unity Church and to contemporary spiritual authors, which provided guidance for creating new paradigms for work, school, dance, relationships, and life.

I now consider myself a very spiritual person, and my spiritual practices are highly eclectic. I read literature by new age, Eastern, and Western spiritual philosophers, like Pema Chödrön, Esther and Jerry Hicks, Ernest Holmes, Jon Kabbat-Zinn, Tenzin Gyatso (the 14th Dalai Lama), Eckhart Tolle, Marianne Williamson, and Neale Donald Walsh. I have been practicing Kripalu yoga since 1998 and completed training to be a yoga teacher in 2000. I have always meditated as part of my yoga practice and began formally practicing mindfulness meditation in May 2005 under the guidance of a meditation teacher. For me, the spiritual realm of existence is just as real and meaningful as the physical, perhaps even more so because it is what connects all living things and what animates our bodies, which are made primarily of water, with life. I believe that humans are collectively being invited to expand our spiritual understanding greatly and quickly so that we may reduce suffering, thrive more fully, and avoid destroying the ecosphere upon which we depend. With many scientists in agreement that global climate change may adversely impact both human and other forms of life on earth (Bates et al., 2008), I feel an urgent need to reveal activities that may enhance our spiritual growth. I believe that tango could be one of those activities.

While tango’s unique aesthetic and technique could provide opportunities for dancers to make spiritual meaning, my choice to focus on tango to the exclusion of other dance forms is a purely personal one and does not imply that other dance forms are less capable of providing the same opportunities to dancers. In fact, in previous research that I have conducted, subjects have
made deep spiritual meaning through dancing swing and ballroom, for example. I would like to research dancers’ experiences of these and other dances further, but for the sake of time and feasibility, I have chosen to focus on tango for this study because of how I experience it and because its intergenerational popularity raises intriguing questions about possible intersections among tango, spirituality, and aging.

**Personal Goals for the Research**

I hope that this research helps participants and readers understand the history of Argentine tango in Philadelphia, dancers’ experiences of tango, and community members’ desires for the future. I also hope it serves broader advocacy and educational goals. For example, data from the survey of dancers may show that the community is diverse in terms of national origin, occupation, dance experience, or faith tradition, which could strengthen advocacy arguments for how social pairs dances like tango may support pluralism, tolerance, and understanding among disparate groups. On a different note, if I find that dancers make spiritual meaning in and/or through dancing tango, I may be able to capture not only what this lived experience is like for them, but also how they make spiritual meaning, which could prove educational for other dancers. If I find that age is a factor in subjects’ propensity to make spiritual meaning in and/or through tango, this research could encourage older people to take up dancing tango as a coping tool for the challenges of aging. Even if I don’t find that dancers make spiritual meaning, by including spirituality in my literature review, in data collection tools, and in data analysis and presentation, I will have contributed to current discourse on adult spiritual health/well-being and growth as it relates to dance, which could serve both to educate readers and to advocate for paying closer attention to the spiritual dimension of human
experience. Finally, I hope that by researching tango, I will add to literature that illuminates the complexity, beauty, and value of this social dance form.

**Biases and Assumptions**

Following are my key biases and assumptions and how I strove to manage them. In discussing *biases*, Booth et al. (2003) cautions researchers against overlooking or reinterpreting data that contradict or qualify their hypotheses (91). Because dancing tango has provided me with opportunities to make spiritual meaning, I am biased toward expecting it has done the same for other dancers. For example, I believe that two characteristics of tango create opportunities to make spiritual meaning in and/or through dancing—non-unison movement and close embrace. Though it is a lead-follow structure danced in pairs, tango dancers rarely do the same thing with their lower torsos, legs, and feet at the same time, creating the potential for unlimited combinations of steps, patterns, and movement. Though one might expect that doing different steps simultaneously would hinder a sense of connection or intimacy, I find that the opposite is true. Because one cannot make assumptions about what will happen next or how one will move in relation to one’s partner, dancers must be completely present, focused on each other, and connected in order to create an enjoyable flow of movement together. This type of interaction or union lends itself to spiritual experiences.

The other characteristic of tango that may facilitate making spiritual meaning is close embrace. In this posture, dancers move in a continuous hug with contact between their torsos, arms, hands, legs, and heads. They dance heart to heart, which creates a feeling of intimacy and affection and requires that dancers maintain a strong connection in order to dance as a unit.

During interviews and while reviewing data from the questionnaire and survey, I remained aware
of my desire to find evidence of spirituality in dancers’ experiences, and I sought evidence of
what I did not wish to find—that neither of these tango characteristics helped dancers make
spiritual meaning and/or that I was entirely alone in experiencing tango as spiritual.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of an assumption is a fact or statement that is
taken for granted.* A key assumption in this research is that I can effectively study tango—a
dance form that has evolved out of the history and culture of Argentina and Uruguay—without
being from either country, spending any time there, or speaking Spanish fluently. It is true that
my perception of tango is quite different from that of an Argentinean or Uruguayan person
because I was born and raised in the United States, because I discovered tango in mid-life, and
because I dance tango and participate in a tango community that is outside of the dance’s original
context. But rather than view these differences as insurmountable handicaps or limitations, I
view them as offering a unique opportunity to explore tango from my personal perspective and
those of my subjects. The complexity, layering, and richness of tango that I experience and that I
researched emerge from my personal context and that of tango dancers in the Philadelphia area.
If meaning is socially constructed—a tenet of most qualitative research—then tango’s meaning is
constructed by each person who dances it and by each city that adopts it. As an extreme
example, some choose to forget tango’s origins. According to Martin (1995), tango arrived in
Helsinki in 1913, and Finland has adopted it so completely that they no longer consider it
Argentine but Finnish (192)! I would not claim that tango is not Argentine, but I believe that
research conducted on a dance form that has such wide global appeal does not require that the
researcher be from the country of its origin. However, it was important that I include the voices
of those who grew up with tango dance and/or music because their experiences might have been

* For the full definition by Merriam-Webster, visit www.m-w.com/dictionary/assumption.
quite different from the experience of those who did not. For example, some Argentineans who
dance tango in the Philadelphia area sing the lyrics of songs as they dance, making theirs a very
nuanced, multi-sensory experience. It is also important to understand tango’s history in the place
of its origin as a broad context and source of insight for analyzing data on the history of tango in
Philadelphia. Therefore, this dissertation includes a brief history on tango as well as data
gathered from Argentineans, who provided both polyvocal and transcultural data on tango.

Conclusion

This chapter laid out the research problem, purpose, and research questions. It offered
discussion of mixed methods procedures, why they were appropriate for this study, and the
study’s significance. My heritage, education, employment history, involvement in dance, and
explorations of spirituality provided a context for understanding my role as researcher and
participant and some of my biases and assumptions. Chapter 2 presents how I addressed the
research questions through gathering and analyzing data using mixed-methods procedures.
CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter explores research delimitations and limitations, characteristics of mixed-methods research, and the rationale for using them. It then moves to the type of mixed-methods design used, data collection tools, selection of research participants, ethical issues, and methods of analysis, interpretation, and presentation.

Delimitations and Limitations

I delimited this research to studying dancers of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area because I was a member of the community from 2002 to 2007 as dancer, performer, instructor, and event organizer, giving me both the opportunity to do preliminary research in the community and to build trusting, reciprocal, and respectful relationships with dancers that facilitated the research. For example, a local instructor provided feedback on the questionnaire and survey as I was writing the dissertation proposal.

A limitation of the research is that I did not speak Spanish well enough to collect and analyze data in both English and Spanish, which limited my access to primary and secondary sources and may have limited the number of native Spanish-speakers who chose to take the survey, which was available only in English. To address this limitation, I used everyday vocabulary in the survey, defined key terms as needed, and made sure to include a number of people from Argentina among interview participants.
Characteristics of Mixed-methods Research

In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Creswell (2003) states that the use of mixed methods is so new in social and human science research that any proposal using mixed methods should begin by briefly describing the concept’s evolution, its definition, the growing interest in it, and common challenges it poses for the researcher (210). During the twentieth century, most researchers used either quantitative or qualitative methods, and many engaged in heated debate about the limitations and validity of these methods (Tashakkorie and Teddlie 2003, ix). In the latter part of the century, a number of researchers began using various mixtures of quantitative and qualitative methods, convinced that they could best address their research questions by using the strengths of both methodologies (Bond 1994; Creswell 2003, 15; Tashakkorie and Teddlie 2003, x). One concept to grow out of this type of research was “triangulation of data sources,” which allows the researcher to compare and contrast quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell 2003, 15). However, additional reasons for using mixed methods have evolved, including how methods develop and inform each other, how they offer insights into different levels or units of analysis, and how they can serve emancipatory and transformative purposes (Creswell 2003, 16). Out of mixing the two methods has emerged a “…separate methodological orientation with its own worldview, vocabulary, and techniques,” which is still in its adolescence (Tashakkorie and Teddlie 2003, x). However, the field is growing rapidly both in its use in a wide range of disciplines and in the prevalence of books devoted to mixed methods procedures (Creswell 2003, 208).

Creswell (2003) identifies three general categories of mixed methods procedures: *sequential, concurrent,* and *transformative*. A researcher using *sequential* procedures begins with one method and follows up with the other, allowing exploration to move, for example, from
the study of a group to the study of group members’ unique experiences. In *concurrent* procedures, a researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative methods simultaneously to collect and interpret data, usually by nesting one research method within the other. Researchers using *transformative* procedures may use sequential or concurrent data collection methods, but all aspects of the research are driven by an overarching theoretical paradigm (Creswell 2003, 16).

Challenges of using mixed methods stem primarily from the relative newness of this type of research. With few previous studies to draw on compared to quantitative or qualitative research, investigators using mixed methods often must navigate their own paths for analyzing and presenting data (Creswell 2003).

**Rationale for Using Mixed-methods Procedures**

The epistemological foundations of this study are essentially pragmatic, drawing from both constructivist qualitative and postpositivist quantitative perspectives, as described by Creswell (2003). Constructivist theory posits that meaning and knowledge are constructed by individuals within the context of their social interactions and historical and cultural norms. I explore how tango dancers view the community’s history as well as the meanings that they create in and/or through dancing tango. A postpositivist framework in the quantitative sense allows me to study, for example, correlations between dancers’ ages and the degree to which tango enhances their spiritual lives. What follows is a brief description of why I use both constructivist qualitative and postpositivist quantitative methods to address four overarching research topics.

First, writing a history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area required collecting both subjective text from teachers about why they began teaching, for example, and quantifiable
information on dates, events, attendance, and the pricing of activities. Second, creating a profile of the tango dance population required collecting demographic and other quantifiable data as well as asking open-ended questions* about dancers’ motivations and desires. Third, I strove to understand how dancers perceived that dancing tango affected their lives, information that was gathered through closed survey questions for an aggregate view and also through in-depth phenomenological interviews with a small number of dancers. Fourth and finally, I was particularly interested in the spiritual meaning that dancers made in and/or through tango and how this might correlate, for example, with their ages. In my experience, spirituality is not a common topic of conversation among tango dancers, so the use of quantitative and qualitative methods improved my capacity to explore this realm in the form of 1) closed questions about spirituality in the survey, and 2) phenomenological interviews that provided a forum for participants to discuss whether or not they made spiritual meaning in and/or through dancing tango. Table 1 shows which research questions are addressed by each data collection tool.

Table 1. Linking Data Collection Tools to Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Other Sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. History and Roles</td>
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<td>2. Members, Motivations, and Future</td>
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<td>3. Well-being and Growth</td>
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<td>4. Lived Experience</td>
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<td>5. Faith Traditions and Spiritual Meaning</td>
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<td>6. Implications</td>
<td></td>
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* According to Groves et al. (2004), “‘Open-ended questions’ allow respondents to formulate an answer in their own words…. By contrast, closed questions require respondents to select an answer from among the options listed as part of the question” (156).
Another reason for using mixed methods was that qualitative data collection tools informed quantitative ones. By December of 2006, most tango instructors/organizers had completed the questionnaire, which asked, “If you could ask Argentine tango dancers in the Philadelphia area anything, what would you most like to know?” Before launching the survey in January 2007, I revised it to include questions that tango instructors/organizers raised, like how much money dancers spent monthly on tango activities. In addition, I completed most of the nine phenomenological interviews before launching the survey so that I could revise the survey further to better gather information on dancers’ experiences.

To summarize, my mixed-method included open-ended and closed questions, and it included questionnaires and surveys as well as phenomenological interviews to reflect the complexity inherent in questions about history, participants in a community, participants’ perceptions of tango activities, and meaning they make through those activities. I remained open to how data collected in the earlier part of the study informed and shaped data collection tools used later in the study.

Type of Mixed-methods Design for this Research

I use primarily concurrent nested procedures as defined by Creswell (2003), meaning that I collected data using qualitative and quantitative methods simultaneously and that I nested the quantitative component within the predominant qualitative method guiding the research (218). More specifically, my research procedures were concurrent in that I collected all data in six months from September 2006 through February 2007—that is, questionnaire data from September through November, phenomenological data from November through January, and survey data in January and February. My research procedures were nested in that the research
subquestions were primarily qualitative in nature with some quantitative questions included to enrich description of tango’s history and of the people who dance tango in the Philadelphia area.

One could make the case that I used *sequential* procedures in that I collected data using three different methods allowing time for some methods to inform or shape those that followed. However, my understanding of sequential procedures is that the researcher completes both data collection *and* analysis using one method before deciding which method to use next (Creswell 2003, 218). Because I only *collected* data sequentially with very little time for analysis, and because I essentially designed all three data collection methods before beginning the research, my procedures are more consistent with concurrent procedures than with sequential ones, as defined by Creswell (2003, 218).

Data Collection Methods

I used four data collection methods: 1) an eleven-page questionnaire completed by 24 tango instructors/organizers; 2) tape-recorded phenomenological interviews with nine dancers, seven of whom also submitted journals and two of whom submitted visual representations; 3) a twelve-page survey of 103 tango dancers; and 4) other primary sources. Because of my activities as an instructor/organizer, I completed the questionnaire and analyzed and presented my data along with that of other respondents. In the dissertation proposal I stated that I would complete the survey and have a friend interview me as well (which I did during the instrument-design phase), but I decided not to participate in these data collection activities. With more survey respondents than expected (approximately one-quarter of active dancers at the time) and lengthy phenomenological interviews, I had plenty of data and did not want to skew results with my own biases. In interpreting and presenting survey and interview data, I draw on my knowledge of the
community and my own experiences of tango, including my voice both as researcher and dancer and revealing the intersubjective nature of the research.

*Questionnaire for Tango Instructors and Event Organizers*

Because tango has been danced in the Philadelphia area since approximately 1990 (based on conversations I have had with local instructors), and because no one to my knowledge had written about its history when I began this study, it seemed most prudent to go directly to the people at the heart of the community—the instructors/organizers—who had the history stored in their memories and, hopefully, also in their files. I gathered data from participants using questionnaires instead of conducting face-to-face interviews for a few reasons. First, because much of the information I wanted to gather was quantifiable (e.g., when they started teaching, how many students they had, where they taught, etc.), I felt that I could gather more accurate data if participants wrote the answers themselves and could consider questions at their own pace and in proximity to their files and records. Second, by formatting some closed questions on the questionnaire in the same way that I formatted closed questions on the survey of dancers, I was able to compare and contrast data sets. Finally, because there were more than twenty active instructors/organizers in the community at the time, conducting interviews and transcribing recordings would have been prohibitively time-consuming given the scope of this research.

*Creating the Questionnaire*

I created the questionnaire with assistance from staff of the Temple University Social Science Data Library (SSDL), a local male tango dancer, my dissertation advisor, and one tango instructor/organizer. I also referred to a number of contemporary publications on questionnaire
design and data analysis (Groves et al. 2004, Nardi 2006, Peterson 2000). To gather basic information about how to do quantitative research (which was not covered in my doctoral coursework), I first visited the SSDL, which offers limited consulting services to graduate students and faculty. Staff suggestions on how to format surveys and questionnaires were quite helpful. For example, it was David A. Ford* who suggested that I format questions following the 2000 United States Census to give me the opportunity to compare and contrast data I gathered with Philadelphia census data.

After making revisions, I asked a fellow tango dancer to review the questionnaire for clarity and content. I then invited feedback from my dissertation advisor, Professor Joellen Meglin, who noted that the level of detail I was requesting might be prohibitively complex and/or overwhelming for some participants. I condensed the questionnaire considerably, keeping in mind how I intended to use the information and, therefore, what questions could be eliminated or combined. I then showed the draft questionnaire to a local tango instructor/organizer. She read it (but did not actually complete it), made useful suggestions, and commented that she felt that she and other instructors/organizers would be able to complete it and would find the data useful and relevant. Finally, after revising the questionnaire based on her feedback, I completed the questionnaire myself, which proved very informative. At that time, I had taught a few tango workshops, hosted numerous milongas, and hosted workshops taught by guest instructors, so I was able to test the questionnaire as participant and researcher.

* David A. Ford is assistant director of the Temple University Social Science Data Library, which is described in detail at www.temple.edu/ssdl/.
Questionnaire Description

The final questionnaire is 11 pages long, and it took approximately 90 minutes to complete all 87 questions. It is included in the Appendices. It asks participants (not in this order) about:

- their own histories of learning tango,
- their experience in other dance and/or movement forms,
- their past and current teaching and/or event organizing activities,
- their motivations for working in tango,
- their income from working in tango,
- their involvement in large local tango events,
- their knowledge of the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area,
- their observations of the local tango community,
- what they would like to know about community tango dancers,
- what they would like to see happen in the community in the next 5-10 years,
- what resources they could suggest to help make these changes happen,
- demographic information about themselves, and
- how the research could be made useful to them and to the community.

The questionnaire uses a combination of closed and open-ended questions, and instructions encourage participants to use extra sheets as needed. The questionnaire has both closed and open-ended questions for a number of reasons. First, the reliability of the questionnaire may be enhanced by using both types of questions (Peterson 2000). Second, I anticipated that participants would be more likely to complete the questionnaire if it were easy to
complete and took no longer than 1.5 hours. Had I used only open-ended questions, the questionnaire would have been too long and the task of analyzing the responses more difficult than warranted by the research questions being asked. Whenever possible, I drew on my knowledge as an instructor/organizer to craft a closed question in place of an open-ended one. For example, instead of asking how participants generated their tango-related income, I worded question number 83 (on page 11) thus: “What percentage of your gross 2005 tango-related income generated in the Philadelphia area came from the following activities?” I listed the seven most likely responses based on my experience and on conversations with instructors and event organizers. The seven choices were teaching group classes, teaching private classes, hosting prácticas, hosting milongas, running guest teacher workshops, organizing tango tours, and selling tango-related merchandise.

Third, closed questions facilitated coding and allowed for comparisons of answers within and between respondents, while open-ended questions invited participants to offer their subjective, individual experiences within the larger framework of quantitative data.

Finally, to gather participants’ demographic data, I followed the closed or open-ended formats of as many of the 2000 U.S. Census questions as were relevant to my research questions, namely, gender, date of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, and country of birth. (Because participants put their names on these questionnaires, I was not comfortable requesting more personal information.)

**Questionnaire Participants**

As of September 2006, 19 instructors were offering 28 weekly classes and prácticas (practice sessions), and 16 people (some of whom also taught) were hosting weekly or monthly
milongas on a regular basis. I chose participants based on the list of instructors published on the Tango Philadelphia website* and on my knowledge of people and their roles in the community. For example, I invited six people to participate who had organized events in the community’s early years but no longer played such a role and were not listed on the website. All told, I invited 34 people to participate, and 23 completed the questionnaire. Two more participated without completing the questionnaire—one who preferred to submit information via email and the other who answered questions by phone. Because of my activities since 2004 as event coordinator and instructor, I completed a questionnaire as well to bring the total respondents to 26. I communicated with some respondents in early 2007 via telephone and email to clarify questionnaire data. Of the ten who were unable to participate, four were actively teaching or organizing events and six were not. It was not feasible for them to participate. It would have been ideal if everyone had participated, but I am confident that the data gathered was quite sufficient to document the forces behind the community’s growth and the people at its core.

Ethical Issues

Upon receiving approval in September 2006 from Temple University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research involving human subjects, I invited instructors/organizers to participate by sending a personalized letter along with the questionnaire, the consent form, and a stamped, addressed envelope. (The questionnaire, consent form, and IRB approval are in the Appendices.) I contacted them within a few weeks of sending the packet to ask if they had questions. The cover letter explained the research questions and methods of the study, how the

* One may view this list by selecting “Tango Instructors” at www.tangophiladelphia.com. The website lists most local classes, milongas, and other activities as well as instructors’ contact information and other items of tango interest. Note that the list of local instructors has changed since the fall of 2006.
data I collected might be useful to them, and how they might contribute to the study—both by completing the questionnaire and by lending me posters, flyers, programs, photographs, and other items on the history of tango in the Philadelphia area. To encourage participation, I gave each person who completed the questionnaire a $10 gift certificate to Barnes and Noble Booksellers.

In the consent form, I described why I had invited them to participate, what research methods I would use, what they might experience through participating in the study, how I would keep their participation confidential, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and whom they could contact with questions. To protect their privacy in the dissertation, I present questionnaire data both in the form of personal stories and in the aggregate to make it impossible to identify individuals. For example, I discuss participants’ income earned through tango activities in the aggregate, but I also present individual accounts of participants’ teaching and event coordination activities. I had intended to use pseudonyms, but because it is such a small dance community, it would have been easy for readers to identify participants based on very little information. Instead, I gave every participant the opportunity to read and edit all text in which they were identified by name. All 23 respondents made revisions either on the drafts or via email, which I kept in my files. Nine made extensive revisions, so I sent the revised text to them for one more round of review and editing before finalizing the dissertation. All original questionnaires and revised texts are in a locked file drawer in my home. I will shred them in 2011—five years after commencing the research.
Phenomenological Interviews

In their article about young people’s experiences of the superordinary in dance, Bond and Stinson (2000/01) argue persuasively for using multiple data collection and analysis tools in research on human experience and meaning. To learn about tango dancers’ lived experiences of tango, I conducted face-to-face, tape-recorded phenomenological interviews with nine dancers. I invited them to create visual representations of their experiences and to journal on key interview questions a few weeks after our interviews. In a small phenomenological study I conducted with dancers in 2003, participants who journaled a few weeks after completing an interview with me came to new insights through the process, and I wanted to give participants in this research the same opportunity. Seven dancers submitted journals and two, visual representations.

Interview Questions

I modeled the phenomenological interview questions after a study that I conducted with tango dancers in 2003.* The questions in that study and in this one center around the concept of “really dancing tango,” which Temple University Professor Karen Bond created for her course, “Meaning in Dance,” that I took during the fall semester of 2003. In Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy, Max van Manen (1990) writes that one very effective way to invite participants to speak of their lived experience is to make the frame of reference as specific as possible. Asking participants to choose a time when they were “really dancing tango” and to explain what that phrase meant to them helped participants immerse themselves in a past moment in time. This immersion made it easier to recall feelings,

* As part of the requirements for the “Meaning in Dance” course that I took in the fall semester of 2003 with Professor Bond, I conducted interviews with two local tango dancers and asked them to journal using questions patterned after the interview questions. The final unpublished paper was entitled “Three Women’s Lived Experiences of Dancing Argentine Tango: A Portfolio.”
sensations, experiences, and thoughts than to recall the same phenomena for dancing tango in the abstract.

I also invited participants to create visual representations of their experiences of “really dancing tango” during the three weeks after the interview. According to Bond and Stinson (2000/01), visual representations can provide insights into meaning-making that are not easy to express or understand through words. I encouraged participants to create visual representations using any method(s) they chose. One interviewee made a collage of images and text, and another made a sketch of a tango trio. The interview questions, journal questions, and art-making instructions are in the Appendices.

One interesting aspect of designing the interview questions was whether or not to ask specific questions about spirituality, one of my central research subquestions. Unlike other questions in the interview that refer to specific sensations, feelings, or thoughts, questions related to spirituality would require more abstract interpretation by participants. Max van Manen (1990) writes that phenomenology is the pure description of lived experience, and that hermeneutics allows the researcher to interpret experience via some “text” or symbolic form. He also writes that in hermeneutic phenomenological human science, the interview serves two specific purposes: 1) to explore and gather material for better understanding human phenomena, and 2) to develop a relationship with the interviewee about the meaning of an experience (van Manen 1990). While the majority of my interview questions were geared toward better understanding human phenomena, near the end of the interview, I ventured into whether or not participants made spiritual meaning from those experiences. I asked what the word “spiritual” meant to them and whether there was anything spiritual for them in their experience of really dancing tango.
Before finalizing the interview and journal questions, I tested both with a tango dancer who was not part of the dissertation research. I tested the questions with a man because I am less comfortable asking men about their feelings than I am asking women, so the practice was useful. As suggested by Professor Bond, I practiced asking questions, like “Can you say more about…?,” “Please describe…,” and “What happened next…?” I tape-recorded the interview so that I could assess the questions and my interview skills.

In all interviews, I applied Interaction Analysis, a method that was designed to improve teacher-student interaction in educational settings but that can be used to enhance or improve any type of communication. In *The Role of the Teacher in the Classroom: Interaction Analysis for Teachers*, Amidon, Casper, and Flanders (1985) describe ten categories of statements or questions and proven methods for using certain combinations of categories to achieve desired communication results. The categories are based on how the listener perceives a statement or question, not on how the speaker intended it—an important distinction because one’s success at communicating is dependent upon how the listener receives the information. The specific categories of statements and questions are as follows. The “PBS” is the person being studied (the teacher, for example), and the “OP” is the other person (the student, for example). The first seven categories refer to what the PBS says, and the last two do what the OP says.

- **Category 1** – Accepts and/or clarifies the OP’s feelings (no judgment)
- **Category 2** – Praises or encourages the OP (judgment)
- **Category 3** – Accepts, clarifies, and/or builds on the OP’s ideas (no judgment)
- **Category 4** – Asks an open-ended or closed question
- **Category 5** – States an opinion or provide information
- **Category 6** – Gives an order with a clear and limited time frame
- **Category 7** – Accepts or clarifies the OP’s feelings and builds on the OP’s ideas
- **Category 8** – Attacks, challenges, or questions the OP’s ideas
- **Category 9** – Terms an opinion or provides information
- **Category 10** – Gives an order with a clear and limited time frame but does not use a time frame
Category 7 – Criticizes, justifies, asserts authority, or uses extreme self-reference

Category 8 – OP gives solicited response to PBS

Category 9 – OP gives unsolicited response; initiates their own idea; may address PBS or other OPs

Cat 10 – silence or noise/confusion

Interaction Analysis holds that the best way for the PBS (or, in my case, the researcher) to encourage participation, develop more creative ideas, and be a good listener is to use categories 1, 2 (encouraging, not praising), 3, and open-ended 4—that is, to accept and/or clarify the OP’s feelings without judgment; to encourage the OP without judgment; to accept, clarify, and/or build on the OP’s ideas; and to ask open-ended questions (Amidon, Casper, and Flanders 1985).

During a course in Interaction Analysis at Temple University in the fall of 2005, I learned more about my tendencies as an interviewer and how to improve my skills. First, I paid attention to how I responded during interviews to be sure I did not drift into asking closed questions. If I did drift, it was a sign that I was ready to move to the next question. Second, I increased my use of category 1 statements and limited my tendency to use the praising type of category 2 statements. I also limited my use of category 5 statements so that there would be as much time as possible for my interviewees to speak. Third, I was more clear about my own objectives, and I tried to discern the objectives of my interviewees. In interviews I conducted during the course, I noticed that some interviewees really wanted to “get it right” and worried that they might not have enough to say or that their comments were not valuable. These types of interviewees need a lot of encouraging category 2 statements. Others were quite confident and may even have had agendas that they wished to voice during the interview. These participants responded well to the use of more category 3 statements.
Interview Participants

In October 2006 via email or U.S. mail, I invited nine dancers to participate based on the following criteria:

- they knew me well enough that they were likely to be comfortable discussing their lived experiences of dancing tango with me;
- they had expressed interest in my research topic and/or offered to be an interview participant; and
- as a group, they were representative of the survey population in terms of age, gender, occupation, years of experience dancing tango, country of origin, and roles when dancing tango.

I believe that these criteria for selection of participants increased the likelihood that I captured multiple and diverse voices of tango dancers in the Philadelphia area on an intimate level. To encourage participation in the study, I gave each participant who completed the interview and sent me their journal by late January 2007 a $10 gift certificate to Barnes and Noble Booksellers. All those invited agree to participate.

Upon reflecting on these criteria, I note that I may have inadvertently created a limitation within this research. In conversations with dancers before beginning this research, I mentioned that I was interested in the history of tango in the Philadelphia area, how dancing tango affects dancers’ lives, and the spiritual dimension of dancing tango. It is possible that by divulging my research interests, I created a situation wherein interviewees could have felt obliged to speak about spirituality or other topics that would not normally have fallen within their realm of meaning-making in tango. To address this limitation, I bracketed out my interest in intersections
among spirituality and tango while conducting the interviews and focused, instead, on immersing myself in the worlds of participants by using the interview techniques described above.

Conducting the Interviews

I conducted interviews from October 2006 through January 2007. They were 45 to 75 minutes long and took place in dancers’ homes. I transcribed the recordings using Dragon Naturally Speaking™ voice recognition software, which I had practiced using in one of my doctoral preliminary projects. After each interview, I gave participants the journal questions, directions for completing them, directions for creating visual representations of their experiences, and a stamped envelope. I asked participants to send me their journals and visual representations within two weeks of our interview, with the promise that I would return them after I had successfully defended the dissertation.

Ethical Issues

In the invitation, I described why I had invited them to participate, what research methods I would use, what they might experience during the interview, how confidentiality would be respected, and how their responses might be useful for the improvement and/or strengthening of tango in the Philadelphia area. For example, through participating, they might learn about themselves or their experiences of dancing tango. Through my published work, they might learn about how other dancers experience tango within the historical and cultural contexts of tango in the Philadelphia area.

The consent form explained how I would keep their identities confidential, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and whom they could contact with questions. (The
interview questions, directions for journaling, directions for creating visual representations, consent form, and IRB approval are in the Appendices.) As planned, I gave participants the opportunity to read and edit text relating to their interviews. However, I also gave them copies of their interview transcripts before I began writing Chapter 7, the phenomenology chapter. Because of my writing schedule, I did not begin to transcribe the interviews until December 2007. It had been approximately a year since the interviews and I had moved to Vermont in July 2007, so I contacted each interviewee in March 2008 to say hello, confirm their addresses, and indicate that I would send their transcripts for review before I began analysis and interpretation. On approximately March 4, 2008, seven interviewees received their transcript via email and/or U.S. mail, and two more received their transcripts a few weeks later. Interviewees who had also submitted journals received them in late March for review. In emails, I reminded interviewees that I would maintain their anonymity by using pseudonyms and focusing on themes in their texts. In reviewing their transcripts and journals, I requested that they a) make corrections in punctuation or wording to clarify their ideas, and b) flag statements that they did not want used in the chapter, if any. Three interviewees returned their interviews with edits indicated using the Track Changes feature in Microsoft Word, which showed what they had changed. Two interviewees sent comments and edits in email messages by referencing page numbers and paragraphs, and four interviewees made no changes in their texts. None requested changes in their journal entries. Two interviewees asked that I check with them about using specific quotations from their texts before sending the draft chapter to other interviewees, and I honored their requests.

With regard to confidentiality, I had planned to use methods similar to those for the questionnaire—namely, pseudonyms and allowing participants to review text that was about
them. However, as I began writing, I realized that in such a small community and given the camaraderie among dancers, it would have been easy for them to identify interviewees had I provided a profile of each person. Even pseudonyms would not have adequately ensured their anonymity. Therefore, I did not use any names at all, describing them as a group and crafting interpretation and discussion based on themes in their responses rather than based on individual experiences.

All original interview recordings and transcripts are stored in a locked file drawer in my home, and only I have access to them. I will destroy them in 2011.

Survey of Tango Dancers

To gather data on dancers’ demographic characteristics, their dance activities, their motivations, and their experiences of dancing tango, I conducted an anonymous survey. The survey was designed to augment the history of tango in the Philadelphia area (e.g., addressing questions regarding when people started dancing tango there); to further illuminate the state of the community; and to gather data in a quantified form on people’s motivations for and experiences of dancing tango. It also asked qualitative questions on dancers’ experiences, what they wanted to see happen in the next five to ten years, and whether they could suggest resources for making such changes.

Survey Creation Process

In creating the survey, I received commentary and suggestions from a local tango instructor, Professor Julia Ericksen in the Temple University Department of Sociology, SSDL staff, a male tango dancer and friend who completed an early version, and from my own
experience taking various versions. At the suggestion of SSDL staff, I used Survey Monkey, an online internet survey research service, to test and conduct the survey.* In September 2007, I invited some friends of mine who dance tango in Burlington, Vermont to take a draft version of the survey. Three men and three women of diverse cultural and dance backgrounds did so. While they were unable to answer questions regarding tango in Philadelphia, they were able to answer most other questions. By phone and email, I gathered feedback on what it was like to complete the survey, how long it took, and suggested revisions. Working with their data allowed me to become more familiar with Survey Monkey and with some statistical analyses. I am keeping these participants’ names completely confidential and have not used any of the data in the dissertation.

Testing the survey revealed questions that needed to be added, confusing wording, and other refinements. For example, designing questions on dancers’ spiritual experiences in and/or through dancing tango was particularly challenging. I began with the Daily Spiritual Experiences Survey because it has been widely used in health research since its first publication in 1999 (Fetzer Institute 2003). As a research tool, the survey “has demonstrated good internal consistency reliability across all samples” (Underwood and Teresi 2002, 30). Underwood (2003) states that it “can be used effectively across many religious boundaries” and that though it “assumes a predominantly Judeo-Christian research population,” it can be modified for use with other groups (11). However, I found it quite difficult to modify the instrument because of its focus on God, which is difficult to define in less religious ways. For example, in the directions

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* One may learn more about Survey Monkey at www.surveymonkey.com. As of 2007, the service provided an extremely affordable and user-friendly template for creating and conducting a survey and downloading data.
for using the scale in research, Underwood (2003) suggests that researchers include the following statement at the beginning:

The following question includes items you may or may not experience. Please consider if and how often you have these experiences, and try to disregard whether you feel you should or should not have them. In addition, a number of items use the word, “God.” If this word is not a comfortable one, please substitute another idea that calls to mind the divine or holy for you. (15)

Even with this caveat, I found the word “God” and the survey’s focus on a relationship with him distracting, inaccurate, and inadequate in describing my spiritual life. I experimented with substituting God with the terms “presence” or “power,” but even those were unsatisfactory because they could easily fail to capture the wide range of human spiritual beliefs. For some, there is no presence or power of any kind. In addition, during my visit to the SSDL in August 2006, staff agreed that the language of the Underwood (2003) instrument could alienate participants and that a less religious and more spiritually oriented scale would probably be more effective.

I found a better instrument for my research in the “Spiritual Orientation Inventory” created by Elkins et al. (1988) because it gets at the heart of spiritual issues without any mention of God or some other presence or power. Even though it was published nearly 20 years ago, it was cited by Underwood (2003) and others who contributed to the Fetzer report, and I found it very contemporary and inclusive of a wide range of religious and spiritual beliefs. The authors write, “Our objective was to delineate a humanistic definition, description, and assessment approach to spirituality that would promote clearer understanding of spirituality and that would be sensitive to the spirituality of those not affiliated with traditional religion” (Elkins et al. 1988, 7). The complete inventory of questions was not given in the Elkins et al. (1988) article, but the authors did provide the nine subscales of the inventory as well as two typical statements for each
subscale. For example, within the subscale of “transcendent dimension,” the authors listed “There is a transcendent, spiritual dimension to life,” and “I have had transcendent experiences in which I was overcome with a sense of awe, wonder, and reverence” (Elkins et al. 1988: 13).

Even though I found the “Spiritual Orientation Inventory” by Elkins et al. (1988) more consistent with the kind of language that I wished to use in survey questions than the Underwood (2003) model, neither mentioned a few key concepts that tango dancers had mentioned in my previous research. In a study I conducted of nine dancers who volunteered for the “Dancing for Schools” tango event that I directed at Temple University in 2004, five themes arose in their responses when I asked if they had had any spiritual experiences through participating: connecting with self and others, the creative act or creating something from nothing, serving others or altruism, meditation, and being completely in the moment.* In a second study on social pairs dances in Burlington, Vermont, in which I combined the responses of tango dancers with those who dance salsa, swing, and ballroom, their spiritual themes were very similar to those of the nine volunteers, but they added one more theme: improving one’s own life and the lives of others through dance.†

To craft survey questions on spirituality, I decided to combine the spiritual assessment tools by Elkins et al. (1988) and Underwood (2003) with themes from my previous research with dancers to create a list consistent with my own views, dancers’ views, and contemporary literature on spirituality. This combined list of the Elements of Spirituality is in the Appendices.

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*I presented this research at the World Dance Alliance Global Assembly on July 20, 2006, at York University in Toronto, Canada. The paper will be published in web proceedings in September 2006 and is entitled “Building Community through Argentine Tango: Adult Volunteers’ Experiences of Creating a Fundraising Event for K-12 Dance Education.”

†I conducted this study as one of my preliminary projects (pre-dissertation research) in the Fall of 2005, and it is entitled “Assessing the State of Selected Social Partner Dances in Burlington, VT: Recent History and Future Potential.” In telephone interviews of six dancers, I asked how dancing affects them physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
At first, I placed all questions about spirituality together on the survey, but based on advice from Professor Ericksen and staff in the SSDL, I decided to weave them in with other questions about people’s experiences of tango. Evidently, research has shown that people completing questionnaires and surveys tend to try to figure out what the researcher is looking for and to answer accordingly. Blending topics is one way to counteract this tendency.

Survey Description

The survey took approximately one hour to complete and asked a total of 54 questions on these topics, roughly in this order:

- current place of residence;
- tango, other dance, and other movement history;
- current level of participation and motivations for dancing tango;
- what they experience when they dance tango;
- whether tango has affected their lives and, if so, to what degree;
- what they would like to see happening in tango in the Philadelphia area in the future; and
- their gender, age, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, profession/occupation, level of income, level of education, political party affiliation, and religion or spiritual tradition.

The survey asked a mixture of open-ended, closed, and mixed (open-ended and closed) questions. Mixed questions asked for short descriptions if participants answered the previous part of the question a certain way. For example, in Question number 30, if the participant
selected “Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino,” he/she was asked to write in the correct descriptor. (The survey and IRB approval are in the Appendices.)

As in the questionnaire for tango instructors/organizers, I patterned some survey questions after the 2000 United States Census so that I could compare and contrast my survey data with local census data. For a few questions, I altered the census question slightly to make them more appropriate for the tango audience. For example, for the question, “What is your occupation?,” I added more examples based on what I know about tango dancers’ occupations, namely, “veterinarian, lawyer, medical doctor, carpenter, dance instructor, visual artist, musician.”

I based question number 37 about participants’ religion or spiritual tradition on a list from the website of the Harvard University Pluralism Project,* whose mission is “to help Americans engage with the realities of religious diversity through research, outreach, and the active dissemination of resources.” To the Harvard list of what they call “faith traditions,” I added “self-designed spirituality” to describe people like me who are spiritual but not affiliated with a specific religion; I also added “none of the above.”

Survey Participants

I conducted the survey from January 18 through February 19 of 2007. I encouraged as many tango dancers as possible to complete the survey by sending email invitations to every address on the Tango Philadelphia email list three times (approximately 950 addresses), making

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* One may read about the Harvard University Pluralism Project at www.pluralism.org.
announcements at local milongas inviting dancers to participate, * asking Michael VanBuskirk (the webmaster) to post an invitation at the top of the Tango Philadelphia website, which he did, and inviting my tango students to participate. At milongas, I distributed a flyer that described the survey and its website, and I displayed a small box containing paper surveys (participants could complete it either on paper or online at the Survey Monkey site), a flyer, and a place to put completed surveys. The only group of people whom I asked not to participate were those who had already participated in the research— instructors/organizers and interviewees—so that their data would not be duplicated. I extended the deadline for completing the survey a few times, taking the last submission on February 17, 2007, and offered an incentive in the form of a raffle that participants could enter upon completing the survey. Cheryl Cummings, secretary of the Temple University Department of Dance, randomly chose three phone numbers from those provided by respondents, and she contacted raffle prize winners. She did not know any of the dancers by name. The prizes were an eighty-dollar gift certificate to The Rosin Box, which sells dance shoes; a sixty-dollar gift certificate to The White Dog Café, an excellent local restaurant; and a forty-dollar gift certificate to Borders Bookstore.

One hundred and three people completed the entire survey, which represented approximately one quarter of the estimated 400 tango dancers who were attending local milongas in early 2007. Although I made many efforts to encourage dancers to take the survey, and the response rate of approximately 25 percent was excellent, the results represent only the people who responded to the survey; they are not intended to represent the entire local tango

* At the following milongas, I announced the survey and invited dancers to participate: “Lesley and Kelly’s Friday Night Milonga” on January 19, 26, February 2, 16; “Milonga en Casa” on January 21; “Tango Café” on January 29; and “Tango Brunch” on February 11. I also displayed the survey on information tables at “Tango Hop” in Media, PA on January 20 and at a milonga in Princeton, NJ on February 3; there were no opportunities to announce the survey at these milongas. I intended to announce the survey at a Collegeville milonga but did not have an opportunity to drive there; however, the milonga host encouraged dancers to participate.
community. However, drawing on my ethnographic observations as an active member of the community, I provide arguments for why some data may, indeed, be representative of the community.

*Survey Limitations*

A key limitation of the survey was that participants were self-selecting from among tango dancers who attend local milongas and/or who opted to receive email notifications about local events. Participants decided whether they met the survey’s eligibility guidelines and whether to participate. (To be eligible, dancers had to be at least 18 years old and must have been dancing tango or studying it in the Philadelphia area when they took the survey.) By definition in quantitative research terms, I used *volunteer sampling* to gather participants for the survey, a method that has characteristics and limitations similar to *convenience sampling*. According to Nardi (2006), when a group of people are invited to participate in research, and a number of people choose to do so, they comprise a convenience sample. Those who volunteer to complete surveys “…may be a very different type of person from those who don’t volunteer, such as [those who]…have extra time to participate, or are interested in the particular topic of study” (Nardi 2006, 119).

An important limitation of volunteer or convenience sampling is that the researcher cannot generalize from the sample population to the general population with any validity—one is limited to making conclusions only about those who completed the survey (Nardi 2006, 118). To address this limitation, I included questions based on the United States Census, but more importantly I did everything in my power to encourage as many tango dancers as possible to participate.
Ethical Issues

In the invitation that I sent by email, I described why I had invited participants to participate, what research methods I would use, what they might experience in taking the survey, how to take the survey, how they would remain anonymous, and whom they could contact with questions. I also explained how data might be useful to the improvement and/or strengthening of tango in the Philadelphia area. (Because it was an anonymous survey, I did not have to ask participants to complete a Consent Form.) Finally, I described how the process of completing the survey might benefit them personally; for example, it invited them to reflect on their tango dancing and might inspire them to think in new ways about their tango experiences.

With regard to anonymity, participants were not asked to give their names or addresses, and I had SurveyMonkey keep cookies and email addresses separate from survey data so that I could not link participants with their specific responses. Giving phone numbers was optional and was only used to contact prize winners as described above. Regarding surveys completed on paper, I set up a survey station (with invitation letters, blank surveys, and pens) at milongas so that participants could complete and submit them without identifying themselves to me. I made no attempt to discover respondents’ identities, I analyzed and present data in the aggregate, and I did not quote any statements that might make it easy for readers to identify the participants.

To reduce the chances that participants would complete the survey more than once, SurveyMonkey used cookies to make sure that only one on-line survey was submitted per computer. I believe that the length of time it took to complete the survey also deterred people from submitting more than one. I am storing paper survey and survey data in a locked cabinet in my home. With regard to the data collected and stored at SurveyMonkey, the company states,
“Our privacy policy states that we will not use your data for our own purposes. The data you collect is kept private and confidential.”*

Other Primary Sources

The fourth and final source of data was published articles and reviews in Philadelphia newspapers, the Tango Philadelphia website, flyers and posters for local tango activities, and event programs and posters from large venues like the Kimmel Center and the Annenberg Center, which I either collected or requested from dancers and instructors/organizers.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

According to Creswell (2003), analysis of mixed methods data “…occurs both within the quantitative…approach and the qualitative…approach, and often between the two approaches” (220). This chapter presents broad strokes of the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods that I used in data analysis and interpretation. More detailed discussion of these methods appears at the beginning of Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data came from five sources: 1) responses to open-ended questions on the questionnaire for instructors/organizers, 2) responses to open-ended questions on the survey of dancers, 3) interview transcriptions, 4) journal entries from interviewees, and 5) visual representations from interviewees. The nature of qualitative data from the questionnaires,

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surveys, and interviews is quite distinct, so my methods of analysis and interpretation for each are equally unique.

Many of the open-ended questions on the questionnaire related to facts and figures, like with whom respondents had studied tango, where they hosted milongas, and what fees they charged for their services. I use historiographic methods to analyze these data alongside quantitative data regarding the community’s history and current trends. By contrast, 19 open-ended questions gathered qualitative responses on topics that were more personal, like why they had done certain things, what they had noticed about dancers’ behaviors, and what might help them improve their own tango activities. I use ethnographic and historiographic methods to explore these texts and to identify themes and forces of growth through the lens of my own experience in the community.

The survey, like the questionnaire, included many open-ended questions that gathered data appropriate for quantitative analysis, like when, where, and with whom respondents began to study tango, their ethnic backgrounds, and their occupations. However, 14 open-ended questions gathered qualitative data on topics like why they danced tango, what they valued in tango partners, how their experiences of tango had changed over time, and what they wanted for the future of the tango community. Using ethnographic methods, I coded text based on the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual constructs central to this research. Four additional categories emerged from respondents’ texts: the dance, the music, gaining exposure to other cultures, and improved quality of life. Coding criteria are discussed in Chapter 6 as well as how quantitative and qualitative data informed each other. Peppering my analysis are quotations from respondents’ text to reveal the complexity of their experiences and to ensure polyvocality in the text.
Initial attempts to analyze these qualitative data were organized by survey questions—that is, by coding and exploring answers to one question at a time. However, it became clear that different survey questions had elicited comparable and complementary information from respondents. Thus, data from multiple questions are woven together in discussion of themes and categories. Another reason for analyzing data from multiple questions is to offset the possible effects of researcher bias. Data from qualitative questions appearing early in the survey (e.g., question numbers 10 and 12) could have been less influenced by researcher bias than data from questions appearing later in the survey (e.g., question numbers 21, 26, and 39). The majority of respondents took the survey online, which required that they answer 3-5 questions at a time before viewing the next set of questions. The wording of questions early in the survey was very general, while questions later in the survey were more detailed, revealing more researcher bias. Therefore, analysis and discussion focuses on themes that emerge across data from questions appearing both early and late in the survey.

Finally, to analyze and interpret qualitative data gathered from interview participants, I use many layers of analysis, including categorizing, creating poetic transcriptions, journaling, and writing and rewriting text. I categorized text according to both pre-determined themes (e.g., sensory and emotional experiences) and those that emerged from dancers’ words (e.g., their internal experiences of dancing and metaphors like flying and playing music). Further categories emerged as I read and re-read earlier versions of this chapter, like my desire to explore dancers’ comfort levels with discussing the spiritual realm.

In addition to categorizing text, I created poetic transcriptions. As a phenomenological research tool, poetic transcriptions embrace the intersubjectivity of data interpretation and representation. Following Corrine Glesne’s model described in her article, “That Rare Feeling:
Re-presenting Research Through Poetic Transcription” (1997), I created poetic transcriptions to help me understand dancers’ lived experiences and to examine how I responded to their text. To provide a window into this process and, most importantly, into my interaction with the data, I present the original text for the first poetic transcription that appears in Chapter 7 and show, step by step, how I created the poetic transcription. The process of creating these poetic transcriptions helped me greatly to understand dancers’ lived experiences as well as my own biases, beliefs, assumptions, values, and experiences of dancing tango. As I pared away what I perceived as unnecessary words, I discovered not only what I believed were dancers’ essential experiences but also facets of my personal lens. Out of forty poetic transcriptions, I chose a handful to discuss based on how they reflected dancers’ experiences or my own, letting my artistic/creative/poetic sensibility as well as my research goals drive the content of phenomenological inquiry.

Finally, I wrote and re-rewrote the Chapter 7 many times, finding new meaning and learning more about myself as a researcher, dancer, and human being with each pass. I also kept a journal for noting thoughts, emotions, and biases. I was particularly careful to journal when I did and did not find data wherein dancers made spiritual meaning in and/or through dancing tango. I engaged in what Joann McNamara (1999) calls a spiral or circular process of hermeneutic analysis in which one alternates between analyzing the data and observing one’s own historical and sociocultural constructs that shape this analysis. McNamara (1999) writes that the researcher must understand herself or himself as deeply as she or he studies others in the research, and a key indicator of the success of such analysis lies in how much the researcher learns or develops through the process.
Quantitative Data

The questionnaire and survey generated four types of quantitative variables: binary (yes/no or male/female); interval (numbers, like dates and ages); ordinal (prescribed sequences with equal values between choices, like income levels); and nominal (thematic or subjective differences, like occupations and faith traditions). The goals of this research are primarily descriptive and explanatory—that is, it was designed to describe the Philadelphia area tango community and explore why and how particular phenomena occurred. Therefore, I use only univariate and bivariate analysis to understand quantitative variables. I do not conduct multivariate analysis, which explores three or more variables at a time and is commonly used in research involving hundreds of respondents gathered through random sampling and designed to predict outcomes in populations beyond the study group (Nardi 2006, 9-22). Sample sizes for quantitative data collection in my research were relatively small—21 for the questionnaire and 103 for the survey—and survey data were gathered using convenience sampling methods, which precludes making generalized statements about dancers who did not participate in the research.

Univariate analysis is conducted on one variable at a time to determine the variability of responses and to reveal which variables are true variables—that is, which ones reveal enough variety in respondents’ answers to make them valid candidates for bivariate analysis. Univariate analysis includes calculating means, medians, modes, and/or standard deviations, and I use such analysis in Chapter 4 to understand facts related to tango activities and the tango community’s growth over time. In Chapter 5, univariate analysis reveals the demographics and characteristics of instructors/organizers (from questionnaire data) and dancers (from survey data).

Bivariate analysis tests whether relationships or correlations between two variables are by chance or not by chance—that is, statistically significant. In Chapter 6, I use a range of
bivariate tests according to the types of variables being analyzed, and I use statistical tools called “indicators” to analyze quantitative data in terms of the five constructs—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social. Each indicator is comprised of data from one or two survey questions and allows testing for significant relationships between these indicators (as dependent variables) and variables like age, gender, and marital status (as independent variables). To create indicators for each construct, I use a statistical test called “Cronbach’s alpha,” which measures how well a set of items (or variables) measures a single unidimensional latent construct.”* This process is described in more detail in Chapter 6.

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**Mixed Methods**

Analysis of qualitative data led me to explore whether subgroups of dancers responded differently to certain questions. For example, did those who were divorced/separated indicate more gains in their social or emotional lives through tango than those who were single? To allow such comparison between subgroups, I used a form of mixed-methods analysis called data transformation in which the researcher quantifies the qualitative data and qualifies the quantitative data (Creswell 2003, 220-221). Drawing on publications by Caracelli and Greene (1993) and by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), Creswell (2003) describes this analysis as follows.

[Quantifying qualitative data]…involves creating codes and themes qualitatively, then counting the number of times they occur in the text data (or possibly the extent of talk about a code or theme by counting lines or sentences). This quantification of qualitative data then enables a researcher to compare quantitative results with the qualitative data. Alternatively, an inquirer may qualify quantitative data. For instance, in a factor analysis of data from a scale on an instrument, the researcher may create factors or themes that then can be compared with themes from the qualitative database. (220-221)

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For the purposes of this research, I quantified the qualitative data by counting the number of respondents who used language related to specific constructs or themes. To facilitate such counting, I put the text from each respondent into a spreadsheet, one response per row. Next to each response, I included other data provided by that respondent, like his/her gender, age, marital status, occupation, and whether he/she was born in the continental United States. These spreadsheets not only allowed me to count how many times respondents referred to constructs, but also to identify differences between how various subgroups referred to them. To compare and contrast these data with quantitative data, I totaled the number of respondents who mentioned physical reasons for dancing tango, for example, converted the total into a percentage, and compared and contrasted this figure to percentages regarding why they danced tango in quantitative data. An example of this spreadsheet tool appears with discussion of findings in Chapter 6.

Another form of mixed-methods analysis that I use resides in determining whether and how quantitative and qualitative data support, refute, or illuminate each other. Disparities between the two forms of data raise questions about tango survey design and about respondents’ experiences. Such comparisons provide evidence of the value of using mixed methods to explore a topic as intricate and complex as dancers’ experiences of tango.

Conclusion

In summary, by using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation and by combining creative and expository writing, I honor the polyvocality of the data, explore ways of knowing, and analyze how the individual pieces of raw
data relate to the whole. Revisiting the research design as pyramid in Figure 1 clarifies how the different research topics and methods build upon each other. I work within a clear organizational structure that allows room for organic processes and serendipitous discoveries. I also experiment with creating my own theories to explain findings that existing theories fail to address.

![Research Design](image)

**Figure 1.** Research Design
CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review provides a context and foundation for addressing the primary research question, “What is the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area, who are its current members, and how has dancing tango affected dancers?” Discussion begins with delimitations and limitations of the literature review. It then moves to a brief summary of tango’s origins in Argentina and Uruguay, tracing its evolution to the present as described by historical scholars. I then present my own description of Argentine tango and definitions of key concepts used in this study. The heart of the literature review revolves around discussion of a visual model for understanding how the research is structured, how key concepts intersect, and how the literature addresses these intersections.

Delimitations and Limitations

In a preliminary review of literature completed in May 2005, I found that research literature is scant or nonexistent on Argentine tango as it relates to adult health and well-being. Therefore, it was imperative that I remain open to many possibilities in the intersection of specific subject domains where little prior research had been conducted. Because this research touches on a broad range of subjects—tango history, adult health and well-being, aging, and spirituality—I use two strategies for the review of literature. First, for individual subjects, I provide basic definitions or review foundational literature, i.e., literature that offers a rudimentary understanding or that summarizes current discourse on each subject to clarify
important definitions, assumptions, and premises. (I do not offer a comprehensive or exhaustive review of all literature on each individual subject.) Second, I review literature that addresses two or more of the relevant subjects, like adult health and well-being and tango, and aging and spirituality.*

Another delimitation is that I use sources on adult health and well-being that have been written since approximately 1990. I do so because this field of research progresses quite rapidly, and I wish to cite the most current information. For example, since the mid-1990s, there has been a marked increase in research published on links between complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and health (Ai and Mackenzie 2006). CAM, also known as integrated medicine, emphasizes a holistic approach to health and healing which includes attention to body, mind, emotions, and spirit (Mackenzie and Rakel 2006, Ai and Mackenzie 2006).

I also delimit my exploration of spirituality to non-denominational texts written since about 1990. While religion serves as the spiritual foundation for many people, it does not hold significant meaning for me, and in my preliminary research, I have found that the Philadelphia tango community is not comprised of many church-going or particularly religious people (an impression that I explore further through this research). In addition, research participants provided data on a broad range of religions and spiritual traditions, so a literature review that takes a comprehensive view on this sphere of human experience provides the best context for analysis. Therefore, my literature review focuses primarily on the spiritual dialogue taking place outside of organized religion or among religious theologians who write to a non-denominational audience or use language to help bridge religious differences. Furthermore, I review texts

* With this goal in mind, I conducted literature searches using the following keywords: a) Argentine tango, ballroom dance, swing dance, social dance, social partner dance, social pairs dance, and contact improvisation; b) adult development, adult developmental psychology, transpersonal psychology; c) health and well-being; d) spiritual well-being, spiritual growth, and spiritual development; and e) aging and maturation.
written after about 1990 because I believe that they are most relevant to issues of spirituality in contemporary culture.

An important limitation of this literature review is the fact that I include only sources written in or translated into English because I am not fluent in any other language. Though I speak, read, and write Spanish at an intermediate level, I do not have enough expertise to comprehend the complexities and nuances of scholarly discourse in Spanish. In an effort to compensate for this limitation, I did not delimit sources on the history of Argentine tango to any specific date of publication. A number of excellent sources written since the 1950s exist in English, and I make use of them as well as more recent publications so as to draw on as wide a sphere of texts as possible.

Brief History of Argentine Tango

A number of authors have written at length about the history of Argentine tango (Azzi 1995, Baim 2007, Castro 1991, Collier 1995, Cooper 1995, Martin 1995, Savigliano 1995, Thompson 2005), so I provide but a brief summary of key eras in the dance’s development. According to Collier (1995), the first significant era was that of tango’s birth from the 1880s to early 1900s when thousands of immigrants from Europe and Africans who had been enslaved and brought to Argentina blended their musical and dance traditions with those of native Argentines in Buenos Aires and later also with native Uruguayans in Montevideo, Uruguay. Tango was born out of a blend of Argentine candombe and African-Argentine tango, Argentine rural and urban milonga, European polka and mazurka, Spanish contradanza and French/Haitian contredanse, and Cuban habanera (Collier 1995, Thompson 2005). Dancers experimented with mixing these dances in the outer poor barrios (areas or districts) and in the poor and high-class
bordellos of Buenos Aires through the late 1880s to music that was highly improvised (Collier et al. 1995). In the 1890s, dancers began to perform tango on stage, and musicians began to write tango scores (Collier et al. 1995). By the early 1900s, tango was still not accepted by the Argentine upper classes, but it “…was being danced at a great variety of more or less respectable venues around the city, occasionally on the stage…” (Collier 1995, 55).

The second era of tango dance’s development was from about 1910 to 1920, when the dance became the rage among the elite of London, Paris, Rome, and New York City, and the elite in Buenos Aires followed suit to embrace it as well (Cooper 1995). During this period, much of the fierce quality of the original tango dancing was quieted and replaced by a more elegant style, but the dance still challenged many of the social and cultural norms of the European elite (Cooper 1995). Tango enthusiasm waned during World War I but was revived across Western Europe and into Eastern Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, which coincided with the early years of its “Golden Age” in Argentina (Cooper 1995).

During the third era—the “Golden Age” of tango—from roughly 1920 to 1950, there was a proliferation of dance venues and an expansive evolution in tango music composition and performance (Azzi 1995). For example, Carlos Gardel, one of Argentina’s most celebrated and beloved tango musicians, performed and recorded from about 1917 until his accidental death in 1935. In the 1930s, while Argentina was adversely affected by the Depression and by political instability, tango music changed considerably under the influence of celebrated composers and performers like Juan D’Arienzo and Aníbal Carmelo Troilo (Azzi 1995). With high-quality tango music playing on most radio stations daily and huge milongas with live music most nights of the week, the 1940s marked the peak of tango’s popularity in Argentina and Uruguay (Azzi 1995).
Political turmoil and military intervention in Argentine politics became common from the 1950s through the 1970s, and as tango venues went out of business, broad public interest in tango dance fizzled out, and tango music changed dramatically from the large bands of the 1930s and 1940s to smaller ensembles that began experimenting with jazz and classical influences (Azzi 1995).

Tango dance continued to flourish and evolve within a small community of Argentines through the 1980s when it again caught the international public eye (Thompson 2005). The tango music and dance show, Tango Argentino, dazzled New York City in 1985 on Broadway, toured successfully in cities throughout the world, and “…sparked a world boom in tango instruction that nearly twenty years later, in 2005, shows no sign of abating” (Thompson 2005, 271).

Dancers now enjoy tango in cities large and small in North America, South America, Eastern and Western Europe, and Asia (Collier et al. 1995, 201-202). A quick internet search brings up hundreds of tango web sites, and based on this researcher’s experience as a member of many tango list-serves, the number of tango festivals, publications, videos, and musical recordings is expanding rapidly. In the United States alone, I know of at least 15 cities with annual or biannual tango festivals, including San Francisco, Seattle, Denver, Boulder, Chicago, Miami, Washington DC, New York City, Boston, and Providence. All of these festivals have begun since the late 1990s, some of them attract more than 400 dancers, and more festivals are added to the list every year.
Describing Argentine Tango

Argentine tango is a social pair’s dance with a lead-follow structure, meaning that a) the leader indicates with his/her body how, where, when, and at what speed the pair will move in a manner that is inspired by and consistent with the music, and b) the follower responds within a vocabulary of movement that is also inspired by and consistent with the music and that allows them to maintain their physical connection. The two essentially dance as one in a movement conversation, each doing his or her part to create a flow in response to the music and to each other. The tango embrace can be very close and intimate or open and spacious with contact on the hands, arms, shoulders, torso, and sometimes the head.

Social tango dances are called milongas and, in North American cities where I have danced, generally run for three to four hours at a time, sometimes with light refreshments. Dancers generally dance to three types of tango music (or non-tango music that they find suitable for tango dance vocabulary)—tango, tango vals, and milonga. Tango is usually played in 4/4 time and is often described as passionate, haunting, and dramatic; tango vals is played in 3/4 time and is generally regarded as romantic though no less dramatic than tango; and milonga is played in duple time, usually at a much faster pace than tango, and is considered playful, grounded, and somewhat whimsical. At milongas, dancers move in a counter-clockwise motion around the dance floor, leaders usually moving forwards (so that they can effectively navigate on the dance floor), and followers usually moving backwards. Dancers learn a code of rules and a vocabulary of movement, including walks, pivots, twisting the body, and footwork to embellish the dance, but when they actually dance tango socially, dancers improvise how this vocabulary is combined, making each dance and each moment in the dance unique. (Please see the Appendices for a partial list of common tango terms.) As tango dancers become more advanced,
they break the codes and may expand their dance vocabularies to include jumps, spins, lifts, and other movements. Generally, as one learns more difficult and complex vocabulary, tango requires very good balance, flexibility, and strength. Advanced tango vocabulary usually requires more space than is available on a crowded dance floor, so though professionals often execute advanced movements on stage, tango’s social appeal lies more in the basic vocabulary and improvised elegance of everyday dancers moving gracefully in close quarters.

Defining Key Concepts

I first discuss how I use the words physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. I then briefly discuss quantum physics as it relates to contemporary discourse on spirituality; the concepts of health/well-being, and growth, as used in this research; and, finally, how I define older adults for the purposes of this research.

With regard to the terms, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, I find them somewhat contrived and limited because what spiritual traditions have known for centuries and what medical science is beginning to prove empirically is that all four components of human experience are interwoven, connected, and interdependent. One’s physical state cannot be comprehended without seeking to also understand one’s mental and emotional states, and science is just beginning to explore the significance of one’s spiritual state in relation to one’s physical, mental, and emotional states. The terms that best describe these relationships are holism and a holistic view of a human experiences (Ai and Mackenzie 2006). In the following discussion, I use the terms holism and holistic when possible, but many authors use the terms physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual, so it is necessary to define them.
I begin with the following definitions from the Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary*: 

- **physical** meaning “of or relating to the body”;
- **mental** meaning “of or relating to intellectual as contrasted with emotional activity”;
  and,
- **emotional** meaning “of or relating to emotion,” which is defined as “the affective aspect of consciousness.”

I further define **physical** to include the structure of the body (e.g., bones, organs, and other soft tissue) and the biological systems or processes of the body (e.g., the endocrine system, the respiratory system, and the lymphatic system). I further define the **mental** realm to mean one’s thoughts and cognitive processes, like learning, remembering, problem-solving, and other intellectual responses or activities. Although mental and emotional realms are sometimes discussed together under the rubric of the **mind** (as in the holistic description of human experience as encompassing body, mind, and spirit), a number of researchers differentiate between the two and/or discuss how mental and emotional states and processes interact. Therefore, it is useful to think of them as two distinct realms of experience.

I had not intended to explore the **social** realm in this research, but it emerged from dancers’ texts and experiences both in the instrument design phase of this research and in final data collection. Two elements of the Merriam-Webster definition resonate with dancers’ texts:

- marked by or passed in pleasant companionship with one's friends or associates, and
- tending to form cooperative and interdependent relationships with others of one's kind.

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*I used the on-line version of the Merriam-Webster to access current definitions at www.m-w.com on 24 January 2006 and on 16 August 2008.*
Combining these concepts yields the definition I use in this research: the social realm encompasses spending leisure time with others for pure enjoyment and/or for personal and collective gain.

Crafting a definition of the term *spiritual* is a bit more complex and challenging because it is quite ephemeral and subjective. For example, the definition of *spiritual* in Merriam-Webster that is most relevant to this discussion is “of, relating to, consisting of, or affecting the spirit.” The dictionary lists fourteen definitions for the word, *spirit*, two of which appear relevant:

- an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms, or
- the immaterial intelligent or sentient part of a person.

I understand this portion of Merriam-Webster’s definition to mean that *spiritual* is of, relating to, consisting of, or affecting that part of us that gives life beyond the physical functioning of the body and that provides us with intelligence and self-awareness. This definition does not capture what I understand spiritual to mean in current society. At this point in my research and based on the work of contemporary authors discussed in the following section, I define *spiritual* as the part of our existence that is of the non-physical world that helps us find and create meaning; guides our behavior, beliefs, and sense of identity; and unites us with everyone and everything in the universe.

Another way to understand the spiritual realm is to explore the field of *quantum physics*, which has found empirical data to support religious and spiritual beliefs. In *The Spiritual Universe: How Quantum Physics Proves the Existence of the Soul*, Dr. Fred Alan Wolf (1996) argues that positivist research has been based on the “wrong questions”—those that try to understand our soul and consciousness solely through physical processes (26). He writes that such research can lead to a “loss of a sacred sense of life” (24). Instead, he explains that
quantum physics helps us to understand the soul as a “process involving consciousness of knowledge” (27). He writes, “The major activity of the soul is manifestation of matter and energy and the shaping of the material world by knowledge. Both manifestation of the world and the soul’s knowledge of it are tied to quantum physics principles…(27).”

In a similar vein, Dr. Amit Goswami, author of *The Self-Aware Universe: How Consciousness Creates the Material World* (1993), states that the philosophy of material realism, which has dominated science for centuries, assumes that all matter is made of atoms or particles that are real and independent of us or how we observe them (9). He writes, “The negative influence of material realism on the quality of modern human life has been staggering (11),” citing warfare, famine, spiritual confusion, and isolation as evidence. He argues instead for a philosophy of “monistic idealism.” He writes, “…instead of positing that everything (including consciousness) is made of matter; this philosophy posits that everything (including matter) exists in and is manipulated from consciousness (10).” Goswami argues that this philosophy acknowledges and validates our spiritual experiences and allows us to see the wisdom inherent in various religious traditions (11).

Goswami and Wolf view quantum physics and religious and spiritual beliefs as complementary and equally important paradigms for understanding ourselves and our universe. While their work is criticized by some, I believe that its value lies not in its incontrovertible truth but in the fact that scientists are considering, through quantum physics, how their discoveries intersect with spirituality. This dialogue marks a significant shift in human thought the bridges physical science and metaphysics through postpositivist inquiry. These scientists and others are also discovering that we have far more influence on and responsibility for the world around us than previously thought.
Having defined the terms physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual (including a brief description of recent discoveries in quantum physics), I now turn to defining health/well-being and growth. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary provides two definitions of health: 1) “the condition of being sound in body, mind, or spirit; especially freedom from physical disease or pain” or 2) “flourishing condition or well-being.” The dictionary defines well-being as “the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous.” Clearly, the terms health and well-being can be used interchangeably when discussing one’s physical, mental, and emotional states, but well-being seems to be more commonly used to describe a positive spiritual state. Therefore, I use health and well-being in discussion to mean basically the same thing—a positive state or experience. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary definition that most closely captures my use of the word growth is “progressive development.” However, I add a positive dimension to its meaning, so that, for example, mental growth refers to things like increased knowledge or skill but not the “progressive development” of Alzheimer’s disease, which is generally viewed as a negative state or experience for those involved.

Finally, I turn to defining aging, midlife, and older adults. I define aging as the process that begins in one’s early twenties once the physical process of development from child to adolescent to adult is complete. The aging process continues until one’s death, but according to Clements (2006), there are three ways to measure one’s actual age: in terms of chronology or years, in terms of physiological condition or one’s state in key biomarkers (like strength, blood pressure, and bone density), and in terms of psychology or how old one feels (223-4). One could have a chronological age of 50 years but have the biomarkers of a 45-year-old and feel 42 years old (Clements 2006). Perhaps in response to this relativity of aging, researchers who write of midlife define it not in terms of numerical age (although I would wager it falls roughly between
the ages of 38 and 48) but in terms of physical symptoms, mental changes, emotions, and/or spiritual questioning. For the purposes of my research, I defer to a description of midlife by developmental psychologist Ronald R. Irwin (2000), who writes that in midlife, one becomes aware of one’s mortality, of the aging of one’s peers and family, and of one’s own “…graying hair, wrinkles, bulging paunches, less reliable memories, and slower reaction times” (283).

Turning to a definition of older adults, Mackenzie and Rakel (2006) define old age as 65 and over (1). In their chapter, “Spiritual Well-Being and the Care of Older Adults,” Ai and Mackenzie (2006) cite 2004 United States Census Bureau statistics on citizens aged 60, 65, and older (273). For the purposes of this chapter, I define older adults as those aged 60 and older.

Intersections Among Key Concepts

A Three-dimensional Model

To illustrate the intersections among these terms (physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, quantum physics, health/well-being, growth, aging, midlife, and older adults) and how I imagine them relating to each other in this literature review and in my research, I invite the reader to envision a three-dimensional model. Imagine a sphere, somewhat like a star in the galaxy, that is made of energy and light. It has two parts. The outside layer is made of the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual states of a human being seen as streaks of color that intertwine and move constantly on the outside of the sphere. The inside is made of 1) the fluctuating health/well-being and 2) the processes of growth (or lack thereof) that impact the level of health/well-being. The fluctuating health/well-being looks like a fire in the center of the sphere that links to each streak of color on the outside, and the processes of growth are the fuel that feeds the fire. The more the fire is fueled with growth, the more health/well-being there is
and the more energy, motion, and intensity in the outside streaks of color. The more the fire dies out, the more drab and motionless the streaks become.

For the purposes of this research model, two factors fuel or dampen the fire inside of the sphere, thereby affecting the streaks of color. These two elements are time (or aging) and dance. Time/aging is a given, so the sphere (the person) cannot opt out of it. We are still discovering how time/aging affects the sphere, but we believe that it affects each streak of color differently. For example, it makes the physical streak less animated over time and may make the spiritual streak more animated through the wisdom and experience that come with time/aging.

We know even less about how dance affects the sphere, but unlike time/aging, dance is an activity that the sphere (the person) chooses to engage in, which may engender a sense of agency or purpose, which may in turn fuel the fire. More specifically, some researchers have found evidence that dance may slow the negative effects of time on the physical streak while fueling the fire that feeds the mental and emotional streaks (McKinley et al. 2008, Vorghese et al. 2003).

Following is a description of existing research and literature that I have located (to date) on the relationships between time/aging, dance, and the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual components of human beings. I will periodically revisit this image of a colorful sphere with a fire at its core that feeds exterior streaks of light to illustrate relationships and connections among these key concepts.

Aging, Dance, and Adult Health/Well-being

Research has shown that as humans age, most physical and mental capacities decline steadily (Chodzko-Zajko 1993, Kastenbaum 1993, Torrance and Goff 1993). Adults who
include regular physical exercise in their daily lives can reduce and postpone this decline and are
much more likely to maintain optimal emotional, mental, and physical health (Chodzko-Zajko
1993, Leslie 1989). With regard to the specific benefits of dance, Cynthia Ensign writes in
“Dance for the Older Adult” (1989) that there are more than thirty potential benefits of dance for
people of all ages, including improvements in physical, psychological, and social health and
well-being.*

Two recent research studies have found that dance improves older adults’ physical,
mental, and emotional health. In a study of 469 subjects older than 75 years of age, Joe
Vorghese, M.D., and his colleagues at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine found that those
who were most frequently engaged in leisure activities, like chess or crossword puzzles, had a 63
percent lower risk of development dementia compared with subjects who said they barely did
these activities (Vorghese et al. 2003). In the study, dancing† was the only regular physical
activity associated with a significant decrease in the incidence of dementia, including
(2003) about the study, “among the participants in the Vorghese study, those who danced
frequently—three or four times a week—showed 76 percent less incidence of dementia than

* Cynthia Ensign (1989) lists the following possible benefits of dance for people of all ages. “Physical:
  improved flexibility, muscle strength, and endurance; improved cardiovascular-respiratory endurance; improved
  balance, coordination, and kinesthetic awareness; improved alignment; increased bone mineral content; decreased
  arthritis difficulties, insomnia, neuromuscular hypertension, stress-related diseases, and low back pain.
  Psychological: increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and stability; increased sense of achievement and acceptance
  by others; increased expression of feelings and recognition of creative abilities; decreased depression. Social:
  Decreased isolation, loneliness, and boredom; increased sharing and support; increased tactile contact, cooperation,
  and enjoyment” (221).

† Upon reading Vorghese’s original article published in the New England Journal of Medicine, I could not
find a description of the specific dance forms in which subjects participated. However, given that subjects were
aged 75 or older, it is likely that choices would have included swing, ballroom, and other forms of social pairs dance
that were popular in the 1940s and 1950s. During those decades, subjects who are now in their mid-70s would have
been in their teens and twenties at a time when learning social pairs dances was a central component of young adult
culture.
those who danced only once a week or not at all” (2). In an interview with Noguchi (2003), Vorghese stated, “Dance is not purely physical in many ways, it also requires a lot of mental effort” (2). Though some researchers question whether people drawn to dance already have characteristics that make them less prone to dementia, other researchers are convinced that the key to dance’s effectiveness is that it is physically demanding, mentally challenging, and creates emotional support networks through direct contact among dancers (Noguchi 2003, Feinmann 2004).

The second recent research study to link dance with health for seniors was conducted by Patricia McKinley, Ph.D. (2008). More than one-third of the elderly population in the United States experiences a fall each year, and, for older adults, falls are a leading cause of death (Society for Neuroscience 2005, 3). For her study, McKinley (2008) recruited 30 seniors, aged 62 to 90, who were healthy but had either fallen in the last year or were afraid of falling. Subjects’ motor and cognitive skills were evaluated before and after the study in which they were randomly assigned to either a walking group or a tango dancing group. Both groups met for two hours twice a week for ten weeks, and “…across the board, the tango group showed more improvement in all measures,” said McKinley (Lewis 2006). Though the walkers reported reduced loneliness because they were able to talk with each other rather than focus on dance steps, the tango dancers “…showed improvement in balance, posture and motor coordination, as well as cognitive gains” (Society for Neuroscience 2005, 3). The tango dancers also did significantly better at “…performing a complex cognitive task while walking, at standing on one foot, and at turning in confined spaces” (Society for Neuroscience 2005, 3). In addition, the tango dancers were less likely to drop out, and 66 percent of them were still dancing tango a year later (McKinley et al. 2008). McKinley is aware that more studies need to be conducted with
larger numbers of subjects and control groups, but she is convinced of tango’s unique potential to offer health benefits to older adults (Lewis 2006). In an interview with Ricki Lewis, McKinley stated,

It is very complicated, like a game for 4 legs and 2 people. Tempo can vary. You have to learn a series of complex steps but improvise the order, going around the dance floor not knowing what the person in front of you is doing. Tango dancing is an ideal leisure activity because it satisfies the basic requirements for exercise adherence: it’s fun, it’s a group activity, and it has a tangible goal that can be perceived not only by the dancer, but by family and friends. (Lewis 2006)

McKinley is not only speaking of dancing tango as a means for achieving health/well-being but also as a tool for physical, mental, and emotional growth. From the perspective of the three-dimensional model of this literature review, subjects learned new skills that fueled their internal fires that supported health/well-being in many of their multi-colored streams of experience. Both of McKinley et al.’s (2008) and Vorghese et al.’s (2003) research indicates that dance in general has the potential to contribute fuel to the fire, and McKinley et al.’s (2008) study focused specifically on tango’s positive benefits. However, this literature review also reveals two significant gaps in the research. I have yet to identify studies on how social pairs dancing affects adult dancers of many ages physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. Nor have I located any research on how these dances affect dancers’ spiritual well-being or growth. However, I have located three popular publications that link tango and spirituality directly or metaphorically.

In his concise, pocket-sized booklet, Tango Zen: Walking Dance Meditation, Chan Park (2004) draws parallels between tango and the teachings of Zen Buddhism. Park writes that “Zen is a Buddhist meditation technique designed to free one’s mind from slavery to reason and logic” (15), and his book discusses how to make one’s dancing a meditative practice. Park writes that
meditation allows one to connect with one’s true nature; that it is only possible if one is completely in the present. If one meditates while dancing tango, one can experience “…deeper appreciation of physical, emotional, and even spiritual aspects of inner-self” (11). He provides a series of chapters and exercises that link Zen Buddhist meditation concepts to tango, including: being completely in the present; experiencing oneness by transcending feelings of separation from one’s partner; using music to connect body and mind; releasing self-consciousness and self-criticism; letting go; and beginner’s mind. Like the research studies by McKinley et al. (2008) and Vorghese et al. (2003), Park’s (2004) booklet presents tango (combined with meditation) as a means of maintaining health/well-being and a tool for growth.

In The Tao of Tango, Johanna Siegmann (2000) presents her personal experiences of applying Taoist philosophy with regard to yang (masculine) and yin (feminine) energies to learning to dance tango. Alternating between philosophical discussion and confessional tales, Siegmann explores how, in tango and in life, one must understand, accept, and balance one’s masculine qualities and one’s feminine qualities in order to find true happiness and to dance well through life. Siegmann’s book is another piece of popular writing that links tango with an Eastern religious tradition in order to deepen readers’ understanding of tango, life, and how the two may complement each other. Like Park (2004), Siegmann (2000) offers a “how-to” manual for using tango to increase health/well-being and personal growth. Siegmann (2000) also offers an interesting paradigm for comparing and contrasting men’s and women’s experiences of tango.

Moving from tango as it is danced to tango as a metaphor, in Dancing with God: Anglican Christianity and the Practice of Hope, Jay Emerson Johnson (2005) uses dance metaphorically to explore one’s relationship with God and tango metaphorically to explore the nature of that relationship. He relates the practice of learning to dance with a partner to the
practice of learning to dance with one’s understanding of the divine. Though Johnson’s understanding of tango appears rudimentary (he does not distinguish between ballroom and Argentine tango, which differ vastly in history and technique), he joins Park (2004) and Siegmann (2000) in acknowledging the spiritual nature of tango; yet he uses the paradigm of a Western religious tradition.

A handful of research studies have indicated that dancing in general (Leslie 1989, Vorghese et al. 2003) and tango in particular (McKinley et al. 2008) can contribute positively to the physical, mental, and emotional health/well-being of older adults, helping them to grow and to reduce their likelihood of developing dementia. An equally small number of books in popular literature oriented to adult dancers of all ages have explored the use of Eastern religious paradigms to enhance both one’s tango dancing and one’s physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health/well-being (Park 2004, Siegmann 2000). Taken together, the gaps in this literature indicate that there is far more to be learned through formal research about the intersections between tango, health/well-being, growth, and aging. Further research is needed on how tango affects adult dancers of many ages and how dancers’ religious or spiritual beliefs intersect with their experiences of the dance. I turn to now to current scholarly discourse on religion, spirituality, health/well-being, growth and their links to the physical, mental, and emotional realms.

**Spirituality and Health/Well-being and Growth**

I first find it useful to review recent scholarly discourse on definitions of the words *religion, spirituality, spiritual well-being and spiritual growth*. There are many religious traditions in the world, but scholars have found that on a broad scale, religions share identifiable
characteristics. Medical scholars Koenig, George, and Larson (2001) state that *religion* is “…an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals, and symbols designed (a) to facilitate closeness to the sacred or transcendent God, higher power, or ultimate truth/reality and (b) to foster an understanding of one’s relationship and responsibility to others living together in a community,” (18). Ai (a social worker) and Mackenzie (a medical scholar) (2006) contribute the idea that while religions generally espouse building a relationship with “…something beyond [oneself], often infinite or transcendent” (272), the object of this relationship can be many things, including “God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Mother Earth, a supreme being or creator, community, environment, nature, or the cosmos” (272).

By contrast, *spirituality* subsumes religion in that spiritual questioning was part of human experience long before religions existed (Ai and Mackenzie 2006, Elkins et al. 1988). I would add that *spirituality* is also at the heart of what *religions* are designed to foster. Jewell (1999) (a pastor) defines spirituality as “the recovery of our lost humanity” (9) or “the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness” (10). Returning to the literature of medical scholars, Koenig, George, and Larson (2001) state that spirituality is “…the personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent, which may (or may not) lead to or arise from the development of religious rituals and the formation of community,” (18). To varying degrees in these definitions, I hear both inward and outward foci—inward as one seeks to understand and love the self and to create personal meaning for one’s life, and outward as one seeks to interact with and/or contribute to other people, the environment, and a metaphysical presence or power.
The primary difference between the terms *religion* and *spirituality* seems to be the presence of an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals, and symbols in religion and the lack thereof in spirituality. As with anything that human beings touch, these organized systems may be put to positive or to destructive use. Many wars have been fought and are still being fought over religious differences, and scholars like Miller (2000), Ai and Mackenzie (2006), and others strive to heal and transcend these conflicts by discussing spirituality in a language that is respectful and inclusive of the myriad religions of humanity and that emphasizes our commonalities.

Moving to two definitions central to this new language of spirituality, Ai and Mackenzie (2006) define *spiritual well-being* as an aspect of one’s quality of life and *spiritual growth* as a process of moving toward spiritual well-being (276). More specifically, Ai (2000) wrote that *spiritual well-being*:

“…lies at the very core of one’s life-span journey with respect to ultimate concern about the meaning of life and a need for wholeness, transcendence, or enlightenment. Achieving [spiritual well-being] implies a sense of harmony, inner freedom, and peace in relationship to such infinite entity as God, community, nature, the environment, or the cosmos (8).

Questions may arise for the reader about similarities and differences between *spiritual* well-being and *psychological* well-being or normative development. Ai and Mackenzie (2006) compare and contrast these terms at length, but for the purposes of this discussion, I summarize their ideas as follows. First, the two realms have different orientations—psychological development is most commonly concerned with individual maturity, identity, personality, and mastery of skills (Ai and Mackenzie 2006). Though scholars like Maslow (1970) and Jung (1933) included spirituality in their theories of adult development, they were in the minority until quite recently in the field of developmental psychology (Miller 2000). Second, spiritual growth
does not follow biological changes the way psychological growth is theorized to do—spiritual
growth can increase or decrease at any point in one’s adolescent or adult life (Ai and Mackenzie
2006). Finally, spiritual growth does not depend upon reaching specified levels of ability,
knowledge, or achievement, whereas psychological growth is usually dependent on previous
growth stages (Ai and Mackenzie 2006).

Despite these differences—or perhaps because of them (i.e., scholars’ realization that the
spiritual realm is a pivotal yet largely unknown realm of human experience)—spirituality is now
being included more readily into psychological research and practice than ever before. Miller
(2000) decries the historical reluctance of the social sciences in general and psychology in
particular to include religion and spirituality in research, stating that in our complex and highly
 technological society, understanding and cultivating these aspects of humanity are increasingly
important. Only since the early 1990s have organizations like the American Psychological
Association supported and promoted research on religion and spirituality, but the number of such
studies is on the rise (Miller 2000, Niño 2000). In addition, private organizations like the John
E. Fetzer Institute have recently funded development of religion and spirituality instruments of
measurement for use in health research (Fetzer Institute 2003).

In the field of humanistic psychology, in particular, Elkins et al. (1988) reviewed the
work of ten prominent writers, including Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, John Dewey, and Erick
Fromm, who had published between the years of 1923 and 1971. These writers “had approached
spirituality from a more phenomenological perspective” (Elkins et al. 1988, 9), and though none
had provided a clear definition of spirituality, there was enough overlap among writers’ concepts
of spirituality for Elkins et al. to create a list of nine major components of spirituality and to
devise instruments for measuring individuals’ spiritual lives. Elkins et al. and others in the
1980s (e.g., Ellison 1983) were among the first to synthesize nearly fifty years of work on spirituality within the field of psychology, providing a foundation for subsequent research. (I refer the reader to the Appendices to view “Elements of Spirituality,” which is my own synthesis of the components of spirituality from three sources: Elkins et al. (1988), Underwood (2003), and my own research with tango dancers.)

Along with this increase in research on spirituality has come a call for a comprehensive theory of human spiritual development distinct from theories of psychological development (Ai and Mackenzie 2006, Irwin 2002, Mustakova-Possardt 2000, Sinnot 2000). Sinnot (2000) (a cognitive life-span developmental psychologist) states that spirituality and quantum physics pose significant challenges to research in her field because they both raise thorny issues of how to study and describe the unknowable and how to reconcile cognitive science with recent physics discoveries about the subjective nature of reality. In response to these challenges, Sinnot (2000) moves toward a theory of spiritual development with her concept of Postformal Complex Thought as the final stage in human psychological development. In this stage, one is capable of accepting or holding paradoxes and contradictions within oneself and between oneself and others. Postformal Complex Thought, writes Sinnot (2000), “…permits the individual to balance, to orchestrate, the physical and mental elements of the self with the element of spirituality” because we have many ways of knowing—with our bodies, minds, emotions, and spirits—that may sometimes be in conflict (186). For example, upon feeling sexually attracted to someone who is not our spouse of ten years, we may experience a wide range of conflicting physical sensations, thoughts, and feelings. Sinnot states, “Postformal Thought…could allow the mature spiritual thinker to know that he or she is operating by two or more mutually contradictory but simultaneous logics while that thinker is experiencing higher awareness”
In the case of attraction to someone, I understand her theory to mean that one’s higher or spiritual awareness could allow one to witness contradictory thoughts without judging or taking action. One could be present to the experience and either allow it to shift of its own accord or deliberately ask how one’s conflicting experiences might be an opportunity for growth or enlightenment, perhaps an invitation not to infidelity but to learning more about oneself, one’s partner, one’s marriage, or one’s way of being in the world.

Irwin (a developmental psychologist) presents another theory of spiritual development in his book, *Human Development and Spiritual Life: How Consciousness Grows toward Transformation* (2002). He writes that spiritual development is normal, optimal, and natural as humans age and that it represents a higher or more evolved state of adult development. Irwin states, “…many researchers have posited social or ego or self development as the underlying structure that accounts for the many changes in behavior, thinking, and feeling that occur over the life span” (5). While these theories have relied heavily on socialization as a central force in adult development, Irwin proposes that if consciousness were the underlying structure that developed over the life span, new theories of development would emerge that do not “…posit autonomy, will, or rational self-regulation as the highest achievement of development” (6). Rather than allowing the ego to filter and drive our experience, we would transcend it to achieve a state of “…openness, and receptivity to inner realities and depths” (Irwin 2002, 7). In Irwin’s words, “[consciousness] is a letting go, a surrendering, that leads to a nonattached acceptance of things as they are” (7). In Irwin’s (2000, 2002) theory of spiritual development through higher levels of consciousness, I find a potential paradigm for understanding tango’s invitation to dancers to transcend the ego, to connect to each other and to the music, and to learn about their own inner experiences. Similarly, Sinnott’s (2000) theory of Postformal Complex Thought could
offer useful ways of understanding how tango dancers’ manage complex and perhaps conflicting physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual experiences.

A final element of recent scholarly discourse on spirituality that is relevant to understanding tango dancers’ experiences is spirituality’s connection to physical, mental, emotional, and social health/well-being and growth, particularly as adults age. In preliminary research on the Philadelphia tango community, I found that the average age of dancers was approximately 50, the largest group comprised those in their 40’s, and the second largest group consisted of those in their 50’s. Tango’s appeal for people of all ages, but particularly for people in midlife and later, raises intriguing questions about the intersections of tango, spirituality, health/well-being, and aging.

Scholars have found that as people age, they place more value on finding or creating spiritual meaning (Ai & Mackenzie 2006, Irwin 2002, Jewell 1999). Loss and mortality invite one to ask existential questions about life’s meaning, to reconcile the past, and to seek integrity or wholeness on a spiritual rather than a material level. For example, Irwin (2000) writes that midlife “…is a crisis of ego, of the breakdown of the ego, and how eventually it can be an evolution into egolessness” (287), a process that many seek to navigate and understand through spiritual growth. Ai and Mackenzie (2006) write that aging, loss of abilities, awareness of mortality, loss of autonomy, and other changes may act as negative stressors that cause older adults to “…reconstruct a new sense of the meaning of life in the presence of adversity or diminished capacity” (276). This process of reconstructing new meaning from a spiritual perspective may take place at any point in one’s life, but it often increases as one ages (Ai & Mackenzie 2006; Irwin 2000, 2002; Jewell 1999).
Ai and Mackenzie (2006) provide a concise literature review of recent research on how religion and spirituality aid older adults’ health. According to their summary, research has shown that through religion, older adults “…experienced new meanings of life, gratitude for being alive, strengthened faith, and growing peace and encouragement” (278) and that “religious involvement facilitates health practices or lifestyle in terms of higher levels of physical activities, less alcohol use, and less smoking” (279). They also state that research shows that spirituality helps subjects “fend off self-blame and prevent desperation,…give up obsessive striving to control an uncontrollable situation,…[and that it] reduce[s] frustration and restore[s] hope” (279).

Meditation is a form of spiritual practice that offers unique health benefits to those in midlife and to the elderly. In “Meditation and the Evolution of Consciousness,” Irwin (2000) writes that through meditation, people at midlife can learn to let go of identification with the limited ego and its attachments and aversions to what it encounters. Meditation teaches one to cultivate the inner witness, to let go of judgment, to accept oneself, to accept pervasive impermanence, and to allow for “…an openness to the phenomenal world and to others, an openness that is both fearless and tender” (297). Through meditation, one can mitigate and transcend one’s anxieties, fears, and ego-driven reactivity to midlife angst (Irwin 2000). Tolle, author of The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment (1999), writes that future and past are constructs of the mind and that the only way to find lasting peace and happiness is to allow oneself to live fully in the present—in the Now. He would agree with Irwin (2000) that meditation is a key means to achieving this state by learning to witness the mind and to find the stillness between one’s thoughts.
In “Meditation and Healthy Aging,” Yuen and Baime (2006) review clinical and anecdotal evidence of the health benefits of meditation. For example, they describe a study that found favorable outcomes in the “behavioral and physiological dimensions” of meditation for nursing home residents (245). They write that practitioners of meditation consistently report that meditating leads to feelings of relaxation, psychological balance, and emotional stability; “enhances psychological insight or understanding” (245); and can provide “enhancement of autonomy and freedom from unhealthy patterns of behavior” (246). Yuen and Baime also review empirical evidence of meditation’s positive implications for psychotherapy, for giving spiritual and emotional support to elders and caregivers, for coping with pain and fibromyalgia, for treating hypertension and cardiovascular disease, and for treating and coping with cancer (246-251). They conclude, “Elders and their caregivers may be able to benefit from the stress reduction and physical benefits of meditation, as well as its ability to support life changes and losses” (255).

Conclusion

Clearly, meditation and other forms of spiritual and/or relaxation practices can have positive impacts on one’s physical, mental, emotional, and social health, particularly as one ages. In addition, the aging process may inspire individuals to develop their spirituality precisely because of the issues aging raises about mortality, the meaning of life, and one’s place in the world. The fields of psychology, developmental psychology, gerontology, theology, and medicine have made great strides in the last fifteen years in understanding the links between aging, spirituality, health/well-being, and growth, but there are still large gaps in the research on how and why these connections exist. With regard to dance, recent research has shown that
dance, in general, and tango, in particular, offer positive physical, mental, emotional, and social benefits to older people. Though popular literature has made connections between spirituality and tango, no formal research exists exploring this phenomenon or how it relates to other aspects of health/well-being and growth. In my research, I hope to make headway in understanding whether and how dancers may use tango as a tool for spiritual growth to fuel the fire that feeds all five of the realms of human existence—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual.
CHAPTER 4
TANGO THROUGH TIME: THE HISTORY OF ARGENTINE TANGO
IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA

Introduction

Argentine tango’s popularity is surging worldwide. Since the mid-1980s, tango communities in cities around the world have grown from a few dancers to thousands of devotees. While the community in Philadelphia has not grown as quickly nor to quite the size as in some other cities, it has enjoyed a steady increase in participants and activities that merits exploration. The first stage performance and workshop offered by visiting tango professionals took place in 1986, the first weekly classes offered by local instructors began in 1991, and the first weekly milonga (social tango dance) was held in 1993. The community grew from a handful of students in 1986 to approximately 400 in 2007* and a “Tango Philadelphia”† email list of nearly 1000. This chapter addresses the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area and forces that have shaped its development. Within this topic lies the research subquestion of what roles

* To estimate the number of tango dancers in the Philadelphia area, I collaborated with event organizers Jackie Stahl, Lesley Mitchell, Kelly Ray, David Walter, Michele Berrios, and Carlos Douris on the weekend of March 2 to 4, 2007 to compare attendance sheets for four milongas that took place on that particular weekend. I took attendance at Ray and Mitchell’s Friday night milonga; dancers Robert Connaire, Jorge Laico, and I took attendance at Milonga Nueva on Saturday night; Walter and Berrios took attendance at Tango Café on Sunday afternoon; and Douris took attendance at the Collegeville milonga, also on Sunday afternoon. Using database software to enter individual names and which milongas they attended, we found that 216 individuals attended local milongas that weekend. We then added names from attendance sheets from Tango Café on March 25, 2007 and from Tango Brunch on February 11 and March 11, 2007, finding that 81 people attended these milongas who had not attended the milongas on March 2 to 4. Given that we did not include names from three other milongas in March (Tango Hop, FunTango, and Heart2Heart), we estimate that 80 more names could be added, bringing the total approximate number of active local tango dancers to 377. Because dancers occasionally skip a month or two of milongas due to work or personal obligations, we estimated the number of active dancers in early 2007 at 400.

† “Tango Philadelphia” is the name of a comprehensive community website run by tango dancer Michael VanBuskirk located at www.tangophiladelphia.com. Visitors to the site provide their email addresses if they wish to receive notices about local tango activities. The website is described in more detail later in this chapter.
particular instructors, event organizers, regular events, and special events have played in this history.

By collecting data for this chapter through questionnaires, I used primarily *self-reported* information from 25 instructors and event organizers. I do not present an irrefutable portrait of the history of tango in the Philadelphia area. Rather, I present a portrait of participants’ records and perceptions of what happened, which I compare and contrast with other primary source data when available, like newspaper articles and event flyers. Throughout the chapter, when a specific source is not cited, data has come from the questionnaires and from my direct follow-up contact with instructors/organizers.

I found the tango activities and the people who offered them to be inextricably connected. It was impossible to write about local activities without also describing the unique backgrounds of their creators—from Lesley Mitchell and Kelly Ray, who specialize at building community through dance and offer a pot-luck dinner/milonga so that dancers may enjoy lengthy conversations, to Michele Berrios and David Walter, who value cultural education and who profile tango musicians at each of their milongas. Through these and many more milongas, classes, prácticas, and workshops, instructors/organizers have not only offered opportunities for dancers to learn and enjoy tango, but have also given tango in Philadelphia its unique character. It is known for dancers’ friendliness and warmth. Understanding how the people and activities have shaped the community has inherent value within the contexts of dance research and dance history, and this information provides a necessary foundation for exploring dancers’ experiences of tango in the Philadelphia area discussed in later chapters.
The first section traces the inspiration, inception, and growth of tango in the Philadelphia area in chronological order from 1986 to 2006.* It begins with key tango performances that inspired public interest in the dance and introduces local instructors/organizers by name as they became active in the community, including brief descriptions of their dance backgrounds and tango activities. Discussion explores weekly and monthly milongas that have played a pivotal role in the community’s vibrancy and growth, as well as many of the one-time events for which data was available. Readers interested in what took place when, where, how, and by whom will appreciate the copious detail offered in this section. While discussion centers around themes that emerged in the behavior of instructors/organizers and dancers, there is an emphasis on documenting the details. I felt strongly that this information should be recorded. Readers desiring less detail may prefer to read the “Summary of Chronological History” on page 143 and to focus their attention on the second section, which discusses trends from 1991 to 2006.† The chapter’s conclusion revisits the original research questions, reviews forces and trends within the community’s history, and identifies emergent questions addressed in subsequent chapters.

A Chronological History

The Inspiration

In 1983, Argentine artists Claudio Segovia and Hector Orezzoli created and directed Tango Argentino, a full-scale performance of dance and music tracing the history of Argentine

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*I chose 1986 as the beginning point because, in that year in Philadelphia, the first major tango show played and the first instructional tango workshop was offered. I chose the end-point of December 2006 because I collected the majority of historical data for this chapter in the fall of 2006 and needed a stopping point to make the quantity of data manageable. The community has continued to grow and thrive beyond 2006.

† This section begins in 1991 because, in that year, the first weekly tango class began in Philadelphia, providing local residents with consistent opportunities to study tango.
tango (Goldner 1986, Lucas 1986). The show engaged “thirty-three of the finest tango singers, musicians, and dancers” in Argentina (Thompson 2005, 265). A full orchestra and two vocalists provided a musical tapestry against which eight couples of diverse ages skillfully danced milonga, tango vals, and tango with passion and elegance (Heller 1986, Thompson 2005).

In 1985, the show impressed sold-out audiences in Paris, Venice, Bologna, Milan, Rome, and New York City, inspiring what art historian Robert Farris Thompson calls, “…the strongest tango renaissance of the twentieth century” (2005, 4). On its 1986 tour through the United States, Tango Argentino sparked “tango fever” in Boston, Chicago, Washington DC, Los Angeles, and San Diego, inspiring classes and milongas as people lined up to learn the dance (Heller 1986). Critics found it electric, playful, provocative, vivacious, and sultry (Goldner 1986, Heller 1986, Webster 1986). When Tango Argentino finally played for two weeks at the Forrest Theater in Philadelphia in late November of 1986, Karen Heller of the Philadelphia Inquirer mused about whether Philadelphia were tough enough not to be “felled with tango fever” (Heller 1986, D1). Philadelphia was not, and, in fact, it had caught the fever about ten months earlier.

Entrepreneurship and Altruism Launch Local Tango – 1986 to 1996

Argentine tango first arrived in Philadelphia in January of 1986 when Elsa María and Héctor Mayoral, two stars from Tango Argentino, gave a class to dancers* at the Academy of

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* O’Reilly’s article states that class attendees were local dance instructors, but Lesley Mitchell (a visual artist and avid folk and Polish dancer at the time who has since become a local tango instructor, milonga host, and tango performer), who attended the class and knew many of the attendees personally, recalls that they were people from local swing, Polish, vintage, and other social dance communities. She recalls that few dance instructors attended the class.
Social Dancing on Samson Street (O’Reilly 1986). Academy owner and ballroom dancer Don Celia wanted to begin offering Argentine tango because people had begun to request it more than any other dance form (O’Reilly 1986). About a dozen attendees learned some Argentine tango and explored the marked differences between it and ballroom tango (O’Reilly 1986).† One reporter summarized these differences by writing, “…the Argentine tango—the original—is to the North American version what the Siberian tiger is to the ordinary house cat” (Nelson 1986). According to local tango instructor, performer, and event organizer Lesley Mitchell, Celia continued to offer tango classes at the academy and organized tours to Buenos Aires for his students. Since Celia’s retirement, owner and director Charles Danza has continued to run the tango program. i

Among the dance instructors who attended the Mayorals’ class in January was Kelly Ray, a doctoral student in physics, who studied and taught ballroom and other social dances as an avocation. Ray had begun to learn tango in Berlin and Cologne, West Germany, in 1980 but could find few opportunities to study it in Philadelphia. In the mid-1980s, Ray and Mitchell began traveling together to study tango. They studied at Stanford University at the first tango festival in the United States, which was organized by Richard Powers, and they attended workshops in New York, Chicago, Miami, and cities in the Midwestern United States. In 1991, they began offering four-week series of tango workshops at the University City Arts League.

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* During Tango Argentino’s run in Philadelphia in November of 1986, the Mayorals again helped inspire interest in tango by giving a special exhibition on November 23 at the International House (Knight 1986), and local dancers mentioned that the Mayorals taught workshops in November of 1986 as well, although I have yet to find articles or flyers that corroborate the occurrence of these workshops.

† Again, O’Reilly’s (1996) account differs from Mitchell’s. O’Reilly quotes Héctor Mayoral, who emphasized the importance of leading and following in tango as opposed to learning steps (1996). However, Mitchell recalls that they learned show steps (i.e., steps used in performance, not socially) that she still remembers, but they learned nothing about the technique or fundamentals of tango. While the exact content of the workshop is unclear, it is clear that the workshop was a notable event in the early history of tango in Philadelphia given that it merited a feature article in the Philadelphia Inquirer and that Mitchell still remembers it more than ten years later.
(UCAL) in West Philadelphia. In reflecting on those early workshops, Ray noted that they were heavily influenced by “stage tango,” which is distinct from “social tango.” He said,

> Overall it was much more pattern-oriented than we have come to teach, since we were influenced more by stage dancers early (more emphasis on choreography), and then later by social dancers (more emphasis on improvisation, musicality, individual expression, dancing with feeling).

Given the interest in tango spawned by *Tango Argentino* and the fact that many classes were taught by stars from that show, it is no wonder that early tango instruction as taught by Ray and Mitchell focused more heavily on tango for the stage than tango for dancing socially at milongas. Mitchell commented that this was not their intention, but that it was how they began teaching.

Ray and Mitchell brought many years of dance experience to their tango teaching, having studied, taught, and/or performed swing, ballroom, Latin, folk, Polish dance, improvisation, ballet, modern dance, African dance, and other dance forms. In the 1970s, Mitchell had been a leader in international folk dance in the Princeton area, and beginning in 1980, she had been a leader in Polish character dance and folk dance in Philadelphia. In both communities, she had pioneered many activities to promote building community through dance. For example, she was instrumental in organizing a number of pot-luck dinners and large folk dances with opportunities for socializing before and afterwards, primarily in Princeton, NJ. She also directed a Polish dance group and organized Polish dance workshops, special events, New Year’s celebrations, and performances in local schools. Mitchell has served on the board of the Philadelphia Swing Dance Society since 1996 and regularly helps to organize and promote swing dance activities in the area.* Ray had begun studying ballroom, salsa, and swing dancing in 1973, began teaching ballroom and swing (also called “club dancing” at the time) in 1983, and had been a coach for

* One may learn more about the Philadelphia Swing Dance Society at www.swingdance.org.
competitive ballroom dancers. He taught dance at many local universities and colleges while doing his graduate work in physics. Ray and Mitchell met through folk dancing and soon teamed up to teach dance and organize local events.

In the mid-1990s, Ray and Mitchell made teaching dance and hosting dance events (with a heavy focus on tango) their primary sources of income, and in 2002 they launched their business web site called “Dance Philadelphia.”* Since then, they have taught group and private classes at UCAL, at their in-home studio at 1315 Buttonwood Street in the heart of Philadelphia, at other locations in Philadelphia, and in nearby cities, like Princeton, New Jersey, where Mitchell has taught dance at Princeton University since 1999.

In 1993, Ray and Mitchell began the first weekly milonga in the Philadelphia area at UCAL called, “Lesley and Kelly’s Friday Night Milonga” for the modest entrance fee of $5, which is still a weekly event and includes light refreshments, a free 20-minute lesson, and mostly traditional music and dancing from 9:30 pm to 1:00 am. At the beginning, attendance was sparse with sometimes as few as six dancers, but by the late 1990s, average attendance had increased to 35 and the cost to $8 ($6 for full-time students). In December of 2006, attendance had increased to an average of 55 dancers, and the cost had increased to $10 ($8 for full-time students). It is the longest-running milonga in Philadelphia and, some believe, has the feel of a milonga in Buenos Aires. It takes place on the second floor of a traditional West Philadelphia twin building with high ceilings, wooden floors, and tall windows. Dancers talk, don tango shoes, and enjoy refreshments in the front room, and they dance in the back room, which is approximately 12 by 20 feet with a wall of mirrors on one side and chairs and small tables along bay windows on the

* One may learn more about Ray and Mitchell at www.dancephiladelphia.com.
other. It is an intimate, small space for dancing, so most couples dance in close embrace, and
good “floorcraft” among leaders is essential.*

Ray and Mitchell regularly spice up the Friday milonga with themes, like Carnaval in
February, costumes at Halloween, and black tie at New Year’s, but my favorite was the first
piropo contest in 2004. Spanish for compliment, a piropo is an exaggerated yet clever or poetic
compliment that a man usually gives a woman out in public or at a milonga. Of course, in
Philadelphia, women give piropos to men, too, so the number of entries in the contest was
impressive—about 80 in both English and Spanish. There were many piropos of honorable
mention, but the one that stands out in my memory was by local dancer Linda Alila. She earned
a prize for “If your arms were a prison, I’d gladly serve life.”ii

Ray and Mitchell also invite professional and amateur tango dancers and musicians to
perform at the Friday milonga, including international artists traveling through Philadelphia with
shows and local artists wanting to share their enthusiasm with the community. Dance performers
have been too numerous to mention. Musicians have included bandoneonist Hector Tito Castro
and guitarist Francisco Pancho Navarro; opera singer San-ky Kim and violinist Irina Schuck;
pianist Maria Bucco and cellist Miguel Rojas; accordionist Lidia Kaminska and her quartet,
“Tanto Tango”; violinist Oscar Borquez; and the home-spun local amateur tango group,
“Bandosa Floja.”†

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* Briefly, “close embrace” is like dancing in a constant hug and allows a couple to take up the least space
possible on the dance floor. “Floorcraft” is navigating successfully around the dance floor without bumping into
others or disturbing the flow of couples moving in a circle counterclockwise around the room. I discuss both
concepts in more length in Chapters 6 and 7.

† I attended the milongas at which these musicians performed. According to Ray, bandoneonist Juan Prado
and a Philadelphia-based tango duet (or trio, Ray was not sure) played at their milongas in the 1990s and also at the
International House in Philadelphia during a tango dance performance by Ray and Mitchell. I was not able to
confirm these accounts through other primary or secondary sources.
As of December 2006, Ray and Mitchell continued to be significant leaders in the local tango community, giving performances and demonstrations in the area and playing key roles in many local events and activities designed to maintain, enrich, and build the community.

In the activities of Celia, Ray, and Mitchell, I find evidence of the first theme in the development of tango in the Philadelphia area—entrepreneurship. Professor Elfren S. Cruz of De La Salle University’s Graduate School of Business writes that entrepreneurs share a number of key characteristics (Cruz 2006). They are innovative and creative, they are risk-takers, and they are able to recognize opportunities, take action, and coordinate resources (Cruz 2006). I view Celia, Ray, Mitchell, and all other local instructors and event organizers as entrepreneurs, having used their own creativity, initiative, and resourcefulness to launch tango workshops, classes, and events in the Philadelphia area. Celia had already demonstrated entrepreneurial skill in establishing his dance studio by the time he hosted the first tango workshop and began offering tango classes to students. Ray and Mitchell began offering tango instruction and events as an avocation and soon turned these and other dance activities into their primary vocation, taking responsibility for the financial risks inherent in a dance business. Celia, Ray, and Mitchell recognized public interest in tango, used their resources to create tango classes and events, and bore the financial burden of these endeavors. The entrepreneurial spirit led many local instructors and event organizers to use their unique training, resources, and ideas to expand the community, a theme I revisit throughout this chapter.

A second notable pair of dancers began learning tango in the 1980s and went on to play an important entrepreneurial role in the local community. According to Robert Morris, a professor of biochemistry, he and Katherine Terzi, a horticulturist, were avid fans of swing, ballroom, Latin, and English Country dance when they met at a tango workshop run by Richard
Powers in the early 1980s. Powers is an award-winning professor of dance at Stanford University who “…has been researching and reconstructing historic social dances for twenty-five years” (Stanford 2007). Powers has researched and reconstructed what Vernon and Irene Castle, among others, called Tango Argentine, which was danced widely in the 1920s and 1930s in the United States and Europe. Powers’ interest in tango has included both this historic form of tango and modern Argentine tango as it is danced today, and workshops he has organized in Cincinnati and at Stanford have included both forms. In a letter Morris sent me along with his questionnaire, he wrote that in 1993 and 1994 he and Terzi “…made the pilgrimage to Stanford for the Argentine tango weeks that Richard organized.” According to Morris, the faculty included internationally acclaimed performers and teachers Daniel Trenner and Rebecca Shulman, Juan Carlos Copes, Danel and Maria, and others.*

Morris and Terzi soon tired of traveling for tango instruction, so when Tango X 2, the second major Broadway show featuring tango, swept through Philadelphia in 1993, they saw it as an opportunity to offer more local tango activities. Miguel Angel Zotto and Milena Plebs, two stars from Tango Argentino, had created Tango X 2 (also known as Tango Por Dos) to show a wider range of tango styles and to pay homage to famous tango artists of the 1930s and 1940s (Goldner 1993). The show, featuring live music and three couples, opened the “Dance Celebration” series at the Annenberg Center in Philadelphia on November 12, 1993 (Goldner

* Morris referred to the form of tango that he and Terzi first learned in the 1980s with Powers as “ragtime tango” or “vintage tango.” According to the Lexington Vintage Dance Society, “…the term ‘vintage dance’ was coined by Prof. Richard Powers…to refer to the social dances of the period from about 1840 to 1940. Vintage dancers seek to re-create not only the steps and patterns and style of these dances, but the music, costumes, manners and whole social milieu of the times” (Lexington Vintage Dance Society 2007). “Vintage tango” is another term for Tango Argentine as it was danced by the Castles and others in the early twentieth century. For more information about this form of tango, see Modern Dancing by Vernon Castle (1914) available in full-text format through U.S. government archives at <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?musdibib:2:/temp/~ammem_WaV6:/>. 93
In true entrepreneurial spirit, Morris and Terzi got permission to leaflet the audience asking if people were interested in attending tango workshops (McGroarty 1994). Several hundred responded, so the team organized a sampler series which took place at the University of Pennsylvania’s Houston Hall at 3417 Spruce Street in Philadelphia in the winter and spring of 1994 (McGroarty 1994). Diane Lachtrupp and Angel Figueroa from New York City taught the first workshop on March 19; the couple by the stage names of Maria and Danel also from New York City taught the second workshop on April 9; and Rebecca Shulman and Daniel Trenner based in New York City and New England, respectively, taught the third on May 2. The workshop fees were $60 for one workshop, $110 for two, and $150 for three, and between twenty-two and twenty-six people attended each workshop.

Based on the success of these workshops, Morris and Terzi offered more tango to the community in the summer of 2004. They organized a weekend of tango activities with guest artist Nora Dinzelbacher, including semi-private lessons, a group class for beginners, and a milonga on June 27-28 at Touch of Class Dance Studio at 24 North Lansdowne Avenue in Lansdowne, PA (6.5 miles from Philadelphia’s center). The semi-private lessons were $80 per couple, and the class and milonga were $20 per person or $35 per couple. Morris and Terzi also organized a workshop and práctica with Juan Carlos Copes on July 30 at Temple University’s Center City campus, and the fee was $75 per person. About this period, Morris wrote, “By this time, the Arts League milonga [i.e., Ray and Mitchell’s on Friday nights] was a reality and lots of other folk were getting involved and thinking about teaching.” Morris and Terzi stopped organizing workshops but continued to play key roles in the community, including helping to

* Tango X 2 was just as successful as Tango Argentino and continues to tour in an expanded form around the world. One may read more about it in its current form on the web at www.tangox2.com.
organize “Tango Vivo!,” the first large tango event in the Philadelphia area, described later in this chapter.

A third entrepreneur who has played a central role in tango’s growth in the Philadelphia area is Jean Fung, a professional scientist who began studying tango in 1990 in San Francisco. She wrote, “After many years dancing competitive ballroom and bringing ballroom to schools, I found Argentine tango—my soul’s delight.” She began organizing workshops in the Philadelphia area in 1994, bringing more than twenty acclaimed tango artists to the area from 1994 to 2004. Fung wrote, “in the peak growing time of the Philadelphia tango community, I organized and hosted workshops roughly every four to six weeks, so as not to conflict with nearby workshops so [that] those who wanted to attend all could do so—one week in Philadelphia, the next in Washington, DC, for example.” While it does not appear that the growth of the Philadelphia tango community had yet reached its peak in 2004, Fung’s workshops had a profound influence on the community’s development.

By mid-November of 1995, Tango X 2 had completed a sold-out run in Manhattan’s City Center, and interest in tango continued to rise nationwide (Rhor 1996). To meet the growing need for tango teachers, Fung began teaching in 1996 at Universal Dance Center (also known as Fortuna’s) at 41 East Crescent Boulevard in Collingswood, NJ (seven miles from downtown Philadelphia). Like Ray and Mitchell, Fung brought a wealth of dance and movement experience to her teaching, including swing, ballroom, Latin, folk, modern, ballet, improvisation,

* One may read more about Jean Fung at http://jeanfung.com/.

† Professional tango artists whom Jean Fung brought to the Philadelphia area to teach workshops included Pablo Aslan, Puppy Castillo, Cacho Dante, Michael Domke, Lorena Ermocida, Jose Garofalo, Carlos Gavito, Cecilia Gonzalez, Guillermo Merlo, Susanna Miller, Cecilia Saez, Fabian Salas, Rebecca Shulman, Florencia Tachetti, Daniel Trenner, Brigitta Winkler, Carolina Zokalski and Diego DeFalco, and Miguel Angel Zotto.
Tai Chi, yoga, and Alexander Technique. Most notably, she has long been a student of Feldenkrais Method® and is now a guild-certified practitioner and teacher.*

By December of 1996, Fung had developed a three-hundred-person e-mailing list and created “The Philly-Tango Grapevine, a hotline and web site for tango lovers…[that listed] forthcoming events, special workshops and links to vibrant tango scenes in other cities” (Rhor 1996, H6).† From 1994 to 1996, she ran the first weekly práctica in the Philadelphia area at Universal Dance Center, and in 1994 she began hosting the weekly “FunTango”™ milonga on Wednesday nights at the Tokio Ballroom above Le Champignon de Tokio Sushi Bar at 124 Lombard Street in Philadelphia. The milonga, which was still running in December 2006, features traditional tango music and is located on the second floor above a full-service restaurant in the historic Society Hill section of Philadelphia. The ballroom is a darkly lit, intimate space with mirrors along one side, small tables on the other, and a bar at the far end. Fung finds the space reminiscent of milongas in Buenos Aires, and she regularly offers a Feldenkrais® lesson before the milonga, features music and dance performances by local and touring professionals, had guest DJs, and decorates with fresh roses that she gives to dancers at the end of the evening.

Exact dates are not available, but Fung has hosted milongas at many locations in Philadelphia through the years, including the Philadelphia Art Museum at 2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the Franklin Institute at 222 North Street, the Sedgwick Theater at 7137 Germantown Avenue, the Trocadero Ballroom at 1002 Arch Street, and the Pompano Grille at the corner of Fifth and Bainbridge Streets. Mitchell recalls that in about 1999, Fung’s milonga at

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* Feldenkrais Method® is a way of working with the awareness of one's body to improve movement and enhance human functioning. One may learn more about it at www.feldenkrais.com.

† One may read more about Fung’s tango activities at www.phillytango.com or www.dancing.com/phillytango.
the Trocadero Ballroom was extremely popular in the tango community. It took place on the first Sunday of the month, had excellent refreshments, and introduced a number of ballroom dancers to tango. By Fung’s estimates, on average, she has hosted one weekly milonga and one monthly milonga every year since 1994. In 2006, Fung began hosting a new milonga, “Heart2Heart,” at the Tokio Ballroom on the second Sunday evening of each month, and she continued to offer classes followed by a práctica at Aquatic and Fitness Center at Riverside, 601 Righters Ferry Road in Bala Cynwyd, PA (seven miles from downtown Philadelphia). Through the years, she has taught at many studios in Philadelphia and its suburbs and also teaches extensively in New York City.

Fung, Ray, Mitchell, Morris, and Terzi received significant assistance in building the tango community from another entrepreneur—Michael VanBuskirk, a lawyer and avid swing, country western, and tango dancer, who created a comprehensive website listing local tango events in 1996. VanBuskirk had suffered an injury the previous year that limited his ability to dance and do other physical activities, but as a self-proclaimed “techie,” he used the time to teach himself about email and the internet. A volunteer for “Heritage on Stage,” VanBuskirk said he “got hooked” on the ease and efficiency of communicating messages to many people via email. He created both a swing dance site and a tango site “…for selfish reasons—swing was a lifeline, then tango.” They allowed him to participate with the dance communities via the internet while recovering from his injury. He added, “Helping the community is fun.”

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* “Heritage on Stage” is an annual performance sponsored by the Heritage Dance Association—a non-profit Pennsylvania corporation devoted to preserving and teaching people about the traditional dances and related music that constitute their common dance heritage. The Association is a Center of the Country Dance and Song Society of America.” One may read more at www.heritagedancefestival.com/hda.html.
In the beginning, the tango site was housed on his personal Voicenet account, and it listed local events by date, but VanBuskirk soon patterned it after “Richard Lipkin’s Non-partisan Guide to Argentine Tango in New York City,” which lists events on a monthly calendar.* He also decided, in 1999, to purchase and use the “TangoPhiladelphia.com” domain name and has since paid annual fees of more than $100 to use it as a forwarding link to his Voicenet site.† The site now lists special events at the top of the page, followed by a large calendar listing prácticas, milongas, and other tango-related events. Each calendar item is linked to a point lower on the web page that provides event descriptions, locations, directions, prices, and contacts. The site also provides “Week at a Glance”—a list of the weekly dance classes with links for class descriptions and instructors’ contact information, as well as other tango- and dance-related information. Additional links include information on tango music, shoes, and clothing; tango sites in nearby cities; DanceTutor.com, VanBuskirk’s online dance tutorial service (described later in this chapter); and a discussion of common foot problems for dancers. Any local instructor or event organizer may send VanBuskirk information to post on the site, although a few choose not to be listed (e.g., those who teach infrequently or prefer to de-emphasize that role). The site also allows viewers to provide an email address for receiving messages about local tango events. VanBuskirk sends these addresses to all local tango instructors and event organizers weekly; they are never shared or sold for other purposes.

It is important to note that VanBuskirk has done all of this work—creating, updating, and maintaining the website and providing email addresses—for absolutely no financial

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* One may visit Richard Lipkin’s site at www.newyorktango.com.
† One may visit the Tango Philadelphia site at www.tangophiladelphia.com.
compensation. “I love it,” VanBuskirk said about providing this service through the years. “It’s worth my time.”

Among my goals for this dissertation is exploring possible intersections between tango and spirituality for members of the community. My interest in this topic began in 2004 when I directed “Dancing for Schools,” a large, tango-based event to raise funds for Temple’s dance education programs in local schools. “Dancing for Schools” was the product of hundreds of hours of volunteer service donated by local tango dancers, particularly VanBuskirk and other members of the planning committee. My research explored their experiences related to community-building and spiritual interconnections in an Argentine tango festival designed to connect an adult community with public schools. Through the research, I discovered that participants found spiritual meaning in their experiences of creativity, connection with others, altruism, and the feelings and sensations they experienced while dancing at the event.

VanBuskirk, who donated significant time to building the “Dancing for Schools” website, found spiritual meaning in acts of altruism and spoke of volunteering as being unselfish. With regard to his and others’ efforts on the planning committee, VanBuskirk noted in an interview with me in March of 2005, “I thought there was a lot of unselfishness on everybody’s part” (Seyler 2006, 13). On his questionnaire for this study, VanBuskirk described his work on the larger website for the entire tango community in similar terms—as being not only something of value to him but also a joy and worth his time. I propose that VanBuskirk’s experience of contributing to the tango community through his website—through altruism and generosity—provides one example of how tango and spirituality may intersect for dancers.

In summary, VanBuskirk’s altruism, combined with his and others’ entrepreneurial activities, served to launch tango in the Philadelphia area from 1986 to 1996. The next logical
step for expanding the community and increasing its visibility was to hold a large tango event—one that would require not only entrepreneurship and altruism but also collaboration.


Early Collaboration for Growth –1997 to 1999

On the weekend of September 27 and 28, 1997, local tango took a huge step forward through the collaborative efforts of Fung, Mitchell and Ray, Morris and Terzi, and VanBuskirk along with local dancers Ann Campbell, Teresa and Juan Carlos Figueroa, Silvi Lieberman, Martha and Marshall Ledger, Betsy McCreary, Steve Mason, David Walter, and Stephen Wong. They hosted “Tango Vivo!,” the largest all-day tango event to date in the Philadelphia area designed to raise awareness of the community and to build membership. It was located in the historic Assembly Hall (built in 1888) of the German Society of Pennsylvania at 611 Spring Garden Street.* A 3200-square-foot room with a wooden floor, high ceilings, chandeliers, a stage, and a balcony, the Assembly Hall was an elegant setting for “Tango Vivo!,” which included workshops on tango technique on Saturday and Sunday and a milonga Saturday night with live music by the New York Tango Trio (Infield 1997). The organizing committee members were: Fung, who booked the performing artists, used her connections in New York City and beyond to publicize the event, and helped to DJ; the Ledgers, who hosted planning meetings, did press work, organized refreshments for the milonga, and did other tasks; Mitchell, who organized logistics, volunteers, and decorations, helped to DJ, and did many other tasks; Morris and Terzi, who negotiated contracts with the artists and managed the event’s taxes; Ray,

* According to the society’s website, “The German Society of Pennsylvania is a nonprofit organization devoted to furthering the understanding of German and German-American contributions to the growth of American history and culture from the past to the present, and into the future.” For more information, visit www.germansociety.org.
who helped to DJ and assisted Mitchell; VanBuskirk, who donated legal services to incorporate “Tango Vivo!” and publicized it via email and on the Tango Philadelphia web site; and Walter and Liberman, who assisted with a range of tasks. The fees were $20 to $40 for the workshops and $35 for the milonga (Infield 1997).

To help draw dancers and newcomers to “Tango Vivo!,” the organizers hired Daniela Arcuri and Armando Orzuza to teach the workshops and perform at the milonga (Infield 1997). They were familiar with Philadelphia having taught at workshops previously that Fung had organized. Arcuri and Orzuza were Argentine natives who starred in Tango Pasión, another full-length tango music and dance show inspired by Tango Argentino that opened in New York City in April of 1993 (Becker 1993).* Though Tango Pasión did not play in Philadelphia until October 3, 2004, it fueled interest in tango in and around New York City in the 1990s and made it feasible for Arcuri and Orzuza to travel to Philadelphia for “Tango Vivo!.”

The event was a huge success. An average of thirty people attended each workshop throughout the weekend, and 130 attended the milonga, including natives of Argentina and friends of dancers who wished to try tango. The milonga on Saturday night was particularly spectacular according to Mitchell, who recalled her favorite quotation from the milonga—a gentleman who attended the event said, "It was like being in a movie." Lesley commented,

I think he meant a combination of the lights, the night, the elegant dress, the food, music, and performances, and the setting (GS [German Society] ballroom). He felt a part of it all—that movie—through dancing on the floor with the other "actors."

While Fung had previously organized weekend workshops and milongas with live music, local dancers recall “Tango Vivo!” as a milestone because it was the largest tango event to date in

* One may read more about Tango Pasión at tangopasion.online.fr/english.php.
Philadelphia and the first time local organizers had collaborated to offer such an event. Mitchell commented in her questionnaire, “It was an ambitious event considering that we were a relatively young community.” Compared to cities like New York and Chicago where tango communities had begun to develop ten years earlier, Philadelphia’s community was relatively small after only six years of class offerings and three years of weekly milongas. “Tango Vivo!” had excellent attendance and was the first full-scale event that local instructors and event organizers created and hosted collaboratively. By drawing on the skills and talents of many dancers, the creators of “Tango Vivo!” demonstrated the power of collaboration, which would become a driving force behind the growth of the tango community.

After “Tango Vivo!” and through the late 1990s, the number of milongas, instructors, classes, workshops, and dancers increased steadily. As more new traveling tango shows like *Forever Tango, Tango Buenos Aires*, and *Tango Fire* maintained tango’s presence on stage, in the press, and in the public eye, people continued to show interest in learning and enjoying the dance. In 1998 and 1999, Mitchell and Ray hosted monthly Saturday night milongas at the Tokio Ballroom, and another local instructor/organizer who was unable to participate in this research hosted a few Saturday evening milongas there in subsequent years.

In 1998, David Walter, who had helped organize “Tango Vivo!,” began teaching classes in central Philadelphia, assisted by his partner, Silvi Lieberman, a professor of statistics and mathematics at Temple University and an avid tango dancer. Like other local instructors, Walter brought a wealth of training in a variety of fields to his teaching. By training, he is a civil engineer and a theologian, having studied at a seminary. In his professional life, he has been a field engineer, a coast guard officer, and a college administrator. In his youth, he was an avid wrestler, lacrosse player, and trumpet player, and for many years he has “toiled part-time in the
world of portrait painting.” Walter began studying tango in 1995 in Philadelphia and in New York City, and he and Lieberman were invited to substitute teach for Ray and Mitchell three years later. The pair enjoyed teaching and began offering weekly lessons in early 1999 in the large room on the second floor of the Ethical Society Building at the Southwestern corner of Rittenhouse Square in central Philadelphia.* The Ethical Society Building is a two-story structure built in approximately 1876 with a stone façade, high ceilings, tall windows, and wooden floors. My clearest memory is of walking up a long spiral staircase to the second floor and pushing large tables and chairs to the sides of the room to clear space for dancing. Walter and Lieberman taught there together until approximately 2001 when Lieberman stopped teaching to battle cancer. Her death in 2002 was a great loss for Walter and the entire tango community. Walter continued teaching, and, as of this writing in December 2007, was teaching on his own at various studios in Philadelphia, at Swarthmore College (where he has taught since 1998), and in collaboration with local instructor, Jackie Stahl, at the Atrium Dance Studio in Pennsauken, NJ.

Also in 1998, Teresa and Juan Carlos Figueroa from Wilmington, DE, began hosting monthly classes and periodic workshops taught by Mariela Franganillo, a native of Buenos Aires who starred in a number of acclaimed tango shows in Buenos Aires and was a leading dancer in Forever Tango on Broadway in 1986. The Figueroas met Franganillo in 1998 at a workshop at Dance Manhattan, a dance studio in New York City, where Franganillo was director of the tango program. They liked her teaching so much that they invited her to travel to Philadelphia on a regular basis to help build the local tango community. From 1998 to 2006, she came to

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* According to its website, “The Ethical Society of Philadelphia was founded in 1885 and was, in turn, a founding member of the national organization, the American Ethical Union. With chapters from Boston to Los Angeles, its guiding principle remains the primacy of ethics in daily life.” For more information, visit www.phillyethics.net.
Philadelphia monthly to teach group and private classes, which were always in high demand. Franganillo also occasionally taught workshops, sometimes in collaboration with other artists, like Héctor del Curto and Pablo Pugliese.

In addition to the tango workshops organized by the Figueroas and by Fung, organizers Ray and Mitchell hosted an average of one or two workshops per year with guest instructors from 1997 through 2003. They hosted workshops with Fernanda Ghí and Guillermo Merlot from Los Angeles in December of 2001 as well as a number of instructors from Buenos Aries, including Facundo and Kely Posadas in February and October of 1999, Julio Balmaceda and Corina de la Rosa in May of 2000, and the dancers who go by the names “Chiche and Marta” * in April of 2001. They also hosted workshops by Ramiro Gigliotti and Héctor Falcón, but exact dates are not available.

Beginning in approximately 1998, local instructors/organizers and dancers also began collaborating to perform and demonstrate tango at public events in an effort to showcase local tango and attract new dancers. Though the exact dates are not clear, Mitchell recalls performing or demonstrating with other dancers at 4th of July celebrations in Philadelphia, at street fairs in Philadelphia and neighboring cities, at political events at City Hall, at the Heritage Dance Festival, † at events run by Raices Culturales Latinoamericanas ‡, and at special events at the German Society.

* Many tango professionals go only by their first names, omitting their last names entirely from all publicity. I have yet to find Chiche and Marta’s last names.

† Refer to footnote number 22 regarding the Heritage Dance Festival.

‡ Raices Culturales Latinoamericanas (Latin American Cultural Roots) is a Philadelphia not-for-profit organization of dancers and musicians who offer programs in the city and represent the traditions and cultures of their mother countries. Visit www.raicesculturales.org for more information.
In summary, the years 1997 to 1999 marked new collaboration among instructors and event organizers as well as increases in the numbers of instructors, workshops, and milongas. The resulting growth of the tango community inspired significant changes from 2000 to 2002.

Community-building, Diversity, and Outreach Fuel Growth – 2000 to 2002

While collaboration emerged as a theme from 1997 to 1999, efforts to build community though tango, the increasing diversity of local instructors and event organizers, and the increasing frequency of community outreach activities were notable developments from 2000 to 2002. Six new instructors of diverse professions and experience in dance and movement brought depth and richness to local tango instruction and may have inspired new people of diverse backgrounds to learn tango. As the numbers of instructors increased, so did the number of event organizers and tango activities, including a milonga designed specifically to allow dancers to get to know each other better and to foster a sense of community. As the number of such events increased, so did the numbers of dancers, and some became quite vested in showcasing tango and encouraging newcomers by participating in outreach activities. In this section, I continue the chronology of events as they unfolded each year with particular emphasis on emerging themes of building community, diversity among instructors/organizers, and advocacy for tango through outreach activities.

To review, from 1994 to 1999, Ray and Mitchell had hosted a weekly milonga on Friday evenings at UCAL, and Fung had hosted a weekly milonga on Wednesday nights above the Tokio Restaurant in addition to about one milonga per month on the weekends at various locations in and around Philadelphia. From 2000 to 2002, three new weekly milongas joined these existing ones. Ray and Mitchell’s “Milonga en Casa” began in 2000 and was the first
milonga designed specifically to build community through tango by inviting dancers to share a meal that they create together. The milonga is still a monthly event and is held in their home studio on the second floor of 1315 Buttonwood Street in Philadelphia, a renovated industrial building with wooden floors, skylights, and walls decorated with Mitchell’s tango-inspired artwork. The milonga begins with a pot-luck dinner at 7:00 pm to which dancers bring food and beverages based on pre-determined themes of ethnic (Italian, Argentine, Egyptian, etc.) or other bent (holiday fare, comfort food, etc.). Dancers serve themselves from a buffet in the smaller studio at the front of the building and sit together in the larger studio around candle-lit tables to eat, drink, and chat. At about 9:00 pm, everyone helps to clear folding tables and chairs, and they dance until about 12:30 am.

After years of hosting milongas at which innumerable conversations got interrupted by someone being invited to dance, Ray and Mitchell created “Milonga en Casa” to allow dancers to socialize and to get to know newcomers. “If you sit around chatting over dinner, it’s much easier to start up a dance,” said Ray in an interview with Philadelphia Weekly reporter Mara Zepeda (Zepeda 2006). The atmosphere is intimate and homey, dancers dress elegantly or casually, and the fee is now $10 per person ($8 for full-time students), which they raised from the original $5 in 2005. As of December 2006, an average of 40 dancers enjoyed “Milonga en Casa” each month. As is the case with most of Ray and Mitchell’s milongas, they often invite traveling tango music and dance artists to “Milonga en Casa,” and artists have included local musicians as well as the entire cast of Tango Buenos Aires. This milonga was the first I attended when I moved to Philadelphia in September of 2002, and I vividly recall feeling welcomed and well-fed. It was a very effective way for me to introduce myself to the community and to begin to feel a part of it through eating, conversing, dancing, and helping out. This theme of consciously
creating opportunities to build community through tango recurs throughout the history of local tango.

In 2001, three more people began teaching tango and hosting milongas—Jackie Stahl and Teresa and Juan Carlos Figueroa. In March of 2001, Barbara Capaldi opened the Atrium Dance Studio in Pennsauken, NJ (seven miles from downtown Philadelphia) and was looking for an Argentine tango teacher.* A local dancer recommended Stahl, a social worker, who had begun studying tango in 1998 and learned it quickly, given her background in gymnastics and her thorough knowledge of West Coast Swing and lindy hop. She greatly enjoyed teaching tango and quit her job as a social worker in 2006 in order to devote all of her time to her dance businesses and creative writing. In her questionnaire, Stahl wrote, “I really enjoy teaching. It's fun and it's fascinating to figure out how people can best learn movement.” As of December 2006, Stahl was teaching two group classes at the Atrium and many group and private classes at Tango Forward, her home studio at 7165 Keystone Street in Northeast Philadelphia. She was also performing regularly at local events with David Walter, writing her screenplay based on tango, and running her business, “Name That Timeless Tune”—a music and dance education and wellness program for the elderly.

To compliment her teaching, Stahl began hosting an evening milonga at the Atrium in 2001 on each first Sunday of the month. Named for its glass atrium at the front of the building, the studio is located fourteen miles from the center of Philadelphia and has seventeen-foot cathedral ceilings, sprung hardwood floors, and skylights that brighten the wood-stone interior. It is always lavishly decorated according to the holiday or season and in 2006 was expanded to two thousand square feet. Stahl’s milonga ran from 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm, included a light buffet

* For more information on The Atrium Dance Studio, visit www.atriumdance.com.
dinner, and incorporated some alternative music along with traditional tango songs. She took a hiatus from hosting the milonga in 2004 and resumed it at a new time, with a new format, and with me as her co-host in January of 2005. We named it “Tango Brunch,” which I describe later in this chapter along with other milongas that began in 2005. In addition to hosting milongas and teaching, Stahl began choreographing and performing tango in 2002 and has given a number of performances in the Philadelphia area with Walter and with Steve Mason, a local tango dancer.

Teresa and Juan Carlos Figueroa began studying tango in 1997 in Philadelphia after studying swing, Latin social dances, folk, flamenco, and movement forms like yoga and Pilates. They began teaching in 2001 when they started a weekly práctica on Saturday afternoons, called “Laburo Canfinfiero.” Created from Lunfardo, a form of Argentine slang that was used widely in Buenos Aires at the turn of the century and in tango lyrics, the name laburo canfinfiero was chosen by the Figueroas to be used poetically to mean different things to different people, but one could translate into English to mean “if there’s work to be done, it’s not serious work.” The Figueroas ran “Laburo Canfinfiero” at what was then DanceSport 101 Studio at 7584 Haverford Avenue in West Philadelphia. Located seven miles from downtown Philadelphia, the studio is a square-shaped, two-floor, contemporary building with tall windows that curves gently along one “corner” at the intersection of Haverford and Overbrook Avenues. The Figueroas held the práctica in the second-floor studio, which has a wooden floor and lots of light streaming in through ample windows. Wrote Teresa Figueroa about the first práctica, “We had to quickly adopt the format of a guided práctica when we realized that students did not know what to practice by themselves.” They developed a very successful and well-attended práctica that began with an hour of warm-up exercises, continued with learning specific figures, and ended with an hour of practice time during which students received individual attention. The Figueroas held
the práctica at DanceSport 101 Studio until 2006 when the building’s ownership changed. They renamed the práctica “*La Cimarra*” to call to mind the idea of liberation or breaking the rules* and moved it to DanceSport Academy, a studio in an historic building located at One West Lancaster Avenue in Ardmore, PA, eight and a half miles from downtown Philadelphia. As of December 2006, they were teaching group and private lessons at that location.

Also in 2001, the Figueroas began hosting the milonga, “*Caminito Cimarron*” in the first-floor studio at DanceSport 101 on the second Sunday of each month. Drawing again on the meaning of the Spanish word cimarrá, the milonga title implied that dancers were finding liberation on their own personal tango journeys. This studio had high ceilings and was elegantly decorated with a central chandelier, mirrors along one side, a small bar, and tables and chairs along the walls. It ran from 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm, most dancers dressed in their best tango attire, and the fee was $10. They served light hors d’oeuvres, played mostly traditional tango music, and occasionally invited guest DJs, like local tango dancers Natalia Riobo and Marcelo Kazaneitz. As did Ray, Mitchell, and Fung, the Figueroas also featured short performances by local artists, including professional violinist Oscar Borquez and dancers Carolyn Merritt and Meredith Klein. Though “*Caminito Cimarron*” was a very popular and well-attended milonga with an average of 60 dancers, the Figueroas had to stop hosting it in 2005 due to scheduling conflicts when the studio changed ownership.†

Beginning in 2001, students who wanted to learn tango in the comfort of their homes could subscribe to a local online tutorial service. In addition to building web sites for dance,
VanBuskirk created Dance Tutor*, which provides dance “instruction using online video, stills and text.” Subscribers may learn from twenty dance sections on swing, Argentine tango, salsa, and Polish-American polka, and the fee for unlimited use of one dance section is $7 per month or $9 for two months. VanBuskirk began creating the programming 1999, which involves videotaping dancers demonstrating technique and steps with accompanying text that he writes with the dancers. He first launched Dance Tutor in 2001 with a swing dance module; the first tango modules became available in late 2001 and early 2002, and both were demonstrated by Stahl and Mason. As of December 2006, the tango modules were Tango I-IV, Tango Vals I and II, and Close Embrace I, by instructors Stahl and Mason, tango artists Andrew Conway of Philadelphia and Kana Kubota of New York City, Ray and Mitchell, and tango instructors Sridhar Hannenhalli and Celine Allard of Philadelphia. All dancers who help create modules receive a percentage of the income generated by their modules, and VanBuskirk is constantly adding more modules.

In 2002, three more people began teaching tango – Encarnación Arias, Charles Costello, and Shana Vitoff. Arias is a veterinarian who studied modern dance, improvisation, and yoga extensively before beginning to learn tango in 1999 from instructors in Philadelphia, New Jersey, and Buenos Aires. In 2002 she began bartering with local dancers by offering tango instruction in exchange for instruction in body-mind practices. Arias wrote, “I work with individuals that can exchange other knowledge such as yoga meditation.” Since 2002, she has taught private lessons at her home and group classes in collaboration with Hannenhalli and with professional violinist Oscar Borquez at the Tokio Ballroom in Philadelphia. Arias has not hosted workshops.

* One may subscribe to or read more about Dance Tutor at www.dancetutor.com.
but she did collaborate with local dancer Dan Comer on a milonga in Camden, New Jersey, in 2006, described later in this chapter.

Charles Costello, a management consultant, began teaching in 2002 when friends within the tango community requested that he give private lessons. Like many tango instructors, he had extensive experience dancing swing, ballroom, and Latin before discovering Argentine tango, and he had some experience with ballet and improvisation as well as karate. As of December 2006, Costello was teaching private lessons with little desire to host workshops or milongas.* However, he played a key role as a volunteer for “Dancing for Schools” in 2004, described later in this chapter.

The third person to begin teaching tango in 2002 was Shana Vitoff, director of Society Hill Dance Academy at 409 South Second Street in Philadelphia. Originally from Minnesota, Vitoff trained and competed as a ballroom and Latin dancer and began teaching dance at the age of 18. Having received many requests for Argentine tango classes at her new studio, she began studying it in 2001 and teaching it in 2002. About her classes, Vitoff wrote in her questionnaire, “Most of my students are ballroom dancers that have crossed over...they either fall in love with it or stop because it is a difficult dance that requires much more time and effort than the other dances and is not 'usable socially'. ” I explore the question of whether tango is more difficult to learn than other social dances in Chapter 6, but it is an issue raised by many dancers who both like and dislike Argentine tango. By “usable socially,” I believe Vitoff means that at most social ballroom and Latin dances, few people know how to dance Argentine tango and few songs are appropriate for it. However, I would argue that tango is “usable socially” at milongas where

* To learn more about Charles Costello and his partner, Evelyn Severino, visit http://www.argentine-tango-us.com/about.html.
tango dance and music are the primary foci, and music for other types of social pairs dancing is played only occasionally. In 2003 and 2004, Vitoff performed at local events with Walter and, as of December 2006, was teaching tango and making her studio available for a monthly milonga hosted by Walter and Berrios (described later in this chapter).

By the end of 2002, not only had the number of instructors increased to eleven people and the number of event organizers to six, but they represented a diverse array of professions and training in dance and other movement studies. Ray studied physics at the doctoral level before becoming a full-time dance instructor and event organizer; Mitchell was a visual artist, folk and Polish dancer, and community-builder; Fung was a scientist who had studied Feldenkrais Method® and many forms of dance; VanBuskirk was a lawyer with experience in swing and ballroom; Morris was a biochemistry professor and Terzi a horticulturist, both with extensive social dance experience; Walter was a former engineer, coast guard officer, college administrator athlete, and musician; Liberman (who taught until approximately 2001) had been a professor of statistics and mathematics; Stahl was a social worker with significant training in gymnastics; the Figueroas were a scientist and housewife with some experience in social dance, Flamenco, yoga, and pilates; Arias was a veterinarian with significant dance and yoga training; Costello was a management consultant who had studied dance and Karate; and Vitoff was the owner of a dance studio with years of training in social and competitive ballroom and Latin dance. I propose that a significant force in the development of tango in Philadelphia lies in the diversity of its instructors/organizers, who brought many types of professional training and knowledge of dance and movement to their understanding of tango and who, by their example, may have encouraged or inspired people of diverse backgrounds to learn the dance. I return to this theme of diversity among instructors as discussion progresses.
The third theme to emerge during this period in local tango’s history was outreach activities that included dancers as tango advocates. The first such activities in which many local dancers participated were demonstrations and milongas in downtown Philadelphia and at Temple University in the summer of 2002. Ray and Mitchell hosted the first series of monthly “Hit and Run” milongas in downtown’s Rittenhouse Square from June through September. With a boom box and casual tango attire, they offered free beginner classes and created impromptu milongas on Saturday afternoons in one of the city’s mostly heavily traveled pedestrian parks in an effort to increase awareness of tango and to inspire new dancers. In her article of October 27, 2002, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, reporter Marina Walker captured the scene beautifully.

Little 9-year-old Amadi Lewis…is just staring at the beauty of the dancing bodies and the music in Rittenhouse Square on a sunny Saturday. Gary Frings, who crashes test planes for the FAA in Atlantic City and is 6-foot-2, sees her longing to dance. In a moment he is gently leading the tiny girl in a pink dress through the steps. Amadi walks and follows, and flows into the music as naturally as only a child can. “It’s . . . cool,” she says to her mother, Darlene, when the song finishes. They call it tango. (Walker 2002, 8)

Frings was among approximately twenty local dancers who regularly attended the “Hit and Run” milongas to demonstrate tango and to encourage new people to try it. Though Frings has since retired and moved to Tampa, Florida, I recall him very fondly as a generous dancer who took delight in encouraging beginners.

Another memorable tango event with a significant outreach component took place at Temple University in June of 2002. Temple’s Department of Dance hosted the annual conference of the Society of Dance History Scholars on Temple’s main campus, and Temple Professor Joellen Meglin served as local planning committee chair. As a special treat, Meglin, who had recently begun studying tango with Ray and Mitchell, invited them to teach a tango lesson and host a milonga as part of the conference’s Saturday evening activities in Mitten Hall.
at 1913 North Broad Street. As a newly admitted graduate student in the department, I volunteered to help with the conference and vividly recall the event because it was the first time I saw Ray and Mitchell perform and the first time I danced with Philadelphia tango dancers. Approximately 25 local dancers attended to help conference attendees learn and enjoy tango. I remember a number of the male dancers leading me around the room with patience, enthusiasm, and kindness. Some of them would become my friends and colleagues when I moved to Philadelphia—Frings, VanBuskirk, Ray, and Mitchell, among others. I also recall being impressed that so many local dancers attended to help Ray and Mitchell with the event out of generosity and a desire to see the community grow. (Only Ray and Mitchell received financial compensation.) The event was another example of dancers’ involvement in outreach activities, and it illuminated Ray and Mitchell’s capacity to inspire local dancers to play advocacy roles.

In addition to milongas designed to build community, the growing diversity of instructors and event organizers, and new outreach activities, history shows that local instructors and event organizers continued to collaborate on special events. On October 5, 2002, dancers Vittoria Natale and Guillermo Elkouss hosted the “Amore de Tango” milonga at the Starlight Ballroom Dance Club at 452-68 North Ninth Street in Philadelphia. It featured music by “Quejas de Bandoneon”—a tango quintet from Bologna, Italy—as well as a Philadelphia duo playing bandoneon and guitar. Approximately 175 people danced tango and enjoyed performances by local dancers Walter, Vitoff, Stahl, and Mason as well as by professional tango dancers Pablo Fontana and Carolina Juarena from New York City.

In summary, three themes emerged in local tango history from 2000 to 2002. First, Ray and Mitchell began hosting “Milonga en Casa” to encourage conversation among dancers and to build community through tango. Second, along with an increase in instructors and event
organizers came an increase in their collective backgrounds, which likely enhanced local instruction and may have helped attract new dancers. Third, dancers began playing an advocacy role by participating in outreach activities hosted by Ray and Mitchell. In addition to these new themes, existing ones continued to appear as local tango entrepreneurs Stahl, the Figueroas, Natale, and Elkouss helped to expand tango instruction and activities and provided opportunities for dancers to continue collaborating with each other. With these forces in place, it is no wonder that tango in the Philadelphia area continued to expand in 2003 and 2004.

Education, Service, Competition, and Conflict – 2003 to 2004

The themes of entrepreneurship, altruism, collaboration, building community through tango, diversity of instructors and event organizers, and dancers as tango advocates continued to appear in the community in 2003 and 2004 along with new themes. One was education—both of the local tango community through a new monthly milonga and of the larger Philadelphia populace through special events. Collaborative groups of dancers also began playing service roles for various individuals and groups, which I view as an expansion of the altruism already visible in the community. Finally, with the rapid increase in the number of local milongas, healthy competition arose to create successful milongas, but conflict among some instructors and event organizers may have limited community development. These themes arise within continued discussion of local tango’s chronological history.

The year 2003 brought new monthly milongas, workshops, special events, and the addition of two new instructors—Vittoria Natale and Guillermo Elkouss. Natale, a professional make-up artist, discovered tango in 1994 in Arlington, VA, after studying swing, ballroom, and Latin dance as well as yoga and pilates. Elkouss, a urologist who grew up in Argentina, did not
study dance formally until he discovered tango at mid-life (Winkler 2003). In an interview with Renee Winkler of the *Courier-Post* in 2003, he recalled that before formal tango studies, “I was exposed to tango on television or radio and in the theater, but my experience was just social dancing” (Winkler 2003, 1T). Natale and Elkouss met through a mutual friend and began dancing tango together in 1999. In 2003, they joined other local tango entrepreneurs and began teaching at Dance Haddonfield at Grace Church, 19 Kings Highway in East Haddonfield, NJ (ten miles from downtown Philadelphia). As of December 2006, they were offering biweekly classes and prácticas at Dance Haddonfield and had just begun teaching at Universal Dance Studio. In addition to hosting “Amor de Tango” and other milongas, Natale and Elkouss have hosted a number of workshops with guest artists from Argentina and New York City, including Alicia Cruzado of New York City and Claudio Fortes and Diana Schancez Benitez of Mar del Plata, Argentina. Natale and Elkouss regularly perform in the Philadelphia area, travel to Buenos Aires for tango instruction, and maintain a website listing their activities.†

Two popular milongas that began in 2003 have helped greatly to expand the community. In April, Vitoff of Society Hill Dance Academy, suggested that she and David Walter, who was teaching tango at the studio, begin a milonga there. Located in the historic district of Society Hill, the studio is an elegant space with hardwood floors, bay windows overlooking cobblestoned streets, a surround-sound system, a kitchenette, and an outdoor patio.‡ They held the first milonga on April 27, and, for the second one on June 22, local tango dancer Michele Berrios, a sales and marketing coordinator who began studying tango in 2002, substituted for Shana to help

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* The *Courier-Post* covers news in and around Cherry Hill, New Jersey, where Natale and Elkouss live.

† To learn more about Natale and Elkouss, visit their site at www.argentangodancers.com.

‡ For more information about Society Hill Dance Academy, visit www.societyhilldance.com.
with the milonga. According to Walter, “Berrios brought many new ideas to the event and suggested that we call it “Tango Café.” From that point forward, Walter and Berrios hosted the milonga, which runs from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm on the fourth Sunday of each month and features a different menu each month of hors d’oeuvres and beverages created by Berrios and music by Walter, who plays primarily traditional tangos.

“Tango Café” was the first milonga to offer an explicit educational service to the tango community. Each month, Walter and Berrios feature different Argentine tango artists by providing brief biographies, music samples, anecdotes, and the occasional audio-visual demonstration. Berrios’s commitment to education was clear in this comment on her questionnaire, “Argentine tango is not a set of steps and routines, it implies embracing a culture and understanding its codes and evolution.” Through “Tango Café,” she and Walter are helping dancers to learn about tango music’s origins and evolution and to honor the contributions of artists, past and present. At one celebration of the “women of tango,” Walter and Berrios not only presented on female musicians from Argentina, but also honored Mitchell, Fung, Stahl, Figueroa, and Natale with roses and certificates in appreciation of their pivotal roles in the local community. Berrios also published “Good Times at Tango Café,” a free newsletter that included a summary and photos from Tango Café, an article about the artist of the month, a section called “The Bargain Corner” for announcements of tango items for sale and Buenos Aires apartments for rent, a list of top tango recordings, a calendar of Philadelphia milongas, and a recipe of the month based on favorite foods served at the milonga. As of December 2006, Berrios “was on hiatus” from creating the newsletter because of the logistics of producing more than fifty copies per month, but she was making various individual articles available to the community on topics such as tango etiquette, music, and attire and on Argentine wine and other beverages. A few
times, Berrios also hosted a pre-milonga “Tango Swap” to which dancers brought unwanted clothing, shoes, and CDs for barter or sale at nominal prices. Many of us discovered gems at “Tango Swap” that remain beloved additions to our tango wardrobes. “Tango Café’s” entrance fee increased from $10 to $12 over time, but that has not affected the milonga’s average attendance of sixty to seventy people, and in December of 2006, attendance showed no signs of slowing.

A weekly milonga that began in 2003 offers another example of how entrepreneurship helped to expand tango in the Philadelphia area. In September, Fung and Carlos Douris of Collegeville, PA, started a weekly Sunday evening milonga at The Dance Depot, a dance studio at 50 West Third Avenue in Collegeville, PA, a suburb thirty miles Northwest of Philadelphia. When The Dance Depot opened in 1997, it had one wooden-floored studio in The Collegeville Station, a small commercial mall. It has since expanded to two studios.* Douris, a self-employed insurance inspector, had studied some ballroom and Latin before discovering tango, which quickly captured his imagination and which he fondly describes as an “addiction.” He was a student of Fung’s, and together they ran the Collegeville milonga on the first and fifth Sundays of the month from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm with an admission fee of $10 per person, light refreshments, and a beginner lesson with Fung. These were the first tango lessons and the first milongas in the Collegeville area and quickly became quite popular. Based on student demand, in early 2005 Fung and Douris began providing more opportunities for students to dance tango on the second, third, and fourth Sunday afternoons. The event wasn’t a milonga, nor a práctica, but simply a place to practice tango weekly from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm and was lovingly dubbed “The Whatchamacallit.” They charged $5 to cover the studio rental fee and light refreshments

* For more information on The Dance Depot, visit www.thedancedepot.com.
and encouraged people to bring their own music for dancing. In the spring of 2005, Fung moved on to other tango ventures, and Lori Coyle came on board to help Douris teach beginner classes.

Coyle is editor of Show Communications Publishing Company and holds a graduate degree in education and additional degrees in the arts. She began studying tango in the fall of 2003 in Philadelphia and became completely enamored with it by the following March while at the “DC Tango Marathon” in Washington, DC. In an email, Coyle wrote, “It took about two weeks for me to be able to feel my toes after that weekend, but I have been dancing ever since.” With momentum from working with Fung, Douris and Coyle made the Collegeville Milongas and Watchamacallits thrive. Douris wrote in his questionnaire that the Collegeville tango scene, “has grown into something I never anticipated”—a weekly milonga with pre-milonga beginner classes, guest DJs that play about thirty percent non-traditional tango music, and an average of fifty attendees. He added, “…probably seventy to eighty percent are new people who have learned here and come every week.” Through their drive and resourcefulness, Fung, Douris, and Coyle created an opportunity for new tango dancers in the suburbs to study and enjoy tango. When dancers travel from Collegeville to Philadelphia for events, and vice versa, they expand and enrich the larger tango community.*

The rapid proliferation of milongas through 2003 gave rise to another theme in the history of local tango’s development—competition. Although, in the spirit of collaboration, event organizers rarely scheduled milongas on competing days and times, they still competed indirectly to provide milongas that dancers would frequent and enjoy. As the co-host of a monthly milonga and a bi-monthly milonga by December of 2006, I felt pressure and inspiration to deliver high-quality milongas based on my own standards and on my experiences at other

* For more information on the Collegeville Milonga at www.collegevilletango.com.
milongas. From other hosts, I learned the importance of greeting dancers warmly as they arrived, providing high-quality music, creating elegant decorations and interesting refreshments, and responding when dancers made special requests or voiced criticisms. I believe that by attending to these and other elements of milongas, event organizers have improved what they offer, pleasing dancers and helping the community to grow.

Two more outreach events took place in 2003, and one included significant collaboration among local instructors. Ray and Mitchell hosted four more monthly “Hit and Run” milongas in Rittenhouse Square from June through September. That year, they also organized and hosted “A Taste of Tango”—two weekends of tango workshops taught by Ray and Mitchell, the Figueroas, Walter, and Stahl. Mitchell was the main organizer and worked with contacts at Temple University and the University of the Arts to use their dance studios. On one weekend at Temple and another weekend at the University of the Arts, approximately sixty people attended six beginner and intermediate workshops per day.

Also in 2003, Ray and Mitchell hosted the first “Alternative Music Milonga” at Café Lift, a small breakfast and lunch diner, at 428 North Thirteenth Street, just around the corner from Ray and Mitchell’s home studio. Though it was not an outreach activity per se, it was designed to serve those who enjoy alternative music (which was rarely played at local milongas at that time) and to attract any new dancers, particularly younger dancers, who might also be partial to alternative music.* Ray had attended successful and enjoyable milongas with alternative music in Berlin, Germany, and really wanted to create similar milongas in Philadelphia. About thirty of us danced tango to swing, salsa, and various forms of alternative tango music, and I recall a

* I use the term “alternative tango music” to mean non-traditional tango music and non-tango music that is played at milongas for dancing tango and that may incorporate elements of pop, electronic, jazz, and/or classical music. Mitchell, Ray, and other event organizers had included alternative tango music at previous milongas, but this was the first in the area that played primarily this type of music.
rather chaotic ten minutes when three of us broke out of the partner-dance format to create a
tango-inspired can-can along one wall of the café.

Local tango dancers can be adventurous, playful, and goofy, and they can be sensitive,
generous, and loving. One of my most poignant memories is of attending the “Silvi Liberman
Memorial Milonga,” a milonga for the tango dancer and partner of David Walter who died of
cancer in March of 2002 (Liberman 2002). Liberman held a doctorate in statistics and taught at
the University of Pennsylvania and at Temple University, where she was director of the
Mathematics Learning Center for several years. She was an avid tango performer and teacher, a
devoted student of Franganillo’s, and a beloved member of the community. Before her death,
she requested that instead of a wake, her friends have a milonga in her honor. Walter, assisted
by Ray, Mitchell, and other members of the community, rented the first-floor ballroom of the
Ethical Society Building in Rittenhouse Square for a gala milonga and performances on Saturday
evening, May 4, 2003. The ballroom is an elegant space with high ceilings and windows,
chandeliers, hardwood floors, French doors at the entrance, and a stage at the far end.
Approximately one hundred and fifty people attended, many of whom were not tango dancers,
and fifteen volunteers helped with decorations, refreshments, and registration. A number of
Liberman’s tango friends performed: Mitchell and Walter, the Figueroas, Stahl and Mason, and
Natale and Elkouss. Along with her frequent dance partner Antonio “Junior” Cervilla,
Franganillo donated a stunning performance “…in honor of her friendship with Silvi” (Silvi
Liberman Memorial Milonga program, 4).

Having joined the local tango community just eight months before this milonga, I noted
how the community felt and behaved like a large, extended family, not only because it played a
somewhat familial role by providing a milonga in lieu of a wake, but also because of the
cohesiveness, generosity, and love evident in participants’ behavior. Fourteen of Silvi’s friends organized the milonga, including seven local tango instructors and dancers. They and many others volunteered significant time and services to create an elegant, festive, and thoroughly enjoyable evening that honored Liberman through the music and dance they loved. I don’t recall seeing any tears that evening, nor was much said about Liberman’s passing. There was a beautiful picture of her at the entrance, and the program gave a brief biography highlighting her career and her love of tango. This event offers a powerful example of how local tango dancers value collaboration, generosity, and community and of how they are willing to be of service to others. They created an evening of dancing and entertainment honoring Liberman that was enjoyable not only for local tango dancers but also for Liberman’s friends and family.

The community’s generosity and willingness to be of service was also evident at a fundraiser for the Center for Cancer Education and Research organized by dancer Marsha Kramer and held at the Union League of Philadelphia at 140 South Broad Street on a Sunday afternoon in November of 2003. Ray, Mitchell, Walter, Vitoff, Stahl, Teresa Figueroa, local tango dancer Daniel Castillo, and Franganillo performed improvised and choreographed dances for the event. Approximately 50 of the 200 attendees were tango dancers, and for $60 per person, we watched performances; danced to tango, ballroom, Latin, and swing music; enjoyed a full brunch buffet; and bid in a silent auction.

Another special event in 2003 was a milonga and party for actor Robert Duval in March hosted by Vitoff at Society Hill Dance Academy after the Philadelphia screening of his movie, “Assassination Tango.” I recall that he attended with his Argentine girlfriend and co-star, Luciana Pedraza, and that after about twenty minutes of heightened attention toward them when they first arrived, they blended into the milonga, dancing along with everyone else.
A final special event of 2003 took place in the Spring when two Swarthmore College students, Jonie Lipson and Carla Humud, who had been studying tango with Walter, hosted their first milonga. Held on the Swarthmore campus in Swarthmore, PA (twenty miles from downtown Philadelphia), the milonga was free of charge and featured live music by the New York Tango Trio, which was a huge draw. According to Walter, approximately 70 people attended the beginner class that he taught before the milonga, and more than 120 dancers enjoyed dancing into the night at the milonga.

In the year 2004, three people began teaching tango—Sridhar Hannenhalli, Carlos Douris, and Dan Comer. Hannenhalli is Assistant Professor at the University of Pennsylvania’s Center of Bioinformatics in the Department of Genetics. He began studying tango in 2002 in Philadelphia and at national and international tango festivals and quickly gravitated to dancing in what can be described as “close embrace.” I define “close embrace” as continuous contact between dancers in the regions of the body above the hips with an emphasis on movements and steps that require little space on the dance floor—two to three feet in diameter. Hannenhalli’s years of yoga practice may have contributed to his keen interest in close embrace, which can facilitate a meditative state for both leader and follower. In 2004, Hannenhalli began offering a close embrace technique class for beginners at the Tokio Ballroom with assistance from Arias,

* There has been much debate among dancers in the Philadelphia area about using the terms “close embrace” and “open embrace.” Some view the two embraces as distinct styles of tango with different vocabularies and patterns of movement around the dance floor; others view them as points on a continuum of tango embrace that dancers modify according to the steps and movements they are dancing. I tend to agree with the latter, having learned this approach from professional artists like Franganillo and local artists of considerable tango experience.

† In tango as in most social pairs dances, there is a designated leader who guides the couple’s movements and their progress around the room and a follower who responds with sensitivity so that they move in unison. Though there are no rules that dictate gender roles and some people are adept at both roles, most men in the Philadelphia area tango community lead, and most women follow. See Chapter 6 for further discussion of gender and dance roles.
and in the fall of 2004, he moved his classes to a small, wooden-floored studio on the second
floor of his home at 2046 Catharine Street in Philadelphia. In addition to offering instruction on
close embrace, he coaches students on dancing with musicality and on good floorcraft
(navigation around a dance floor). He has also hosted workshops with guest tango instructors
Sharna Fabiano of Washington, DC; Dina Burke of Wilmington, Delaware; and Mylene Pelletier
of Montréal, Canada. As of December 2006, Hannenhalli was giving private lessons and
teaching weekly group classes in his home studio.

In addition to teaching, Hannenhalli has hosted two milongas at the Church of the Good
Shepherd at 3820 The Oak Road in Philadelphia. He organized the “Philadelphia Tango
Exchange #1” on February 28, 2004, in collaboration with Stahl and Bruce Fertman, a local
tango dancer and founding director of the Alexander Alliance in Japan, America, and
Germany—an organization that teaches Alexander Technique.† The publicity flyer for the
milonga read, “Midway between New York and DC, Philadelphia is the perfect place for Tango
dancers to come together from many cities and share their enthusiasm for the dance. The
Philadelphia Tango Exchange All-night Milonga will make it happen!”ix Held in a beautiful,
large room with extremely high ceilings, large windows, and a wooden floor, the evening began
with Fertman’s introduction to Alexander Technique for tango dancers, followed by a lesson on
close embrace by Robin Thomas from New York City. DJed by Thomas, the milonga began at
10:00 pm and ended at 5:00 am when about ten of us devoured bagels while cleaning the room,
bleary-eyed but happy. Approximately 80 people attended the event, including about five from

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* One may learn more about Hannenhalli’s tango activities at www.markis.com/tangohug.

† According to the Alexander Alliance website, Alexander Technique provides “…a working knowledge of
the principles that govern human coordination…[and helps students redirect]…excessive effort into useful energy
and transform tension into attention, fatigue into kinesthetic lightness.” One may learn more about Bruce Fertman,
the Alexander Alliance, and Alexander Technique at www.alexanderalliance.com.
New York City and five from Washington, DC. “The Philadelphia Tango Exchange #1” echoed familiar themes in the history of local tango—entrepreneurial spirit and collaboration evident in Hannenhalli, Stahl, and Fertman’s creation of the first all-night milonga in the Philadelphia area; a focus on education via the introduction of Alexander Technique for improving tango technique; and outreach to tango dancers in nearby cities to raise broader awareness of the tango community in the Philadelphia area.

In response to tango dancers’ interest in Alexander Technique, Fertman organized the weeklong course “A Matter of Time,” which ran from April 23 to 28, 2004, to help dancers use the technique to improve their tango dancing. He also hired tango instructors Michael Ruehl and Paulina van Bakel from Germany’s Estudio Sudamerica in Berlin to teach tango classes. I was among the twelve people who attended the week of classes and recall it as one of the most rewarding periods of my tango dance studies to date.* As of December 2006, Fertman had gone to Buenos Aires for a few months to teach Alexander Technique and to study tango.x

A second local dancer who began teaching tango in 2004 was Douris, who taught as an assistant with Fung at workshops for beginners in North Wales, a suburb of Philadelphia, and later in Collegeville. Though he has continued to teach since 2004 in Philadelphia suburbs and in Collegeville, he prefers to keep a low profile as an instructor and to focus, instead, on hosting milongas and workshops. He wrote, “As one person said, I am flying under the radar.” He does not advertise his teaching and tries to teach only beginner classes, the level at which he feels most comfortable and effective. As of December 2006, he was teaching primarily on Sunday afternoons before the Collegeville milonga to encourage current dancers and inspire new ones.

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* Fertman helped me increase awareness of my movement patterns and habits, and I used these skills daily in three to four hours of tango instruction and practice. My dancing improved at deep levels during that week, and I look forward to having more educational experiences like it.
He brings in more experienced instructors to offer higher level classes and has collaborated with others to host tango workshops. For example, he and Fung hosted workshops by bandoneonist Daniel Diaz from Washington, DC, and he and Coyle hosted workshops with local dancer Steve Mason, with Norberto “El Pulpo” Esbrez and Luiza Paes from Argentina, and with Coyle’s good friend, Robin Pfanning, from Providence, RI. In addition, local schools and businesses have found Douris through the Collegeville Tango website and invited him to teach classes and demonstrate tango, which he has done both on his own and in partnership with Coyle.

The third person to begin teaching in 2003 was Dan Comer, a salesman from Pennsauken, New Jersey, who had done some swing dancing and studied breakdancing and “pop and lock” before discovering tango in 2002. He began teaching because he was invited to run classes in the absence of the main dance teacher at Princeton University. He taught classes there for two months, but as of the fall of 2006, his classes were on hold. He planned to resume them in early 2007 and was volunteering to assist with classes at the University of Pennsylvania Tango Club in the meantime.

Regarding special milongas in 2004, Ray and Mitchell hosted a third series of “Hit and Run” monthly milongas in Rittenhouse Square from June through September, a second “Alternative Music Milonga” at the Church of the Good Shepherd, and “A Taste of Tango” workshops again for one day at Temple University in collaboration with the same instructors with whom they worked for the first “Taste of Tango” in 2003. However, the largest tango event of the year in terms of attendance, collaboration, and publicity was “Dancing for Schools: A Tango-plus Festival to Benefit Dance Education” (D4S), which took place at Temple University on the last weekend of October 2004.
I had been hired in the summer of 2003 to write grants to raise operating funds for the newly formed NDEO/Temple University Center for Research in Dance Education (CRDE) housed in Temple’s Department of Dance. With few programs in place to entice foundations to award the CRDE any grants, I decided in early 2004 to appeal to the tango community for funding ideas. Douris stepped forward, and we simultaneously thought of hosting a tango event to raise funds for the CRDE. We also hoped that the event would educate social dancers about the CRDE and the Department of Dance, strengthen ties between the local tango community and the Department of Dance, and draw new members into the Philadelphia tango community.

I directed the event with Douris as chair of a planning committee comprised of Temple staff, faculty, and graduate students along with eleven members of the local tango community. I worked closely with all of the local tango instructors and event organizers to invite their participation and to ensure that the event would enhance rather than compete with existing activities. I publicized the festival through a professional web site that VanBuskirk and I created as well as through email, direct mail, flyers and posters, radio interviews on three popular Philadelphia stations (WXPN, WRTI, and WKYW), and announcements at local milongas.

D4S began on Friday evening, October 29, with the milongas at UCAL and Top Hat Studio. Though these milongas did not contribute financially to D4S, they made the festival more appealing to dancers from out of town. On Saturday afternoon, we hosted workshops and a práctica taught by international tango professionals Brigitta Winkler (from Berlin and New York City) and Tomás Howlin (from Buenos Aires and Montréal), located in room 224 of Pearson Hall on Temple’s main campus. On Saturday evening, the Monster Milonga (the main event) ran from 7:00 pm to 3:00 am in Mitten Hall, a large, gothic-style building built in 1931 at the corner of North Broad and Berks Street on Temple’s main campus. The milonga took place in
the Great Court on the first floor—an extremely large room with a foyer, a central area with a stone floor and massive chandelier, and three elevated areas with wooden floors to the West, South, and East of the central area. The room has stained glass windows, balconies overlooking the central area, and beautiful stone pillars and fireplaces. With gold tablecloths, flowers, tea candles, and elegant refreshments, we created a refined evening of tango dance, music, and performance. The evening included a tango demonstration/performance by local tango teachers, a beginner class taught by Winkler and Howlin, a performance by Winkler and Howlin, live music for dancing by Los Chantas Tango Quartet from New York City, a silent auction, and other sale items. The festival ended on Sunday afternoon with two more classes taught by Winkler and Howlin and a práctica hosted by the Figueroas.

Approximately one hundred and ninety-five people attended the Monster Milonga from twenty states around the country; one hundred and thirty were from within a thirty-mile radius of Philadelphia, and sixty-five were from afar. Attendance for the Saturday and Sunday afternoon events were twenty-four and fourteen people, respectively, and attendees were primarily local tango dancers. The event raised $12,400 for the CRDE, due in part to a matching donation of $6,000 from a Temple alumnus. However, the generosity of the tango community was most evident in the value of in-kind donations, which totaled approximately $40,000 for volunteer planning committee time, website creation, silent auction coordination, donated silent auction items, videotaping, photography, food and beverages, cooking services, the creation of decorations, performer discounts, door prizes, and volunteers who worked during the Monster Milonga and the workshops. A lasting reminder of the fundraiser is the Tango Philadelphia logo that was created for T-shirts and advertising. My hope was that local instructors and event organizers would use it after the fundraiser as a unifying image for tango in the Philadelphia
area. As of December 2006, seven had used it—VanBuskirk placed it on the home page of the Tango Philadelphia web site, and El GoTanGo, a group of local instructors/organizers described later in this chapter, printed it on postcards for publicity and outreach purposes.

Directing “Dancing for Schools” was a pivotal experience for me that deepened my sense of commitment to the community and my desire to see it flourish. It was also rich with evidence of historical themes. Having never run a fundraising event nor a tango activity before 2004, I joined the entrepreneurs in the community by using my creativity and resourcefulness to direct the fundraiser, and my competitive nature inspired me to lead my volunteers in creating the best milonga we could muster. Altruism, collaboration, and service were evident in tango dancers who served as members of the planning committee and who volunteered to work before, during, and after the fundraiser, not only to create an enjoyable tango event, but also to raise funds for K-12 dance education programs. With regard to building community through tango, I designed the fundraiser to maintain existing relationships and to help forge new ones—within the tango community, between Temple and the tango community, and between Temple and nearby public schools that would benefit from Temple’s dance education programs. However, the fundraiser’s most notable themes were education and outreach. Through it, I sought to educate tango dancers and the general public about the need for and value of K-12 dance education, to educate the general public about the vibrancy of the local tango community, and to highlight and advocate for local tango in hopes of drawing new dancers.

I had another unspoken goal in directing the “Dancing for Schools” fundraiser that aimed at addressing another theme in the community’s history—unresolved conflict. In 1997, some of the local instructors and event organizers experienced a falling out while collaborating to host “Tango Vivo!,” and this conflict developed into rifts between them that had not been resolved by
2004. To my knowledge, after 1997, some community leaders stopped not only working together but also communicating with each other. Though these rifts may have given rise to competing weekly and monthly milongas that could be viewed as normal and healthy signs of growth, my experience of the rifts was that they weakened the community because a few talented instructors and event organizers operated in relative isolation when more collaboration with and from them could have resulted in rich opportunities for instruction and events.

While I did not push to learn the details that gave rise to the rifts, and the instructors and event organizers involved did not offer those details, for which I greatly respect them, I also wanted the conflict resolved because I often felt uncomfortable when moving between “camps,” that is, attending their different activities. For me, the experience was reminiscent of moving between the homes of two divorced parents wherein questions of loyalty arise no matter how diplomatic the players may be. My hidden agenda in the 2004 “Dancing for Schools” fundraiser was to “bring the family back together” by including all local instructors and event organizers equally, though I had had little direct contact with some of them. Honoring and showcasing their contributions to the community was my primary motive for including them, but I secretly hoped that I might also create an opportunity for movement toward resolution of the rifts. To my knowledge, while their contributions were honored and showcased, relationships were not improved and were still cold in early 2007. In summary, while themes of entrepreneurship, altruism, collaboration, building community through dance, diversity, outreach, education, service, and competition helped the community grow, my experience was that unresolved conflict and rifts may have had some limiting affects on the community in the form of lost opportunities and a less inclusive sense of community.
Recurring Themes Support Continued Growth – 2005 to 2006

In 2005 and 2006, tango in the Philadelphia area continued to grow at a rapid pace with new instructors, new monthly activities, guest instructor workshops, and a host of special events. Though no new themes emerged, most existing themes became more pronounced, like the way in which new and existing instructors/organizers of diverse backgrounds shaped tango activities.

The first new monthly milonga of 2005 began in January. Coyle, who had been running the Collegeville milonga with Douris, was eager to host milongas in her home town of Media, Pennsylvania (20 miles from Philadelphia’s center) for a few reasons. First, she and a close friend wanted to dance to more alternative/non-traditional music than what was being offered in Philadelphia (without traveling to New York, where more such music was played); second, because she wanted to walk to milongas; and third, because there were no Saturday night milongas at the time. She wrote “I love my small town, and I can walk to most things.” She launched “Tango Hop” in Media as the first monthly “alternative” milonga in the area, featuring “...our old and new favorite traditional tango music juxtaposed against all things we find ‘tangoable’.” The milonga took place on the third Saturday of each month, and Coyle taught the beginner tango class right before the milonga.* Coyle first held “Tango Hop” at the Blessed Virgin Mary Nativity Church Hall on Franklin Street—a quaint space with high ceilings and large windows. She then moved it to the Community Center when the milonga outgrew the church and finally settled it on the second floor of the Media Firehouse on the corner of Jackson and Front Streets, where she now hosts the “free, fun, friendly, and funky” event. Coyle transforms the linoleum-floored hall into a beautiful space with lights and flowers and serves hot

* One may learn more about “Tango Hop” and Coyle’s other dance-related activities at www.tangohop.com.
refreshments from nearby restaurants. Attendance has grown steadily to an average of 70 people in December of 2006 from Media, Philadelphia, and other nearby cities, who show their appreciation, in part, by placing bills in the donations jar.\textsuperscript{x1}

While Coyle was expanding local tango with new activities in Media, Barbara Kountouzi was engaging her entrepreneurial spirit to do the same for students, staff, and faculty at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Coordinator of education and research services at the university’s Biomedical Library, Kountouzi began studying tango in 2000 in Philadelphia and has traveled to New York City and Buenos Aires to pursue it. In November of 2005, Kountouzi teamed up with Alila (of the winning piropo) and Costilla (of the performance at the Union League) to teach the inaugural class of their newly founded University of Pennsylvania Tango Club. Sixty people attended the two-hour class followed by a two-hour práctica, and Kountouzi has been teaching weekly classes there ever since with assistance from Alila, Castillo, and Comer. As of December 2006, she was also teaching some private lessons and helping dancers with choreography.

A third opportunity for local tango students became available in 2005 when Jerry Klein, another local tango entrepreneur, began hosting an informal práctica on Wednesday nights at his second-floor studio home at 1527 South Street in downtown Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{*} A sculptor who had studied Aikido for seven years, Klein began learning tango in January of 2005 and soon decided he needed more opportunities to practice on a regular basis. Fung’s Wednesday “FunTango”\textsuperscript{TM} milonga took place a few blocks away at the Tokio Ballroom, but as a beginning dancer, Klein wanted “a low-stress opportunity to practice dancing without the pressure of trying to create a really good dance for the follower.” He also wanted \textit{just} a práctica, not more instruction along

\textsuperscript{*} Jerry Klein is not a relative of Meredith Klein mentioned earlier in this chapter.
with a práctica. At that time, the existing prácticas in the Philadelphia area (Fung’s, the Figueroas’, and Natale and Elkouss’s) were preceded by classes taught by the práctica hosts. With Wednesday being the most convenient night in his schedule, Klein began inviting people to his studio home to practice for free. Klein was aware of Fung’s milonga and did not want to compete with it, so he did not list the práctica on the Tango Philadelphia website; people learned about it through word of mouth. In July of 2006 he began charging $5 per person and providing light refreshments, and as of December 2006, an average of fifteen to twenty people attended regularly.

In addition to new classes and the new práctica, more milongas began in 2005. Stahl and I began hosting “Tango Brunch” at the Atrium Dance Studio on each fifth Sunday of the month (which occurred in January, May, July, and October), and in January of 2006, we moved it to the second Sunday of every month. As of December 2006, it was still a monthly event that began with a Kripalu yoga class that I taught from 10:30-11:30 am and continued with a buffet breakfast and dancing to traditional and alternative music provided by Stahl from 11:30 am to 2:45 pm.* The dress code is casual (we encourage dancers to wear their “fancy pajamas”); the meal is home-made, including quiche, meats, salads, breads, and dessert; and the fee began at $10 in 2005 and increased to $12 in 2006. When main dance studio of the Atrium was expanded in 2006, the number of attendees rose steadily from an average of twenty-five in 2005 to an average of forty-five in December 2006.†

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* I received certification as a Kripalu yoga instructor in May of 2000.

† “Tango Brunch” became a weekly Sunday milonga in May of 2007 with alternating Kripalu yoga and “Tango Libre” classes before the brunch and dancing. Created and taught by Stahl, “Tango Libre” offers solo exercises to improve flexibility, balance, posture, strength, musicality, and quality of movement to help dancers gain better control over their bodies, allowing them to connect more freely and reliably with partners and with the music.
“Tango Brunch” offers another example of how event organizers’ backgrounds have influenced local tango activities. Stahl drew on her interest in alternative tango music, which broadened the pallet of music offered at milongas close to downtown Philadelphia, and I integrated my training as a yoga instructor, providing a gentle class to an average of twelve dancers who regularly commented that they left the class feeling relaxed and happy and that the yoga enhanced their tango experience. We also invited guests to offer special services, including Julia Schiptsova, a tango dancer from Washington DC, who sells Comme Il Faut tango shoes, and local tango dancer and trained massage therapist Rob Connaire, who has offered free foot massages. “Tango Brunch” is known locally for its nurturing and relaxed atmosphere, which adds to the range of local tango events from which dancers may choose.

Another significant collaboration began in 2005 with the specific purpose of building the tango community, attracting new dancers, and providing more opportunities to dance tango to alternative music. In January of 2005, Stahl initiated a meeting with Ray and Mitchell, the Figueroas, Walter, and Berrios to explore what they could do collaboratively to promote tango. In that year, they created a Tango Philadelphia postcard featuring the website address and the logo of the same name that was developed as part of “Dancing for Schools.” They also gave free tango performances at Rittenhouse Square and launched a monthly milonga called “El GoTanGo” at the Ethical Society Building in Philadelphia. For an entrance fee of $12 ($10 for full-time students), dancers could take an introductory lesson and dance to traditional tango and alternative music, the latter comprising about one-third of the music, plus the occasional set of Latin or swing songs. Dancers could also enjoy refreshments and a display of work by a visual artist from within the local tango community.
In June of 2005, the group took a hiatus for the summer and returned in October of 2005 to host “El GoTanGo” at a new location—Studio B, a large yoga studio on the second floor of 209 Fairmount Avenue in Philadelphia. At the new location, the milonga added a new element—a music or dance performance by local or guest performers. “El GoTanGo” took another break during the summer of 2006, and Stahl and Walter stopped participating due to other commitments. Ray, Mitchell, the Figueroas, and Berrios returned in December 2006 and plan to host the milonga every two or three months in the future. According to Mitchell, the milonga’s attendance followed a pattern similar to that of other new milongas—attendance was high (meaning seventy to ninety people) at the beginning when the milonga was “new and different” and then went up and down dramatically over the years (from thirty to ninety people). According to Ray, the music balance shifted over time to accommodate the majority of local tango dancers who preferred dancing to traditional tango music 85 to 90 percent of the time and alternative music 10 to 15 percent of the time.*

Another series of milongas began in January of 2005 at a location just outside of Philadelphia. Ikea, the house wares store in Conshohocken (eighteen miles from Philadelphia’s center), invited Douris and Coyle to manage their new social dance program with monthly Saturday night dances in a section of the store’s dining area. Every third month, the pair hosted a milonga, and in the other months they hosted Latin or ballroom dances, “…but we worked in some tango music every time,” said Douris. The events started at 6:30 pm with a beginner lesson and continued with dancing from 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Ikea advertised the dances by putting big signs around the store, and the $10 fee entitled participants to Ikea’s Swedish meatballs and other snacks, cookies, soft drinks, and lingonberry juice.

* These percentages are estimates Ray provided based on feedback he received from local dancers.
A common problem at local milongas is that more women than men (followers than leaders) attend so that women who do not lead end up sitting much of the evening, a problem I discuss further in subsequent chapters. However, Douris noted that at the Ikea events, “the male-female ratio was about 45/55—it was always close to even. I attributed this to the fact that many couples shop at Ikea for their homes or apartments, so couples saw the signs and attended the dances.” Through collaboration with personnel at Ikea, Douris and Coyle engaged their entrepreneurial spirits to add to the diversity of local milongas and to create another outreach event that drew new dancers into the tango community. Though an average of fifty people usually attended the Ikea dances, the program ended in 2006 when Ikea managers decided to use the dining room area differently.

A bit further from Philadelphia, Maria Martynovsky, a graduate student at Princeton University (forty-five miles from downtown Philadelphia), became president of the Princeton Tango Club in January of 2005 and began hosting their monthly milongas, which often drew dancers from Philadelphia and its suburbs. With experience dancing folk, ballet, and modern, Martynovsky began studying tango in 2003 in Ithaca, New York, while completing her undergraduate studies at Cornell University. Martynovsky continued the club tradition that had begun in 2003 of hosting monthly milongas in the New Graduate College Common room at 88 College Road in West Princeton, New Jersey, on the third Saturday of the month from January through August and on the first Saturdays from September through December.* With modest fees to encourage students to attend, the milongas were usually preceded by workshops with

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*I discuss the Princeton milongas in the 2005-2006 section because that is the time frame for which I have data. I was not able to collect data on Princeton milongas from 2003 to 2004 because, at that time, a different graduate student was president, and I did not feel it appropriate or necessary to contact him/her. Note that aggregate data on monthly milongas discussed later in this chapter do reflect that Princeton’s monthly milongas started in 2003.
guest instructors who often DJed and danced at the milongas. Martynovsky has brought many tango professionals to Princeton to teach workshops, including Joaquin Canay and Omar Vega of Buenos Aires; Valeria Solomonoff, Murat Erdemsel, Michelle Lamb, and Rebecca Shulman from New York City; Carlos and Tova Moreno from Boston; and Isaac Oboka from Denver. As of December 2006, Martynovsky planned to continue hosting monthly milongas while enrolled as a graduate student, and she expected the program to continue beyond her tenure as club president.

At another college in the suburbs of Philadelphia, two undergraduate entrepreneurs hosted the second Swarthmore College Milonga on February 26, 2005. Students Lipson and Humud, who had hosted the 2004 milonga at Swarthmore, collaborated again with Walter to host the 2005 milonga in the Upper Tarble Pavilion on the Swarthmore campus. It began at 9:00 pm with a beginner lesson taught by Walter and included performances by Ray, Mitchell, Stahl, and Walter and social dancing until 12:00 am. On December 9, 2006, tango students at Swarthmore hosted their third Swarthmore College Milonga assisted by Walter and others.

From June through September of 2005, Ray and Mitchell hosted a third series of monthly “Hit and Run” milongas in Rittenhouse Square, but those were not the only outdoor milongas that year. In her questionnaire, Alila wrote that she collaborated with local tango dancers Carolyn Merritt and Laura Digilio to host “Tango by the River” on July 29 at the Ellen Phillips Samuel Memorial Garden on Kelly Drive in Philadelphia. At the time, Alila was a staff member at the University of Pennsylvania, Merritt was a doctoral student in Temple’s Department of Anthropology, and Digilio was a scientific researcher in pharmaceuticals at Merck and Company, Inc. Inspired by outdoor milongas in New York City, the three tango entrepreneurs provided a sound system and free dancing on the patio of a statue garden by the Schuylkill River,
which flows through Philadelphia to the Delaware River. Serving as a unique experience for local tango dancers and as an outreach tool to make tango visible to the general public, the milonga drew approximately thirty people who danced somewhat carefully on the stone patio amidst large statues as a gentle breeze blew on the warm summer evening.

A final special event of 2005 was a second milonga hosted by Hannenhalli in October at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Philadelphia. Robin Thomas and Jennifer Bratt from New York City offered a workshop before the milonga, and Thomas DJed the event. Though it was not billed as an all-night milonga, I do recall staying until about 2:00 am when ten of us reluctantly stopped dancing to help clean up. Similar to the “Philadelphia Tango Exchange” in 2004, Hannenhalli’s 2005 milonga demonstrated his entrepreneurial abilities and helped to make dancers from Philadelphia and New York City more aware of each other.

The year 2006 brought more new instructors, monthly events, and special events as the tango community in the Philadelphia area continued to grow. I began teaching tango in September of 2006 at the Pennsylvania Dance Conservatory at 7500 Germantown Avenue in Philadelphia with considerable assistance from tango dancer and musician Rob Connaire. Jorge Laico, a friend and ballet professional who had just become the conservatory’s owner, invited me to begin offering tango classes there. With no ongoing opportunities for people to study tango in that part of the city (on the border between Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill), local instructors were supportive of my desire to encourage new dancers from the area to join the community. As of December 2006, I was offering two beginner-level classes, and attendance was steady at an average of eight people per class.

A monthly milonga that began in the summer of 2006 was Fung’s “Heart2Heart” on the evening of the second Sunday of each month at the Tokio Ballroom in Philadelphia. Like the
Wednesday evening “FunTango”™ milonga, “Heart2Heart” features traditional tango music and was an regular event as of December 2006.

In November of 2006, “Milonga Nueva”—the first local milonga that regularly offered live music by professionals—began running bi-monthly at the Pennsylvania Dance Conservatory in the Mount Airy section of Philadelphia. Conservatory Owner Laico invited me and Connaire to work with him and his wife, professional accordionist Dr. Lidia Kaminska, to create the new milonga, which featured the music of “Tanto Tango,” Kaminska’s tango quartet, as well as the music of guest DJs from Philadelphia and nearby cities. “Milonga Nueva” took place in a large studio on the third floor with a vaulted ceiling and large windows, which we decorated with candles, white lights, flowers, and rose petals. Eager to dance to live music, one hundred and twenty people attended the first milonga, and ensuing milongas drew an average of one hundred dancers from the Philadelphia area and Baltimore. In the spirit of collaboration, “Milonga Nueva” and “El GoTanGo” ran on alternating first Saturdays of the month so that they would not compete for attendance.

In the spirit of collaboration and the kind of competition that would strengthen rather than weaken the tango community, most event organizers took great care over the years to schedule new milongas and other events at times and on days that would not compete directly with existing events. Though the community grew quickly, many felt that it was not large enough to support two major events happening simultaneously, and most event organizers communicated with each other to avoid direct competition. By the end of 2006, out of more than twenty monthly milongas, only a few of them ran on the same days and times. On Friday nights there were two milongas—“Lesley and Kelly’s Friday Milonga” at UCAL in West Philadelphia and another in a suburb about twenty-three miles from downtown Philadelphia. On Wednesday
nights there were the “FunTango”™ milonga and Klein’s práctica a few blocks apart in
downtown Philadelphia. Finally, the weekly Sunday afternoon “Collegeville Tango” milonga in
Collegeville ran concurrently with two Sunday milongas in Philadelphia, but given the growth of
tango in Collegeville and with more than thirty miles between Collegeville and Philadelphia,
these Sunday events tended not to compete heavily with each other. I find it quite remarkable
that there were not more scheduling conflicts as the number of milongas per month increased

With regard to special events in 2006, in the spring I directed the second tango festival at
Temple University to raise funds for the CRDE. Renamed “Dancing for Schools: A Tango
Festival and Silent Auction to Benefit Dance Education,” the fundraiser started with introductory
tango seminars and culminated with a day of workshops and a large evening milonga.* In March
and April of 2006, local instructors donated their time to teach three tango seminars in Mitten
Hall to build awareness of the fundraiser and to recruit student volunteers. Sixty people attended
the seminars, and 15 of them volunteered to help with the milonga. In the weeks just before the
milonga, three local tango dancers and I gave free tango classes to 20 Philadelphia Girls High
School students, who volunteered to help with the milonga. In the afternoon of Saturday, May
13, professional dancers Angeles Chanaha and Michael Nadtochi from New Jersey taught two
dance workshops in room 224 of Pearson Hall, and Los Chantas Tango Quartet taught a music
workshop in room 221 of Pearson Hall. That evening, 190 people attended the “Mighty
Milonga” in Mitten Hall’s Great Court, the same place where the “Monster Milonga” had taken
place nearly two years before.

* As of Spring 2007, the festival website was still located at
www.temple.edu/boyer/dance/dancingforschools.
Like its predecessor, the “Mighty Milonga” featured tango performances, live music for
dancing by Los Chantas Tango Quartet, a silent auction, and other sale items. As in 2004, the
fundraiser website highlighted local milongas that took place on Friday and Sunday of that
weekend and gave lengthy descriptions of the local and visiting artists involved. The milonga
began at 8:00 pm with a beginner tango lesson, and dancing continued from 9:00 pm to 3:00 am.
Professional accordionist Dr. Lidia Kaminska performed three solo pieces, and guitarist Allen
Krantz and violinist Moonsun Lee performed duets. The milonga also featured choreographed
dance performances by Ray and Mitchell, Walter and Stahl, and Chanaha and Nadtochi. The
enhanced focus on both music and dance at the 2006 fundraiser reflected the recent merge of
Temple University’s Department of Dance with its Boyer College of Music, now called the
Boyer College of Music and Dance.

Though fundraiser attendance in 2006 was about the same as in 2004, the 2006 event
raised only $7,500 for the CRDE because there was no matching donor and because it received
limited support from corporate sponsors. However, the event’s successes included its outreach
and advocacy functions that drew public attention to the local tango community, including the
attention and participation of local high school students; Temple faculty, staff, and students; and
the general public. The fundraiser also provided another opportunity for more than 100 local
tango instructors, event organizers, and dancers to collaborate in creating an event in service of
local K-12 dance education programs. Finally, the fundraiser played an educational role within
the tango community by informing dancers about the need for K-12 dance education, and it
helped to maintain positive relations between the tango community and Temple University.

There were a few more special milongas in the summer of 2006 designed to expand and
enrich the community. In June of 2006, Comer and Arias hosted a Saturday evening milonga at
the Community Center in Camden, New Jersey, and, on August 26, Alila and Digilio hosted a second “Tango by the River” at the Ellen Phillips Samuel Memorial Garden by the Schuylkill River.

Breaking out of the milonga mold, Berrios, who runs the educationally rich “Tango Café” with Walter, started the monthly “Tango Tertulia” in the fall of 2006 to offer “friendly discussions for Argentine tango lovers” at Apamate, a small restaurant serving Latin American cuisine at 1620 South Street in Philadelphia. According to Berrios’s email invitations, tertulia may be translated from Spanish to English to mean “…a get together, gathering, [or] social gathering with literary or artistic overtones.”xii While enjoying dinner, dessert, or a glass of wine, attendees have discussed topics like the artwork depicted on tango sheet music and the role of the flute in early tango music. With a small yet committed following of tango enthusiasts, Berrios plans to continue hosting “Tango Tertulia” indefinitely.

In addition to monthly and bi-monthly events that began in 2006, Coyle continued in entrepreneurial fashion by opening Tango 411 Studio/Gallery at 119 Gayley Street in Media.* In addition to teaching tango at Collegeville, she had begun teaching in a small space in Media in February of 2005. When she learned of the opportunity to expand the space for her classes, she enlisted the help of her students (some of whom were contractors, painters, and carpenters) to create “…a little over 750 square feet of space for visual and performing arts in Media.”xiii When Tango 411 Studio/Gallery opened in August of 2006, she not only continued to teach her beginner and intermediate tango classes there but also began a práctica from 8:30 pm to 11:30 pm called “El Ocho Loco” and started displaying the work of local artists.† She operates the

* One may learn more about activities and events at Tango 411 Studio/Gallery by visiting www.tango411.com.
studio with the help of some close friends and runs a program to help dance and movement entrepreneurs promote and offer classes and events at the studio. Activities of the studio/gallery continued to expand in early 2007 to serve many different segments of the Media community, all with the goal of building community. Coyle wrote, “Though I actually physically built the studio, the real work is building community, creating a safe space for people to be themselves, discover themselves, discover life among others that complement them and care for them.”

Coyle’s activities along with those of others in the tango community in 2005 and 2006 offer additional evidence of historical themes of entrepreneurship, altruism, collaboration, building community through tango, diversity of instructors and event organizers and their activities, dancers acting as advocates through outreach activities, a commitment to education, being of service, and competition.

Activities not Included in this History

A number of tango activities have taken place in the Philadelphia area for which I was not able to collect data. For example, Kountouzi reported that the University of Pennsylvania tango club has hosted a few milongas, Walter recalls that there were milongas at the Warwick Hotel in the late 1990s*, and Ray and Mitchell have hosted special workshops and milongas for visiting tango professionals, which Ray described as “usually on a Saturday; once at a church in Lansdowne, PA; once at a Church up in the northeast; I believe two at the German Society of PA; probably another one or two.” One local instructor and event organizer who has been active

† “El Ocho Loco” can be translated from Spanish to English to mean “the crazy eight.” The term “ocho” in tango refers to a figure in which the dancer’s feet roughly trace the pattern of the number eight on the floor.

* For example, Walter showed me a flyer he had saved announcing “Argentine Tango Night” on Sunday, July 27, 1997 at the Warwick.
in the community since the late 1990s was unavailable to participate in this research, so none of
his activities are described or included in this or subsequent chapters. Though it has been
impossible to document every single key tango activity that has taken place in the Philadelphia
area since 1986, activities for which data is available create a chronology of consistent growth
from 1986 to 2006 that invites further exploration.

Summary of Chronological History

When Tango Argentino, the traveling music and dance show from Buenos Aires, played
for the first time in New York City in 1985, it sparked a national “tango fever,” which swept
through Philadelphia and other cities in the mid-1980s. Two stars from the show, Elsa María and
Héctor Mayoral, offered the first tango class in Philadelphia in 1986 at Celia’s studio, and, by
1991, Ray and Mitchell had begun offering regular classes at the local University City Arts
League. In 1994, Ray and Mitchell began hosting the first local weekly milonga, Morris and
Terzi hosted a series of six workshops taught by leading tango artists from Buenos Aires and the
United States, and Fung began hosting many workshops per year taught by renowned national
and international tango artists. In 1996, Fung began teaching tango and developed a 300-person
mailing list and personal tango-focused website, and VanBuskirk established a website for listing
all local tango activities. The period of 1986 to 1996 was notable for the entrepreneurism and
altruism of Celia, Ray, Mitchell, Fung, Morris, and Terzi, and VanBuskirk, who launched tango
in the Philadelphia area.

The year 1997 marked a milestone for local tango when many local instructors and event
organizers collaborated to host “Tango Vivo!,” the first weekend tango event in Philadelphia,
complete with workshops, a dance performance, and a tango trio playing live music for dancing.
With 140 people in attendance, the event highlighted how the community had grown since 1991 when only six to twelve people had regularly attended the weekly milonga. From 1998 to 1999, more local community members began teaching tango, and event organizers continued to offer workshops with professional tango artists.

In the seven-year period from early 2000 through 2006, the tango community grew faster than it had in the preceding fourteen years. Fourteen instructors and sixteen event organizers joined the ranks (some played both roles); the number of milongas per month increased to 21; and, from 2004 to 2006, the number of workshops by guest instructors spiked dramatically to 18 per year after hovering at four per year from 2002 to 2003. New historical themes that appeared were activities designed to build community through tango; the diversity of instructors and event organizers and the range of activities they created; dancers participating in outreach activities as tango advocates; education about tango culture and history as well as about the value of dance for young people; and dancers volunteering in service of others. By 2006, interest in tango had grown so much that local tango aficionados began attending Berrios’s “Tango Tertulia,” which involves no dancing, just conversation and education about all things tango. An estimated 400 people danced tango in the Philadelphia area, and as of January 31, 2007, 944 people had joined VanBuskirk’s email list for receiving information about local tango activities. In 2006, tango in the Philadelphia area was still expanding, both in the numbers of people involved and in the number of tango activities, and it showed no signs of slowing.

Trends in the History of Tango in the Philadelphia Area

Having described the history of tango in the Philadelphia area in detail and discussed forces behind its growth, this section takes an aggregate view to analyze trends over time using
both quantitative and qualitative data. The section begins by tracking changes in the numbers of activities and the people leading them from 1991 to 2006. Data for this comparison is solely quantitative.

Given that the most marked increases in activities and people took place after 2000, it is interesting to look more closely at recent data for trends and patterns. The questionnaire solicited such data in both quantitative and qualitative forms, primarily from 2004 to 2006, a time frame that I hoped would allow instructors/organizers to draw from recent records and/or memory. Twenty-two instructors/organizers provided quantitative data on classes, prácticas, workshops, and/or milongas, depending on their activities, as well as their own qualitative perceptions of how the community was changing. (The instructor/organizer who participated via email instead of completing a questionnaire did not provide this information.) Their perceptions provide depth to this chapter’s documentation of the community’s history and offer launch points for considering the community’s future growth addressed at length in Chapter 8.

Numbers of People and Activities

An overview of the total number of reported events and the total number of people running these events annually from 1991 to 2006 shows fairly consistent growth of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area over time. “Figure 2. Community Growth. Change in Number of Milongas per Month, Instructors, and Event Organizers By Year” illustrates this growth. Note that Figure 2 portrays only the numbers of milongas that took place weekly (which averages to 4.3 times per month) or monthly (once per month); it does not include isolated milongas or other special events. I made this distinction because weekly and monthly milongas that dancers rely on for consistent opportunities to dance tend to contribute to growth of the community more than
do special events, which excel instead at celebrating and publicizing local tango. In addition, because the Ikea milonga took place once every three months (four times per year), I counted it as 0.33 milongas per year in my calculations, and because “Milonga Nueva” takes place six times per year, I counted it as 0.5 milongas per year.

Figure 2 shows that the number of milongas per month increased from none in 1991 and 1992 to 9.6 by 1994, reflecting the two weekly milongas run by Ray, Mitchell, and Fung. The number of milongas per month remained at 9.6 until 2000, when it began to rise, and between 2000 and 2006, the number nearly doubled to 20.73 in 2006 (rounded to twenty-one earlier in this chapter).
The figure shows a similar increase in the number of local tango instructors. From 1991 to 1993, there were two instructors; in 1994, a third instructor began teaching tango; and in 1998, the number of instructors began to increase fairly steadily until 2006 when there were 19 instructors.

It was also useful to plot changes in the numbers of local event organizers, because although some people have played both roles, all local tango instructors do not organize workshops or ongoing milongas, and all organizers of workshops or ongoing milongas do not teach tango. The change in the number of event organizers plots a more erratic path than the change in numbers of milongas per month and instructors. From 1992 to 1994, the number of event organizers rose to five, in part reflecting the workshops that Morris and Terzi hosted in 1994. When they stopped hosting workshops after 1994, the number dropped back to three in 1995 (Ray, Mitchell, and Fung) and remained there until 2001 with one exception. In 1997, the number spiked briefly to ten when many local tango dancers joined existing event organizers to host “Tango Vivo!.” From 2001 to 2006, the number of event organizers more than tripled, rising from six to nineteen.

Viewing all three lines of change together, one sees that the number of milongas per month, the number of instructors, and the number of event organizers increased at similar rates from 1991 to 2006. A fourth variable is consistent with this overall trend but shows more peaks and dips along the way. “Figure 3. Workshops Over Time. Change in Numbers of Workshops with Guest Instructors by Year” shows the number of workshops with guest tango instructors that local event organizers hosted from 1991 to 2006. The number of workshops taught by guest tango instructors from cities like Buenos Aires, New York City, and Montreal, jumped quickly from none in 1993 to eleven in 1994 when three people began hosting them. Morris and Terzi
hosted six workshops in the spring and summer of 1994, and Fung began offering an average of five workshops per year at that time. In 1995, the number of workshops dropped to five when Morris and Terzi did not continue hosting them but Fung did, and the number rose again in 1997, 1998, and 1999 when Ray, Mitchell, and the Figueroas began hosting workshops. From 1999 to 2002, the number dropped again to four per year because most hosts decreased the number of workshops they were hosting. However, in 2003 there was a steady climb again in workshops per year to eighteen in 2006, by which time Ray, Mitchell, and Fung had stopped hosting workshops and six new people had begun—Douris, Coyle, Martynovsky, Hannenhalli, Berrios, and I.
In summary, quantitative data from 1991 to 2006 show an increase in the number of milongas per month, instructors, and event organizers per year. Data on the number of workshops show a less consistent path, with a peak of eleven in 1997, a long period from 1995 to 2004 when the number did not rise higher than eight, and a sharp spike in the number of workshops from 2005 to 2006. In the next section, I explore some possible explanations for why the numbers of workshops per year has been erratic, among other trends.

**Weekly Classes and Prácticas**

The questionnaire gathered quantitative data on group classes, prácticas, and private lessons. For each activity, I requested that they provide the average number taught per week; the average number of attendees per week; the levels of their classes and private lessons (beginner, intermediate, or advanced); the percentage of attendees who were leading versus following; and the fees. Out of 22 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 18 were instructors, and 14 of them completed the questions regarding their teaching during these two time periods. (Four instructors either had not taught during these time periods or chose not to respond to these questions.)

The number of weekly private lessons increased by 11 between 2004 and 2006, and the average number of people taking private lessons each week increased by nine, which may indicate that some students who took private lessons began taking them more frequently. By contrast, the number of weekly group classes/prácticas increased by only one, yet average attendance at these activities increased by 72, which suggests that average group size increased. (Data for class and práctica attendance was combined in the questionnaire.) There was overlap among student attendees, meaning that some students took classes and/or private lessons from
multiple instructors, so these numbers do not represent the actual number of dancers studying tango; rather, they show a trend toward increasing numbers of dancers seeking instruction.

Questionnaire respondents reported that mean group class fees decreased by $2.49 (from $10.20 in 2004 to $7.71 in 2006) and that median group class fees decreased by $1.10 (from $10.00 in 2004 to $8.90 in 2006). Combined, these data indicate that from 2004 to 2006, the fees that instructors charged became somewhat more consistent, that is, there was less difference among the fees they charged—in 2004, instructors charged between $4 and $16.50 per class, and in 2006, they charged between $5.33 and $15 per class. Though these data do not address the fees charged by all local instructors (five of whom chose not to provide this data or not to participate in the research), they do suggest a trend. The decrease in group class fees probably reflects the increase in the number of instructors from 10 in 2004 to 19 in 2006, some of whom offered classes at low prices to attract new students and others who did not rely heavily on teaching tango as a source of income.

The mean fee for a private lessons increased $5 from $55.00 in 2004 to $60.00 in 2006, and the median of $60.00 did not change. In other words, in 2004 and in 2006, half of the instructors teaching private lessons charged more than $60.00, and half charged less. When these data are considered along with the mean of $60, they indicate that $60.00 per private lesson was a reliable average fee. Of the 16 instructor respondents, seven were giving private lessons in 2004 and 12 were giving them by 2006. (The four respondents who were not giving private lessons in 2006 either had stopped teaching or were looking for other venues in which to teach.) This increase in the number of instructors and slight increase in the fees that students paid for

* The “mean” is the average, the “median” is the midpoint (50% were higher and 50% were lower), and the “mode” is the most common response, if any. Note that because there were only twenty respondents (n=20), it was not useful to calculate standard deviations or other statistical measures.

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private lessons offers another indicator of the increase in dancers’ interest in and willingness to invest in tango.

The mean number of leaders in group classes stayed about the same at 50 percent from 2004 to 2005, but the median number of leaders in group classes dropped from 49 percent to 40 percent, which reflects the imbalance of leaders and followers that six respondents noted in their questionnaires. The difference between the mean and the median indicates that classes experienced different degrees of leader-follower imbalance. This phenomenon could have reflected differences in the number of leaders and followers choosing to attend group classes (versus private lessons or workshops), or it could have reflected a similar imbalance occurring in the number of leaders and followers in the entire community.

Finally, from 2004 to 2006, there were small increases in the numbers of classes and privates that instructors offered per week by dance level. Beginner classes increased from eight to ten, intermediate classes from six to seven, and the number of advanced classes remained constant at three. Increases in private lessons were a bit larger—beginner from eight to ten, intermediate from seven to eleven (the largest change), and advanced from five to six. The increase in instructional offerings is consistent with respondents’ reports that the number of dancers was growing. It is not clear why the largest increase appeared in the number of intermediate private lessons, but in my experience, when one reaches the intermediate stage in tango, one is quite enamored with the dance and determined to learn how to dance it well. Though private lessons are more expensive, they can help dancers improve more quickly through individualized instruction than can group lessons. It is possible that a number of tango dancers reached the intermediate level and desired this type of instruction around the same time.
Moving to qualitative data, the questionnaire asked what changes or trends, if any, respondents may have noticed in students’ attendance, preferences/interests, behaviors, or other phenomena in classes and prácticas since May of 2004. They noticed many trends, and the one mentioned most frequently related to shifting levels of interest in various styles of tango embrace and tango dancing. Five instructors mentioned that students are more curious about close embrace, including Hannenhalli, who stated that there is “more popularity of close embrace dancing,” Mitchell, who stated, “interest in close embrace style continues to grow,” and Ray, who stated that there is “more willingness to dance in close embrace (a closer more intimate embrace).” Many dancers feel that the physical proximity of dancing in close embrace (essentially full contact in the upper body and often head or cheek) is more intimate, and people respond to it differently. Consistent with this characteristic of tango, Stahl wrote in her questionnaire, “People are curious about close embrace and ask about it. Some students like it a lot. Others are uncomfortable with it.”

While five instructors noticed an increase in interest in close embrace, two of these—Ray and Mitchell—noticed an increase in interest in “tango nuevo.” One could claim that tango nuevo is at the opposite end of the continuum from close embrace because tango nuevo is often danced in both open and close embrace, moving seamlessly between the two and including moments of limited or no contact between partners.

Related to these observations and consistent with current debate nationally about the definitions of various embraces and styles of tango, Fung noted a recent trend in the “…apparent sense that close embrace is on another planet from open embrace when they are all part of the continuum and are separated for teaching reasons. In reality, the EMBRACE is the embrace and will vary according to person, place, music, energy…” I tend to agree with Fung,
viewing different embraces as falling on a continuum with close embrace at one end and open
embrace or very limited contact between partners at the other. I would argue that there is value
in using the terms “close embrace” and “open embrace” for teaching purposes, provided they are
presented as having equal value on the continuum of tango embrace technique. *

Another trend noted by tango instructors related to shifting gender roles in leading and
following. Figueroa and Ray perceived that there were increasingly more women than men in
classes, and they along with Hannenhalli perceived that women were increasingly interested in
learning to lead, in part out of necessity in classes without enough men. Ray noticed that men
were also more willing to step out of their traditional role of leading women. He saw,

...a willingness of men to practice (partner) with other men when the class wasn't
gender balanced and there were extra men. (This trend started about 10 years ago,
but has become even more pronounced in the last 2-3 years). Until recently the
men would NOT usually dance with each other in similar circumstances (extra
men in the class). They would simply sit out or practice the steps by themselves.

Both male and female dancers are becoming more flexible about leading and following to
accommodate gender imbalances in classes, a trend that has extended to the dance floor at
milongas as well, discussed in more detail below.

Figueroa, Ray, and Stahl noticed an increase in the numbers of young dancers taking
tango classes. Stahl wrote, “Although there are still not a lot of young people who do tango in
Philadelphia (compared to other dances like swing or salsa), I've noticed that more 20-
somethings are showing up in my classes.” Related to this trend, Stahl, Ray, and Mitchell

* On a personal note, when a leader flows between close and open embraces based on the music, the steps,
and our connection, I experience greater creativity, improvisational potential, and opportunities for self-expression
as a dancer and a musician than I do if a leader dances exclusively in close embrace. I have studied many forms of
dance and movement since childhood, and I studied piano for six years, African and jazz percussion for ten years,
and voice for fifteen years, including performing in chorales and a capella groups. I am drawn to self-expression
through music and dance, and thoroughly enjoy how the continuum of tango embraces supports this expression.
perceive that interest in tango had increased markedly in the past two years. Stahl noticed new
textual content interest in tango from the salsa and West Coast swing communities at the Atrium Dance Studio
where she teaches, and Ray speculated that one reason for this trend might have been that “Many
movies in the last few years have portrayed men very favorably (often the protagonists of the
movie, in strong, masculine roles) doing partner dancing (even dancing tango).” In a quick
search on the internet, he found thirteen films produced since 1988 that include male
protagonists who dance tango.* Having seen most of these films myself and read reviews on the
others, I agree with his perception that men who do partner dancing in these movies are
portrayed positively and that this phenomenon has probably helped to fuel public interest in
learning to dance tango.

Douris, Ray, and Mitchell noticed an increased interest in dancing to non-traditional	
tango music as well as music that is a fusion of tango and other forms, like pop and electronic
music. Related to these preferences in music, Kountouzi and Hannenhalli noticed an increase in
dancers’ desire and ability to dance with “musicality.” Though there is no clear definition of this
term within the tango community, anectodal conversations with dancers indicate that they mean
sensitivity and responsiveness to the meter, rhythmic variations, melody, counter-melody, and
other elements of music that a leader and follower express physically through dancing.

Finally, Kountouzi and Douris noticed an increased desire to teach tango among
members of the community. Kountouzi, counted herself among those who had recently taken up
teaching, and Douris commented in his questionnaire that many people seemed to want to teach.

* Ray identified the following thirteen films (listed in alphabetical order): “Assassination Tango” (2002);
“Evita” (US, 1996); “Moulin Rouge” (UK, 2001); “Never Say Never Again” (1983); “Scent of a Woman” (1992);
“Tango” (1999); “Tango Bar” (1988); “The Tango Lesson” (1997); “Tango Magic” (television documentary, 1999);
“Tango: The Obsession” (documentary, 1998); “True Lies” (US, 1994); “The Tuxedo” (US, 2002); and “Waking
Life” (US, 2001).
It is true that the numbers of instructors in the Philadelphia area increased rapidly from 2004 to 2006. In Chapter 5, I explore instructors’ backgrounds in dance, their tango training, their motives for teaching, and issues of being qualified to teach tango. Suffice it to say that most people begin teaching tango out of love for the dance and a desire to help others. However, there is no certification process for becoming qualified to teach tango locally or nationally, which essentially means that anyone in the United States may claim that he or she is tango instructor.

In summary, data on weekly classes and prácticas showed patterns of increased instructional opportunities and numbers of students; small fluctuations in fees; a decrease in the ratio of leaders to followers that helped to increase gender role flexibility regarding leading and following; increases in the numbers of group classes and private lessons, especially at the intermediate level; an increase in interest in alternative music and styles of dancing; an increase in young people; and an increase in dancers’ desire to teach.

Trends in Workshops

Out of 22 respondents, 20 provided data on the workshops they had hosted. The questionnaire did not collect data on changes in workshop attendance, attendees’ level of dancing, and the ratio of leaders to followers. Workshops vary greatly in content, location, quality of instruction, and other variables, making their comparison akin to comparing apples to oranges. The only variable that merited quantitative data collection was how fees might have changed over time. Fees in 1994 were between $25 and $75 per person and were determined based on the fees charged by guest instructors. From 2004 through 2006, the mean workshop fee per person was $22, the median was $25, and the mode was $25. Discounts for registering ahead or attending more than one workshop brought fees per person down to a mean of $21, a median
of $20, and a mode of $20. Overall, workshop fees decreased slightly by a few dollars from 1994 to 2006.

The questionnaire gathered qualitative data on whether instructors/organizers had noticed changed or trends in workshops that they had hosted since May of 2005. I requested data only from the most recent year to keep the task of questionnaire completion manageable. Out of six respondents who had hosted workshops since May of 2005, four had noticed no changes or trends, but Teresa Figueroa and Michele Berrios had noticed a few. Figueroa noticed that “some of the more experienced men prefer to attend workshops versus regular classes,” and that “younger students are on the increase.”* Her observation that experienced men preferred workshops to classes is consistent with Ray’s, Hannenhalli’s, and Figueroa’s observation that there were fewer men than women in classes. Similarly, her observation that more young people were attending workshops is consistent with Ray’s, Stahl’s, and her observation that more young people were attending classes and showing interest in tango.

Berrios noticed that dancers “want to learn complicated figures, try nuevo tango steps and are becoming more demanding with the prices of workshops. They want them to be so affordable it sometimes does not make it possible to host good teachers.” Her observation about dancers’ increasing interest in tango nuevo and other complicated styles of tango is consistent with Ray’s and Mitchell’s observation that more dancers in their classes are interested in learning tango nuevo. However, Berrios’s observation that workshop attendees were demanding lower prices and that this demand limited the feasibility of hosting workshops raises a new issue and echoes comments other workshop hosts made at different points in the questionnaire. For

* When instructors and event organizers use the term “young” or “younger” to describe local dancers, they are speaking of people in their teens and twenties.
example, Fung stated, “I no longer choose to host and subsidize visiting artists in Philadelphia.” By using the word “subsidize,” Fung implies that she paid out of pocket to offer workshops. She and other hosts often invited workshop instructors to stay in their homes. In addition, if workshop attendance was low or there was pressure to charge low fees, hosts had to make up the difference in artists’ fees that could be as high as $600 per day. It is my suspicion that others in the community who stopped hosting workshops may have done so, like Fung, in part for financial reasons—namely, the high cost of hosting workshops and dancers’ reluctance to pay more than $25 per workshop. In a conversation with me, Mitchell confirmed that she and Ray have hosted workshops to help the community grow and to allow dancers to have experiences they could not otherwise get locally. They have never made money from hosting workshops because of the amount of work involved and the income lost from not teaching their own normally scheduled classes.

Despite these financial challenges for workshop hosts, from 2004 through 2006, the number of workshops more than doubled from seven per year to eighteen, and fees decreased slightly to $21 if one took multiple workshops per day. Dancers wanted fees to decrease even further, but questionnaire respondents still reported increased attendance by young people, increased interest in tango nuevo, and leaders with experience preferring workshops over classes.

Trends in Milongas

As with workshops, the questionnaire gathered quantitative data only for changes in milonga fees, not for other variables, in an effort to streamline the amount of work required of questionnaire participants. Out of 22 respondents, the 20 event organizers who provided data on their milongas indicated that in the 1990s, average milonga fees were $5 or $6 per person. In
2001, fees began to increase gradually to May 2006 rates, which were $10 or $12 per person with $2 discounts at some milongas for full-time students, except for “Tango Hop,” which remained free with donations accepted. (In November of 2006, “Milonga Nueva” was the first milonga to charge $15 per person, and that was charged because of the musicians’ fees for providing live music.) In summary, from 1994 to 2006, most milonga fees increased by $5 to $6, doubling in a span of twelve years.

In that period, the U.S. Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the Northeast Urban Region increased by 62.5 points from 153.2 in January of 1994 to 215.7 in May of 2006, a 41-percent increase (U.S. Department of Labor 2007). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the CPI “…is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services” (2007). From 1994 to 2006, the CPI did not double the way fees for milongas in the Philadelphia area did. Although the numbers of tango dancers increased over time from a handful in 1991 to approximately 400 in 2006, which might have pushed milonga fees down, demand for milongas was high enough to support prices doubling. The fee to attend a milonga, where one enjoys socializing, refreshments, and dancing for three to four hours, was still lower than the price of other popular recreational social activities, like attending a concert ($15 or more) or going out for dinner and a movie ($30 or more). However, two local event organizers reported trends indicating some dissatisfaction among dancers regarding milonga fees. Berrios noted, “People are demanding more for their money. The bar was raised and everyone had to offer better 'service' (space, food, presentation, innovation and creativity).” Similarly, Kountouzi observed that there was “more resentment towards increasing prices.” It seems that milonga prices may have to remain fairly constant well into the future to avoid displeasing local dancers.
Regardless of milonga fee increases, two questionnaire respondents noticed an increase in attendance through May of 2006. Ray observed that “the dances are getting more crowded as the tango community continues to grow,” and I noted that attendance at “Tango Brunch” had been increasing slowly but steadily from a mean of 30 dancers in March of 2006 to a mean of 38 in May. However, as the community grew, not all milongas saw increases in attendance. The mean attendance rates for the period of March through May of 2006 provided by questionnaire respondents showed uneven attendance levels at the various milongas. For weekly milongas for which I was able to gather data (“Lesley and Kelly’s Friday Night Milonga,” “FunTango”™ on Wednesdays, and “Collegeville Milonga” on Sundays), mean attendance was 38, but the median and mode were 50, meaning that two of the three regularly had attendance of about 50 people, and the third had lower attendance. For monthly milongas for which I was able to gather data (“Milonga en Casa,” “Tango Café,” “Princeton Tango Club,” “Tango Brunch,” “El GoTanGo,” and “Heart2Heart”), the overall mean attendance was 46 and the median was 39, reflecting the variety of mean attendance rates at individual milongas, which ranged from 20 to 75 people.

Along with an increase in attendance at some milongas, Ray noted, “We are seeing more dancers of all ages as the community continues to grow, but most noticeable is the increase in the number of younger dancers. We would like to see this trend continue and in fact increase.” This observation is consistent with instructors’ observations that there was an increase in younger dancers attending tango classes. Another observation about milongas that was consistent with trends in tango classes was a growing imbalance between leaders and followers. Wrote Stahl, “The gender imbalance seems to have gotten worse. Most milongas have significantly fewer experienced leaders than followers.” Kountouzi noted the same trend, which results in followers sitting out many dances and can foment frustration and resentment among them.
Finally, respondents observed that more dancers were becoming interested in and able to
dance to what Ray described as “modern and non-traditional tango music (tango-electronica,
tango-lounge) as well as to non-tango music.” Kountouzi, Stahl, Mitchell, and I concurred with
this observation, and Ray and Mitchell adjusted their Friday night milonga at UCAL to
accommodate this trend by playing alternative tango music in a studio on the third floor, separate
from where traditional tango music was played on the second floor. Along with this trend in
music preferences at milongas, Ray noted that more people were interested in dancing and
learning tango nuevo, which is often danced to alternative tango music. Both these trends in
music and dance preferences at milongas noted by questionnaire respondents are consistent with
similar trends they had noticed at local classes.

In summary, from 1994 to 2006, most milonga fees increased by $5 to $6, doubling in a
span of twelve years to $10 or $12 with the exception of one milonga that was free and one that
cost $15 because it included live music. This doubling of milonga fees outpaced the 41-percent
increase in the U.S. Consumer Price Index in the Urban Northeast for the same time period.
However, the price of attending a milonga still kept pace with or was lower than other
comparable forms of recreation. From 2004 to 2006, the number of milongas increased and
attendance at most of them increased, although it was uneven, with some garnering a mean of 75
dancers and others just 20. Respondents reported some dissatisfaction among dancers regarding
increased milonga fees and/or a desire for better “services” to offset increased fees. Other trends
included more dancers of all ages at milongas, particularly young people; a growing imbalance
between leaders and followers; and more interest in dancing to alternative tango music.
Summary of Trends

Quantitative data from 1991 to 2006 show a fairly steady increase in the number of milongas per month, instructors, and event organizers, with the most notable growth occurring from 2000 through 2006. The prevalence of workshops with guest tango artists also increased, but with more fluctuations over time.

Quantitative and qualitative data from 2004 through 2006 suggest that most classes, prácticas, workshops, and milongas showed similar changes:

- an increase in the frequency of activities,
- an increase in attendance,
- a decrease in the ratio of leaders to followers and a corresponding increase in men’s and women’s willingness to dance in non-traditional roles,
- an increase in interest in dancing tango nuevo and dancing to alternative tango music, and
- an increase in the numbers of young people.

There was more variation among tango activities in fee changes, which were:

- small increases in fees for private lessons and milongas, versus
- slight decreases in fees for group lessons and workshops.

These data explore how the community changed, primarily from 2004 to 2006, but more importantly they offer a glimpse into how instructors/organizers viewed the community, its growth, and their own roles. For example, they were inspired by the numbers of young people taking an interest in tango yet concerned about balancing the costs of tango activities with dancers’ needs. In their responses, we begin to understand why they did what they did. They hosted milongas devoted to non-traditional tango music to encourage dancers who loved it, and they allowed the number of workshops offered to fluctuate greatly from year to year because of...
the high associated costs. They taught more private lessons to meet demand, and they encouraged men and women to dance in non-traditional roles in classes that had more leaders than followers. In anecdotal conversations with me, dancers have shared their appreciation as well as their frustrations with tango activities. This chapter offers a window into the unique triumphs and challenges inherent in playing leadership roles in the community. Chapter 5 explores instructors/organizers’ motivations further and how they may have affected the local tango community.

Conclusion

This chapter documents the history of the Argentine tango community in the Philadelphia area and identifies the forces and people behind its creation. Forces outside the community that sparked its development centered around traveling tango shows like *Tango Argentino* that celebrated tango music and dance in full-length, professional performances. These shows sparked public interest in tango that led to the first tango workshop in 1986, the first local class in 1991, and the first milonga in 1994. Forces within the community centered around the actions of local instructors/organizers and the activities they created. In tracing each person’s history and their unique contributions, a number of themes arose—entrepreneurship, altruism, collaboration, building community through dance, the diversity of local instructors and event organizers, outreach activities that allowed dancers to advocate for tango, educational efforts, being of service to others, and competition. By contrast, conflict among some instructors and event organizers in 1997 that precluded their collaboration beyond that year may have limited the community’s growth.
In an effort to further document and understand the community’s history, this chapter also explores quantitative and qualitative data revealing trends in its growth since 1991 in general and from 2004 to 2006 in particular. In these data, the voices of instructors/organizers become more apparent as they describe their perceptions of the community’s needs and their efforts to meet them.

Upon reviewing the history as a whole, two additional themes become evident—the role of the internet in supporting growth of the community, and the frequency with which event organizers showcased the work of other artists. First, as the only “non-partisan” tango web site, VanBuskirk’s “Tango Philadelphia” has played a pivotal role in the community by promoting local tango, keeping community members informed of activities and the people who offer them, and providing a service for collecting and disseminating email addresses of those wishing to receive tango-related messages. For example, as a local event organizer, I counted on receiving VanBuskirk’s weekly emails notifications of new email addresses so that I could inform dancers of classes and events. All local instructors/organizers who request it receive these weekly notifications, and most regularly send invitations, announcements, and reminders of their activities via email. Though many also print flyers to advertise activities, I, for one, relied primarily on internet communication, and my experience as a recipient of frequent emails from other instructors/organizers was that they relied on it heavily as well. Many instructors/organizers also maintain their own web sites, which include detailed information about their tango activities, photos of past events, newspaper articles highlighting local tango, and other information. The internet has offered a powerful and inexpensive means of communication that has supported the growth of tango in the Philadelphia area.

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A second theme evident upon reviewing the entire history of the community is the frequency with which tango event organizers invited amateur and professional musicians, dancers, and visual artists to perform or display their work at local milongas. I believe that the motives for such invitations stem not only from competition—a desire to make one’s milonga appealing to dancers—but also from altruism, collaboration, a desire to build community, education, and/or service. More specifically, it is altruistic for event organizers to invite professional dancers to perform at local milongas as a way of enhancing local dancers’ enjoyment of tango. As discussed in Chapter 5, many dancers are artists, either by vocation or avocation, so there is also a sense of collaboration within the community when a local tango dancer shares his or her artistic talents. Helping dancers to learn about each other’s art may promote stronger relationships among them and certainly builds good will within the community. Regarding education, local dancers learn more about tango music and dance through special performances by professional artists, and they learn about visual art through displays of people’s work. Finally, by showcasing the work of other artists, event organizers provide a service to artists who may benefit financially from the publicity.

It is in this latter theme of supporting artists that a certain ethos appears in the actions of local instructors and event organizers. In introducing this chapter, I mentioned that the tango community in the Philadelphia area is known among dancers from other cities for its friendliness and warmth. I propose that early local entrepreneurs promoted and modeled an ethos that placed a premium on tango’s community-building capacity and that this ethos has influenced most other entrepreneurs and remained a foundational force in the growth of local tango. Other themes in its history could be viewed as outgrowths or elements of this ethos—altruism, collaboration, outreach and advocacy, and being of service to others. These themes have not only helped the
community grow but also provided instructors/organizers and dancers with opportunities to establish and deepen relationships with each other and with a wider public.

Returning to the original research questions, this chapter has explored how local instructors/organizers created an ethos of community-building through dance that has shaped tango in the Philadelphia area. Discussion centered around how regular events fueled its growth, how special events highlighted and celebrated the community’s existence, and how instructors/organizers responded to recent trends. Data have addressed some questions and raised many more. What has motivated instructors and event organizers to play leadership roles? How has an ethos of community-building through dance affected the experiences of local dancers? What kinds of people have been attracted to tango in the Philadelphia area, and are there any common characteristics among them that would help to define the community further? How much consistency is there among the perceptions and experiences of those who teach tango and host events and those who study tango and attend events? I address these and many other questions in subsequent chapters, beginning with “Chapter 5. Dancing with Diversity: A Description of Entrepreneurs and Dancers.” This chapter takes a closer look at the demographics, backgrounds, motivations, and experiences of the entrepreneurs who have shaped tango in the Philadelphia area and the dancers who have given it its energy, vibrancy, and beauty.

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i This information came from a phone conversation in November 2006 with local tango instructor and event organizer Lesley Mitchell and from a phone conversation in November 2006 with a staff member of the academy. It was not feasible for studio staff to participate in this research.

ii Linda Alila confirmed the wording of this piropo and gave me permission to quote it in a personal email (5 February 2007).

* I find this question particularly relevant because, given the heavy use of the internet for communication within the community, for example, those who do not have access to a computer and to the internet would be hard-pressed to stay abreast of local activities.
iii Information on these workshops came from an original flyer that Morris and Terzi provided and a personal email (15 February 2007).

iv Information on these workshops came from another original flyer that Morris and Terzi provided.

v It was impractical for Fung to search her archives for exact dates and locations of the many milongas that she has hosted over the years, so she suggested this average as an accurate count of her activities.

vi Frings gave permission to quote this mention of him in a personal email (6 February 2007).

vii This quotation came from Coyle in a personal email (5 February 2007). Additional information came from Coyle in another personal email (25 April 2007).

viii This information came from Walter’s questionnaire, from a follow-up email he sent me, and from the Swarthmore website that listed this event in 2003 and in 2005 at http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/sci_cult/diversity/calendar.html (7 February 2007).

ix This quotation is from the publicity flyer for “Philadelphia Tango Exchange #1.”

x Data for this paragraph came from the publicity booklet for “A Matter of Time.” Fertman gave permission to mention him and to describe his role in local tango in a telephone conversation in the Fall of 2006.

xi Data on “Tango Hop” came from Coyle in a personal email (5 February 2007) and was based on my observations from attending the milonga.

xii This quotation came from an email invitation to the community from Berrios (25 October 2006).

xiii This quotation and information about Tango 411 Studio/Gallery came from Coyle in a personal email (25 April 2007).

xiv As a local event organizer, I received weekly updates to the email list from VanBuskirk and used the Word Count feature in Microsoft Word to count the number of email addresses on the list.

xv This claim is based on feedback I received in Fall 2005 from local instructors regarding whether the first “Dancing for Schools” fundraiser had inspired a marked increase in the number of students in their classes. In telephone conversations, they reported that it had attracted only a handful of new students. We concluded that the fundraiser’s value lay primarily in its celebratory, outreach (primarily as publicity), and fundraising functions, not in its capacity to attract large numbers of new dancers.

xvi This statement is based on messages on the internet-based tango discussion list housed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. One may view archives at http://mailman.mit.edu/pipermail/tango-l/.
CHAPTER 5
WHO IS DANCING?:
PROFILING DANCERS AND WHAT THEY REVEAL ABOUT TANGO

Introduction
To truly understand the history and current trends of the tango community in the Philadelphia area, one must understand its key players—instructors and event organizers—as well as the dancers who receive tango instruction and attend events. Chapter 4 provided brief individual profiles of each instructor/organizer as he/she became active in the community. The chapter raised questions about their demographics, backgrounds, tango training, and motivations for participating in the community. It also raised questions about whether instructors and event organizers may have inspired people of demographics and backgrounds similar to their own to explore tango.

The first section of this chapter discusses aggregate data on 25 instructors/organizers, including basic demographic information, level of dance and movement experience, and tango studies. This information, when compared and contrasted with data on local tango dancers who participated in a survey, provides fodder for considering how instructors and event organizers may have influenced the composition of the community. The chapter also explores their self-reported motives for working in tango, adding depth and breadth to themes identified in Chapter 4 that shaped the tango community’s creation.

The second section of this chapter presents demographic information on more than 100 local tango dancers who completed a survey for this research in January and February of 2007. Discussion covers their patterns of participation in the tango community, their dance and
movement experience, and the length and location of their tango studies. Because the survey of dancers was not administered randomly, the results are not statistically representative of the community. However, with a response rate of approximately 25 percent (more than 100 out of approximately 400 active local tango dancers), the survey results provide valuable information about a considerable segment of the local tango population. Throughout discussion of local dancers, I explore how data may provide insights into the nature of tango as a dance form and/or help explain tango’s appeal for particular segments of the population.

The Distinctive Identities of Instructors and Event Organizers

Data Collection and Analysis

Recall that data for this chapter came from 25 instructors/organizers who either completed the questionnaire or provided information via email. Some participants did not answer every question (like date of birth, for example), so the total number of participants varies by topic and is provided along with discussion.*

Data are presented in the aggregate to protect instructors’/organizers’ anonymity. As with Chapter 4, when a specific source is not cited, the reader may assume that data was collected from instructors/organizers.

Discussion centers around univariate analysis of nominal, ordinal, and interval variables to identify central tendencies and the range of responses within each variable.† The chapter

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* While it is accepted practice in quantitative research to analyze only data collection instruments that were filled out completely by participants, qualitative research allows for analysis of all instruments whether completely or partially filled out. Given that this study nests quantitative methods within a predominantly qualitative design, data is analyzed from both fully and partially completed data collection instruments.

† To review, a nominal variable is one that indicates only a qualitative difference in the characteristic being measured, like religious affiliation (Nardi 2006). An ordinal variable is one that occurs in a prescribed sequence in
begins with descriptive analysis of gender, place of birth, and occupation; it continues with the mean, median, and mode for their ages as well as a distribution curve. I then analyze two nominal variables—their levels of experience in selected non-tango dance forms and in movement forms. Discussion continues with analysis of another interval variable—how long they had been studying tango—as well as two more nominal variables—with whom they had studied and their teaching activities. The section concludes with discussion of their motivations for working in tango, including analysis of one ordinal variable and ethnographic analysis of qualitative responses to an open-ended question. My ethnographic analysis involves allowing categories of meaning to emerge from text provided by instructors/organizers. This combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis and description, combined with historical information from Chapter 4, offers a detailed portrait of instructors/organizers who created the tango community; moreover, it sets the stage for comparison and contrast with data on dancers presented in the second section of this chapter.

*Unique Identities: Gender, Background, Occupation, and Age*

Sixteen women and nine men participated in this research. They hail from many countries and embody a wide range of ethnicities, occupations, and ages. Out of 24 participants who indicated where they were born, 15 were from the United States and nine from outside of the United States. Twelve were born in Pennsylvania or nearby states (Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Virginia, and West Virginia); three were born in other parts of the United States which the value increases or decreases in a particular order, for example, categories of income, like $20,000 to $30,000 (McGrath 1996, Nardi 2006). An *interval* variable is one for which the response tells everything one needs to know; one does not need to decode it to determine its meaning (Nardi 2006). Furthermore, equal intervals between variable values indicate equal differences in the amount of the thing being measured (McGrath 1996). Examples include dates and ages.
(California, Ohio, and Minnesota); four were born in Spanish-speaking countries (two in Chile, one in Argentina, and one in Spain); and one was born in each of the five following countries: Greece, Jamaica, India, Italy, and Russia. Because place of birth is just one factor within a person’s background, I asked respondents to list their ancestry or ethnic origin as well. Responses were quite varied and included Albanian, American Indian, Dutch, French, German, Irish, Kenyan, Norwegian, Scottish, and Welsh.

Six respondents listed “dance teacher/entertainer/studio owner” as their primary occupation, three listed “graduate student,” two listed “sales and marketing,” and one each listed the following: attorney, editor of a publishing company, housewife, librarian, management consultant, professor, self-employed insurance inspector, teacher, and veterinarian.

Seventeen out of 26 respondents provided their birth dates. Calculating their ages as of February 19, 2007, the mean age was 46, the median was 45, and the standard deviation was 13.28. (There was no mode; every response was unique.) The similar mean and median indicate a reliable mid-point in the ages, but the high standard deviation indicates a wide range of ages among respondents. I suspected that including the general age ranges of those who did not provide their birth dates would shift the picture somewhat (because most were in their fifties or sixties), I estimated the age ranges of the eight instructors/organizers I knew personally. (I had never met one of them.) In estimating their age ranges, I departed from accepted conventions of

* The mean is the average response (the total divided by the number of responses), the median is the mid-point (50 percent of respondents fall above the median and 50 percent below), and the mode is the most common or most frequent response. In analyzing data, if the mean, median, and mode are similar, there may be a narrow range of responses—that is, most respondents answered similarly to each other. If the mean, median, and mode are different from each other, it may indicate that responses were more disperse or varied. Another way to measure dispersion of data is by using standard deviation, which Nardi (2006) defines as “…the average variation of all the values from the mean….The larger the standard deviation is from zero, the more dispersed the scores are in the sample for that particular variable” (137).
quantitative research and shifted to an ethnographic framework, relying on my observation in addition to self-reported data to compensate for insufficient data. “Table 2. Instructors/Organizers by Age Range” reveals a higher percentage of people at mid-life or beyond. Of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 25

14 instructors/organizers who were most visible and active in the community,* two were in their thirties, two in their forties, six in their fifties, and four in their sixties. Although the highest number of the most visible and active instructors/organizers were in their fifties and sixties, the multigenerational profile of instructors/organizers sets a wonderful example for the tango community, demonstrating that adults of all ages can enjoy tango and play meaningful and influential roles in the community.

In summary, as of December 2006, although the majority of the most visible and active instructors/organizers were in their fifties and sixties, the entire group ranged in age from their

* By “most active” I mean instructors who taught at least one weekly class and event organizers who ran at least one monthly milonga.
late twenties to sixties. They had been born in many places within and outside of the continental United States, they came from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, and they worked in an array of occupations. Their diversity may have set an example that helped create an equally diverse community of tango dancers, as explored later in this chapter.

*What They Bring to Tango: Non-tango Dance and Movement Experience*

To understand instructors’/organizer’s backgrounds and the skill and perspectives they brought to their tango activities, it is useful to explore their experience with dance and movement forms in addition to tango. Question number 80 stated, “Please indicate whether you have done the following dance and movement forms and for how long.” Twenty-one instructors/organizers responded using a six-point scale*, and I first discuss their experience with dance forms, then their experience with movement forms. Data is analyzed from two perspectives to find a) the average level of experience that respondents* as a group* had in each dance and movement form, and b) the average level of experience that each respondent had in all dance and movement forms.

“Table 3. Dance Experience of Instructors/Organizers” shows that instructors/organizers had the most experience dancing swing, ballroom, and what I described on the questionnaire as “salsa/cha-cha-cha/rumba/other Latin.” Fourteen instructors/organizers had one or more years of experience in these social pairs dance forms, and only one had no experience in any of these forms. It is quite logical that many respondents had experience in these forms because such dances, like tango, are danced in pairs with a lead-follow structure in which the man traditionally

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* The six-point scale was: 1 = none, 2 = 1-6 months, 3 = 6-11 months, 4 = 1-2 years, 5 = 3-4 years, and 6 = more than 4 years.
leads and the woman traditionally follows. Having experience in these forms may have helped respondents to learn tango and could have added depth to their tango teaching.

After these dance forms, those with which instructors/organizers had the most years of experience were “other dance forms not listed,” folk, and ballet. In “other dance forms not listed,” the median and mode were “none,” but nine respondents had studied these dance forms for at least one year. In folk and ballet, the median was one to six months, and the mode was “none,” indicating that some instructors/organizers had experience in folk and/or ballet but that

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* The six-point scale was: 1= none, 2 = 1-6 months, 3 = 6-11 months, 4 = 1-2 years, 5 = 3-4 years, and 6 = more than 4 years.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dance Form</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One or More Years Experience Number</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salsa, Cha-cha-cha, Rumba, and Other Latin Dances</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swing</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballroom</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dance Forms Not Listed</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballet</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Dance</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvisation</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tap</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flamenco</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Dance</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Improvisation</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 21
most had no experience. Instructors/organizers had even less experience in modern dance, improvisation, tap, flamenco, African dance, and contact improvisation.

“Table 4. Movement Experience of Instructors/Organizers” shows that of all the movement forms in the questionnaire, they had the most years of experience practicing yoga, with a median of six to 11 months and a mode of no experience. By contrast, for all other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dance Form</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilates</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Body/Mind Form</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Technique</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai Chi</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Martial Art</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feldenkrais</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karate</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 21

movement forms listed, the median and mode were “no experience.” Out of the 14 who had practiced yoga, four had practiced it for less than one year, five for one to four years, and four for more than four years. It is not surprising that a number of tango instructors/organizers practiced yoga, not only because yoga offers physical benefits that may enhance one’s dancing (e.g., improved posture, balance, flexibility, and strength), but also because tango and yoga invite the practitioner to enter into similar states of mind. Recall discussion in Chapter 4 of Sridhar Hannenhalli, a local instructor/organizer who has been practicing yoga for many years and who

* The six-point scale was: 1= none, 2 = 1-6 months, 3 = 6-11 months, 4 = 1-2 years, 5 = 3-4 years, and 6 = more than 4 years.
specializes in teaching tango in close embrace, the embrace that may be most conducive to a
meditative experience. Dancers who enjoy the mind-body experience of yoga may be drawn to
tango for a similar type of experience, and vice versa.

By looking at means, medians, and modes, one gains an aggregate sense of respondents’
experience, which could give the impression that instructors/organizers had a reasonable range of
experience in these dance and movement forms. However, viewing data from a different
viewpoint tells a different story. On the questionnaire, instructors/organizers selected numbers
on a rating scale of one to six to indicate whether and for how long they had studied each dance
and movement form. I added the scores for each form to see which had the highest rates of
respondent experience. These calculations showed that even the highest sum of 84 for
“salsa/cha-cha-cha/rumba/other Latin” was relatively low considering that 84 is only two-thirds
of the highest possible sum of 126. (A score of 126 would have indicated that all respondents
had studied a particular dance or movement form for more than four years.) Data also show that
for only two dance forms was the mode (most common response) “more than four years”—
“salsa, cha-cha-cha, rumba, and other Latin dances” and swing. For all other dance and
movement forms, the mode (most common response) was “none,” meaning that any breadth and
depth of dance experience lay with just a few instructors/organizers.

Indeed, five instructors/organizers had more than four years of experience in six to nine
dance forms; four of them had some experience in every dance form; and, as a group, all five had
more than four years of experience in every dance form except African, contact improvisation,
and Flamenco. One instructor/organizer was not far behind with more than four years of
experience in four dance forms, but she had nearly no experience in any other forms. Most of
the remaining fifteen instructors/organizers had median and mode scores of no experience across
dance forms.

Respondents were more uniform in terms of years of experience in movement forms. Only three out of
21 had medians or modes indicating more than a few months of experience, and the remaining 18 had
medians and modes of “no experience.”

These data further illuminate respondents’ diversity. Instructors/organizers were not only
diverse in age, country of origin, ethnicity, and occupation, but also in dance and movement
experience. A few offered years of experience and broad exposure to many dance and
movement forms, but a majority taught from the perspective of having had less experience with
dance and movement. These data also raise questions about respondents’ qualifications to teach
dance. One could argue that those with more experience in a variety of dance forms would be
better able to understand and convey the technical aspects of tango to students. On the other
hand, a dancer’s experience in dance is no guarantee that he or she will be an effective instructor.
Those with less experience in other dance forms could be gifted teachers and also be adept at
helping students with little dance experience overcome fears and inhibitions. Suffice it to say
that instructors with extensive dance experience and those without can play equally important
roles in the community by modeling inclusivity and appealing to dancers who are also diverse in
their levels of dance and movement experience.*

In summary, instructors/organizers as a group had the most years of experience dancing
swing, ballroom, and “salsa/cha-cha-cha/rumba/other Latin,” and they had limited experience in
other dance forms, from folk to improvisation. Analyzing data by respondent instead of by

* The topic of whom is best qualified to teach tango is a complex one that I am not inclined to take on in
this dissertation. I will say, though, that I believe tango students are best served by studying with many different
teachers in order to benefit from a range of perspectives and styles and to assess for themselves which instructors
best meet their needs.
dance form revealed that five instructors/organizers accounted for much of the dance experience with medians of a year or more in all dance forms and modes of more than four years of experience. Of all the movement forms in the questionnaire, instructors/organizers as a group had the most years of experience practicing yoga, with a median of six to eleven months. They had no more than a few months of experience in the other movement forms, and analyzing these data by individual respondent revealed the same general lack of experience in forms other than yoga. Given that tango and yoga invite the practitioner to enter into similar states of mind (focusing on the present moment, accepting of what is, open to what happens next), these data raise interesting questions about intersections between tango and meditation that are explored in depth in Chapter 6.

**Immersing in the Art Form: Tango Studies and Teaching**

Twenty-five local instructors/organizers provided data on when they began studying tango, and, while a few had been studying for more than 20 years, most had studied for between three and nine years. Tracking the year in which each began studying showed a steady increase over time. From 1980 to 1989, four began to learn tango; from 1990 to 1999, nine more began; and from 2000 to 2006, an additional 12 began. Note that this increase reflects respondents’ own study of the dance and not, necessarily, when they began to teach tango or organize events. Grouped together, as of the end of 2006, respondents had been studying tango for a mean of ten years and a median and mode of seven years with a standard deviation of 6.46. The range in these figures reflects the wide dispersion of years of experience that instructors/organizers had studying tango.
When asked who had been their most influential/important Argentine tango teachers, nine instructors/organizers listed Mariela Franganillo, the native of Buenos Aires described in Chapter 4 who taught monthly classes in Philadelphia from 1998 to 2006. After Ms. Franganillo, the most frequently mentioned tango instructors were Julio Balmaceda and Gustavo Naveira (mentioned four times each); Daniela Arcuri, Carlos Copello, Fabian Salas, and Robin Thomas (mentioned three times each); and Corina de la Rosa, Lorena Ermocida, Fabrizio Forti, Armando Orzuza, Rebecca Shulman, Jorge Torres, and Brigitta Winkler (mentioned two times each). In addition to studying with these artists, instructors/organizers have used instructional videos by Juan Carlos Copes, Carlos Gavito, Fabian Salas, and Miguel Angel Zotto, which have enhanced their own tango studies and facilitated their teaching.

Out of 22 local instructors/organizers who provided information on where they had studied tango, 16 had traveled nationally and ten had traveled outside of the United States to study with high-level artists who perform and teach internationally for a living. Those who had traveled beyond Philadelphia for instruction were more likely to have organized local workshops taught by the tango artists with whom they had studied, enriching opportunities for tango students. Those who had not traveled beyond Philadelphia for instruction were less likely to have hosted guest instructor workshops or to have studied with high-level tango artists, with the exception of studying with Franganillo.

In response to an open-ended question on the questionnaire, one instructor/organizer commented that Philadelphia’s tango community seemed insular compared to communities in other large cities, and another felt that local dancers did not appreciate the value of learning from “the masters.” The role that local instructors/organizers play in broadening dancers’ skills and knowledge of tango and its culture may be enhanced by their own interaction with high-level
tango artists beyond Philadelphia. However, it is important to note that traveling for tango instruction requires time and financial resources that some local instructor/organizers do not have. Broadening one’s skills through the use of instructional videos produced by high-level tango artists offers one solution to this limitation.

Of the 19 instructors who provided data on when they began to teach tango, 16 were still teaching as of December 2006, and they taught in a variety of full- and part-time capacities, providing further evidence of the range of instruction available to students. Four of these 16 were full-time dance instructors who relied on teaching dance as their primary sources of income—one teaches only tango; two teach primarily tango as well as swing, salsa, and other dances; and the fourth teaches primarily ballroom and Latin with a little bit of tango. Of the remaining 12 instructors, seven teach part-time, four teach sporadically as invited or needed, and one runs a website called DanceTutor.com, which provides online videotaped instruction to subscribers for learning many social pairs dances, including tango.

In summary, instructors/organizers were quite diverse in how long they had been studying tango, how far they had traveled to study with tango masters, and the frequency levels of their teaching. Although a majority had been most heavily influenced by Franganillo, instructors/organizers listed 17 other high-level artists who had played important roles in their tango studies. Sixteen local instructors/organizers had traveled nationally and ten had traveled internationally to study with high-level tango artists. Those who had traveled beyond Philadelphia for instruction were more likely to have organized local workshops taught by the high-level tango artists with whom they had studied.
Why They Work in Tango: Personal and Altruistic Motivations

Question number 81 stated, “Indicate how important each of the following motivations are for why you work in Argentine tango.” Using a five-point rating scale*, instructors/organizers indicated that two most important motivations were “to enhance my knowledge of tango” and “to contribute to the community.” Data shown in “Table 5. Why Instructors/Organizers Worked in Tango” suggest that instructors/organizers had both altruistic and personal motivations for working in tango, which become more clear upon comparing these quantitative data with qualitative data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to the Community</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance Tango Knowledge</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance Emotional Life</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact with People</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance Physical Life</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance Mental Life</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance Spiritual Life</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income or Financial Reasons</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support My Dance Business</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 21

Motivations for Teaching Evolve Over Time

When asked the open-ended question, “Why did you begin to teach Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area?,” the most common answer, which was given by ten respondents, was that

* The five-point scale was: 1 = extremely important, 2 = very important, 3 = important, 4 = slightly important, and 5 = not at all important.
they had been asked to teach by dance teachers or students. For example, one man wrote, “I had no intention and no desire to teach any Argentine tango. It began because of requests from people coming to…[a particular] milonga.” Similarly, two men were asked to run classes in the absence of the main dance teacher, and one woman wrote, “I was encouraged and asked by some of my teachers to teach in Philly, and for that I am grateful.” Other respondents began teaching to meet the needs of new dance studios or tango clubs.

The second most common reason, given by five respondents, for beginning to teach was their love of tango dance, music, and culture and the joy they found in sharing these with others. One woman wrote, “We started teaching…most importantly because we loved it and thoroughly enjoyed sharing our passion with others.” Stressing the joy he receives from teaching tango, one man wrote, “I started to teach because I love the music and the ‘dance.’ I want the joy of sharing what I know and love with other people.”

Closely related to being motivated by their love of the dance and their desire to share it with others was what two respondents described as a desire to promote tango and its culture. One man wrote,

One thing that really appeals to me is that, culturally, in Argentina…people of all ages not only go to the same dances, but frequently dance with each other, which I find fascinating and healthy. I would like to see more of that here in the U.S.

According to data from the tango survey of local dancers discussed later in this chapter, his goal of a multi-generational tango community in the Philadelphia area has been achieved. While most are aged 45 to 64, dancers range in age from teenagers to septuagenarians. With regard to promoting tango and tango culture, one woman wrote, “We started teaching because of…our desire to promote AT Salon….” By “AT,” she means Argentine tango, and by “Salon,” she
means salon-style tango, which is the form danced socially at milongas.* Implicit in her desire to promote salon-style tango was a desire to promote the culture of milongas, which are highly social events wherein people dance, socialize, and often share a meal.

In addition to wanting to promote tango and its culture, two respondents began teaching with the intention of creating a social dance community around tango, and three began teaching to help the tango community grow. For example, one woman wrote that she began to teach tango, “because of my desire to be involved in a living community of social dancers.” Similarly, three other women began teaching to help the community grow, and I suspect that others felt similarly though they did not indicate so directly because many instructors/organizers have engaged in numerous community-building activities, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Four respondents began teaching to support their dance-related businesses, including one woman who wrote, “I saw that it [tango] was getting more and more popular and realized I had better get on the ball.” The final reason that two respondents gave for beginning to teach was the conviction that they had something special to offer, either in their teaching style or in content. For example, one woman wrote, “I believe I have a special way of teaching that tries to integrate the body and the spirit, allowing the energy to flow between the partners (opposite sex and the same sex).”

Given that instructors who responded to the questionnaire had been teaching, on average, for four years, how might their motives have shifted over time? When asked, “Why do you continue teaching Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area?” the most common response, given by eight instructors, was that they enjoyed teaching. For example, one woman wrote, “I really

* People dance salon-style tango at milongas where dance floors are crowded, requiring that dancers use relatively small movements done in place or progressing slowly around the room and dance in close proximity to each other. By contrast, in show tango or performance-style tango done on stage, dancers may dance quite far apart and do lifts, jumps, and other movements that require a lot of space and progress quickly across the floor.
enjoy teaching. It’s fun and it’s fascinating to figure out how people can best learn movement.”

The next most common responses were that they appreciated the income from teaching (six respondents) and that they wanted to build community and promote tango in the area (five respondents). One man wrote,

The reason I continue is to maintain the flow of new people that come to…[my milonga] every week…. I enjoy the growth of the new tango community…and enjoy the fact that it attracts people from long distances to learn and to dance and socialize.

Similarly, another man wrote that teaching “…is part of promoting the Argentine Tango community in Philadelphia, which I love being a part of, and love being able to promote and build through my teaching.” A desire to expand the community inspired respondents to continue teaching, as did their enjoyment of teaching and the income they made.

In their own words, instructors gave a wide variety of additional reasons for continuing to teach. For three of them, teaching supported their understanding and/or improvement of their own dancing, and for another three, requests to teach kept them in that role. New friendships and a strong connection to the community kept two of them teaching, while promoting knowledge and appreciation of Argentine arts and culture motivated two more instructors. Finally, one instructor taught to build bridges between the tango community and other communities, and another wrote, “It is my life’s work, my mission to share the joy.”

Overall, instructors’ reasons for continuing to teach tango were more numerous than their reasons for beginning to teach. While people may have begun teaching because they wanted to build community, enjoy tango, promote it, or respond to requests to teach, their motivations expanded as they gained experience in teaching. They enjoyed teaching, appreciated the income, understood tango better, made new friends, promoted Argentine arts and culture, linked with
other communities, and fulfilled personal missions. From a broader perspective, while their motives to start teaching were primarily altruistic, their motives to continue teaching were a blend of altruism and personal gain. I understand this transition personally, having begun to teach in order to expand the community and having continued to teach not only for that reason but also because I enjoyed it, appreciated the income, made friends, and valued my deepening knowledge of tango.

Hosting Workshops to Enrich and Expand the Community

The questionnaire gathered data on why instructors/organizers hosted workshops with guest instructors. Eight responded that they wanted to expose students to different styles of tango and interpretations of the dance, and one man reflected at length on why this service was important:

I…have tried to study with…many different teachers over the years to get as broad a perspective as possible for my…own dancing…and to be able to present this broad perspective…about the different ways that real Argentine tango dancers really dance…. Yet, no matter how hard I work to present all of the different styles, it is still filtered through me, my way of thinking, my preferences, etc. So…I have tried to bring in some teachers to offer a variety of other interpretations.

Even with many years of experience dancing and studying tango with numerous high-level tango dancers, he understands the value for his students of interacting with these artists directly, as do most of the instructors/organizers who responded to the questionnaire. The next most common reason for hosting workshops was given by two women, who offered workshops to help expand the community. Other reasons for hosting workshops were given by individual respondents: to generate income, to attract dancers to a larger event, to avoid traveling for workshops, as an outgrowth of their own study with instructors, and at the request of the instructors themselves.
Note that most of these motivations were primarily altruistic in nature—to expand instruction for tango students and to build the community—and just a few were personally motivated—to generate income and to avoid traveling.

Meeting Many Needs Through Milongas

A blend of the altruistic and the personal moved respondents to host milongas. The motivation they listed most frequently was providing opportunities for their students to dance tango because, without milongas, there would be essentially no opportunities to dance it in the Philadelphia area. At ballroom and Latin dances, hosts either play no tango music or just tango music that has been adapted for the ballroom style of tango. Such adapted music tends to be just tango, not tango vals or milonga—the other two forms of tango music that complete the trio of tango as a social art form. Moreover, tango as it is danced socially in Philadelphia and in cities around the world is very different from ballroom tango in the embrace, technique, and social etiquette. Most importantly, dancing tango is part of a cultural experience distinct from the cultures of dancing ballroom and Latin. In fact, instructors/organizers indicated as the second most common motivation for hosting milongas their desire to promote tango and its culture. For example, one woman wrote about how important it was for her to feature “other aspects of Argentine tango: the culture, music, artists, food, etc.” at her milongas.

A third motivation mentioned by three instructors/organizers was getting new people interested in tango. For example, one woman wrote, “Many people get involved in tango after going to a milonga and seeing the happy faces of the dancers there. They begin to want to become part of it.” The enjoyment factor was also a motivator for instructors/organizers, three of whom wrote that they host milongas for the fun of it. A male instructor wrote, “…I enjoy the
work. Preparing good food and good music for enthusiastic tangueros is fun to do.” It is enjoyable work for two more respondents in part because they feel skilled at hosting milongas, like one woman who wrote that it was rewarding to see that dancers appreciated the format, location, and attention to detail of her milonga. Other personal motivations played a part in hosting milongas: single respondents wanted to earn income, attract new students, and have opportunities to dance closer to home.

In summary, instructors/organizers gave a wide range of altruistic and personal motivations for working in tango, and for those who taught tango, personal motivations evolved over time as instructors began to reap specific benefits from teaching. Comparing quantitative with qualitative data regarding motivations for working in tango revealed a researcher bias in the quantitative question’s design. Eight out of nine of the motivations that respondents could assess as being “not at all important” to “extremely important” were personal, and only one was altruistic (to contribute to the community). Even given this bias, respondents rated only one personal motivation (to enhance my knowledge of tango) as highly as they rated the one altruistic motivation (to contribute to the community). In their qualitative responses they presented many additional altruistic reasons for working in tango, including helping new studios or clubs, giving students opportunities to dance, promoting knowledge and appreciation of Argentine arts and culture, and building bridges between the tango community and other communities. These data give credence to the theory that instructors/organizers shared an ethos that valued building community through dance. Moreover, qualitative data also show how difficult (and perhaps meaningless) it can be to distinguish the altruistic from the personal. Though one could teach or host a milonga for personal reasons, any activities that expand or
strengthen the community in terms of numbers of dancers, the quality of dancing, and/or the appreciation of tango culture, in the long run, serve everyone involved.

**Reflections on Instructors and Event Organizers**

Overall, these data on the demographics of local instructors/organizers and their levels of experience in dance and movement illuminate the diversity of those who launched the tango community in the early 1990s and who continued to shape its growth in 2006 and beyond. Each instructor/organizer offers a unique identity as a result of this diversity and a different composite of knowledge, values, and skills that enrich the community. I find it heartening and consistent with my experience of them to discover that many have been motivated not only by personal gain, but also by their commitment to sharing the social and cultural benefits of tango with others in the Philadelphia area. To begin to understand the effects of their work, I turn now to exploring the demographics, dance and movement experiences, and tango activities of dancers in the community.

**An Anomalous Cohort: Tango Dancers in the Philadelphia Area**

This section presents demographic data provided by respondents to the “Survey of Argentine Tango Dancers in the Philadelphia Area” in January and February of 2007. While these data do not represent the entire community, they do highlight the ways in which its members are diverse and similar both within the tango community and in comparison with residents of Philadelphia County. After reviewing data collection and analysis methods for the tango survey, discussion centers on respondents’ demographic data as well as conditions that make dancing tango challenging for them and how they have overcome these challenges.
Finally, I explore their levels of dance and movement experience outside of as well as inside their tango studies.

While analysis of data from instructors/organizers illuminated their backgrounds and motivations, analysis of data from dancers not only did this, but also led me to hypothesize about the nature of tango as a dance form—that is, why it may appeal to people with certain characteristics. For example, the high percentage of survey respondents in mid-life and beyond (more than two thirds) led me to explore why tango might appeal to this cohort. Such anomalies in the data provide fodder for analysis of dancers’ motivations for engaging in tango, how they make meaning of their experiences, and how they perceive that tango affects them.

Data Collection and Analysis

Recall that in January and February of 2007, I collected demographic and other descriptive data on tango dancers in the Philadelphia area through an anonymous, twelve-page survey. One hundred three people completed the entire survey either on paper or online, which represented approximately one quarter of the estimated 400 tango dancers who were attending local milongas in early 2007. I used *convenience sampling* to gather participants, so I cannot generalize from the sample population to the general population with any validity; I am limited to drawing conclusions about those who completed the survey. However, drawing on my ethnographic observations as an active member of the community, I provide arguments for why some data may, indeed, be representative of the community.

Another 47 people began the survey online but did not complete it. One hundred forty-two people logged onto the survey site, but only 103 completed it through question number 18 (about one-third of the survey), and only 95 completed the entire survey online (through question
number 53). Another eight dancers completed the survey on paper. Therefore, the total number of respondents varied by question. Discussion of research results for each variable (gender, age, etc.) includes the total number of respondents so that the reader knows upon what values I based calculations. Data from completed and partially completed surveys are included in analysis, a practice consistent with best practices in qualitative research.

Univariate analysis identifies central tendencies and the range of responses within selected variables.* To place tango survey data within a wider context, I compare many variables to U.S. Census (2005b) data on residents of Philadelphia County. In the tango survey, the only two interval variables related to time—dancers’ ages and how long they had been studying/dancing tango—and I discuss these using distribution curves, means, medians, modes, and/or standard deviations. The survey collected data on five ordinal variables—frequency of attendance at tango activities, level of education, level of income, level of spending on tango activities, and behavior patterns in choosing dance partners. For these variables, I calculate medians and modes and present bar charts showing the percentages of dancers who gave each response. The most common form of variable discussed in this chapter is nominal, of which there are ten: gender (a dichotomous variable), marital status, country of origin, ethnicity, faith tradition, occupation, sexual orientation, political party affiliation, experience in non-tango dance and movement forms, and tango studies. For these nominal variables (except gender), I discuss modes and provide bar and pie charts as appropriate. Finally, I use ethnographic methods to analyze two qualitative variables—conditions that survey respondents believed made dancing tango challenging and what allowed them to continue dancing despite these conditions. These

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*I analyze and discuss only demographic and other descriptive variables in this chapter. I analyze and discuss many other variables related to dancers’ perceptions of and experiences of dancing tango using bivariate analysis in Chapter 6.
Men, Women, and Age

Approximately twice as many women as men completed (or nearly completed) the survey. Out of one hundred and eight respondents to the question regarding gender, 67 were women (62 percent), and 39 were men (36 percent). It is not clear why more women than men completed the survey, but factors could have included the kinds of questions in the survey, my gender as a female researcher, or other factors that had nothing to do with the actual gender balance in the community. However, this ratio of more female than male survey respondents may reflect trends reported by instructors/organizers regarding an increasing gender imbalance at milongas and in classes.

One hundred and one respondents gave their birthdates, and I calculated their ages based on the end-point of February 19, 2007, which was the deadline for completing the survey. The mean age of respondents was 51, the median was 54, and the mode was 55, indicating consistency in the mid-range of ages; however, the standard deviation was 12.2, indicating that 95 percent of respondents were between the ages of 26.6 and 75.4.

Because more than twice as many women as men completed the survey, presenting the raw numbers in a chart would have given an inaccurate representation of the ages of male and...
female respondents. Instead, I calculated the percentages of the total numbers of male and female respondents in each age group. “Figure 4. Percentage of Male and Female Tango Survey Respondents by Age Group” shows that age for both genders is negatively skewed.

![Figure 4. Percentage of Male and Female Tango Survey Respondents by Age Group](image)

The groups aged 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 account for more than two-thirds of the men and about two-thirds of the women (71.1 percent of men and 66.7 percent of women). Differences in age by gender become more apparent when comparing the means, medians, modes, and standard deviations, as shown in Table 6. On average, male respondents were a few years older than female respondents, there was a higher percentage of men than women over the age of 35 (92.1
percent of men and 81 percent of women), and the age range of women was slightly wider than that of men.

While it is not clear why these differences in age existed between male and female tango survey respondents, one can gain insight into the skewed nature of respondents’ ages overall by placing these data within a wider context. For such a context, I turn to the U.S. Census Bureau’s (2005b) American Community Survey. Because the full census is only conducted decennially, the U.S. Census Bureau now conducts the American Community Survey between census years to gather additional data and to track changes (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b). Data are collected via random sampling, and, as of April 2007, the most recent year for which data was available was 2005 (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b).

To determine which American Community Survey data (i.e., from which cities and towns) would be most relevant as a context for understanding tango survey data, I analyzed the home locations of respondents. Out of 116 respondents who gave their home zip codes, 47 of them (41 percent) lived in Philadelphia, 43 (37 percent) lived within 20 miles of Center City Philadelphia (the heart of downtown), 13 (11 percent) lived 21 to 50 miles of Center City, and 11 (9 percent) lived 51 or more miles from Center City. Because more than three-quarters (78
percent) of respondents resided in Philadelphia or within 20 miles of Center City Philadelphia, I
used American Community Survey data for Philadelphia County, which is comprised entirely of
the City of Philadelphia (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b). Although this comparison of tango survey
data to Philadelphia County data from 2005 is not perfect, county data offered the best
geographic match to tango survey respondents’ home locations and provided one way of
understanding survey data within a wider context.

“Figure 5. Comparing Age Groups. Percentage of Respondents to the ‘2005 American
Community Survey’ and the ‘2007 Tango Survey’ by Age Group” † shows two skewed curves—
tango data is skewed negatively, and Philadelphia County data is skewed positively. In other
words, the central tendency of tango survey respondents is approximately ages 40 to 60, while
the central tendency of Philadelphia County residents is approximately ages 30 to 50. Overall,
these data indicate that proportionately more tango survey respondents than Philadelphia County
residents were aged 55 to 64, 45 to 54, or 20 to 24. “Table 7. Number of Survey Respondents by
Age Range” shows data upon which Figure 5 was based.

Following are some nascent theories as to why tango in the Philadelphia area might
attract more people from some age groups than from others. A good place to begin is with
people aged 45 to 64 because they account for 69 percent of tango survey respondents versus 33
percent of Philadelphia County residents. Although these tango survey data do not necessarily

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* The City of Philadelphia covers 136 square miles and radiates as little as 2.5 miles and as far as 18 miles
from Center City Philadelphia (the heart of downtown). Respondents living within 20 miles of Center City could be
as close as 2 miles but no farther than 17.5 miles from the Philadelphia city limits.

† The tango survey collected data only from tango dancers aged 20 and older, but the “American
Community Survey” gathered data on children, teens, and adults. To generate this chart, I used only data for adults
20 and older gathered by the “American Community Survey.”
Figure 5. Comparing Age Groups. Percentage of Respondents to the “2005 American Community Survey” and the “2007 Tango Survey” by Age Group

Table 7. Number of Survey Respondents by Age Range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>2005 Amer Comm Survey</th>
<th>2007 Tango Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19</td>
<td>98,379</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24</td>
<td>97,540</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34</td>
<td>194,635</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>200,704</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54</td>
<td>192,782</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64</td>
<td>138,834</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74</td>
<td>83,546</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 and older</td>
<td>94,786</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,101,206</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
represent all local dancers active in early 2007, they confirm my own observations of the tango community. It is heavily populated with people at mid-life and beyond.

First, the ages of local tango instructors/organizers may have had an impact. Recall that by my estimates, their mean age was forty-six and their median age was forty-five. Of the fourteen instructors/organizers who are most active in the community,* two were in their thirties, two in their forties, six in their fifties, and four in their sixties. It is possible that the most active instructors/organizers could have helped to attract dancers of a similar age range by demonstrating that tango is accessible and enjoyable to those in midlife and beyond.

It is also possible that the nature of tango itself as a leisure activity that is physically and cognitively challenging (without being physically risky) may attract people in this age cohort. Recall from Chapter 3 (the literature review) that medical researcher Joe Vorghese (2003) found that dancing was the only regular physical activity (compared to activities like chess or crossword puzzles) associated with a significant decrease in the incidence of dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease, for seniors.† Similarly, Patricia McKinley’s study found that seniors in the group who danced tango, compared to those who walked, made greater improvements in balance, posture and motor coordination, and cognitive gains and were less likely to drop out of the activity once the study ended (2008). McKinley’s research participants enjoyed tango so much that they were still dancing it a year later (Society for Neuroscience 2005). If seniors could improve their physical and mental abilities through dancing tango while enjoying the

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* By “most active,” I mean instructors who teach weekly classes and event organizers who run at least one monthly milonga.

† Upon reading Vorghese’s original article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, I could not find a description of the specific dance forms in which subjects participated. However, given that subjects were aged 75 or older, it is likely that choices would have included swing, ballroom, and other forms of social pairs dance that were popular in the 1940s and 1950s. Subjects who are now in their mid-70s would have been in their teens and twenties during those decades, when learning social pairs dances was a central component of young adult culture.
process, adults of all ages could as well and could, in fact, be drawn to the dance precisely because of its challenging qualities. Though tango is often referred to as “fancy walking” and can be danced very pleasingly with small steps and simple patterns that do not require immense strength or flexibility, dancers need to be able to quickly shift among a number of complex rhythmic phrases and strings of movement. They must improvise based on complex aural, visual, and tactile cues, and they must embellish their movements to add their own unique personal signature to the dance. Dancers generally move smoothly, as well, maintaining contact with the floor. Tango does not require jumping or bouncing that can strain joints or muscles. Tango is mentally complex and physically demanding in endurance and nuance without putting undue strain on the body. For adults seeking a mental and physical challenge in their fitness or leisure activity, tango could be an excellent choice, and it could be particularly appealing to those aged 45 to 64.

Another term for this age cohort is the “Baby Boom” generation, and the unique expectations and behaviors of this group are key to exploring tango’s appeal and its benefits to dancers. Born roughly between the years 1946 and 1964,* the Baby Boom cohort represents approximately one third of the U.S. population and is “…redefining how we as a society regard adults in their middle and later years” (Whitbourne 2006, vii). Although there is considerable diversity within this cohort in factors such as socioeconomic status and education, particularly by racial group (Eggebeen 2006, Stewart 2006), as a whole, this generation is healthier and better educated with more disposable income than previous generations of middle-aged Americans (Whitbourne 2006). They engage life fully, seek new challenges, and refuse to allow their

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* Scholars differ in their definitions of the Baby Boom cohort, with some placing births between the years 1946 and 1964 (Stewart 2006, Jones 2006, Eggebeen 2006), and others between 1946 and 1962 (Whitbourne 2006).
abilities to decline with age (Jones 2006, Whitbourne 2006). Given that a high percentage of tango survey respondents are members of the Baby Boom generation, it is possible that tango may meet their unique physical, mental, and social goals and needs.

Related to the Baby Boom cohort’s desire to approach aging differently from previous generations is another potential reason for tango’s appeal. It is a dance of subtlety and self-expression that can be enhanced through life experience. In an interview with me in 2003, Mariela Franganillo, the tango performer and instructor of international acclaim mentioned in Chapter 4, explained how her dancing had improved as she had matured.* A native of Buenos Aires and mentor of many tango dancers in the Philadelphia area, she commented upon her own dancing, “One thing that happens in tango is that the older you get, you have more experience and you are more firm as a woman in what you are. You improve as a woman and that shows in the dance.” Franganillo’s words echo those of Julie Taylor (1999), who wrote in Paper Tangos, “to dance the tango you remember with your body; that is why it is not usual or easy to dance the tango when you are very young” (80). They imply that the more life experience you have, the more depth you bring to your dancing and the richer your experience of tango may become. Seeking activities that celebrate and are enhanced by life experience is consistent with Baby Boomers’ desire to remain vital as they age.

Moving to a more pragmatic level, costs associated with dancing tango may also make it more attractive to people in older age groups. While the entrance fees for milongas are quite low ($10 to $15 per person) compared to other forms of entertainment, one cannot learn how to dance tango simply by attending milongas. Most dancers I know also attend weekly tango

* Tape-recorded interview by author with Mariela Franganillo, 2 November 2003, Union League of Philadelphia.
classes and/or prácticas to learn tango initially and then to improve as dancers. Recall that classes cost $8 to $15 per week, and prácticas cost between $5 and $10 each. Survey Question 14 asked how much respondents had spent per month for the period of November 2006 through January 2007 on tango activities in the Philadelphia area. Their mean level of spending was between $91 to 120 and $121 to 150, their median was $91 to $120, and their mode was more than $180. If one adds purchasing tango shoes and/or clothing, tango becomes even more expensive. For many people, income increases with age, so it could be more feasible financially to dance tango in mid-life and beyond than when they are younger. In addition, people between the ages of 25 and 44 (22 percent of tango survey respondents versus 39 percent of Philadelphia County residents) may have children to support, which is an added financial burden.

Finally, even if one’s income is sufficient to dance tango, the dance requires a significant time commitment. In my experience, one cannot dabble in tango and expect to make much progress at learning or enjoying it. In passing, dancers commented that they did not feel they were truly dancing tango until they had studied it consistently (meaning attended weekly classes and prácticas) for a year or longer and that they were, by then, “hooked” or inspired to continue studying to improve their dancing. The survey asked how often dancers had attended various activities in the Philadelphia area during the last three months. (Those who had studied tango for less than three months answered for the number of months they had studied tango.) “Figure 6. Tango Attendance. Percentage of Tango Survey Respondents Who Attended Four Types of Tango Activities at Varying Levels of Frequency in a Three-month Period” summarizes the responses of 110 dancers who attended group classes, private classes, prácticas, and milongas.

* Respondents rated their spending on a seven-point scale of 1=$0-30, 2=$31-60, 3=$61-90, 4=$91-120, 5=$121-150, 6=$151-180, and 7=more than $180.
The darker the line, the more frequently respondents attended the activity. Table 8 provides the frequency values for attendance at tango activities.

Figure 6. Tango Attendance. Percentage of Tango Survey Respondents Who Attended Four Types of Tango Activities at Varying Levels of Frequency in a Three-month Period

Data came from Question 15: How often have you attended the following tango activities in the Philadelphia area during the last three months? N = 110

The activities they attended most frequently were milongas. In fact, 93 percent attended some milongas each month and 58 percent attended three or more; only seven percent attended no milongas. The next most frequently attended activities were group classes—74 percent attended some classes and 53 percent attended three or more per month. Slightly below attendance at group classes was attendance at prácticas—74 percent attended some prácticas and 41 percent
Table 8. Frequency Values of Attendance at Tango Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milongas</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Classes</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prácticas</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Classes</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 110

attended three or more. The least heavily attended activities were private classes. Thirty-one percent attended some private classes, 10 percent attended three or more, and 69 percent attended none. At an average of $60 per hour in the Philadelphia area, private lessons may be prohibitively expensive for some dancers.

To give an idea of the time involved in these activities, milongas last three to four hours and often end at one or two o’clock in the morning, group classes last one and one-half hours, prácticas last two to three hours, and travel time can range from five minutes to more than an hour. Many respondents attended multiple tango activities per month, and 25 percent of them attended three or more milongas, classes, and prácticas, meaning that they spent from 22 to 40 hours per month dancing tango. For some survey respondents, dancing tango was a serious time commitment—one that could be prohibitive for people raising young children or caring for elderly parents. I know of six skilled dancers who greatly reduced their tango activities when they became parents, and I know of others who do not travel far for tango activities because they are caring for elderly parents.

* The six-point rating scale was: 1 = none, 2 = 1 to 2 per month, 3 = 3 to 4 per month, 4 = 5 to 6 per month, 5 = 7 to 8 per month, 6 = 9 or more per month.
In summary, the fact that 69 percent of tango survey respondents were aged 45 to 64 may be related to the fact that many of the most active local instructors and event organizers were in their fifties and sixties, or it may reflect how tango is well-suited to dancers at mid-life and beyond who seek physical and cognitive challenges through their leisure activities and have rich life experience, higher disposable incomes, and more spare time. It is less clear why the percentage of tango dancers aged 20 to 24 may be proportionately higher than Philadelphia County residents. While dancers in this age group probably have good physical health and may have more free time than people raising children, they have less life experience and generally lower incomes than people in older age groups.

Marital Status and the Prevalence of Divorce

Out of 106 respondents who indicated their marital status, 24 had never married (23 percent), 38 were married (36 percent), 34 were divorced (32 percent), four were separated (4 percent), and six were widowed (6 percent). “Figure 7. Comparing Marital Status. Percentage of Respondents to the ‘2005 American Community Survey’ and the ‘2007 Survey of Tango Dancers’ by Marital Status” shows these percentages compared to those for Philadelphia County (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b). The percentages of tango survey respondents who were married, widowed, or separated were comparable to those of Philadelphia County residents. However, the percentage of tango survey respondents who had never married was nearly half the percentage of Philadelphia County residents who had never married. This difference may be explained in part by the fact that tango survey respondents’ median age was 54, while that of Philadelphia County residents was 35.3. In addition, the American Community Survey calculated percentages for respondents aged 15 years and older, whereas the tango survey calculated percentages for
Figure 7. Comparing Marital Status. Percentage of Respondents to the ‘2005 American Community Survey’ and the ‘2007 Survey of Tango Dancers’ by Marital Status

Tango survey data came from Question 42: What is your marital status?

respondents aged 20 years and older. Though teens sometimes wed, it is more common in current society for people to wed in their twenties or later. The most marked difference, however, was in the percentage of tango survey respondents versus Philadelphia County residents who were divorced—34 percent versus nine percent, respectively. Again the older tango cohort could account for some of this difference, but my experience with local tango dancers leads me to trust the data’s indication that a disproportionate percentage of dancers are
divorced. What elements of tango might appeal to people who are divorced and what role might the tango community play in their lives?

First, unlike popular entertainment forms that are commonly engaged in by couples (like eating at a restaurant, or attending a movie or concert), tango activities can be equally enjoyable for single people as for couples because, traditionally, people dance with a number of different partners at any given event. While some come as couples and dance primarily with each other, the majority of tango dancers may dance with as many as ten different partners during a milonga, workshop, práctica, or group class.

Second, dancing tango is a way to meet new people, particularly at milongas where one may chat between dances or while mingling at the refreshment table. On the tango survey, I asked “What kinds of relationships have you developed with people whom you have met through dancing tango in the Philadelphia area?” Out of 106 tango survey respondents (some of whom gave multiple answers), 105 had developed friendships, 29 had met romantic dates or partners, 16 had met business partners or colleagues, and five had met spouses. These data show that involvement in tango can be a very effective way to develop new relationships, which could make it particularly appealing for people who have lost partners, friends, extended family, and/or sufficient contact with their children as a result of divorce.

Third, dancing tango may serve divorced people well because it provides close physical contact (especially in close embrace). One learns from instructors and from other dancers to maintain clear emotional and sexual boundaries that allow acquaintances, friends, and perfect strangers to dance in what amounts to a continuous hug between dancers during each song. Having this level of physical closeness may be quite valuable to those who have transitioned from living with a spouse to living without one. Survey respondents indicated that they received
emotional, mental, social, and spiritual benefits from dancing tango, as well as physical benefits. I discuss these benefits and how they may relate to the unique needs of divorced people in Chapter 6.

Finally, given the significant amount of time that many respondents spent studying tango and enjoying it at milongas, it would make sense that those who had transitioned to being single again could have more free time to devote to tango. In summary, tango may be appealing to people who are divorced because it can be equally enjoyable for single people as for couples, it is a great way to meet new people, it offers physical contact with clear sexual boundaries, and it offers a way to enjoy one’s free time.

Representing Many Countries

Out of 106 respondents who indicated where they had been born, 76 were born in the continental United States (72 percent), and 30 were born outside of the continental United States (28 percent). Those born outside of the continental United States hailed from 22 states, countries, or areas* and represented places in the following ten regions of the globe: Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, India, Indochina, the Middle East, North America, and South America. Respondents were a very diverse group, particularly when considered within the context of local census data. According to the American Community Survey, 14 percent of Philadelphia County residents were born outside the continental United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b). The percentage of people born outside of the continental United States who completed the tango survey was twice that of Philadelphia County residents. Again, the tango

* Those born outside of the Continental U.S. were from (one respondent per location unless otherwise indicated): Argentina, China, Colombia, Europe, France (2), Greece (2), Hong Kong, Honolulu (Hawaii), India (2), Istanbul (Turkey) (2), Italy (3), Mediterranean, Netherlands, Oran (Algeria), Philippines (3), Poland, Russia, Soviet Union, Switzerland, Syria, Venezuela, and Vietnam.
data is consistent with my observations of dancers, so these data inspire me to ask why tango may attract a relatively high percentage of people born outside of the continental United States.

To address this question, it is useful to return to the history of tango, which evolved in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries among residents of Argentina and Uruguay, immigrants from Western Europe and the Caribbean, and Africans who had been captured and brought to the area as slaves (Baim 2007, Collier 1995, Savigliano 1995, Thompson 2005). Tango was born out of a blend of Argentine candombe and African-Argentine tango, Argentine rural and urban milonga, European polka and mazurka, Spanish contradanza and French/Haitian contredanse, and Cuban habanera (Collier 1995, Thompson 2005). Tango was created and danced in large part by immigrants in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, and it may not be simply coincidental that the dance still appeals to immigrants in Philadelphia one hundred years later. I turn first to my own experience to explore this phenomenon.

Although I am not foreign-born, I moved to Philadelphia from what felt like another country—Burlington, Vermont. Burlington is a city of 50,000 people within a metropolitan area of 140,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau 2005a). It is eighty miles from Canada and sits on a hill overlooking Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Mountains surrounded by farms and small towns. Politically and socially progressive, the area boasts a very high standard of living. By contrast, Philadelphia is a sprawling city of 1.4 million people within a metropolitan area of 5.6 million along the eastern corridor between New York City and Washington, DC (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b). It is far more diverse in terms of residents’ ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses than Burlington, and approximately twice the percentage of people lived
in poverty in Philadelphia in 2005 (U.S. Census Bureau 2005a, 2005b).* When I moved to Philadelphia in 2002, I had lived in Burlington for fifteen years—most of my adult life. I left behind friends and family, my house and gardens, the university where I had worked for ten years, the farms, lake, and mountains, and, most of all, a way of life that I enjoyed immensely. I honestly felt like an immigrant—I felt disoriented, homesick, lonely, and overwhelmed by the scale, environment, and culture of Philadelphia. Although being a student at Temple University helped me acclimate to life in a large city, it was the tango community that quickly became my home away from home and the place where I felt most accepted and welcome.

What was it that drew me to tango that might also draw immigrants from other countries? At first, the people in the community appealed to me—their wide range of backgrounds and occupations, their intelligence, their kindness toward me as a newcomer, and their clear passion for the dance. I enjoyed their company and felt at home with them, but I soon fell in love with tango itself—its technical complexity, the soulfulness of its music, and its capacity to root me undeniably and completely in the present. In Tango: The Art History of Love, Thompson (2005) describes the roots of tango thus,

Dazzling dance gifts from black and white gauchos, black and white sailors, white compadritos and compadritos of color, and Italian immigrants blended and fused in rich creole moments. These swirling mixtures created milonga, canyengue, and tango.

The innovators were working-class. They lived on the margin. In shaping the tango, they discovered their own style of being. …the guys on the corner and the women in the academies believed in themselves. Tango was their will to full dignity. (274)

Just as creating tango helped these people “discover their own style of being,” tango has helped me to discover and embrace my being. Each time I dance, it invites me to be more truthful about

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* According to the American Community Survey administered by the U.S. Census Bureau, 25 percent of Philadelphia County residents lived below the poverty level in 2005, compared to 12 percent of Chittenden County residents. Burlington is the largest city in Chittenden County and comprises one third of its population.
my past and present—who I am, why I am here, what I want, and where I am headed. I cannot put into words how tango does this, I only know that it does, and I suspect that it has played a similar role for others, whether immigrants or natives of the country where they dance.

A Rich Ethnic Heritage

Tango survey respondents were even more diverse in terms of ethnic background. One hundred six respondents provided open-ended responses to the question, “What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?” They belonged to 45 different ethnic groups, and many of them listed multiple ethnicities. I use the term “ethnic background” to mean the same thing as “ethnic group” or “ancestry.” According to Maybury-Lewis (2002), an ethnic group is broadly defined as a population whose members identify with one another as distinct from others, and this phenomenon usually occurs through a perceived common history and often also includes shared culture, race, religion, or language. The most common ethnic group that respondents listed (the mode) was Irish (17 responses or 11 percent); the second most common was German, including one who was Pennsylvania Dutch (14 responses or 9 percent); the third was Italian (13 responses or 9 percent); and the fourth was American (9 respondents or 6 percent). Other self-identified ethnic groups came from Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, South America, and the Pacific Islands, for example.* One respondent wrote that his/her ethnic background was unknown, and one wrote that he/she was a “citizen of the world.”

* The other ethnic groups listed were: 8 British (5 percent), 8 French (5 percent), and 7 Russian (5 percent). Four respondents listed Slovak (3 percent), and the following 7 ethnic groups were each listed 3 times (2 percent): Chinese, European (mixed), Hungarian, Lithuanian, Scottish, Semitic, and Welsh. The following 9 ethnic groups were each listed twice (1 percent): African-American, Argentinean, Caucasian, European (Western), Greek, Indian, Norwegian, Romanian, and Swiss. The following fourteen ethnic groups were each listed once (less than one percent) AmerAsian, Asian, Austrian, Dutch, Eastern European, Filipino, Indo-Germanic, Pacific Islander, Panamanian, Polish-Russian, Portuguese, Syrian, Ukrainian, and White Anglo-Saxon Protestant.
The U.S. Census Bureau (2005b) allowed respondents to choose from a list of only 27 ancestries, and because this data collection method differed from that of the tango survey (which allowed respondents to write in their ancestries), direct comparison of the two data sets was not feasible. However, census data provides a loose benchmark for assessing how tango survey respondents compared to Philadelphia residents. The American Community Survey (2005b) indicates that Philadelphia residents’ most common ancestry (the mode) was Irish (26 percent), followed by Italian (17 percent), German (15 percent), and Polish (9 percent).* Note that the first three of these—Irish, German, and Italian—were also the first three most commonly listed ancestries of tango survey respondents (in slightly different order), indicating some consistency between the two populations. Overall, Philadelphia residents and tango survey residents reflect similarly wide diversity in their ethnic origins or ancestries.

* Other common ancestries were: English (7 percent), Sub-Saharan African (4 percent), and American (4 percent). One to three percent of the Philadelphia County population was French (except Basque), Scotch-Irish, Scottish, Ukrainian, or West Indian (excluding Hispanic origin groups). Less than one percent was Arab, Czech, Danish, Dutch, French Canadian, Greek, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Slovak, Swedish, Swiss, or Welsh.

Faith Traditions and “Self-Designed Spirituality”

One hundred three respondents indicated that they participate in more than 15 faith traditions, and the one most frequently listed (the mode) was Catholic (27 respondents or 26 percent), followed by self-designed spirituality† (25 respondents or 24 percent) and Protestant (23 respondents or 22 percent). The next most common responses were Jewish (12 respondents or 12 percent) and atheist (10 respondents or 10 percent). No more than six percent of

† I use the term “self-designed spirituality” to mean engaging in thoughts or actions of a spiritual nature that are not associated with any particular faith tradition; rather, they may be an amalgamation of many traditions or be completely self-created. Further analysis will reveal how tango dancers define “self-designed spirituality.”
respondents gave each of the following responses (the actual number of respondents is in parentheses): “other Christian” (7), Taoist (5), Interfaith (4), Pagan (4), Buddhist (3), Agnostic (2), Hindu (2), and Native Peoples (2). The following six responses were each listed once: Muslim, Pantheist, Quaker, Quaker sympathizer—not affiliated with any meeting or church, Russian orthodox, and twelve-step. One dancer wrote “I believe in God,” another simply wrote “humanity,” and a third wrote “tango/dancing is my new belief!” Ten dancers responded that they had no faith tradition, and one wrote “prefer not to label this.”

While it would be interesting to place these data within the context of faith traditions of Philadelphia area residents, the U.S. Census Bureau (2005b) does not collect data on residents’ religious affiliations. Moreover, according to the Harvard Pluralism Project,

> What information we have about such numbers is controversial; some suggest that a religious tradition that keeps track of its own adherents has a vested interest in maximizing those numbers. The presence of religious diversity does not require proof; it is a fact that can be seen in communities across America. (Harvard College, President and Fellows of, and Diana Eck 2007)

Suffice it to say that the diversity of faith traditions of tango survey respondents is consistent with the diversity of faith traditions of United States residents. However, the high percentage of respondents who listed “self-designed spirituality” was surprising. What does this term mean to tango dancers? In interviews with nine local tango dancers during the winter of 2006 to 2007, I asked them to define the word “spiritual” and to describe whether and how they found spiritual meaning through dancing tango.* The range of responses was quite varied and rich, and I discuss these findings in depth in Chapter 7.

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*I conducted these interviews before the tango survey was launched, so interview respondents would not have been influenced by the use of the term “self-designed spirituality” in the survey. In addition, interviewees and instructors/organizers were not eligible to take the survey, and I asked that interviewees, in particular, not to discuss our interviews with others in the community. However, one cannot preclude the possibility that dancers in the community might have learned of my interest in intersections between tango and spirituality through interviewees.
A Well-Educated, Affluent Cohort

Out of 106 people who responded to the question about their level of education, the mode was bachelor’s degree (36 respondents or 34 percent), which included bachelor of arts and bachelor of science. The next most common response was master’s degree (30 respondents or 28 percent), which included master of arts, education, English, business administration, or social work. Fourteen respondents (13 percent) held a doctor of philosophy or a doctor of education, and ten (9 percent) held professional degrees, which included bachelor and doctor of law, as well as doctor of medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine. Seven respondents (7 percent) held associate’s degrees, six respondents (6 percent) had completed some college courses with no degree, three respondents (3 percent) held a high school diploma or the equivalent, and none had completed less than a high school diploma or the equivalent. Overall, respondents to the tango survey were a very well-educated group, particularly when compared to the education levels of Philadelphia residents.

“Figure 8. Comparing Education Levels. Percentage of Respondents to the ‘2005 American Community Survey’ and the ‘2007 Tango Survey’ by Level of Education” shows that, while 50 percent of tango survey respondents held master’s, professional, or doctoral degrees, only nine percent of Philadelphia County residents held such degrees (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b). On the other end of the scale, three percent of tango survey respondents had completed high school only (or its equivalent) compared to 36 percent of Philadelphia County residents. No tango survey respondents had completed less than high school or the equivalent, while 21 percent of Philadelphia County residents had not reached this educational level.

This difference in levels in education between the two groups could be related to the higher median age of tango survey respondents; moreover, because I used convenience sampling
Figure 8. Comparing Education Levels. Percentage of Respondents to the ‘2005 American Community Survey’ and the ‘2007 Tango Survey’ by Level of Education

Tango survey data came from Question 43: What is the highest degree or level of school you have COMPLETED?

for the tango survey (meaning that respondents were self-selecting), one could argue that data are skewed in a number of other ways. First, people with higher levels of education might have been more likely to complete the survey because they could have been more familiar with and perhaps more comfortable with social science research than people with lower levels of education. Dancers also knew that I was conducting the survey as part of my doctoral research, and those with higher degrees could have been inclined to support my educational pursuit because of their appreciation and/or understanding of the value of education. Finally, dancers with higher levels
of education might have conducted their own research at some point and, therefore, could have valued research more than people with little or no research experience. While these are logical limitations to tango survey data, my experience of tango dancers is that they are a very highly educated group. If that is true, what factors might be at play?

In terms of economics, people often pursue advanced degrees to increase their income level, which could make tango more affordable for them. However, I believe that the nature of tango may also be a factor. Tango requires a long learning curve for most dancers, and I offer my own experience as an example. Before I discovered tango, I was a musician, athlete, yoga instructor, and dancer who had studied dance since my twenties, including rhythm tap, modern dance, West African dance, improvisation, contact improvisation, jazz, Lindy Hop, Cuban salsa, and International ballroom. In my late thirties in 2001, I began learning tango and studied it somewhat sporadically until the spring of 2003 when I realized that I was unlikely to make much progress unless I committed myself fully to learning and practicing it. In other words, even with broad experience in other forms of dance and movement, I found tango technique very challenging, and it wasn’t until I had studied it for more than 15 hours a week for about four months that I felt I had grasped the rudiments of the dance. I have been studying tango consistently since then and still feel that I have much to learn. The dance is complex and requires that the dancer not only have sufficient time and money, but also commitment, determination, perseverance, and patience—qualities that one already possesses or may develop in the course of completing an advanced degree.

In making this statement, I do not mean to imply that people without college or advanced degrees do not possess these qualities, nor am I implying that they are less able to dance tango. A high level of education is not a prerequisite for developing such qualities nor for learning,
enjoying, or excelling at tango. I present the above theory to explore what it is about tango that may attract a relatively high percentage of people with advanced degrees. Simply put—they may enjoy the challenge and satisfaction of learning a very difficult dance.

The reader may be inclined to wonder whether all social pairs dance forms require these resources and qualities. While the purpose of this dissertation does not include comparing tango to other dance forms in any systematic way, the survey did ask whether dancers believed that tango was unique compared to other dance forms they had done and, if so, how. In my experience, tango is more complex and challenging than other social pairs dances, and a number of survey respondents would agree, but I leave this topic to Chapter 6 in which I present their responses regarding what makes tango unique.

Not only were tango survey respondents better educated, but they were also wealthier than the average Philadelphia County resident. Tango survey question number 49 asked, “What was your gross household income in 2005?”* “Figure 9. Comparing Income Categories. Percentage of Respondents to the ‘2005 American Community Survey’ and the ‘2007 Tango Survey’ by Household Income Category” shows how these data contrast with those for Philadelphia County. One hundred three tango survey respondents indicated that they had a mean household income between $70,000 and $90,000 (indicated by a score of 7.3 on the 15-point scale) and a median of $60,001 to $70,000. However, the mode (given by 17 respondents) was “more than $150,000.” By contrast, the 2005 American Community Survey found that only eight percent of Philadelphia County household incomes were $100,000 or higher, 24 percent were from $50,000 to $99,999, and 67 percent (more than two-thirds) were below $50,000. With

* Respondents selected from 15 income categories. The first category was “less than $20,000.” The fifteenth category was “more than $150,000.” Category two was “$20,001 to $30,000,” and every category through the fourteenth increased by an increment of $10,000.
Figure 11. Comparing Income Categories. Percentage of Respondents to the ‘2005 American Community Survey’ and the ‘2007 Tango Survey’ by Household Income Category

Tango survey data came from Question 43: What was your gross household income in 2005?

the median 2005 household income for Philadelphia County residents at $32,573, and 24.5 percent of residents living below the poverty level,* tango survey respondents represented a particularly wealthy segment of the local population (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b).

* According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2005c), “Families and persons are classified as below poverty if their total family income or unrelated individual income was less than the poverty threshold specified for the applicable family size, age of householder, and number of related children under 18 present…..” As of 2005, the threshold below which a single person under 65 years of age was deemed living in poverty was $10,160, and the threshold for a family of four (with two children under 18) was $19,806. Thresholds are the same for all parts of the country.
Artists and Professionals Abound

One hundred and two respondents listed 72 distinct occupations and, when placed into categories, the mode or most common response was “artist,” which included musicians, visual artists, dancers, and graphic designers. To compare tango survey data to Philadelphia County data, I used fifteen occupational categories from the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2005b) and added the categories of “students” and “retirees.” “Figure 10. Comparing Occupational Categories. Percentage of Respondents to the ‘2005 American Community Survey’ and the ‘2007 Tango Survey’ by Occupational Category” shows that there were small or

![Occupational Categories Bar Chart](chart.png)

Figure 10. Comparing Occupational Categories. Percentage of Respondents to the ‘2005 American Community Survey’ and the ‘2007 Tango Survey’ by Occupational Category

Tango survey data came from Question 48: What is your primary occupation?  

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negligible differences between data sets in many occupational categories, meaning that tango survey respondents reflected general occupational trends in Philadelphia County. Both data sets showed no respondents working in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining, which is not surprising in an urban environment. They also both showed seven percent of respondents working in finance and insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing. There were small differences in the percentages of respondents working in construction; educational services, health care, and social assistance; other services (except public administration); and information (e.g., computer programming). Differences were a bit higher in two categories: eight percent of Philadelphia County residents and one percent of tango survey respondents worked in public administration, and six percent of Philadelphia County residents and no tango survey respondents worked in transportation, warehousing, and utilities.

The largest differences between the data sets occurred in four occupational categories. There were many more tango survey respondents working in the category of arts, entertainment, recreation, and accommodation and food services—20 percent of tango survey respondents versus eight percent of Philadelphia County residents. All of these tango survey respondents worked in the arts. There were also more tango survey respondents working in the category of professional, scientific, management, and administrative and waste management services—20 percent of tango survey respondents versus 11 percent of Philadelphia County residents. These tango survey respondents worked as engineers, inventors, researchers, lawyers, and development officers. Conversely, there were fewer tango survey respondents working in retail trade, wholesale trade, and manufacturing—one percent of tango survey respondents versus 19 percent of Philadelphia County residents. Overall, tango survey respondents were more likely to work in
the arts and in professional, scientific, and management occupations and less likely to work in trade and manufacturing than their Philadelphia counterparts.

These data raise questions about the elements of tango that might appeal to people who work in the arts and in professional, scientific, and management occupations, and might not appeal to people who work in trade and manufacturing. One element that could appeal to artists is the opportunity for improvisation and self-expression. When teaching beginning dancers, I compare learning tango to learning a language with individual steps and codes of movement (similar to words and grammar) that can be arranged in movement patterns (phrases or sentences) to convey one’s interpretation of the music and to express the connection between dancers. When dancing tango socially, no two dances are ever the same, even between the same dancers to the same music. We dance the way we speak, allowing our senses and thinking in the immediacy of the moment to guide the danced conversation. As a musician and dancer, I find the improvisational element of tango very appealing, and I suspect that other artists may as well.

Tango could also appeal to artists because of its aesthetic qualities, both visually and aurally. The dance itself is beautiful to watch because of how dancers pivot and spin through space, and this quality can be enhanced by dancers’ attire. For most milongas in the Philadelphia area, dancers dress elegantly—women in stylish, high-heeled shoes and form-fitting clothing; men in leather shoes and suits or dress shirts. Many people are also drawn to tango by the music—tangos that are haunting and passionate, valses that are romantic and lyrical, and milongas that are upbeat and playful. The music is as complex and varied as the dance itself, and it contributes to a rich palette for the senses. In summary, tango may appeal to artists because it offers visual and aural aesthetic appeal as well as opportunities for improvisation and self-expression.
It is less clear why tango might appeal to a high percentage of people in professional, scientific, and management occupations and to a lower percentage of those in trade and manufacturing positions. Perhaps the prevalence or dearth of these cohorts relates more directly to their levels of education. Tango survey data combined with my observations of the community indicated that dancers had proportionately higher levels of education than Philadelphia County residents. Indeed, of tango survey respondents in professional, scientific, and management occupations, 25 percent held bachelor’s degrees and 75 percent held master’s degrees or higher. Tango may appeal to a disproportionately high number of people in these professions, who also have high levels of education, because it offers physical and cognitive challenges, as discussed earlier in this chapter. By comparison, the two respondents in trade and manufacturing occupations held associate’s degrees. One cannot predict an individual’s interest or success in tango by his or her level of education. Rather, the prevalence of tango dancers working in occupations that require advanced degrees may give credence to the theory claiming that tango’s difficulty may appeal to dancers who seek a challenge.

_A Heterosexual Bias_

Out of 103 tango survey respondents who listed their sexual orientation, 1.94 percent were gay, 5.83 percent were bisexual, none were lesbian, and 92.23 percent were heterosexual. Two notable research projects gathered data on Americans’ sexual orientation—the 2000 U.S. Census and the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLS) (Black 2000). The 2000 U.S. Census gathered data on unmarried-partner households run by heterosexual or gay/lesbian
partners;* however, it did not gather data on the sexual orientations of those who were not living with their partner, those who were not in a sexual relationship, or those who were bisexual (United States Census Bureau 2000). Therefore, it was not meaningful to compare tango survey data with U.S. Census data.

The National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLS) conducted in 1992 by the National Opinion Research Center (1992) at the University of Chicago was more comprehensive. It found that 1.3 percent of women identified themselves as lesbian, and 2.7 percent of men identified themselves as gay,† but the study did not collect data on people who were bisexual (National Opinion Research Center 1992). It was not feasible to make direct comparison between tango survey data and NHSLS data because of differences in data collection methods, but it is noteworthy that the percentage of gay tango survey respondents was lower than the national percentage and that there were no lesbian tango survey respondents.

These data raise questions about tango as it exists in the Philadelphia area, including the traditional roles of men dancing as leaders and women dancing as followers. How might these traditional gender-specific roles serve to encourage or discourage dancers who are not heterosexual? In the introduction to Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On and Off the Stage, editor Jane C. Desmond writes, “How one moves, and how one moves in relation to others, constitutes a public enactment of sexuality and gender” (2001, 6). She argues that dance evokes concepts of romance, sensuality, and desire and that, to fully understand the human

* According to 2000 census data for Philadelphia County based on unmarried-partner households run by heterosexual or gay/lesbian partners, 0.39 percent were gay, 0.34 percent were lesbian, and 99.27 percent were heterosexual (U.S. Census Bureau). I calculated these figures from “PCT14. Unmarried-partner Households by Sex of Partners” for Philadelphia County at <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/> (10 September 2007).

† Note that these figures were for women and men “within the past year.” NHSLS results were higher for same-sex partnering “since 18 years” of age: 4.1 percent of women were lesbian, and 4.9 percent of men were gay.
experience, dance history must consider the sexual dimensions of dance (Desmond 2001). Furthermore, she argues that, given the prevalence of homophobia in American society, same-sex dancing can be viewed as a political act of transgression when danced within a dominantly heterosexual culture (Desmond 2001). Tango was created within the dominantly heterosexual culture of early twentieth-century Buenos Aires (Savigliano 1995) and retains that pattern in early twenty-first-century Philadelphia. Gay and lesbian dancers may find it uncomfortable, unappealing, and politically charged to dance tango with each other on a mostly heterosexual dance floor. For bisexual dancers, dancing in heterosexual pairs may be less problematic, but they, too, may not feel completely free to dance with same-sex partners.

To explore questions of gender pairing and gender roles further, one may turn to tango survey data regarding dancers’ habits. The survey asked “How often have you danced in the following roles and with the following people at milongas in the Philadelphia area during the last three months?” Using a five-point rating scale, respondents were asked to indicate how often they had danced as a leader, as a follower, with people older and younger than they, with people at various tango levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced), and with men and/or women. “Figure 11. Men’s Partnering. Percentage of Men Who Danced in Various Partner Configurations by Frequency at Milongas in a Three-month Period” illustrates how often men danced with either gender and how often they danced as leader or follower. Note that the darker the bar, the higher the frequency with which they danced in this configuration and, conversely, the lighter the bar, the lower the frequency. No bar at all indicates zero percent. Men were more likely to have danced in the role of follower than they were to have danced with other men. If men who danced

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*I discuss data regarding dancing with people of different ages and at different tango levels in Chapter 6.*
Figure 11. Men’s Partnering. Percentage of Men Who Danced in Various Partner Configurations by Frequency at Milongas in a Three-month Period

Data came from Question 22: How often have you danced in the following roles and with the following people at milongas in the Philadelphia area during the last three months?

N = 39

as followers were not likely to have done so with other men, they must have done so with women. Data support this claim, showing that women’s patterns of gender partnering were less traditional than men’s and that they took the role of leader slightly more often than men took the role of follower.

“Figure 12. Women’s Partnering. Percentage of Women Who Danced in Various Partner Configurations by Frequency at Milongas in a Three-month Period” shows how often women danced with either gender and how often they danced as follower or leader. The most striking
Figure 12. **Women’s Partnering.** Percentage of Women Who Danced in Various Partner Configurations by Frequency at Milongas in a Three-month Period

Data came from Question 22: How often have you danced in the following roles with the following people at milongas in the Philadelphia area during the last three months? **N = 65**

- Every time or almost every time
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Once in a while
- Never or almost never

Data are the percentage of women who danced with women: two percent “every time or almost every time,” another two percent “most of the time,” 15 percent “some of the time,” 50 percent “once in a while,” and 32 percent “never or almost never.” It is notable that 70 percent of women respondents had danced with female partners at least “once in a while,” if not more frequently. Women reported having danced with same-gender partners far more often than did men, but women were about equally as adventurous as men when it came to nontraditional dance.
roles. Overall, Figures 11 and 12 illustrate that respondents danced in fairly traditional gender-specific, leader-follower roles and that, while men and women danced outside of these configurations to some degree, women were more likely to do so than men. These data support Kelly Ray’s observations discussed in Chapter 4 that men were less likely than women to dance in non-traditional roles and with each other. Recall also that Ray noticed a recent increase in men’s willingness to dance as followers and to dance with each other, in part because of gender imbalances in classes.

While gender pairing and gender roles do not imply anything about dancers’ sexual orientations, they do indicate dancers’ comfort levels with non-traditional tango behaviors. I hope that these nascent trends of dancers embracing non-traditional pairing and gender roles signal not only a response to gender imbalance, but also a relaxation of tango’s traditional heterosexual bias. My hope is that contemporary Philadelphia dancers will eventually view dancing with opposite-sex and same-sex partners in traditional and non-traditional roles as accepted and enriching, and I hope that dancers welcome and encourage people of all sexual orientations to enjoy tango. Perhaps Philadelphia will eventually have a milonga like “La Marshall” in Buenos Aires, which began in 2002 and is one of a number of ongoing milongas designed to give dancers complete freedom of expression in choosing their partners and their dance roles.*

Barely Bipartisan

The tango survey asked, “What is your political party affiliation?” Respondents chose from four options: “Democrat, Republican, No party affiliation, Other party—please print name of party (clearly).” Out of one hundred and three respondents who listed their political party affiliation, 47 were Democrats, 10 were Republicans, 39 had no party affiliation, and seven listed “other,” including three independents, one Libertarian, and three who wrote that they voted based on the candidates. The American Community Survey does not gather data on respondents’ political party affiliations, but The Gallup Poll® regularly collects these data for the United States as a whole and for individual states. In 2006, The Gallup Poll® conducted 30,655 telephone interviews of randomly sampled adults, aged 18 and older, from around the country. Interviewers asked whether voters were Democratic, Republican, or independent and, if independent, whether they leaned toward voting for Democratic or Republican candidates. For Pennsylvania, the poll found that 50 percent were Democrats or independents who leaned Democratic in their voting, 42 percent were Republicans or independents who leaned Republican in their voting, and nine percent were independents who did not lean toward a specific party (Jones 2006). I was not able to find the percentage of Pennsylvania respondents who declared themselves independent irrespective of which way they tended to “lean” when they voted; however, nationally, The Gallup Poll® found that in 2006, 34 percent of Americans identified themselves as Democrats, 30 percent as Republicans, and 34 percent as independents.

* According to The Gallup Organization web site, “The Gallup Organization has studied human nature and behavior for more than 70 years. Gallup employs many of the world's leading scientists in management, economics, psychology, and sociology.” For more information about The Gallup Organization and The Gallup Poll®, go to http://www.gallup.com/content/?ci=115.
Because the tango survey asked about political party affiliation differently from the Gallup Poll®, it was not feasible to compare the two data sets, but I was inspired to explore the meaning of the term “independent.” The term is used by the Gallup Organization and by The Harris Poll®, another prominent political research service, to mean “independent status”—i.e., registering to vote without declaring oneself Democrat or Republican or registering to vote and declaring oneself a member of another party, like the Green Party or the Reform Party. Given this definition, it is logical to group tango survey respondents who indicated that they were neither Democrat nor Republican as independent. Grouping them thus reveals that 46 percent of tango survey respondents were Democrats, ten percent were Republicans, and 45 percent were independent. Lacking a comparable data set for Philadelphia County residents, suffice it to say that tango survey respondents were less likely to be Republican and more likely to be Democrat or independent than their national counterparts as reported by The Gallup Poll® for 2006.

Overcoming Conditions That Make Dancing Tango Challenging

In an effort to identify whether dancers have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities that might impact their tango dancing, the survey asked, “Do you have any conditions that make dancing tango challenging for you?” Out of 106 tango survey respondents, 80 answered “No” (75 percent), and 26 answered “Yes” (25 percent). Those who answered affirmatively were then asked, “What allows you to dance tango regardless of or in spite of this condition or these conditions?” Respondents listed physical, emotional, and mental challenges along with a variety of activities that allow them to keep dancing tango.

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* To learn more about The Harris Poll®, go to www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/aboutpoll.asp.
The most common responses, given by 14 respondents, related to physical injuries or limitations. Six dancers did various things to mitigate foot pain, like wear comfortable shoes, use orthotics, take medication, and pace themselves so as not to overstress their feet. Other respondents mentioned the following (one person per condition): low back pain, uneven hips and one blind eye, being overweight, being quite tall, an old shoulder injury, and an old ankle injury. Dancers indicated that the following things allowed them to dance tango regardless of or in spite of these physical conditions: doing yoga, ballet, or Pilates; doing rehabilitation or relaxation exercises; losing weight; or altering their tango technique to compensate for a condition. Without giving any specifics, one dancer wrote, “Not interested in the pain; rather dance and just let the pain be there or not.”

The next most common category of response, given by nine dancers, was in the realm of emotions. Three dancers who did not indicate the nature of their challenges indicated that “love” was what allowed them to continue dancing tango. One wrote “love of the dance,” the second wrote “love of the dance and music,” and the third wrote simply “love.” In a general sense, love is one of the most powerful positive forces in the universe for creating joy and assuaging human suffering, so the degree to which people experience love through tango could allow them to manage or keep dancing despite any number of physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual challenges. A good friend of mine says, “tango is love.” I agree, and I explore intersections between love and tango further in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. Other emotional experiences that allowed respondents to dance tango were “driving passion,” “sheer desire,” “enjoyment of the dance,” and “fun and expressiveness.” For example, one respondent wrote,

The thing that makes dancing tango difficult is that attending late night milongas and prácticas make it difficult to participate in the 9-5 work world. It also creates conflict with a spouse that does not share the same interest. I put myself in a
position of compromising my work and marriage in favor of the pursuit of Argentine Tango. I do it anyway because of my driving passion.

She enjoys dancing tango enough to offset the emotional strain it creates in her work and marriage. Similarly, another woman mentioned the stress associated with the late hours of many milongas. She wrote, “…my condition is that late nights are not pleasant for me. I haven’t been dancing lately as a result.” For some, the late nights are worth it; for others, they are prohibitive.

Moving from the physical and emotional realms to the mental realm, one man wrote, “I am dense; I learn slowly and need to analyze and practice the physical movements. I find it helpful to stop in a class and discover when I am ‘full’.” I understand these statements to mean that he paces himself in class so that he does not attempt to learn too much too quickly and that this approach has allowed him to dance tango despite his perceived denseness. In my experience, it takes many people a long time to learn tango, so though he views himself as a slow learner, he may be no different from most tango students.

Finally, moving into the spiritual realm of what allowed respondents to dance tango regardless of or in spite of challenging conditions, one woman wrote “spiritual lifting.” She did not describe the specific challenge, but if by “spiritual lifting” she means “spiritually uplifting,” she may find that dancing tango raises her spirits such that she is able to overcome challenges.

In an effort to place these data within a Philadelphia context, I explored the U.S. Census Bureau’s definition of “disability,” which is:

…a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition. This condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning, or remembering. This condition can also impede a person from being able to go outside the home alone or to work at a job or business. (2007)

According to the American Community Survey of 2005, 16 percent of Philadelphia County residents had disabilities. The conditions that tango survey respondents had were not nearly as severe as the U.S. Census Bureau definition of “disability,” so direct comparison would not be meaningful. However, it is meaningful to note that approximately one quarter of tango survey respondents indicated that they had physical, mental, and/or emotional conditions that they managed or overcame in order to dance tango. They worked to improve their physical health or conditioning, altered their tango technique, focused on love in general or on their love of the dance and/or the music, focused on enjoying tango, paced themselves in tango instruction, or focused on the spiritual realm. What motivates dancers to go to such lengths to keep dancing tango? What does tango provide that is so valuable? I explore these and other questions about dancers’ motivations in quantitative and qualitative data analysis in Chapters 6 and 7.

What They Bring to Tango: Non-Tango Dance and Movement Experience

In conversations with dancers in the Philadelphia area, I learned that they came to tango with a variety of experience in other dance and movement forms, and gathering data on this experience provided breadth and depth to the portrait of survey respondents and how they compared and contrasted with instructors/organizers. In addition, in these data lay the potential for discovering patterns that might help illuminate tango’s appeal and raise questions for further exploration. The tango survey stated, “Please indicate whether you have done the following dance and movement forms and for how long.” One hundred and six people responded, and following is discussion, first, of their experience with dance forms and, second, of their experience with movement forms. I analyze data from two perspectives to find a) the average
level of experience that respondents *as a group* had in each dance and movement form, and b) the average level of experience that *each* respondent had in all dance and movement forms.

Like local tango instructors/organizers, dancers as a group had the most experience dancing swing, salsa, and ballroom/Latin. “Figure 13. Social Pairs Dance Experience. Percentage of Tango Survey Respondents By Level of Experience in Three Non-tango Dance Forms” shows that between 25 and 35 percent of respondents had more than six years of experience in these dances. In swing, the median was one to two years and the mode, more than

![Figure 13. Social Pairs Dance Experience. Percentage of Tango Survey Respondents By Level of Experience in Three Non-tango Dance Forms](image)

Data came from Question 36: Please indicate whether you have done the following dance and movement forms and for how long.

N = 106

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six years; in salsa, the median was one to two years, and the mode, “no experience”; and in ballroom/Latin, the median was less than one year, and the mode, “no experience.” Echoing data from instructors/organizers, the popularity of these dance forms among tango dancers is not surprising given the similarities among them as dances with lead-follow structures that people enjoy socially.

As with instructors/organizers, a small group of tango survey respondents accounted for the majority of dance experience. Eleven respondents (10 percent) had medians and modes of at least one to two years of experience across all selected dance forms, and only six of these (6 percent) had medians and modes of “more than six years.” Recall my theory that instructors/organizers helped shape the community by virtue of their own diverse demographics and backgrounds. They may have demonstrated that tango is accessible not only to people of different demographics, but also to those with a wide range of experience in non-tango dance, particularly those with very little experience.

In addition to asking about their past experience with dance forms, I asked respondents to indicate which dance or movement forms they were doing currently in addition to tango. Not only did respondents have the most experience in swing, ballroom/Latin, and salsa, but they were also fairly likely to have continued with these dances—42 percent were dancing swing, 39 percent were dancing ballroom/Latin, and 50 percent were dancing salsa. Comparatively, only 16 percent still engaged in “other forms of dance not listed,” and small percentages of respondents continued with the remaining seven dance forms (1 to 9 percent). These data were somewhat surprising because, in anecdotal conversation with tango dancers, many spoke with

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* Medians and modes were “no experience” for all of the remaining dance forms listed: ballet, contact improvisation, flamenco, folk, improvisation, modern dance, tap, and “other dance forms not listed.”
me of ceasing to do other dance forms because of how demanding tango was to learn and dance socially. Perhaps I was more inclined to converse with people who immersed in tango exclusively the way I did, giving me a biased view. Clearly, a large percentage of survey respondents continued to enjoy other social dances in addition to tango.

Not only did I wish to understand respondents’ dance backgrounds and current practices, but also their experience with movement forms, like yoga and Tai Chi, which have the potential to enhance or facilitate one’s ability to dance tango. Out of eight movement forms, tango survey respondents had the most experience in yoga. Thirty-four had practiced for three years or more (32 percent), 23 had practiced for two years or less (21 percent), and 47 had never practiced yoga (44 percent). Of those who had practiced for at least three years, 21 had practiced for more than six years (19 percent). Recall that local tango instructors/organizers who participated in this research also had considerably more experience practicing yoga than other movement forms. The recurrence of this theme in the data raises questions about intersections between tango and yoga, which I address at length in Chapter 6. The next category in which respondents had the most experience was “other body/mind/spirit practices not listed.” Twenty-five percent had three years of experience or more, nine percent had two years or less, and 67 percent had no experience. Because respondents could not indicate precisely what these other forms were, it was not possible to analyze these data further. However, the forms did not include others listed on the survey—Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method®, karate, Pilates, tai chi, or “other martial art not listed.” Respondents had medians and modes of “no experience” in these six forms.

Again, it is useful to analyze not only the average experience levels for respondents as a group regarding each movement form, but also to analyze individual respondents’ levels of
experience with all movement forms. Only six respondents had medians or modes of at least one to two years of experience in all movement forms; the remainder had medians and modes of “no experience” or less than six months. Overall, tango survey respondents were less likely to have experience in movement forms than in non-tango dance forms, and among the few who had extensive movement experience, the majority of this experience was in yoga.

Returning to the collective behavior of all respondents, I gathered data on percentages of respondents who were still practicing movement forms in addition to dancing tango. Consistent with respondents’ high levels of experience with yoga, 39 percent of them continued to practice yoga in addition to dancing tango, compared to 23 percent who practiced “other body/mind/spirit practices not listed,” 15 percent who practiced Pilates, and 15 percent who practiced no movement form at all. Just a handful of respondents continued to practice tai chi, Alexander Technique, and “other martial art not listed”; none practiced Feldenkrais Method® or karate.

Regarding the value of yoga for those who dance tango, for two and a half years I offered a Kripalu yoga class at the beginning of the Sunday “Tango Brunch” milonga in Pennsauken, NJ. Over the years, many tango dancers told me of how the yoga class improved their dancing, their mood, and/or their overall enjoyment of the milonga. They spoke of how yoga brought them fully into the moment and into their bodies, warmed up their joints, and left them feeling peaceful and open to the people around them. For some, the yoga class made “Tango Brunch” their favorite milonga in the area. These intersections between yoga and tango have provided some of the impetus for my exploration of the spiritual dimension of tango and inform discussion of quantitative and qualitative data on these topics in Chapter 6.

In summary, tango survey respondents as a group had some experience in many dance forms with the most in swing, ballroom/Latin, and salsa. They were more likely to be continuing
to dance these forms in addition to tango than other forms. On an individual level, a small percentage of respondents accounted for a majority of dance experience—only 10 percent had medians and modes of at least one to two years of experience in dance forms other than tango. Respondents as a group had much less collective experience in movement forms with the exception of yoga, which 32 percent had practiced for three years or more. In addition, yoga was the form that most respondents continued to practice in addition to dancing tango (39 percent of respondents). The appeal of tango for yoga practitioners and, conversely, the appeal of yoga for tango dancers may reflect how both forms invite a meditative, receptive, and peaceful state of mind that invites further exploration.

*Immersing in the Art Form: Dancers’ Tango Studies*

The final step taken in creating a portrait of the local tango community was to explore their histories of studying and dancing tango, including where and when they began to learn it and when they began to attend milongas. Fifty-seven percent of tango survey respondents began learning tango in Philadelphia, and another 36 percent began in cities within commuting distance of Philadelphia in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Delaware, or Maryland. One or two percent of respondents began learning tango in each of the following places: Buenos Aires (Argentina), Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Washington, DC., or Lyon (France). Recall the demographics of tango instructors/organizers and proposed theories about how they could have influenced local dancers. Because the majority (93 percent) of tango survey respondents began learning tango within the Philadelphia area, local instructors and event organizers have had considerable opportunity to shape the community, including tango
technique, patterns of interaction and etiquette, and attracting dancers with comparable demographics and backgrounds.

One hundred and twelve respondents indicated the approximate dates when they began learning tango: only one percent in the late 1980s, 26 percent in the 1990s, and 73 percent from 2000 to February 2007. I calculated the number of years that tango survey respondents had studied tango based on the end-point of February 19, 2007 (the deadline for submitting the survey). The mean number of years was 4.1, the median was 2.3, the mode was 1.1, and the standard deviation was 3.9. These figures reflect the wide ranges in the length of time that respondents had been studying tango—from a few months to more than ten years. The largest two groups were those who had danced tango for one to two years (34 percent), and those who had danced for less than one year (21 percent). Together, these two groups accounted for 55 percent of tango survey respondents. By contrast, the remaining 45 percent of respondents had a wide range of experience dancing tango: 13 percent had studied it for three to four years, five percent for five to six years, 14 percent for seven to eight years, five percent for nine to ten years, and seven percent for 11 years or more.

In the tango survey, I also asked when respondents had begun attending milongas in the Philadelphia area, and the results were quite consistent with when they had begun to study tango, as shown in “Figure 14. Attending Milongas. Percentage of Tango Survey Respondents by Years Attending Milongas.” These data raise a number of questions about the local tango community and about the survey itself. Why did so many relatively new tango dancers complete the survey? Are the data skewed by convenience sampling, or might they reflect the experience levels of members of the community? It is possible that the data are skewed because those who recently discovered tango might have been more inspired to take a survey than those more accustomed to
the dance. In my experience, when people first become enamored with tango, they attend many tango activities. This level of interest could have fueled their willingness to take the survey and their curiosity about its content. However, one could make a similar argument about seasoned tango dancers, who could have had strong opinions about tango and a vested interest in the community that might have fueled their desire to take the survey. The most likely phenomenon to have led many new dancers to complete the survey becomes clear when considered alongside data presented in Chapter 4.
Recall that the numbers of local tango instructors, event organizers, and milongas had grown steadily since the early 1990s with marked increases since 2000 that showed no signs of slowing by the end of 2006. Recall, also, that new tango activities began in the Philadelphia suburbs of Collegeville and Media in 2004 and 2005, respectively, which offered new tango opportunities for those living in and near those towns. In my roles as milonga host, tango instructor, and dancer, I witnessed a significant increase in the numbers of new dancers from 2005 to 2007. I also witnessed that out of each new group of people who became inspired to try tango, only a small percentage remained committed to learning the dance over time. People may stop dancing tango due to its technical difficulty and/or the demands it places on time and money. As dancers progress in ability (or don’t progress in ability), they may also become disillusioned with various elements of tango, like the periodic lack of sufficient dance partners, the wide range of dancers’ skill levels, the characteristics of various milongas (music, location, level of “friendliness”), and the quality or convenience of local instruction. Finally, life demands may intervene to make it less feasible to dance tango, including having children, changing jobs, or moving out of the area. In other words, while many people may become enamored with tango and enjoy dancing it for a while, not all of them continue dancing tango over time, so it should be no surprise that the numbers of survey respondents with fewer years of experience outnumbered those with more years of experience. Taking these observations into account, it is reasonable to assume that tango survey data are fairly representative of the local community.
Diversity and Uniformity in the Philadelphia Area Tango Community

and Implicit Questions About Tango

These aspects of their dance and movement experience, along with their demographics, illuminate the diversity and uniformity of tango survey respondents and begin to reveal aspects of tango that may appeal to specific populations. Survey respondents were quite diverse in terms of marital status, country of origin, ethnic background, faith tradition, occupation, level of income, years and range of experience in non-tango dance and movement forms, and years of experience dancing tango. They were more uniform in their ages, levels of education, sexual orientation, and political party affiliation. Approximately one-quarter had some condition or conditions that made dancing tango challenging but that they overcame in order to keep dancing.

Compared to the general Philadelphia County population in 2005, tango survey respondents were about 15 years older on average; they were more likely to be divorced; they were more likely to have been born outside of the continental United States; they were much better educated; they were more likely to work in the arts and in professional, scientific, and management occupations and less likely to work in retail trade and in manufacturing; and they had higher incomes. Compared to the United States population in 2000, tango survey respondents were slightly less diverse in terms of sexual orientation, and compared to the United States population in 2006, tango survey respondents were more likely to be Democrats or independents than Republicans. Finally, tango survey respondents were just as diverse in terms of ethnic groups and faith traditions as their national counterparts.

These data raise a number of questions about the nature of tango and about how tango may affect dancers’ lives. For example, is tango well-suited to people facing the opportunities and challenges of mid-life? Does it offer physical and emotional benefits to people who are
divorced or provide a means of identity clarification to immigrants? Does it hold opportunities for self-expression and aesthetic enjoyment for artists? Do data showing that respondents had varied levels of experience in dance and movement forms indicate that tango is accessible to a wide variety of people? Conversely, does the relatively large percentage of respondents who had danced tango for two years or less compared to the smaller percentage who had danced it for longer periods of time suggest that the dance may be prohibitively difficult or demanding for some? Related to this question, data point to the resources one needs in order to dance tango, including money, time, patience, and persistence. Data also point to how the heterosexual roots of the dance may exclude people who are not heterosexual and how recent shifts in gender roles within the local tango community may signal growth in this area. Finally, data showing that 95 percent of tango survey respondents began learning tango in the Philadelphia area provides evidence of how local instructors/organizers have had great opportunities to influence dancers in the community.

While all of these issues invite further analysis and reflection on the nature of tango and on how dancers perceive that it affects their lives, the data most relevant to the research questions and focus of this study are those suggesting intersections among aging, tango, and spirituality. The high percentage of dancers who are middle-aged or older, coupled with literature showing that people at mid-life are more inclined to consider mortality, life purpose, and meaning through spiritual inquiry (Ai and Mackenzie 2006; Irwin 2002; Jewell 1999), raises questions about the role that dancing tango may play in this journey. In addition, the prevalence of tango survey respondents who practice yoga invites exploration of possible intersections between tango and meditation, the latter being a form of spiritual practice in some faith traditions, like Buddhism (Kabat-Zinn 1994). Finally, the relatively high percentage of
respondents who listed “self-designed spirituality” as their faith tradition raises questions about how tango dancers may define and practice such spirituality. For example, could opportunities for improvisation and self-expression through tango attract people who like to think independently or whose needs are not served by existing religious or spiritual traditions? In Chapter 6, I address these questions and others regarding dancers’ perceptions of how tango affects them on many levels—physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

Conclusion

This chapter created a profile of tango dancers in the Philadelphia area by presenting selected demographic data and the dance and movement backgrounds of 26 local tango instructors and event coordinators and more than 100 local dancers. It explored how instructors and event organizers may have shaped the local tango community; it discussed diversity and uniformity among tango survey respondents as well as differences and similarities between them and residents of Philadelphia County; and it presented fledgling theories on what these data may suggest about the nature of tango and what it offers to dancers. Having built a foundational understanding of dancers in this chapter and the recent history of tango in the Philadelphia area in Chapter 4, I turn now to how dancers perceive that tango affects them and their lives.
CHAPTER 6
UNDERSTANDING TANGO’S APPEAL: DANCERS’ PERCEPTIONS
OF TANGO’S EFFECTS ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

This chapter addresses a major research question for this study – whether dancers perceived that participating in tango affected their physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual health/well-being or growth and, if so, how. In so doing, the chapter explores dancers’ motivations for dancing tango. It also addresses questions that emerged in Chapter 5 about the nature of tango as a dance form and how it may serve specific populations, like immigrants, artists, those who are divorced, those with varying levels of experience in other dance and movement forms, and those of the baby boom generation. The “Survey of Argentine Tango Dancers in the Philadelphia Area” gathered quantitative and qualitative data on many aspects of dancers’ experiences, beliefs, and patterns of behavior related to tango. Analysis and interpretation using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods reveals that tango had profound effects on dancers and their lives. Some of these effects were expected and quite logical, like improved physical health, greater joy, and an expanded social life. Others were unexpected; for example, those who felt sexually aroused while dancing tango were more likely to have spiritual experiences and to believe that tango had enhanced their spiritual lives.

The chapter begins with an overview of the quantitative, qualitative and mixed research methods employed, noting some of the methods’ strengths and limitations as applied to tango survey data. It moves to quantitative analysis of how respondents reported that tango affected them and their lives. More specifically, data from various questions are combined to create statistical indicators for measuring five constructs—physical, mental, emotional, social, and
spiritual. These quantitative data provide benchmarks for exploring qualitative data on the same constructs. Tango survey respondents gave lengthy answers to a number of open-ended questions on why they began to dance, why they danced presently, how tango had changed their lives, and what made tango unique from other dance forms. The chapter goes on to discuss themes that appeared in these qualitative texts, considering each construct as well as relationships among the constructs. The chapter ends with mixed-methods analysis of data that address key questions from Chapter 5 regarding how tango may serve specific cohorts.

Complex Research Methods for a Complex Topic:
Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods

This chapter explores whether and to what degree dancers perceived that tango affected them through the use of five realms of experience or constructs—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. These five constructs comprise the backbone of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods analysis as useful benchmarks and tools for comparison between subgroups of respondents. However, discussion of how they intersect or overlap provides some of the most intriguing results, and the reader will find that the researcher’s personal reflections are offered at a few points to tease out or clarify meaning.

Analyzing and Interpreting Quantitative Data

Among the goals of univariate analysis (analyzing one variable at a time) conducted in Chapter 5 was determining which variables were true variables—that is, which variables revealed enough variety in respondents’ answers to make them valid candidates for bivariate
analysis. Bivariate analysis tests whether relationships or correlations between two variables are by chance or not by chance—that is, statistically significant. Univariate analysis revealed that for only one variable did respondents give nearly identical answers—the question about their sexual orientation. The majority (95 out of 102 respondents or 92 percent) indicated that they were heterosexual as opposed to gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Such broad consistency in responses made the sexual orientation variable a near constant and precluded using it in bivariate analysis. For all other questions, including many not presented in Chapter 5, respondents selected a wide range of answers, making their use in bivariate analysis valid for seeking significant correlations.

The survey generated four types of quantitative variables: binary (yes/no or male/female); interval (numbers, like dates and ages); ordinal (prescribed sequences with equal values between choices, like income levels); and nominal (thematic or subjective differences, like faith traditions). I applied different bivariate analysis procedures depending on the types of variables being explored, and I used the statistical software program called SPSS to conduct analyses. Analysis revealed positive and negative correlations determined by the correlation coefficient. A coefficient near zero showed a weak relationship or no relationship between variables, and a coefficient near -1.0 or 1.0 showed a strong linear relationship between the variables. Positive coefficients indicated that larger scores on one variable were associated with larger scores on the other variable as well. Negative, or inverse, coefficients indicated that larger scores on one variable are associated with smaller scores on the other variable. Correlations were also discussed in terms of their $P$-values—the probability that a correlation found between the two variables was random or by chance. If the significance or $P$-value was less than or equal to 0.05,
the correlation coefficient was considered reliable or statistically significant. Throughout the chapter, footnotes detail the specific bivariate analyses conducted and the results.

I used statistical tools called “indicators” to analyze quantitative data in terms of the five constructs—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. Each indicator was comprised of data from one or two survey questions and allowed testing for significant relationships between these indicators (as dependent variables) and variables like age, gender, and marital status (as independent variables). The survey included three questions designed to create indicators. Question number 13 asked to what degree dancing tango affected respondents in various parts of their lives, including their physical, emotional, and mental health; spiritual well-being; and social life. They rated each area on a five-point scale from “made much worse” to “made much better.” Question number 30 asked them to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with 24 statements about how dancing tango affected them. These statements asked about the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social constructs in a variety of ways. For example, the three statements related to the emotional construct were: “enhances how I feel emotionally,” “helps me grow emotionally,” and “makes me feel positive emotions.” In question number 30, there was also a negative statement for each construct to discourage respondents from checking off items without closely reading each statement. For example, the negative statement for the emotional construct was “makes me feel negative emotions.” Respondents rated each statement on a five-point scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with “neutral” as the mid-point. The third question—number 17—asked respondents to indicate how often they had certain positive or negative experiences while dancing tango at milongas during the last three months. Respondents rated positively worded items like “healthy and strong,” “alert,” and “altruistic” as well as
negatively worded ones, like “uncoordinated” and “anxious” on a five-point scale from “never or almost never” to “every time or almost every time.”

To create indicators for each construct, I used a statistical test called “Cronbach’s alpha,” which measures how well a set of items (or variables) measures a single unidimensional latent construct.* If Cronbach’s alpha for a set of variables is 0.6 or higher, those variables hang together as a consistent or reliable measure, and the closer the alpha is to 1.0, the stronger the indicator. Note that in traditional quantitative research, indicators and alphas are used for factor analysis, which “…is a form of exploratory multivariate analysis that is used to either reduce the number of variables in a model or to detect relationships among variables.”† Normally, the researcher does not know ahead of time which variables will “hang together” as factors; such relationships are discovered after data collection and preliminary analysis. In the case of this research, I purposefully designed groups of variables to hang together as indicators so that I could explore the five constructs, and I used alphas to validate how I labeled the indicators.

I created two indicators for each construct. I used best practices to create what I call enhancement indicators by drawing on data from two different questions (numbers 13 and 30) that addressed the same issue—to what degree tango may have enhanced their lives. I could not use best practices to create what I call positive experience indicators because only one question (number 17) gathered data on respondents’ experiences while dancing tango. Cronbach’s alpha values for all of the indicators were above 0.6, making them functional statistical tools, but the values for positive experience indicators were not as high as those for enhancement indicators;

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therefore, I do not give them as much weight in bivariate analysis as I do enhancement indicators. The value of using positive experience indicators lies in their alternate perspective—they measure dancers’ experiences while dancing tango, whereas enhancement indicators offer a measure of how respondents perceived that tango affected them in general. Tables 9 and 10 list the variables used to create these indicators.

I used a higher number of variables to create both the spiritual enhancement indicator and the positive spiritual experience indicator than to create the physical, mental, emotional, and social indicators because intersections between tango and spirituality are central to this research and because spirituality can be difficult to describe in words. By including a wide range of spiritual concepts and phrases from my previous research with tango dancers and from current scholarly discourse, I hoped to increase the chances that dancers would understand and be able to respond regarding the spiritual construct.

I did not include the reversed, negative statements in the indicators because they brought the alphas down for every construct, indicating that they were confusing to survey respondents or that they did not fit well with the constructs.* I had tested these negative statements in the survey completed by six dancers in Vermont in the fall of 2006, and there was no indication that these negative statements were problematic. However, the constructs were reliable without them because each was comprised of sufficient variables and had a sufficiently high alpha. Tables 9 and 10 show the negative statements in italics and the alpha value for each construct with and without the negative statements. In future research, I will revise the negative statements so that

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* Before analyzing data generated by these negative statements, I reversed the five-point scale, as is consistent with best practices in quantitative research.
Table 9. Variables Used to Create “Enhancement Indicators” and their Cronbach’s Alpha Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Variables Used to Create Indicator (with question numbers where they appeared in parentheses)</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha*</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha w/Neg**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Enhancement</td>
<td>your physical health (13****)</td>
<td>0.791</td>
<td>0.613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enhances how my body works (30****)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improves my physical health (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>makes me physically tired and rundown (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Enhancement</td>
<td>your mental health (e.g., your thoughts or intellect) (13)</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>0.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improves my mental abilities (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enhances the way my mind works (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps me grow mentally (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reduces my mental capacity (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Enhancement</td>
<td>your emotional health (e.g., your feelings) (13)</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td>0.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enhances how I feel emotionally (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps me grow emotionally (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>makes me feel positive emotions (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>makes me feel negative emotions (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Enhancement</td>
<td>your social life (13)</td>
<td>0.746</td>
<td>0.643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enhances my social life (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improves my ability to interact with others (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>makes me less able to interact with others (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Enhancement</td>
<td>your spiritual well-being (13)</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>0.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps me to be more patient (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps me to be more accepting (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps me to be more compassionate (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reminds me that there is more to life than material things (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enhances my sense of spiritual well-being (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps me understand why I am here in this life (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adds to my sense of wonder and respect for life (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helps me to make the world a better place (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enhances how I experience a transcendent, spiritual dimension of life (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>creates confusion about my religious or spiritual beliefs (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Values for only positively worded variables. Positively worded variables were used in bivariate analysis.

** Values for positively and negatively worded variables. Negatively worded variables were not used in bivariate analysis.

*** Data came from Question 13: Please indicate to what degree dancing tango has affected you in the following areas.

**** Data came from Question 30: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about how dancing tango affects you.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Variables Used to Create Indicator (all are from question 17*)</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha**</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha w/Neg***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Physical Experience Indicator</td>
<td>healthy and strong pleased with how my body is functioning <em>uncoordinated</em></td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>0.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Mental Experience Indicator</td>
<td>alert pleased with how my mind is functioning <em>confused</em></td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>0.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotional Experience Indicator</td>
<td>happy trusting emotionally balanced <em>anxious</em></td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td>0.656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Social Experience Indicator</td>
<td>accepted respected appreciated <em>competitive</em> <em>intimidated</em></td>
<td>0.711</td>
<td>0.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Spiritual Experience Indicator</td>
<td>creative connected to myself grateful whole and peaceful connected to my partner connected to the music altruistic connected to a transcendent, spiritual dimension <em>alone and separate</em></td>
<td>0.786</td>
<td>0.767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data came from Question 17: Please indicate how often you felt this way while dancing tango at milongas during the last three months.

** Values for only positively worded variables. Positively worded variables were used in bivariate analysis.

*** Values for positively and negatively worded variables. Negatively worded variables were not used in bivariate analysis.

they do not bring the alphas down because indicators created using positively and negatively worded statements are considered more reliable measures of social science phenomena.
Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Data

Through five open-ended questions, the survey gathered qualitative data on dancers’ motivations for dancing, how they viewed tango, and how it may have affected them and/or their lives. The questions were as follows; three were preceded by binary questions, which are shown in italics.

10. What was the inspiration or inspiring moment that made you decide to learn to dance tango?
12. Please describe the two or three most important reasons why you dance tango now.
20. Has dancing tango changed you or your life somehow? Yes/No
21. If “Yes,” please describe the two or three most important ways in which dancing tango has changed you or your life.
25. Through dancing tango in the Philadelphia area, have you become more accepting or tolerant of people who are different from you? Yes/No
26. If “Yes,” please think of a few people toward whom you have become more accepting or tolerant, then describe how tango has helped you to make this change (without naming names).
38. Is there anything unique about dancing tango compared to other dances that you’ve done? Yes/No
39. If “Yes,” please describe what makes dancing tango unique compared to other dances you’ve done.

Using ethnographic methods, I categorized text based on the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual constructs. More specifically, I categorized as “physical reasons” statements or phrases that included the word physical or terms such as exercise, health, touch, or movement. Phrases that included the word mental or terms like mind, challenge, intellect, learn, or discipline were categorized as “mental reasons.” I categorized as “emotional reasons” phrases that included the words emotion or feelings or referred to specific emotions, like joy, happiness, euphoria, or feeling good. Phrases that included the word social or that referred to communication, relationships with fellow tango dancers, or the tango community as a whole were categorized as “social reasons.” Finally, categorizing text as “spiritual” required the most
complex and least obvious criteria. While some respondents used the words spirit or spiritual in their text, most referred to spiritual reasons for dancing tango using other words and concepts discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. These included acceptance, connection with self or others, connection with a transcendent dimension, being creative, self-expression, and finding meaning or purpose in life. The concept of “love” was an additional theme that arose from the data, which warrants discussion in the context of current scholarship on intersections between art, love, and spirituality. While Chapter 7 delves more deeply into the spiritual construct as it relates to dancing tango, Chapter 6 begins to explore respondents’ experiences regarding this construct.

In addition to categorizing text according to the five constructs, I used two more categories—“the dance” and “the music.” As one would expect, I categorized any mention of tango dance technique or dancing as “the dance” and any mention of tango music or other music as “the music.” I also categorized text using themes that I extrapolated from respondents’ words, like “gaining exposure to other cultures” and “improved quality of life.” Peppering my analysis are quotations from respondents’ text to reveal the complexity of their experiences and beliefs and to create polyvocality in the text.

Qualitative data first appears in the section entitled, “In Their Own Words: Qualitative Data on How Tango Affected Respondents and Their Lives,” as a way of exploring data on each construct. Initial attempts to analyze qualitative data were organized by survey questions—that is, by coding and exploring answers to one question at a time. However, considerable similarities among data from different questions revealed that the survey had elicited comparable and complementary information from respondents through different perspectives or angles, an
outcome I had hoped to achieve. For example, data on what made tango unique clarified many of the reasons why they danced in the present, and data on how tango had helped them to become more accepting or tolerant of others enriched data on how tango had changed them and their lives. Thus, while data for each question was coded separately, discussion weaves together results from multiple questions.

Another reason for analyzing data from multiple questions is to offset the possible effects of researcher bias. Data from qualitative questions appearing early in the survey (question numbers 10 and 12) could have been less influenced by researcher bias than data from questions appearing later in the survey (question numbers 21, 26, and 39). The majority of respondents took the survey online (between 92 and 94 percent, depending on the question), which showed only one to five questions at a time on the computer screen. Respondents had to answer all questions on the screen before viewing the next set of questions; they could not peek ahead. The wording of quantitative, multiple-choice questions 9 and 11 was very general so as to decrease the possibility of influencing how dancers responded to qualitative questions 10 and 12. Quantitative, multiple choice questions appearing later in the survey (numbers 13 and 17) were more detailed, revealing more researcher bias and carrying greater potential to influence qualitative responses to questions number 21, 26, and 39. To mitigate this bias, discussion focuses on themes emerging across data from questions appearing both early and late in the survey, revealing as much of respondents’ own experience of and beliefs about tango as possible.

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* While my intention in preliminary testing of the survey was to reduce researcher bias, a postpositivist view holds that eliminating such bias is impossible.

† Paper versions of the survey were available to dancers at local milongas during a two-month period, so dancers could have read all of the questions before going online to complete the survey. However, I was stationed by the surveys for most of each milonga and noticed few people taking time away from dancing in order to read them or ask about them.
Qualitative data also appears in the section entitled, “Does Tango Serve Different Cohorts in Unique Ways?: Addressing Questions Raised in Chapter 5.” In this section, data from two open-ended questions are used in conjunction with quantitative data to determine whether and how tango may have served specific subgroups of respondents (divorced, immigrant, etc.). Specifically, survey question number 12 asked respondents to list the two or three most important reasons why they danced tango presently, and all 116 people who had completed the survey up to this point responded to this question. Question number 21, appearing later in the survey after many respondents had dropped out, asked whether and how tango may have changed them and/or their lives, and 96 out of 103 people responded. Given the questions’ high response rates and their early and late placement, they were useful in comparing how different subgroups of respondents answered qualitative questions. For example, by tracking who among respondents were divorced/separated, I could explore whether they as a subgroup responded differently to each qualitative question.

Mixed-methods Analysis and Interpretation

In addition to using statistical methods for analyzing quantitative data and ethnographic methods for interpreting qualitative data, I used mixed methods in a number of ways. As mentioned above, analysis of qualitative data led me to explore whether subgroups of dancers responded differently to certain questions. For example, did those who were divorced/separated indicate more gains in their social or emotional lives through tango than those who were single? To allow such comparison between subgroups, I used a popular form of mixed-methods analysis called data transformation, which involves quantifying qualitative data and/or qualifying
quantitative data (Creswell 2003). For the purposes of this research, I quantified the qualitative data by counting the number of respondents who used language related to the five constructs. In addition, regarding the question on how tango had changed them and/or their lives, I counted the number of responses that referred to a sixth important theme that arose from the data—exposure to new cultures and travel. To facilitate such counting, I put the text from each respondent into a spreadsheet, one response per row. Next to each response, I included other data provided by that respondent, like his/her gender, age, marital status, occupation, and whether he/she was born in the continental United States. Table 11 shows a fictitious example of how the spreadsheets looked; the actual spreadsheets were too large to print. These spreadsheets not only allowed me

Table 11. Fictitious Example of Quantification of Qualitative Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>USBorn</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Phys</th>
<th>Emot</th>
<th>Ment</th>
<th>Spir</th>
<th>Soc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>divorced</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>doctor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data came from Question 12: Please describe the two or three most important reasons why you dance tango now.
to count how many times respondents referred to constructs, but also to identify differences between how men versus women or divorced versus married people referred to them. Because the survey sample size was relatively small, only differences of 15 percent or more between groups were deemed important and worthy of discussion. * I do not claim that such differences were statistically significant; only that they may reveal patterns and trends that, when compared and contrasted with quantitative data, help address research questions.

Another form of mixed-methods analysis that I use is to determine whether and how quantitative and qualitative data support, refute, or illuminate each other. Disparities between the two forms of data invite deeper exploration of respondents’ experiences as well as evaluation of the survey’s design. Such comparisons illuminate the value of using mixed methods to explore a topic as intricate and complex as dancers’ experiences of tango.

A limitation of the research became clear upon analyzing data from question number 39, which asked them to describe what makes dancing tango unique compared to other dances they had done. While it asked them to compare tango to “other dances,” it did not specify which dances. My intention had been to compare tango to other social pairs dances as opposed to modern dance, ballet, folk dance, or other forms. Given that between 67 and 73 percent of respondents had experience in swing dance, ballroom, and/or Latin dance before learning tango, most respondents did compare tango to other social pairs dances: 15 did so explicitly and others did so implicitly through the way in which they wrote about tango technique, mentioning, for example, the distinct embrace. A few compared tango to other dance forms—two compared it to

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*I chose differences of 15 percent or more based on the advice of Alan Howard, a statistician at the University of Vermont, who gave me guidance on quantitative analysis. According to Howard, survey data from 400 respondents, for example, would have a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent. Because only 103 respondents completed my tango survey, any meaningful difference in data from subgroups would have to be greater than 5+5, or 10 percent. He advised that a difference of at least 15 percent between subgroups would be needed to infer a pattern or trend.*
modern dance and one to ballet—comparisons that proved more valuable than I expected in revealing how dancers experienced tango. In retrospect, the limitation of question number 39 was minor but its note could serve to inform future data collection tools.

**Moving Beyond the Five Constructs**

The five constructs were useful tools for beginning to understand how respondents perceived that tango affected them and their lives, for comparing subgroups, and for pointing out further areas of exploration in the data. However, dancing tango is a complex process that simultaneously engages the dancer on many levels, and this complexity is central to its mystery, appeal, and beauty. For example, when people dance in close embrace, they may experience not only physical touch but also tremendous joy and a spiritually rich connection with their partner, which may inspire improved social interaction. Exploration of intersections among the constructs yields what the researcher found to be the most satisfying descriptions of tango and how people perceived that it affected them and their lives. The structure of this chapter reflects this evolution in data analysis—it moves from analysis of the separate constructs to discussion of how they overlap and intersect, particularly with regard to how they merge into or contribute to the spiritual construct. The use of mixed methods contributed greatly to the process of discovering and exploring those intersections.
What the Numbers Say: Quantitative Data on How Tango Affected Respondents and Their Lives

Univariate analysis of enhancement indicators revealed that dancers reported consistent levels of enhancement among all constructs, with social enhancement rated highest and spiritual enhancement lowest. In “Figure 15. Means for Enhancement Indicators,” a score of 3 indicates no change in the construct (neutral), and a score of 4 indicates some enhancement. The highest possible score of 5 indicates much enhancement and the lowest of 1 indicates that dancing tango worsened the construct. The means for all enhancement indicators fell close to “some enhancement.” Standard deviations were quite consistent across indicators, ranging from 0.60 for mental enhancement to 0.68 for physical enhancement, showing that respondents were in considerable agreement about the degree to which tango enhanced their lives.

![Figure 15. Means for Enhancement Indicators](image)

Figure 15. Means for Enhancement Indicators
Univariate analysis of positive experience indicators showed that respondents had slightly more positive mental, emotional, and physical experiences than social and spiritual ones while dancing tango. Recall that these indicators use data from only one question (number 17), making them somewhat less important than the enhancement indicators. The question asked how often they felt certain things while dancing tango at milongas during the last three months. In “Figure 16. Means for Positive Experience Indicators,” a score of 3 indicates “some of the time,” and a score of 4 indicates “most of the time.” The highest score of 5 indicates “every time or almost every time,” and the lowest score of 1 indicates “never or almost never.” The range of standard deviations was wider for these indicators than for enhancement indicators. With a standard deviation of 0.68 for positive spiritual experiences, there was considerable agreement among respondents on this indicator. With standard deviations of 0.75 for positive emotional experiences, 0.76 for social, and 0.78 for mental, there was less agreement among respondents.

Figure 16. Means for Positive Experience Indicators
for these indicators. Finally, respondents agreed the least on positive physical experiences, as evidenced by a standard deviation of 0.85.

While comparing the two indicators is tricky because they are based on questions that are worded differently (questions 13 and 30 ask about life enhancement while question 17 asks about positive experiences in the moment), in viewing Figures 15 and 16, one sees that only the social construct appears different. On the enhancement indicators figure, it is a bit higher than other constructs, but on the positive experience indicators figure, it is lower than three other constructs. These data suggest that in the act of dancing tango, respondents did not have as many positive social experiences as they did positive emotional, physical, or mental experiences. Conversely, when they viewed tango from a broader perspective, they valued the social benefits highest.

While extensive mixed-methods analysis appears later in this chapter, differences between Figures 15 and 16 invite a preliminary view of what this type of analysis offers. These differences hint at a phenomenon that recurred throughout analysis—dancers’ intimate, creative, and internally rich experiences in the moment of dancing tango seem to have inspired them to grow into more confident and socially engaged people. This phenomenon was more apparent in qualitative data than in quantitative data. For example, open-ended question number 12 asked respondents to “Please describe the two or three most important reasons why you dance tango now.” Of the five constructs, social reasons were mentioned most frequently: 57 out of 116 respondents (49 percent) danced for the social interaction and the community compared to 35 who danced for spiritual reasons, 32 for emotional reasons, 30 for physical reasons, and 28 for mental reasons (30, 28, 26, and 24 percent, respectively). In both qualitative and quantitative data, respondents indicated that the social aspect of dancing tango was very important to them.
These data offer an example of how quantitative and qualitative methods corroborated each other—the social construct figured importantly in both types of data on dancers’ overall motivations for dancing tango.

In other cases, the two types of data contradicted or challenged each other. For example, while the spiritual construct rated lowest on Figures 15 and 16 based on quantitative data, it placed second after social reasons for why respondents presently danced in qualitative data. This contradiction could point to differences between how respondents defined spiritual (more narrowly) and how I defined it (more broadly) for categorizing purposes.* It could also indicate that the survey questions were somehow inadequate for measuring the spiritual construct. Regarding quantitative data, statistical indicators, by their very nature, are designed to distill human experience into codifiable terms for purposes of comparison and contrast, but at a price. Such codification not only embeds the researcher’s biases (in the choice of statements used to build the constructs, for example), but also makes polyvocality impossible and hides the complexity, richness, and paradox of life. Conversely, qualitative data collected through open-ended questions can generate such quantities of data that analysis becomes unwieldy and/or the researcher’s biases in coding or presenting data still limits polyvocality or veils complexity. These limitations of quantitative and qualitative research methods pose clear challenges and require rigorous, transparent procedures to offset them. Yet, an intriguing possibility arises if one assumes that the survey questions were well constructed and the analyses well conducted.

Do the data reveal a conflict within respondents about tango and spirituality? In other words, when asked point blank whether they presently danced tango for spiritual reasons, * The “spiritual” construct and how text was categorized as spiritual is provided in greater detail later in this chapter.
respondents were less inclined to declare it important. But when writing in their own words about the two or three most important reasons why they danced tango, many used the words “spirit” or “soul” as well as other words and concepts that scholars define as spiritual. This contrast may reflect a fundamental conflict for tango dancers living in American culture—how to reconcile the spirituality of dancing tango with the body-centered sensuality of tango. In Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist, sociologist Robert Wuthnow (2001) writes that many United States residents are following their own spiritual paths within and outside of organized religion and drawing heavily on the arts for spiritual guidance and inspiration. Central to this dissertation on tango is an exploration of how it may offer a forum for spiritual growth that challenges Western religions’ separation of body and spirit. Through creative, intimate, physically sensual human interaction, tango may invite dancers to break down emotional and mental barriers, experience their common humanity, and grow into more accepting, understanding, and spiritually attuned people. It is precisely within these phenomena that integrations among the emotional, social, and spiritual domains are crucial. And it is through respondents’ own words that the constructs come to life. Exploration of how respondents wrote about tango and its effects on their lives lays the foundation for understanding these integrations and what they reveal about dancers and about tango.

In their Own Words: How Tango Affected Respondents and Their Lives

With no limit to how much they could write, many respondents gave lengthy answers to the five qualitative questions (listed earlier in this chapter), and they frequently wrote about
specific elements of tango dance and music.* Therefore, discussion begins with their
descriptions of tango dance and music, providing a baseline for understanding their experiences
and perceptions of tango, then delves into the five constructs, integrating specific subthemes that
emerged from the data. Each section traces why they began dancing tango and then explores
why they danced it presently and how it changed them and/or their lives.

Tango Dance and Music: Internal Experience and Interpersonal Connection

Respondents wrote frequently and passionately about the dance itself, which inspired
them both to begin dancing tango and to continue dancing it. Watching tango mesmerized and
captivated them; they found it graceful, sensual, elegant, passionate, stylish, and seductive. One
woman with prior dance experience vividly described seeing tango for the first time:

I saw a friend dance. She performed with another woman, and I was close
enough to the stage to see that she had her eyes closed; although they exchanged
lead and follow, she was mostly following. I thought it was one of the most
beautiful things I’d ever seen. Seeing how two people could have this total
conversation without words and (for one at least) without sight. I came from a
dance background but had never felt what I saw in their dance. It blew me away,
and I wanted to do it.

This description reveals the intimacy and communication tango invites between dancers as well
as its pleasing aesthetic for viewers. Another respondent wrote that a tango performance “was
extremely intense…they were so focused on each other and their dance. It was obvious that
there was so much more going on than what could be seen by the naked eye. I wanted to
experience whatever they were experiencing.” These descriptions of tango’s appeal begin to
reveal the multiple levels on which tango functions.

* Question numbers 10, 12, 21, 26, and 39.
Moreover, respondents’ comments regarding why they danced tango and what made it unique communicate how they grew to enjoy and appreciate tango’s complexity. Here, their descriptions broadened to include elements of tango technique and deepened to include their internal experiences. Respondents appreciated the importance of communication between partners, tango’s improvisational nature, its complexity, and the challenging nature of the technique. For example, one man wrote, “Tango has combined the technical and creative aspect of dance that I have always desired,” and another wrote, “I wanted to explore a dance form that was improvisational but had a structure to 'hold onto.'”

Out of 116 respondents, 95 respondents (90 percent) believed that tango was unique compared to other dances that they had done, and in the open-ended question asking why it was unique, they expounded on two themes: a) the importance of the connection and/or communication between partners, and b) the richness of dancers’ internal experiences. Forty-three out of 95 respondents (46 percent) wrote that tango was unique because of the connection and/or communication with one’s partner. More specifically, they used the word “connection” to describe the importance of focusing on and uniting with one’s partner. One woman wrote, “Close embrace requires more connection; there is little independent or separate movement; the partners become one.” Similarly, a man wrote that tango was unique because of “the potential for connection to your partner through the flow of musicality through the two of you concurrently.” Others wrote of the connection indirectly: tango required a “sense of other while sensing yourself,” and “there's a softness and blending of energies that I don't feel with other dances.” A key practice that contributes to the tango connection and to the “blending of energies” is what some followers do with their eyes. “It is all about the connection of two
people, and my eyes are closed during this dance,” wrote one woman, “[but] not during any
others.” In more blunt terms, a ballet dancer wrote, “Ballet is all about me, always; tango is all
about the partner.” Tango invites each dancer to enter their partner’s world, to dance in their
proverbial shoes, to let go of what separates and focus on what unites, and to listen so completely
that two become one.

As part of this connection, tango invites non-verbal communication with one’s partner,
and 24 out of 95 respondents (25 percent) wrote that this made tango unique. For example, one
dancer wrote, “Tango forms a bond between two people, and they communicate with each other
in the moment and to the music at a more intense level than with other dances.” Another dancer
summed up these elements of tango beautifully:

All the other couple dances that I do have set rhythms and patterns. Tango is
absolutely free of those restrictions. To dance tango well, you must give up the
regimen and get tuned in to your partner and to the music.

In this state of tuning into their partners, respondents had very rich internal experiences, like one
woman who wrote, “It has a spirituality, it is an internal dance,” and another who wrote,
“…tango puts an emphasis on the interior of the dancer.” They were among respondents who
found that tango invited them to be completely in the moment or allowed them to achieve a
meditative state. Others described it as an intensely intimate and private experience between two
dancers: “It is a personal dance between two people, not done for show like ballroom dancing.”
While I would not agree that ballroom dancing is necessarily done for show, there are elements
of tango’s close embrace that distinguish it from the ballroom embrace and that can invite
dancers to have very intimate experiences. As one dancer put it:

…what really makes tango unique is the embrace. For this reason, it is by far the
most intimate (emotionally, intellectually, not necessarily sexually) social dance I
have ever done. It is private and introverted in a way that swing and salsa are not, and there is nothing quite like it.

In short, dancing in tango’s close embrace is like dancing in a continuous hug. Dancers maintain contact in their upper torsos, shoulders, and arms and they often touch heads or cheeks as well as brush each other’s legs as they move. Their attention is directed toward their partner except for the leader’s need to keep track of his/her surroundings in order to navigate the room. One respondent described the embrace as “instant intimacy”; in fact, it is so intimate that many beginner students of tango have great difficulty getting used to it and must practice at length just to feel comfortable and relaxed in such proximity to their partners, let alone dance with them.

By contrast, the ballroom embrace has body contact in the lower torso, thighs, arms, and shoulders with upper bodies and heads arched away from each other and gazes turned outward. In my personal experience of ballroom, the body contact in the lower torso is physically intimate, but the outward gaze away from my partner makes me feel as though we are team-mates in a sport rather than intimate partners. Respondents seemed to share this view of the differences between the two forms of dance. They viewed tango as more sensual, romantic, passionate, and emotionally moving than other dances. One woman described the emotional element of tango in a particularly poetic way. She wrote, “Tango is a conundrum...it is an emotional riddle answered by an unemotional riddle and back and forth; it changes from one mysterious step to the next.”

One of the elements that makes tango mysterious and ever changing is its distinctive technique and movement vocabulary, which was the second most common reason why respondents felt that tango was unique compared to other dances. Forty-one out of 95 total respondents (44 percent) mentioned at least one technical factor, like the physical closeness of close embrace, the importance of the lead-follow dynamic, the crossed-system of walking,
partners doing different steps simultaneously, or the adaptable movement vocabulary that allows for an infinite number of patterns. One woman gave a beautiful example, writing that tango was unique because of “the freedom of the legs to perform the boleos, ganchos, etc. There is a lack of muscular use in the legs to perform those moves that is different from other dances.” She refers to the different use of the weighted and unweighted legs in tango. While a dancer’s weight is centered over one leg, the other leg is free to swing like a pendulum to the back, front, or side in dynamic response to the energy moving through both dancers. The unweighted leg often wraps around the other dancer’s legs or body, a type of movement that I have not encountered in other social pairs dances, although it certainly appears in modern dance and contact improvisation. In my experience, this contrast between the weighted and unweighted leg offers some of the most unusual and intimate moments in tango.

This sense of freedom in the unweighted leg mirrors the freedom dancers wrote of to improvise, express themselves, and be creative through tango. Such opportunities comprised the third most common reason respondents named for why tango was unique. Twenty-seven of them (29 percent) had not encountered such freedom in other dance forms and appreciated how tango allowed them to artistically create anew each time they danced. One dancer enjoyed “the creative aspect not only of the lead but [also] of the follow; the ability to create something new and distinctive each time you dance a song with someone.” Another dancer found “the artistry of the dance” to be appealing: “You don't have to memorize the sequence. It is very creative, and steps are created according to your emotions.”

While some danced in accord with their emotions, others danced in accord with emotions and tango music. One woman wrote, “Tango is more than just doing steps. It's a mood
expressed to music and movement conveyed to your partner.” She and 25 other respondents (28 percent) felt that tango music made the dance unique compared to other dances. Similarly, 41 respondents (35 percent) described tango music as one of the top three reasons why they danced in the present. They described it as inspiring, dramatic, captivating, passionate, addictive, unpredictable, beautiful, and full of variety. Many appreciated how the different forms of tango music—tango, tango vals, and milonga—allowed them to express different sentiments, and one respondent gave a detailed description of the music as “very unusual, interesting and emotionally intriguing; in particular, the frequent use of the minor keys gives it a very 'bittersweet' emotional quality.”

While listening frequently to tango music helps dancers to become familiar with it, tango music often incorporates tempo changes that can be challenging for dancers. One man wrote that tango music was unique because of the “unpredictable nature of phrases and transitions…. [It] keeps one guessing and attentive at every moment to interpret it as well as possible, [while] still giving the follower enough time to follow…[the] lead with clarity.” Many respondents enjoyed the way tango music inspired them to move, like the woman who wrote, “Listening to the tango music while actually doing the motion or dance steps with grace and fluidity is just beautiful.” Another dancer echoed her sentiment, writing, “I love to move to music that captivates me,” and a man wrote, “The more I hear the music, the more I want to move.” Another man described how the freedom, music, and connection between dancers created unlimited opportunities.

The uniqueness in dancing Argentine tango is in the freedom of interpreting the music. Through single simple movement (units), there is an opportunity to experience a combined creativity (leader and follower) that will create a harmonious movement reflecting the intention and the will of the two dancers. Seems to me there is no end…[to] learning and growing in Argentine tango.
Like him, others believed that the link between tango music and dance was facilitated by or took place through the connection between dance partners; witness a woman who danced primarily because of the “confluence of the music and connection to a partner.” Describing this relationship further, one man danced primarily because of “the passion of the music, intensified through the dance and connection with the partner.” In these descriptions, one hears echoes of the history of tango. Its music and dance evolved simultaneously, the one influencing the other, making it likely and understandable that dancers would experience strong links between the dance and the music.

Respondents wrote that tango offered not only opportunities for connection between partners, musical interpretation, and growth, but also great challenges as they struggled to learn what some considered to be a very difficult and complex form. Sixteen out of 95 respondents (17 percent) felt that tango’s complexity or difficulty set it apart from other dance forms, and these respondents were fairly representative of the demographics of the survey population as a whole—men and women, older and younger dancers, and those with little and extensive experience cited tango’s complexity and/or difficulty. Two dancers found it difficult because of how it is improvised in relationship to the music’s rhythm, that is, there is “no time counting; [it is] not structured to 4 or 8 counts.” It is true that while dancers respond to tango music, there are no rules about how to do so. Dancers are free to respond to straight time, duple or triple time, or syncopated rhythms in the music. They may also respond with stillness, adding a contrasting and/or dramatic element to the dance. One woman wrote that dancing tango required “great physical skill and mental focus,” and another noted how her dancing could change dramatically from one day to the next:
Tango is very challenging and temperamental. There are days when my dancing is
more natural and fluid, and there are days when no matter how hard I try, it does
not produce the same response in me and, I am sure, not in my partner, either.

By contrast, for another woman tango’s complexity made it appealing on many levels:

To me there is something much more compelling in what goes on with your
partner in tango than what I experienced in swing or salsa. For me, it was much
deeper and more complicated, and it holds my interest on so many different levels
(experientially, logically, [and] emotionally). I take it much more seriously than
any other partner dance I’ve tried.

Echoing her view of tango’s richness, one man wrote that it was “a thinking person’s dance.”
Echoing her view of tango’s compelling nature, a second man wrote, “I have put more effort into
learning tango than any other dance.” Given the amount of effort it takes to learn as complex
and difficult a dance as tango, it’s no wonder that many respondents said that tango had helped
them improve their dancing overall. For instance, one man wrote, “Due to [the] awareness and
consideration a leader must have for the follower, tango has improved all the types of dancing I
do.”

In summary, respondents were inspired to begin dancing tango by witnessing the dance
and hearing the music, and their appreciation of both art forms grew in depth and breadth once
they had begun to study tango. In their words, one finds themes that recur throughout the data as
seen through the lens of the emotional, social, and spiritual constructs, including connection and
communication between partners (spiritual and social), richness of internal experiences
(emotional and spiritual), intimacy of close embrace (social), and joy in interpreting tango music
in creative collaboration with their partners (emotional, social, and spiritual). In addition, the
complexity of tango technique was challenging for them, which was problematic for some and
exhilarating for others, allowing as it did unlimited artistic expression and interpersonal growth.
Before exploring the emotional, social, and spiritual constructs further, I move to how respondents wrote of themes subsumed by the physical and mental constructs. While their words relating to the physical and mental constructs were somewhat less impassioned than those relating to the other constructs, they do address some of the primary research questions and flesh out understanding of how tango affected respondents and their lives.

**The Physical Construct: Improving Health and Offering Healthy Touch**

Only five respondents wrote that they began dancing tango because of anticipated physical benefits, including a man whose primary physician and cardiologist recommended that he dance to improve his health and a woman whose masseur suggested she dance to address a relentless hamstring muscle problem. Once respondents had begun to study tango, the percentage who listed physical reasons for dancing tango increased to 30 out of 116 (26 percent), and the most common response came from 14 respondents (12 percent) who stated that it was good exercise or helped them to stay physically fit or healthy. In response to how dancing tango had changed them or their lives, 27 out of 97 (28 percent) listed specific physical benefits, including being more coordinated and stronger, having better balance and more energy, and being less stressed. One dancer aged 47 wrote,

> I had to give up athletics and hadn't been physically active for many years due to health problems; I am grateful that tango is something that my body can tolerate. It is nice to find a social circle and an opportunity for physical contact at an age when people easily become isolated.

Another dancer re-discovered her love of physical activities, and a third wrote, “Since dancing tango, I have experienced a reduction in my blood pressure from moderately to mildly-elevated levels.” Other respondents became attuned to or pleased with their bodies and a few valued
touch through tango, like one who wrote, “[it] feels good to touch and hold a person.” A man wrote, “I’m not married, so it provides me with touch, both physical and emotional, with the opposite sex.” His reference to physical and emotional touch calls to mind the work of Dieter Heitkamp, whose article entitled “Moving from the Skin: An Exploratorium” in Contact Quarterly (2003) explores the biological functions of the skin and how they relate to dancers’ experiences of contact improvisation. Both tango and contact improvisation invite extensive physical contact between dancers, much of which is not mediated by clothing. In both forms, dancers may touch each other’s skin on their hands, arms, shoulders, faces, heads, and legs, inviting both physical and emotional intimacy. Heitkamp writes that touch is the only sense that can be perceived from everywhere on the body; every other sense is limited to one organ in one location. In addition, according to psychological theory, the skin is a vessel, a boundary and “…the site and primary means of communication and development of meaningful relationships” (Heitkamp 2003: 39). In consensual, respectful interaction, one cannot touch without also being touched, so it is through interaction with others that one defines oneself to oneself (Heitkamp 2003). Tango offers dancers opportunities to experience self and other in enjoyable ways through touch, opening doors for personal growth and meaningful social interaction. While respondents did not write about the physical construct as frequently as they did other constructs, physical benefits from tango certainly played a role in why they danced in the present and how it had affected their lives.
As in the case of the physical construct, only a few respondents referred to the mental construct as motivation for why they began to dance tango, but 14 out of 116 (12 percent) referred to it as a reason for dancing tango in the present and 33 out of 97 (34 percent) wrote that tango had improved their mental health. Themes that emerged related to specific things that respondents had learned, qualities like diligence and effort that they needed in order to learn the dance, and the benefits that such practice brought to the mind.

Respondents wrote of having learned not only about tango technique but also about themselves, the tango community, and dance as a cultural phenomenon. For example, a woman wrote, "I have learned many things about myself: not only my strengths but my weaknesses as well.” Later sections on the emotional and social constructs explore what respondents learned about themselves in more detail; suffice it to say that tango helped her learn about herself from a new perspective. Regarding learning about the tango community, one man wrote, “I study anthropology and as an observer of human nature it has been fascinating to see the social behavior and nature of the tango community as a whole and individuals who dance tango.” Other respondents’ experiences in the community gave them greater understanding of and appreciation for dance. One man wrote, “Tango has provided me with a better understanding of dance evolution or history and the cultural impact a single dance can have on the social world.”

Qualities like diligence and effort needed in order to learn the dance emerged in appreciation of the “challenge to learn and excel at something very difficult” and “the diligence, effort and perseverance involved in mastering it.” Noting the fresh opportunity afforded by each night of dancing, a woman wrote “I like the concentration, the challenge of the newness with
each new partner, each new piece of music, every time, time and again.” Another wrote, “it has increased my appreciation for what the human body is capable of and for the struggle and discipline…required to truly learn both roles (that of follower and leader).”

Finally, respondents wrote of the benefits that learning tango brought to the mind, including intellectual stimulation and improved mental health. One man wrote that learning tango “had been a wholesome mental health experience.” Some respondents wrote of a sense of accomplishment and others of how tango might counteract the effects of aging: “I hope that it grows new neurons to replace the billions I am losing as I age!” Still others enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of learning tango and interacting with other intellectual people in the community. While few respondents took up tango for mental health reasons, many grew to appreciate how the dance challenged them mentally and helped them to learn new things.

The Emotional Construct: Increasing Joy, Confidence, and Personal Growth

Though respondents did not specify emotions that drew them to tango, they did write about being affected emotionally by the form before learning to dance it. One woman began dancing because of “the feeling deep within I had when a friend told me she was studying the tango.” Another woman wrote, “Tango has always had an emotional draw—the passion and music of the dance, the emotion that surrounds the dance…,” as if tango had a life of its own as a passionate form surrounded by emotion. A male dancer expressed a similar sentiment by writing, “I enjoyed…the way the music made me feel…. To me it is very romantic and tender.” These respondents almost personified tango, giving it the capacity to be passionate, romantic, and tender and to draw them in.
When asked to describe why they presently danced and how tango had changed them, respondents were able to articulate specific emotions and emotional benefits. The most prevalent themes revolved around how much they enjoyed dancing, how they felt more joyful or more confident in general, and how they felt better about themselves. They wrote that dancing tango made them feel extremely happy, joyful, exhilarated, and euphoric, like one man who was, “addicted to the intense euphoria.” A dancer wrote, “The milonga as a dance has given me moments of incredible joy and exhilaration.” Similarly, another dancer wrote, “I discovered how powerful the dance is; it always makes my mood better. I really enjoy [it] every time I go to dance tango.”

Not only did dancing tango bring them joy, but it also helped them to become more confident—not just in their dancing abilities but in their lives in general. For example, one woman wrote, “It has increased my self confidence and overall satisfaction with my life.” Another man wrote that tango had “renewed my self confidence as a man [that] the women still find attractive and would like to partner with on the dance floor.” As dancing tango improved some people’s self-confidence it also inspired them to feel better about themselves. One woman expressed this connection beautifully: “I am more confident. I feel good about myself and my abilities. I feel more worthwhile and more outgoing, more willing to contribute my opinion.” Here lies evidence of where the emotional and social constructs intersect—she felt more confident and worthwhile as a person, which stimulated her to be more outgoing socially. How might these changes have fueled and/or informed each other?

Dancing tango made some respondents more self-aware, like the man who wrote, “I am more aware of myself, more in touch with myself physically, emotionally, socially” and the
woman who felt “connected once again to life in the big picture.” Similarly, another group of dancers enjoyed opportunities for self-development and emotional growth through tango: “I met my girl while dancing [tango] and we love to grow together,” or “It has been a wonderful outlet of my inner feelings; also it has given me an interesting insight into my own personality and my own values.” Such words suggest that dancers grow individually and emotionally through interacting with other tango dancers—exemplifying how the emotional and social constructs intersect.

Finally, a handful of respondents enjoyed tango as means of emotional expression or valued tango’s capacity to restore, nourish, or relax them, like the woman who wrote, “Thanks to dancing tango, I am able to relax. Now, I channel some of my free-floating anxiety into tango.” Clearly, respondents found many emotional benefits to dancing tango, from joy and exhilaration to greater self-confidence, personal growth, and emotional health. A woman who had not been able to participate expressed these benefits from the perspective of their absence: “I have not had the opportunity to dance tango in a year or maybe more…. I miss it very much and would love to come back and fit it into my life.” Her words ring true for me as one who moved away from the Philadelphia area tango community in order to spend time in my house in Vermont. Having experienced the emotional benefits of participating in a large and vibrant tango community, it is difficult to adjust to life without them.

The Social Construct: Coming to Know Others and Building Community through the Body

Closely related to respondents’ emotional reasons for beginning tango were social reasons, which they described on individual and communal levels. One woman began to dance
tango in order “to establish closer communication” between herself and her husband, others
began in order to spend more time with friends, and still others in order to meet potential dates,
like the woman who “heard it was a great way to meet interesting men.”

On a communal level, six respondents began dancing tango because they felt welcomed
into the community and found the dancers “friendly and helpful.” Two dancers wrote poignantly
about the first milongas they attended. One responded to dancers’ warm overtures and
encouragement from an advanced dancer:

The people were extremely welcoming and got me out on the floor dancing. One
advanced dancer, who later became a teacher in the area, was particularly warm
and said to me, “Welcome to the community.” I was very touched and also
connected very deeply with the music.

The second dancer appreciated the family atmosphere at Milonga en Casa, the monthly pot-luck
dinner and milonga at the in-home studio of Lesley Mitchell and Kelly Ray:

The defining moment was when we went to a milonga at Leslie's casa, and I
identified the group as “family.” And my friend said, “Yes, it is family and you
fit in.” The music and dancing were important, but also the warm milieu with
beautiful and thoughtfully prepared food. And then I watched a young couple
bring their newborn twin babies into the milonga. I knew I was home in this
“family”!

These interpersonal and communal themes recurred in respondents’ texts on why they
danced tango in the present and how they felt that tango had changed them and their lives.* The
most common theme in data from both questions was that respondents enjoyed better social lives
through dancing tango. They deepened existing relationships, met new and interesting people,
made new friends, and/or enjoyed being part of a community of people who shared a common
passion. One woman wrote of tango’s potential to enhance an existing primary relationship:

* Fifty-seven out of 116 respondents (49 percent) described social reasons for dancing tango in the present,
and 70 out of 97 respondents (72 percent) wrote that dancing tango had improved their social lives.
“Tango has added another dimension to my long-term relationship—another avenue for expressing feelings and ideas, another important thing that we have in common, another activity to share. We have a great relationship, and tango is part of it.” Regarding meeting new people, another woman wrote that she enjoyed “the intergenerational aspect” of the community. A man emphasized the cultural and generational aspects: “Something common that we love connects people from different cultures and ages.” Others appreciated what community participants had in common, like the man who commented, “It is nice to dance among intellectual and art loving folks.” Many wrote that their social lives had become more active and fulfilling, a number describing how their social lives revolved around tango. One dancer explained, “I met a new circle of people…[which] is important to me as I am an immigrant. These people became my friends.” Finally, another dancer gave a poignant example of how being part of the tango community had changed him. He wrote, “I feel more inserted in the city life. People around me care about me.”

The second most prevalent theme was that dancing tango had helped respondents to improve their social skills by changing how they interacted with others. They became more patient, kind, accepting, appreciative, or sensitive, like the woman who wrote,

Dancing with a diverse group of people has helped me become a more tolerant person than before. Especially, I am patient with inexperienced tango dancers, as I remember how I felt as a beginner—sometimes frustrated that the better dancers shied away from me.

Her own experiences as a beginner gave her compassion for other beginners and inspired her to be more tolerant. Another woman noted an interesting paradox—she wondered whether tango had helped her to become more honest in her close relationships, or whether she was drawn to
tango because she was already an honest person and the dance invited her to strengthen that quality:

[Tango] is a very immediate and intense way of relating to people. I think this has affected my communication style with my close friends or romantic partners. I try to be very direct and honest as much as possible because that is the connection that is most comfortable for me. [I’m] not sure if tango made this stronger in me, or if this aspect of myself draws me to tango, but so be it.

At the very least, the intimacy of tango helped her to reinforce her capacity to be direct and honest, a fine example of how some respondents improved their verbal communication skills through tango. Others became more adept and confident when interacting with those of the opposite sex, like the man who wrote, “Before tango, I had trouble meeting women, especially ones I was attracted to. Since tango, I have had success socializing with women of all kinds, even those who have no interest in dance at all.”

Finally, echoing earlier discussion of tango dance and music, respondents stated that connecting and communicating with their partners were primary reasons why they danced in the present and through which tango had changed them and their lives. One woman danced tango because it allowed her “to connect with other people minus the small talk”; another noted that she had become “more comfortable being close to people”; and a third enjoyed “the physical and emotional connection that can happen on the dance floor, a kind of momentary intimacy that I find very pleasing.” Recall that respondents wrote at length about how the connection and non-verbal communication made tango unique compared to other dances. For one woman, this communication was her primary reason for dancing tango in the present:

I have only one main reason, really. What I like about the dance is the non-verbal communication part. I am constantly amazed [by] how much we can express subtly and without words. This conversation develops within each song. And then, it's different with each song, depending [upon] what parts of my [soul] and my partner’s soul the song taps into: playful, sensual, sad, dramatic. In a sense,
it's deeper and more honest than any words. Often enough, it's a chance to look into another person's wonderful soul and appreciate it.

For her and other respondents, tango circumvents the limitations and misunderstandings of verbal communication by inviting physical communication that is shaped by each dancer’s interpretation of the music. Moreover, intersections appear among the emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of respondents’ experiences. One woman captured this intersection beautifully in describing how she grew through membership in the community.

It is the main way that I socialize with others, it is even the way I LEARNED how to socialize with others. I need tango for the community, [which] is very important in tango, and I think that the reason it is so is because in order to dance well we have to commit a part of ourselves to the partner. With community, we get to know and then trust the other members, and this allows individuals to be open enough to dance.

Through interacting with others, she learned how to socialize with them; through socializing, she grew emotionally to know and trust them; and through developing this rapport, she was able to be “open enough to dance” with them. In her words, tango not only invites familiarity and trust, but this process is essential to being able to dance together. Particularly in close embrace, wherein dancers move together in a continuous hug, knowing and trusting one’s partner can greatly facilitate the dance: the more relaxed two dancers are in each other’s presence, the more likely they are to commit to being in close physical contact. The more committed they are to being in close contact, the greater their capacity to move effectively as a unit. Dancers can form a continuous feedback loop wherein their emotional and social growth through tango enhances their abilities in executing the dance, which in turn builds confidence and creates a more satisfying emotional and social experience.

I suspect that this continuous feedback loop is a central part of what makes tango
appealing to some and unappealing to others. Dancing in such intimate physical contact with another provides an immediate and unmistakable mirror of one’s state of mind. Speaking from personal experience, the more trusting, relaxed, whole, and confident I feel, the better I am able to connect with, listen to, and enjoy dancing in the moment with my partner, whether or not I already know him or her. In such a state of mind, I welcome the intimacy and connection, my thoughts and emotions do not interfere, and I thoroughly enjoy dancing tango. Conversely, the more distrustful, tense, fragile, and self-critical I feel, the more likely that I will judge myself and my partner and that we will stumble in disconnected confusion. In such a state of mind, I am also less likely to be in the present and more likely to be agitated over the past or worrying about the future. While I might be able to mask negative thoughts and feelings with words or a smile, my body cannot lie, and I know the instant I begin to dance how I am truly feeling, what I am thinking, and how that is affecting my behavior and my dancing.

Tango invites me to be my best self—to take full responsibility not only for my tango technique but also for my state of mind. As such, tango can be an invitation to bliss or it can be a nightmare. When faced with negativity within myself, it can seem easier or less painful to turn the tables and find fault with my partner or the music or the community. It is much more difficult, although far more rewarding, to look within at what I may need to learn or how I am being invited to grow. When I am courageous and do the inner work, tango is like a true and lifelong friend who welcomes me back with a wink and an embrace. To me, how we treat ourselves and each other in tango is so important that I invariably give a short “lecture” to my beginner students on taking responsibility for one’s dancing and one’s learning. I warn them of
the perils of blaming their partners and encourage them to cultivate humility, compassion, and respect for each other as foundations for success in tango.

 Apparently, I am not alone in this belief. Question number 23 of the tango survey asked “What qualities do you value most in a tango dance partner?” For both leaders and followers, the most common response was good tango technique, but nearly as important was being treated well by their partners. Out of 61 followers who answered this question, 53 of them (87 percent) valued musicality, a good connection, a clear lead, and good floor craft in leaders. Similarly, 33 out of 41 leaders (80 percent) valued musicality, connection, and followers who were relaxed, receptive, and open-minded. The next most common theme was how they wanted to be treated, elaborated upon by 40 out of 61 followers (66 percent) and 18 out of 41 leaders (44 percent). Followers valued leaders who danced at their level (which was particularly important for beginners); were patient, gracious, and appreciative; enjoyed dancing with them; had good hygiene and good boundaries; and cared about their comfort. Leaders valued followers who were willing to dance with beginners, enjoyed dancing with them, and were patient, trusting, tolerant, appreciative, pleasant, and friendly. Clearly, dancers valued partners who treated them with respect and kindness.

 Question number 23 did not ask what respondents avoided in dance partners, but 16 followers (26 percent) and 16 leaders (39 percent) volunteered this information, and their words revealed both how they did not want to be treated and their own judgments about other dancers. Understandably, they did not like poor tango technique, which for followers was being jerked, pushed, tugged, or rushed, and for leaders was followers who anticipated the next movement (that is, who did not wait for the lead). In addition, followers and leaders did not appreciate unsolicited teaching, which is considered poor etiquette during milongas, in particular.
However, followers and leaders revealed their judgments of others when they stated that they did not like dancers who showed off tango moves at their expense or who took themselves and the dance too seriously. In addition, followers did not like leaders who made judgments or had expectations, and leaders did not like followers who were fearful or “rattled by mistakes,” nervous or aloof, who did not dance with everyone, or apologized while dancing. In order to voice any of these dislikes, respondents must have made negative assumptions about their partners’ motivations, actions, and/or experiences of tango, turning the proverbial finger outward at others, rather than asking what they themselves could do to improve their own experiences. Because it is impossible to truly know another’s experience, the issue becomes not whether we as dancers are right or wrong about our partners but what these thoughts do to our own feelings, behavior, and experiences. Do they enhance or detract from our dance experiences? Do they fuel our emotional and social growth or stifle it? Do we rise to the invitation presented by tango, or do we pass it by?

Another question on the survey addressed how dancing tango may have affected dancers’ thoughts, feelings, and behavior toward themselves and toward others. Shifting briefly to quantitative data and analysis, question number 13 asked dancers to rate how tango had affected them in a variety of dimensions on a five-point scale from 1 = “made much worse” to 5 = “made much better.” “Figure 17. Effects of Tango. Percentages of Respondents Who Reported Changes in Thoughts, Feelings, and Behavior toward Self and Others” shows that a majority of respondents noted positive changes or no changes as a result of dancing tango and that few reported negative changes. They reported the most positive changes regarding how they thought and felt about themselves, 68 out of 110 respondents (62 percent) indicating that tango had made
their self-directed thoughts and feelings better or much better. Exactly half of them (50 percent) indicated that tango had made their behavior toward themselves better or much better. Fifty-two and 58 percent indicated that tango had made their thoughts, feelings, and behavior toward others better or much better, respectively. Thirty-six to 47 percent indicated no changes, and 0 to 5 percent indicated that tango had made any of these phenomena worse or much worse. Clearly,
dancing tango has inspired positive emotional and social changes for many respondents, but what exactly were these changes?

Recall that in qualitative answers, dancers wrote that through tango they had become more in-tuned to their bodies, proud of their tango accomplishments, happier, more confident and positive, and/or more accepting of those with less tango experience. While no survey questions probed more deeply into how tango may have helped dancers change their feelings, thoughts, and behavior toward themselves, question numbers 25 and 26 addressed how tango may have helped change their feelings, thoughts, and behavior toward others. Recall that binary question number 25 asked “Through dancing tango in the Philadelphia area, have you become more accepting or tolerant of people who are different from you?” If respondents answered “yes,” they went on to the next question, which stated, “Please think of a few people toward whom you have become more accepting or tolerant, then describe how tango has helped you to make this change (without naming names).” Sixty-six out of 116 respondents (62 percent) answered that they had become more accepting or tolerant, and they were quite representative of the overall survey population with regard to gender, age, immigrant status, and years of tango experience.∗ To explore these data from a quantitative perspective, I conducted bivariate analysis of questions number 25 and 22. Question 22 inquired how often respondents had danced at milongas in the last three months as leader and follower. It also asked how often they had danced with men, women, beginners, intermediate dancers, advanced dancers, people ten years older than they, and people ten years younger. There were positive relationships between

∗ Within the subgroup that responded affirmatively to this question, I subdivided dancers by gender, age group, whether or not they had been born in the United States, and their years of tango experience. Comparing these percentages to overall demographic percentages for all survey respondents, I found, remarkably, that percentages were roughly equal, no more than three percentage points off (which translates into roughly 3 respondents) and were most often within one percentage point (or one respondent).
answering question number 25 affirmatively and (from question number 22): a) dancing with those “ten years younger than you” and b) dancing with beginners.* Apparently, those who stated that they had become more accepting or tolerant through dancing tango were likely to have shifted their behavior toward younger dancers or novice ones.

Qualitative data both confirmed and expanded understanding of these changes. Twelve out of 65 respondents (18 percent) had indeed become more accepting or tolerant of dancers who were older or younger than they. Eleven (17 percent) had become more tolerant of dancers with lower tango skill levels than they, primarily because they appreciated the difficulty of the dance and remembered their own struggles. One man put succinctly, “I think I have become more tolerant of people who are beginners, because I was a beginner at this dance for a long time.” However, qualitative data also revealed more breadth in the nature of newfound acceptance and tolerance than was revealed through responses to the quantitative question. Eleven respondents (17 percent) had become more accepting of people from different countries or cultures who spoke other languages, had different customs and “ways of being,” and brought different aesthetics to the community. And 12 respondents (18 percent) had become more tolerant of dancers whose physical characteristics they had found unappealing, considering them unattractive, overweight, short, tall, or poorly dressed. Finally, a handful of respondents had become more accepting of dancers who embodied other differences: racial or ethnic backgrounds, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientations, marital status, or intellectual training. Or perhaps others had physical disabilities, poor hygiene, or “unappealing

* For dancing with people “ten years younger than you,” the Mann-Whitney asymptotic significance was .026, and for dancing with beginners, the Mann-Whitney asymptotic significance was .048. The Mann-Whitney test measures relationship, not correlation (as with Spearman and Pearson tests), so I use the term “relationship” to describe the results of these tests.
personalities.” Again, one hears judgment of others in these statements, but at least there is a willingness on the part of these dancers to see others in a different light.

Most striking was how tango helped respondents to become more tolerant of others. Respondents described a sequential process that began with dancers gaining exposure to people of diverse backgrounds through membership in the tango community and continued with interacting through the dance, learning about others and themselves through the experience, and growing to better understand, appreciate, and/or accept others as a result. This process reveals more of the intersections between the emotional and social constructs as respondents grew through interacting with each other.

Respondents believed that tango attracted a particularly diverse group of dancers, providing them with opportunities to meet people whom they might not have met otherwise. For example, one man wrote, “I've met a woman who has dreadlocks that I find to be lovely. I probably would not have occasion to meet someone so different from me.” Describing the same process in more detail, another man wrote,

Tango has given me an opportunity simply to interact with people who are different from me in terms of race, religion, national origin, and culture. That interaction alone has helped broaden my perspective, [made me] feel more connected with a larger community, and [helped] develop new social contacts.

Data discussed in Chapter 5 showed considerable diversity among tango survey respondents, giving them ample opportunities to interact with people who were different from them. Respondents shared curiosity about people they had met, including one woman who wrote, “Until tango, I had very little contact with people of different cultures. Now I want to learn more about them and their backgrounds.” Another felt that tango provided a bridge:
It has been thrilling and enriching to meet so many diverse people—diverse in every aspect—and have something in common with them: tango. That helps to bridge differences that otherwise might never give me the chance to meet them.

Having met dancers of diverse backgrounds, respondents frequently wrote that the physical intimacy of the dance transformed their thought patterns, like the woman who wrote, “Spending that amount of time with people, up close and personal, one loses the need for distance. Familiarity breeds understanding and a level of comfort that eliminates a certain…need for judgment, even subtle.” Her words echoed those of the woman who learned how to socialize and trust people through tango. Her words also indicated how the physical intimacy of tango can short-circuit one’s inclination to judge others, inviting knowledge of them through the body rather than the mind. By remaining open-minded, dancers made new and enjoyable discoveries about each other:

Tango has helped me to become more accepting because I sometimes find a deep, rewarding connection with someone who, off the dance floor, I may have ignored or just been unaware of. It just makes you feel closer to your fellow humans regardless of their demographic, looks, quirks, whatever. The connection is so profound and immediate (heart-to-heart)…

In close embrace in particular wherein dancers touch chests, tango offers a way of sensing and knowing another person at levels that transcend the mind. One woman trusted this level of knowing over that of the mind: “I think that the core of someone is evident through close physical contact, through dancing, and I trust that way of knowing someone more now than what I might know about them intellectually.” Ironically, such knowledge can challenge existing perceptions of people: “It works both ways—there are now people who I might have gotten along with intellectually who I like less because of how they dance with me!” As always, tango invites exploration in many ways; another woman spun the process around. She used her
interaction with someone off the dance floor to inform her understanding of him as a dancer: “It has happened that people who make me crazy on the dance floor are terribly sweet off the floor, and I've been able to eventually develop a dance relationship with them through first getting to know them on the more social side of tango.”

There are many opportunities for people to engage in the “social side of tango”— sitting on the periphery, mingling over the refreshments table, or standing together between songs on the dance floor. One dancer described a continuity between non-verbal communication—which begins to break down interpersonal walls—and verbal dialogue:

The dance does not exactly stop when the music stops; there is the time in-between when you can continue a conversation that probably started while dancing. I think that the fact that you were able to share this body proximity with a person you did not know already breaks the barrier to make you more vulnerable to lose yourself and be more accepting of another human being.

Tango offers multiple opportunities for dancers to get to know each other through physical contact, the dance, and verbal exchange as an extension of the dance. Among the most beautiful expressions of this opportunity was one man’s testament to what he learned through tango: “Old women have shown me their grace. Old women have shown me their charm. Without dance, they could not have expressed and I could not have understood.” Even more touching than how tango invited these women to express themselves was his admission that tango helped him move beyond ageism. Tango allowed him to receive their grace and charm, which likely had always been there. He just hadn’t been able to perceive these attributes.

He and others wrote of how they had grown through interacting with people different from them with varying degrees of self-awareness. For example, one man seemed to have undergone a partial shift in racist thinking: “I have become more respectful of people of color,
because when I dance with them, when I talk with them, I see they are just like me, and need human touch.” Other respondents seemed more conscious of what their tango experiences reflected about themselves, like one woman who wrote, “I have become more tolerant of slow learners, overweight people, shy people, tall men and short men, frilly women. (Wow, was I that intolerant?)” She was surprised by how many people she had judged before coming to tango.

Another dancer summarized the process beautifully:

I have danced with people of at least ten different nationalities. I have had the chance to talk to them not only about tango but [also] about their cultures and ways of being. I have shared points of view about religion and life itself, and I am pretty sure that through that sharing I have become more tolerant of our differences.

Others took the process further—from tolerance or appreciation to friendship, like the woman who wrote, “It's more a matter of making friends with some people [whom] I did not expect to enjoy getting to know—discovering commonality through tango which became an avenue to friendship.”

Overall, respondents wrote about how their involvement in tango allowed them to meet people of diverse backgrounds, to interact with them in physically intimate ways that reduced mental judgment, to learn about themselves and others, and to become more accepting of people different from them. Some even developed friendships that they believed would not have been likely without tango. In this sequential process, intersections among the emotional and social constructs are evident in how the social community brings individuals together in ways that facilitate their emotional growth.

In summary, respondents began to dance tango to strengthen old relationships, begin new ones, and be part of a community that they found welcoming and appealing. They continued to
dance tango in the present because they enjoyed more active and fulfilling social lives, improved their social skills by becoming more thoughtful toward others and more confident in their social interactions, and enjoyed the honesty and intimacy of connecting and communicating physically with their partners. Through such intimacy, respondents were invited to grow, and evidence of a feedback loop appeared wherein self-reflection and accepting responsibility for one’s dance experiences could enhance their abilities to dance tango, particularly in close embrace. They were also inspired to treat themselves and others differently and to become more tolerant of people different from them. The nature of tango was key to these processes because physical intimacy short-circuited their inclinations to judge, inviting knowledge of each other through the body rather than the mind. From the perspective of human physiology, Heitkamp (2003) wrote that because the skin and the brain develop from the same materials in the fetus, “…the skin can be considered the outer surface of brain…or the brain can be considered the inner surface of skin” (42). Heitkamp cites a beautiful passage from *Job's Body: A Handbook for Bodywork* by physical therapist Deane Juhan (2003) to clarify how human physiology relates to our emotional and social lives:

> The skin is no more distant from the brain than the surface of a lake from its depths; both are different sites in an inseparable medium. ‘Peripheral’ and ‘central’ are merely terms for spatial distinctions, and do more damage than good if they seduce us into forgetting that the brain is a functional unit from the cortex to the fingertips to the toes. Whoever touches the surface, moves the depths. (Juhan, quoted in Heitkamp, p 46)

As they dance tango, people experience self and other, outer and inner, body and soul in rich emotional and social contact that invites exploration of a fifth realm of human experience—the spiritual realm.
Regarding why they began to dance tango, respondents did not use the terms “spirit” or “spiritual” specifically, but they did refer to connection with self and other and to the concept of love. Six respondents wrote that they were affected by watching the connection between dancers, like one man who began because tango “teaches us to connect with different people through harmony, music and oneness.” A woman took the concept of connection further to maintain a link with a beloved parent. “I learned after my father died that he had loved tango music,” she wrote, “and I guess I wanted to connect with him in some way after he was gone.” Though her father was no longer alive, she felt that dancing tango would allow her to connect with him somehow—perhaps through the spiritual realm. The other prevalent theme in why respondents began to dance tango was love. For example, one woman began because she was “wondering if it was possible for two people to love each other in the moment without class, race, social background, [or] ‘story’ considerations, imagining tango as tantric practice.” Her words echo discussion earlier in this chapter of how tango helped respondents to become more accepting of others. In addition, she was not alone in her use of the word “love” in the context of tango. Eleven other respondents began dancing because they “fell in love” with tango, loved some aspect of it (like the music), or were close to someone who had fallen in love with it. Though the word “love” can be used casually to mean “liking something very much,” it can also have a spiritual meaning when connoting deep acceptance or appreciation of someone or something. Indeed, in A Home for the Heart: A Practical Guide to Intimate and Social Relationships, psychologist Charlotte Sophia Kasl (1997) writes, “Love is the energy at the center of all life…. Loving ourselves, loving others, and loving spirit/God are inseparable, for all life is interconnected and sacred” (3).
While only 13 respondents (11 percent) described spiritual reasons for beginning to dance tango, 35 of them (30 percent) wrote in these terms regarding why they danced in the present, and 19 out of 97 respondents (20 percent) wrote that dancing tango had changed them or their lives in spiritual ways. Combining data from these two questions, four themes arose in dancers’ responses—conceiving the concept of spirituality or the soul in general, connecting with themselves or others, expressing themselves creatively, and having meditative or transcendent experiences. Examples of statements about spirituality in general included those of a man who wrote that tango made him feel “spiritually free” and another man who wrote, “tango is spiritually important to my week.” Other respondents felt more healthy or nurtured in a spiritual way, like the woman who wrote, “it has nourished me, body and soul,” and another woman who wrote that tango “fills up your soul and senses.”

More common were statements relating to specific themes clustered within the spiritual construct. A number of respondents wrote of spirituality in reference to connection or community, like the man who danced tango because of “the magic of dancing…the connection physically and spiritually between two tango dancers.” A second man also described the dance as magical but related it to both his internal and his external world: “It's important to me to connect with myself and my partner through music and [the] body [in] coordinated movements to experience a magic moment of unspoken communication.” Tango helped others connect to wider groups, like the woman who wrote, “I am delighted to participate in the international community of tango in Philadelphia—this is where tango is a spiritual form.” The meaning of her statement is not entirely clear, but I take it to mean that the community aspect of tango in Philadelphia was what made tango spiritual for her. Another woman extended the concept...
beyond the Philadelphia community to life in general by writing that tango helped her “emotionally and spiritually—I feel connected once again to life in the big picture.” Kasl writes, “We are tribal people and our health, joy, and happiness are intricately tied to interconnecting with others and with spirit” (1997, 7). She invites readers to explore how their relationships with others create opportunities to grow into more whole and loving people and how spirit or God exists both within individuals and in the space between them as they come together. Tango survey data suggest that dancers experience growth, satisfaction, and joy from connecting and communicating with each other that stems from both the individual growth they experience and the sacred space that they create between them when they dance.

The second prevalent theme was creative self-expression, either through expressing one’s nature or essence or through creating art. For example, two women found that they could express their sensual natures. The first wrote, “[tango gives] me an opportunity to express my sensual side, which gets bottled up in so many places,” and the second wrote, “It has confirmed my desire to express my sensual side through dancing. It has shown me that I can do that well.” These women found satisfying ways to express at least one dimension of themselves through tango, while other respondents viewed tango more broadly as an artistic process and/or a source of renewal and rejuvenation. In Creative Spirituality, Wuthnow (2001) explores the spiritual lives of artists and the artistic nature of spirituality. He writes, “As artist after artist attests, creativity is the capacity to see and think about things in innovative ways. It ultimately reflects the person’s entire being. This is why many artists insist that creativity and spirituality are virtually indistinguishable” (268). Indeed, many tango survey respondents viewed themselves as dance artists and found spiritual meaning in the creative process. For example, one dancer found
that creative expression through tango was nurturing and used it to balance the demands of work:

“It provides a channel for artistic, spiritual and creative expression for me. This is the most important reason [why I dance tango] as my work with the terminally ill requires that I participate in restorative and nourishing leisure pursuits.” Others reveled in creating art rather than just witnessing art, like the woman who wrote,

I have become an active participant in an artistic process, rather than only an observer (i.e., as an observer attending concert, dance or theater events). I am learning how to be a follower/partner in a process involving a combination of pair and group movement, rather than an independent ‘actor.’

She appreciated collaborating with others and becoming an artist herself, as did a man who wrote, “it has helped me to create art on the dance floor [and given me] the ability to…express myself through improvisation!” Many respondents enjoyed being able to express themselves through movement and music, like one man who drew a parallel between dancing and creating visual art. He wrote, “more than any other dance that I perform, [tango] provides a connection with one's partner. The combination of the right song/music, and your partner is like…a one-of-a-kind painting. The dance seems to bring out the most creative part of me.” He and others collaborated with their partners to create art through tango, combining the intimacy and richness of human interaction with the spiritual act of creation and self-expression. In this personal and interpersonal integration, the emotional, social and spiritual constructs can be theorized to interconnect in a web of music, movement, and art.

A third theme evident in respondents’ texts was that of being completely in the present, achieving a meditative state, having a transcendent experience, or feeling as if they were transported elsewhere. In many Eastern faith traditions, meditation is a form of spiritual
practice, and it can be a spiritual practice or a relaxation technique for those of other faith
traditions or those forging self-designed spiritual paths. As such, meditation and other practices
that bring people into the present moment are important to explore as possible dimensions of the
theorized spiritual domain of tango. Indeed, one woman wrote that through tango she is,
“learning more about being present in the moment, rather than anticipating what comes next,”
and another wrote that tango “forces me to be in the moment, [to] be here now.” Eckhart Tolle
writes in The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment (1999) that we are most
receptive, creative, and peaceful when rooted completely in the present. Some respondents
appreciated how tango invited them to be in the present, and others went a step further, like one
woman who defined tango as “a form of meditation” and a second who wanted to “further
develop [her] meditative focus through music and dance.” A third woman wrote, “I have
mastered the steps just enough to achieve a Zen-like state when listening to the music and
allowing the leader to help me interpret the music through movements.” In this context, I
interpret “Zen-like state” to mean she shifted from using her analytic, logical mind to engaging
in a meditative state of awareness, receptivity, and acceptance. In “Meditation and the Evolution
of Consciousness,” Ronald K. Irwin (2000) writes that meditation teaches one to cultivate the
inner witness, to let go of judgment, to accept oneself, to accept pervasive impermanence, and to
allow for “…an openness to the phenomenal world and to others, an openness that is both
fearless and tender” (297). Perhaps it is precisely dancers’ abilities to be in the present or in a
meditative state of mind that allows them to grow personally into more self-aware human beings,
to become more accepting or tolerant of others, and to be open to creating art in collaboration
with their partners. Here, the researcher sees the emotional, social, and spiritual constructs
intertwining again.
Moving from meditation to another state of mind experienced by dancers, Elkins et. al (1988) write that a key component of spirituality is connection with a transcendent dimension—that which goes beyond what we experience with our senses. Respondents wrote at length about these types of experiences, like the woman who wrote, “I have found [that] there is a spiritual aspect to dancing—one transcends oneself.” Similarly, a man wrote, “Tango music touches my inner being,” alluding to the part of him that transcends the physical. Others wrote of being somehow altered or transported while dancing tango, like one woman who wrote,

Tango is a way to disappear, to flow. Do you know about Optimal Flow Theory? Well I can do that through dancing Tango. No other dance does it for me, it is complicated enough through simple means to engage my physical body through movement, my emotions and my senses.

She seems to be referring to psychologist Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi’s (1990) theory of flow—a state of being completely immersed in and focused on an activity wherein time flies and one feels deep joy, peace, freedom, and competence. While she disappeared in a state of flow, others felt transported, like the man who wrote, “When I get connected with someone while dancing it is [an] out-of-this-world experience,” and a woman wrote, “What keeps me really hooked [are]…moments of completely being transported into another sphere.” A third woman echoed her statement: “The music takes me onto another planet. The dance has become an extension of myself when I am on the dance floor. I become trance-like while doing the traditional tango.”

Finally, a fourth woman wrote eloquently about a blend of these experiences:

I feel this dance overcomes me, something is channeled through me, and I am taken to another place, become another person. I find great passion while dancing tango, passion that I wouldn’t or couldn’t otherwise express. Somehow, I think tango helps me to define myself as a person. I belong to it, not the other way around.
For these respondents, tango was transformative at metaphysical levels—they disappeared and flowed, were transported elsewhere, entered altered states, and became channels for something beyond them. Moreover, tango helped them to discover and express their passion—it inspired them and provided a forum for clarifying their identity, their concept of self.

Respondents wrote of what I have configured as the spiritual construct in many ways, from being fully in the present or in a meditative state to transcending themselves or being transported elsewhere. In addition, elements of the emotional and social constructs intersected repeatedly with elements of the spiritual construct as tango invited personal growth, intimate interpersonal interaction, and collaborative artistic creation alongside the experience of spiritual states. Discussion of the spiritual construct in this section began with the concept of love as it relates to tango, and it seems fitting to return to it in concluding this section on how tango affects dancers and their lives. Not only have the dancers written of love in relation to tango, but a prominent scholar has as well. Art historian Robert Farris Thompson (2005) directly links love and tango in the title of his book, *Tango: The Art History of Love*, which traces the roots of tango from classical African dance ceremonies, many of which were performed for deceased loved ones, to the intimate call and response of today’s lead-follow structure of tango. One of the central theses of this dissertation is that tango is a spiritual practice for some dancers and that love may lie at the heart of this practice.

Award-winning documentary producer Dave Isay recently published a book and compact disk entitled *Listening Is an Act of Love: A Celebration of American Life from the StoryCorps Project* (2007). StoryCorps is an independent nonprofit project whose mission is to honor and celebrate people’s lives through listening to their stories (Isay 2007). If listening is indeed an act of love, then tango dancers who listen intently and completely to each other’s bodies and souls in
In order to move as one are loving each other in the most fundamental sense of the word. They are
witnessing each other’s present. They are holding each other in a loving embrace as each finds
his or her way, and the space they create between them is a sacred space. As the music begins
and they move into each other’s arms, they move beyond fear of exposure and intimacy to a
place of trust and acceptance – the precise point at which they may relax, express themselves,
grow, and enjoy the creative process together. A good friend of mine puts it succinctly. He says,
“tango is love.” Yes, tango is love, and love is at the core of a spiritual life—love of self, love of
other, love of all beings in the universe. Love in the broadest sense is a lens that allows us to see
our common desires for happiness, peace, acceptance, and for being truly seen, heard, and
understood by those around us. Tango invites dancers to view themselves and each other
through a loving lens and, as they do, they are invited to enter the spiritual realm in which two
become one and unite with all that is.

As a scholar, the spiritual realm is of great interest to me professionally and personally,
and it has been a rich part of my tango experience as a dancer, instructor, event organizer, and
performer. In light of my clear interest in the construct, the remainder of this chapter presents
data that both confirm and challenge my expectations of how tango and spirituality may or may
not intersect for survey respondents. As I analyze and discuss quantitative and qualitative data
that address specific questions raised in Chapter 5, I explore more closely how and where the
spiritual construct may or may not relate to the unique needs and experiences of various cohorts.
Does Tango Serve Different Cohorts in Unique Ways?:

Addressing Emerging Questions through Mixed Methods

Previous sections of this chapter have explored how tango survey respondents reported that tango affected them and their lives in terms of the five constructs—dimensions of growth/development which were found to be valid indicators of human experience. The first section was based on quantitative data and the second primarily on qualitative data. In this third section, mixed methods become far more important for addressing questions that emerged in Chapter 5 regarding how tango may or may not have served specific cohorts. These cohorts were comprised, respectively, of dancers who were divorced, born outside of the continental United States, and of different age groups as well as dancers who worked in various occupations, had varying years of experience in tango and other dance forms, and had varying levels of education and income. In addition, unexpected correlations among age, spirituality, meditation, yoga, gender, and/or sexual arousal led the discussion down new and unforeseen paths regarding the role tango may play in challenging the predominant body-spirit dichotomy common in Western cultural heritage and many Western religions.

Questions Remain Regarding the Divorced Cohort

Data in Chapter 5 showed that a disproportionately high percentage of tango survey respondents were divorced compared to the Philadelphia population. To facilitate analysis of data on marital status, I created a binary variable comprised of those who were divorced or separated versus all others (never married, married, or widowed).* Surprisingly, bivariate

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* In this binary variable, one group comprised 34 who were divorced and 4 who were separated, and the other group comprised 38 who were married, 24 who had never married, and 6 who were widowed.
analysis revealed no significant relationship between being divorced/separated and either one’s exact age or one’s age group. However, analysis did reveal that those who were divorced/separated fell within a more narrow age range than those who were not,† and another test revealed a correlation between being part of the baby boom generation (aged 45 to 64) and being divorced or separated.‡ Together, these results indicated that tango survey respondents who were divorced or separated were somewhat more likely to be members of the baby boom generation, and, conversely, that if respondents were of the baby boom generation, they were somewhat more likely to be divorced or separated.

Demographic data from the tango survey also raised questions about how tango might serve people who are divorced. Surprisingly, bivariate analysis did not reveal significant relationships between this cohort and either the enhancement or positive experience indicators.§ In other words, there was no statistically significant difference in how respondents who were divorced reported that tango enhanced their lives physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, or spiritually compared to those who were not divorced. Nor was there a difference between the two cohorts in their reported positive experiences while dancing tango. Similarly, there was no

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* Age groups were identical to those discussed in Chapter V: 15-19, 20-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65-74.

† The two variables in the T-test were: a) those who were divorced or separated versus those who were not, and b) respondents’ actual ages. The standard deviation for those who were not divorced or separated was 13.2304, and for those who were divorced or separated it was 10.0693.

‡ The Pearson Chi-Square asymptotic significance was .012, indicating a positive relationship between being part of the baby boom generation and being divorced or separated.

§ T-tests showed no significant correlations between the divorced/separated variable and the enhancement and positive experience indicators. See pages 6 and 7 for charts and discussion of how these indicators were created.
difference between the cohorts in their reasons for dancing tango in the present. Finding these results surprising, I conducted additional analysis to explore whether people who were divorced were more likely to expand their social networks through tango. However, there was no correlation between this cohort and creating new relationships through tango, including friends, business partners or colleagues, romantic dates or partners, or spouses. These quantitative analyses suggest that tango did not offer unique benefits to respondents who were divorced.

Qualitative data from two survey questions seem to corroborate these results. The first question asked respondents to list the two or three most important reasons why they danced tango in the present. The second question asked whether and how tango may have changed them and/or their lives. Throughout this section, data from the former question is referred to as “Why Now” data, and data from the latter is referred to as “Changed You” data. Note that the qualitative “Changed You” question was preceded by a binary question: “Has dancing tango changed you or your life somehow?” Out of 109 respondents, 98 (90 percent) answered “yes.”

Analysis of “Why Now” data showed no difference between the divorced and non-divorced cohorts. However, “Changed You” data showed that 17 percent fewer of those divorced/separated wrote in terms of how tango had improved their emotional lives. These data suggest that tango may enhance the emotional lives of those who are not divorced more than those who are. In summary, while this study found that a disproportionately high percentage of divorced people responded to the tango survey compared to Philadelphia area demographics, it

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* A Mann-Whitney test showed no significant correlations between the divorced/separated binary variable and why they danced in the present.
† A Chi-Square test showed no significant correlations.
‡ “Changed You” data: 16 out of 33 of those divorced/separated (48 percent) wrote regarding the emotional emotional construct versus 42 out of 65 of those married, widowed, or never married (65 percent).
was not designed to explore reasons for this difference in depth. Further research is needed to identify unique benefits tango may offer to people who are divorced.

**Serving Immigrants and People Born in the Continental United States**

Data discussed in Chapter 5 found that a disproportionately high percentage of tango survey respondents were born outside of the continental United States compared to the Philadelphia population. Tango’s history as a dance and music form created by immigrants in Buenos Aires and Montevideo at the turn of the twentieth century suggests that it might assist dancers of then and now with clarifying their identity and creating community. Surprisingly, bivariate analysis revealed no significant correlation between the immigrant cohort in Philadelphia and the enhancement and positive experience indicators, nor was there a significant relationship between this cohort and why respondents danced in the present.*

Consistent with these findings, comparison of those born and not born in the continental United States in the “Why Now” qualitative data showed no differences between groups in all constructs. However, analysis of the “Changed You” data showed differences between groups in the mental construct as well as in a category that arose out of respondents’ own words: travel and exposure to other cultures. The largest difference appeared in the mental construct—20 percent more of those born outside the continental United States wrote in terms of how tango had enhanced their mental health or well-being.† Within this cohort, one woman wrote that “[tango]

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* T-tests between the “born in continental United States” binary variable and the enhancement and positive experience indicators showed no significant correlations. A Mann-Whitney test of the “born in continental United States” binary variable and why they danced in the present showed no significant correlations.

† “Changed You” data: 13 out of 25 of those *not* born in the continental United States (52 percent) referred to the mental construct versus 22 out of 69 of those born inside the continental United States (32 percent).
made me more committed to learning to dance,” and another wrote, “I have learned many things about myself.” One man felt that tango “changed mainly my perception of my potential and my life in [the] future,” and another wrote that through tango he was able to relax more and keep his mind off worrying about things like work. While respondents in both cohorts indicated that dancing tango had improved their mental health in some way, this construct was more prevalent in text by those born outside the continental United States.

The most interesting difference between the two cohorts was with regard to the category of travel and exposure to other cultures—15 percent more of those born within the continental United States wrote that dancing tango had encouraged them to travel and/or helped them to learn about other cultures represented by members of the tango community.* These data highlight how important tango may be to cultural pluralism, particularly for those who may not have had reason or desire to travel to other countries. Dancing within the tango community in the Philadelphia area could provide a rich opportunity for respondents to learn about and appreciate cultures different from their own.

In summary, quantitative data did not offer information on the unique ways in which tango may serve those born outside of the continental United States, but qualitative data suggested that it may serve them more than others in the mental realm. Qualitative data also suggested that by expanding cultural exposure for those born in the continental United States, tango could encourage cultural pluralism. Whether and how tango may serve these two cohorts in different ways is worthy of further exploration.

* “Changed You” data: 13 out of 69 of those born in the continental United States wrote that dancing tango had encouraged them to travel and/or helped them to learn about other cultures (19 percent) versus only 1 out of 25 (4 percent) of those born outside the continental United States.
Another question raised in Chapter 5 was whether tango might attract a disproportionately high number of artists because it offers opportunities for self-expression and creativity. Quantitative analysis showed no significant correlations between being an artist and the enhancement or positive experience indicators. Nor was there a correlation between being an artist and why respondents presently danced, leaving questions unanswered as to why a high percentage of artists responded to the tango survey.

However, there was a significant correlation between other occupational categories and physical reasons for dancing tango in the present. Quantitative analysis showed that physical reasons were more important for respondents who worked in health care or education than for those who worked in other occupational categories. By virtue of their profession, health care workers could have been more aware of the physical benefits of dancing tango than those in other professions, or they could have perceived greater gain in this realm. It was not clear why those in education would value physical reasons highly. Analysis of qualitative data did not reveal any meaningful differences in how people of different occupations wrote about the five constructs, so more research is needed to explore why tango may appeal to artists, health care providers, and educators in unique ways.

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* To make this analysis feasible, I grouped occupations into five categories—arts; health care; education; engineering, computer science, science and research; or other.

† A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed an asymptotic significance of .001 for physical reasons for dancing tango in the present. Mean rankings showed that physical reasons were more important for those who worked in health care (mean ranking of 70.92) and education (mean ranking of 81.80) than for those who worked in the other categories (mean rankings no higher than 48.39).
Tango is Accessible to Those with Previous Social Pairs Dance Experience

Data presented in Chapter 5 showed that respondents had varied levels of experience in dance and movement forms. Questions emerged regarding how such experience might correlate with tango experience and whether data suggested that tango was accessible to a wide variety of people. Bivariate analysis showed positive correlations between the number of years respondents had danced tango and the number of years they had danced swing, salsa, and ballroom/Latin, in particular. In other words, the longer respondents had danced tango, the longer they were likely to have danced these three social dance forms as well, and vice versa.* There were no correlations of any kind between the number of years dancing tango and the number of years doing other dance forms. These data suggest that tango may have been more accessible to those with social pairs dance experience, which is not surprising given similarities among them, like dominantly heterosexual pairing of men leading and women following and a focus on socializing and enjoyment. Conversely, there was no correlation between the number of years respondents had danced tango and the number of years they had practiced yoga or other movement forms, indicating that practicing movement forms did not make tango any more or less accessible for respondents. It was not feasible to compare qualitative data by respondents’ levels of experience in other dance and movement forms because of how data was collected. (There were 18 variables within quantitative question number 36. Creation and manipulation of a spreadsheet comparing qualitative responses across the 18 variables would have been unwieldy and inconclusive.) Additional research is needed to address this topic in more detail.

* Analysis using Spearman’s rho showed positive correlations between years dancing tango and years dancing swing .352 and salsa .345 at p = .01, and positive correlation between years dancing tango and years dancing ballroom/Latin .234 at p = .05.
Data in Chapter 5 showed that a relatively large percentage of respondents had danced tango for two years or less compared to a smaller percentage who had danced it for longer periods of time. Respondents’ texts on how difficult it can be to learn tango discussed earlier in this chapter led me to wonder how dancers’ experiences might change over time. Might data indicate that the dance is prohibitively difficult for some or that respondents’ experience of tango becomes less enjoyable as they gain more experience? While bivariate analysis showed no correlation between how long respondents danced tango and their reasons for dancing it in the present, it did show negative correlations between the number of years they danced tango and spiritual and emotional enhancement of their lives.* The more respondents had danced tango, the more they disagreed that tango had enhanced their spiritual and emotional lives. Bivariate analysis of the experience indicators revealed similar results. As the number of years dancing tango increased, all indicators of what dancers experienced while dancing tango decreased somewhat, and there was significant negative correlation between the number of years respondents danced tango and their emotional experience of dancing tango. As the number of years dancing increased, the emotional experience of dancing became less positive, particularly for those who had been dancing for between 6.01 and 8 years.† Two questions emerge from these data. How and why did spiritual and emotional benefits decrease the longer respondents had danced tango, and what might have happened for those who had been dancing tango for between 6.01 and 8 years?

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* Analysis using Pearson’s correlation showed negative correlations between years dancing tango and indicators for spiritual enhancement (-.296) and emotional enhancement (-.299) at p = .01.

† Analysis using Pearson’s correlation revealed negative correlations between years dancing tango and the indicator for positive emotional experiences while dancing tango (-.224) at P = .01.
While it would have been ideal to compare qualitative data based on how long respondents had been dancing tango, such analysis was not feasible because of the way data was collected and because only seven respondents had been dancing for 6.01 to 8 years. Comparison with such a small group would not have been useful. However, my own experience and anecdotal evidence from conversations with other dancers suggest a few reasons why spiritual and emotional enhancement might be lower for those with more tango experience. Regarding the spiritual construct, dancers experience a certain awe and wonder in their first years of dancing tango, in part, because of not understanding how the lead-follow dynamic works. It seems like magic or like partners are communing on spiritual as well as physical levels for such collaborative dancing to occur. As one learns more about the technique and physics of tango, the dance can become less mysterious and magical but can still remain spiritual because of the intimacy of the connection and the shared act of creative and artistic expression. For those who may not be actively engaged in spiritual seeking in other parts of their lives, once the mystery or magic of the tango fades, perhaps the spiritual experience does as well.

Regarding why emotional benefits might decrease for those who had been dancing for 6.01 to 8 years, dancers may reach turning points in their tango journeys having mastered the dance to a large degree, settled into their own pattern or style of dancing, and/or attended local tango events for a number of years. For some leaders, for example, being in charge of what comes next in the dance can lead to boredom through sheer repetition. Advanced followers may “converse” actively in the dance by altering or suggesting movements to make the experience more musical and more interesting for leader and follower, but these skills are rare in most followers. Some men explore other forms of dance to augment or expand their tango
experiences, and others begin learning to follow, teach, or perform to overcome boredom. As a follower, I hit a plateau in my studies after four years and began learning to lead and to teach in order to keep tango emotionally appealing as well as physically and mentally challenging. Having now studied tango for seven years, I plan to keep tango appealing by studying extensively in Buenos Aires, cultivating partnerships with dancers with whom I may practice and perform, and continuing to expand my skills as a tango instructor. However, many dancers may not have the freedom, resources, or desire to make tango so central to their lives, and the options for keeping the dance emotionally appealing may be limited.

_Education and Income Levels Did Not Affect Tango Attendance Rates_

Data in Chapter 5 also pointed to the resources one needs in order to dance tango, including money, time, patience, and persistence. While this study did not collect data on respondents’ levels of time, patience, and persistence, _per se_, it did gather data on their levels of income and education. Bivariate analysis revealed no significant correlations between respondents’ income levels and the number of years they had danced tango, nor with their rates of attendance at classes, prácticas, and milongas.* Therefore, while data presented in Chapter 5 indicated that respondents as a group had higher levels of income than Philadelphia residents, which could have indicated that higher incomes were required for dancing tango, no such relationship existed. Respondents with lower household incomes did not attend tango activities any less frequently than those with higher incomes. I find these data somewhat surprising given

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* Spearman’s rho revealed no significant correlations between income and years attending tango or rates of attendance.
how expensive it can be to study tango; however, it was reassuring to find that tango was equally accessible financially to respondents with vastly different income levels.

Bivariate analysis of quantitative data also showed no significant correlations between respondents’ levels of education and a) the number of years they had danced tango, b) their rates of attendance at tango activities, or c) the enhancement and positive experience indicators.\(^*\) Data presented in Chapter 5 showed that respondents’ education levels were much higher than those of Philadelphia residents, but education did not seem to be a factor among respondents regarding how much they danced tango nor how they perceived that it affected them and their lives. The only correlation in data regarding respondents’ resources for dancing tango was between their level of education and their level of income. Analysis showed a positive correlation, indicating that the higher respondents’ levels of education, the higher their levels of income.\(^\dagger\)

Analysis of qualitative data with regard to income and education levels was not feasible for the same reasons that analysis of respondents’ length of time dancing tango was not feasible—a combination of data collection methods and small subgroups of respondents. Understanding relationships between dancers’ tango habits and their resources as well as their personal qualities (like patience and persistence) will have to be the subject of future research.

*Age Did Not Correlate with Tango as Expected*

The prevalence of respondents in the baby boom generation raised intriguing questions about how tango might serve this cohort. Bivariate analysis showed no correlation between age

\(^*\) Spearman’s rho revealed no significant correlations between level of education and the above listed variables.

\(^\dagger\) Spearman’s rho was .289 at p = .003 between two variables – highest degree and income category.
and how long respondents had danced tango, but it did reveal some striking and unexpected
differences in how respondents of various ages experienced tango and believed that it enhanced
their lives.* There were no significant correlations between those in the baby boom generation as
a group and either the enhancement or positive experience indicators. Nor were there significant
correlations between respondents’ actual ages and either the enhancement or positive experience
indicators in the physical or mental constructs.† However, there were negative correlations
between age and the two spiritual indicators (spiritual enhancement and positive spiritual
experience) as well as between age and spiritual reasons for dancing tango in the present.‡ These
These negative correlations showed that the older the respondent, the less likely they were to
report that tango enhanced their spiritual lives, that they had positive spiritual experiences while
dancing tango, and that they were dancing tango for spiritual reasons. “Table 12. Frequencies of
Spiritual Enhancement Indicator by Age Group” provides the number of respondents per age
group as well as the mean and median scores and standard deviations on a five-point scale (1 was
lowest, 5 was highest). While differences are not large, Table 5 does show that those aged 20 to
44 reported higher mean and median levels of spiritual enhancement than those aged 45 to 74.

These results were quite surprising. I had expected the opposite—for spiritual indicators
to show increased spiritual enhancement and more positive spiritual experiences for older
respondents because, according to Ai and Mackenzie (2006), Irwin (2002), and Jewell (1999),

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* A Pearson test showed no significant correlation between age and how long respondents danced tango.

† A T-test revealed no significant correlations between the baby boom generation as a group and the five
constructs, and a Pearson test showed no significant correlations between respondents’ actual ages and the physical
or mental constructs.

‡ For the spiritual enhancement indictor, Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was -.259 at p = .009; for the
positive spiritual experience indicator, Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was -.229 at p = .023; and for spiritual
reasons for dancing tango in the present, the Spearman’s rho was -.197 at p = .049.
people at mid-life and beyond are more inclined than younger individuals to consider mortality, life purpose, and meaning through spiritual inquiry. These data showed more clear intersections between spirituality and tango for younger dancers, which led me to wonder whether there were generational differences in respondents’ faith traditions that might have factored into these results. Bivariate analysis of respondents’ actual ages and three variables related to faith tradition revealed no significant correlations. The three variables related to faith tradition were a) the nineteen faith traditions that respondents listed as their current faith traditions; b) these nineteen faith traditions grouped into three categories—Eastern religions, Western religions, and “other”; and c) those who indicated that they practiced “self-designed spirituality.” Similarly, bivariate analysis of age groups and the same three faith tradition variables revealed no significant correlations or relationships. These results indicate that it was unlikely that the faith

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* One-way ANOVAs and T-tests showed no significant correlations between actual ages and these faith tradition variables.

† I used a range of statistical tests according to the variable types—binary, interval, ordinal, or nominal. Tests included One-way ANOVAs, T-tests, Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney, and Spearman’s rho.

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Table 12. Frequencies of Spiritual Enhancement Indicator by Age Group

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traditions of different age groups played a role in correlations found in indicators that measure the spiritual construct.

A clue to understanding these data could also lie in the negative correlations that appeared between age and emotional and social enhancement indicators. * “Table 13. Frequencies of Emotional Enhancement Indicator by Age Group” shows that from age 20 on, the older the age group, the lower the level of emotional enhancement from dancing tango. “Table 7. Frequencies of Social Enhancement Indicator by Age Group” shows a more erratic pattern—the highest mean and median scores (and lowest standard deviations) for those aged 20-34, a slight increase in the mean score for those aged 45 to 54, and lower scores for the two older groups—however, the trend is still toward less social enhancement for older respondents.

Could it be that many older respondents had already found or created means by which to fulfill their spiritual, emotional, and social needs before coming to tango? Were older respondents less inclined than younger respondents to think of tango in terms of spiritual,

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<td>4.36</td>
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<td>4.13</td>
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<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
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<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.88</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For the emotional enhancement indicator, Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was -.284, and p = .004; for the social enhancement indicator, Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was -.257, and p = .010.
Table 14. Frequencies of Social Enhancement Indicator by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<td>15-19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.33</td>
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<td>4.00</td>
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<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

emotional, and social enhancement or experience? Or did older respondents actually perceive less gain in these constructs than younger dancers and, if so, why? While it is beyond the scope of this research to address these questions further regarding age and the emotional and social constructs, survey data on meditation and yoga as components of the spirituality construct do allow further exploration of age and other variables.

_Surprising Intersections Among Age, Spirituality, Faith Tradition, Meditation, Yoga, and Gender_

While a meditative experience may not be considered part of the spiritual realm by everyone, it is a central component of many non-Western religions and, for some scholars, it is synonymous with prayer. In his work on artists and their spiritual lives, Wuthnow (2001) draws parallels between meditation and prayer and writes that in both activities, one quiets the mind to become more fully present and/or more open to the sacred (127). Tango survey question number 27 stated:

For some, dancing tango can be a meditative experience. For the purposes of this survey, "meditative" is defined as the quality one reaches upon making a choice to
focus one’s attention in the present, to not judge, to not strive, and to accept whatever happens from moment to moment. How often is tango meditative in this way for you? If you never lead or never follow, select “Not applicable” in the corresponding rows.

On a five-point scale from 1 = “never or almost never” to 5 = “every time or almost every time, respondents ranked two statements: “When I am leading, dancing tango is meditative,” and “When I am following, dancing tango is meditative.” Just as bivariate analysis revealed no significant relationship between age and faith tradition, it also revealed no significant relationship between age and whether or not respondents had meditative experiences while dancing tango.*

At this point in the research, bivariate analysis of the age variable seems to have run its course. Analysis revealed significant relationships between age and a few variables, but age was not the central determinant in dancers’ perceived gains from tango as expected given the prevalence of those aged 45 or older. Analysis turns now to other variables besides age, like faith tradition, length of years dancing tango, gender, and one’s role in tango, that might offer insights into how tango does or does not intersect with the theorized spiritual construct.

Significant correlations appeared between two categories of faith traditions and the spiritual enhancement indicator. Those who practiced multiple faiths (that is, who indicated practicing any number of Eastern, Western, and other faith traditions) and those who were strictly Catholic correlated positively with perceiving that tango enhanced their lives spiritually.† (There was no correlation between any of the faith tradition categories and the positive spiritual

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* Spearman’s rho revealed no significant correlations.

† A T-test showed 2-tailed significance of .032 for those who practiced multiple faiths and a 2-tailed significance of .003 for those who were Catholic.
experience indicator.) These results are curious given that one might view the two spiritual paths as quite divergent from each other—Catholicism espousing a clearly defined spiritual paradigm with proscribed beliefs, values, and activities versus a path of multiple faiths offering unlimited spiritual freedom. Here, as at many points in this section of the chapter, multivariate analysis would be ideal to explore more fully possible relationships among many variables simultaneously, like faith tradition, spiritual enhancement, and having a meditative experience while dancing tango. Given this study’s small sample size, such analysis was not feasible, so discussion focuses on intriguing results revealed through further bivariate analysis.

There was no significant relationship between the frequency of having a meditative experience while dancing and the number of years one had danced tango.* This was surprising because I had expected to find a positive correlation indicating that the more experience and familiarity one had with the form, the more one might be able to move out of the thinking mind and into a meditative state. Clearly, there was no relationship of the sort. There was also no significant correlation between the frequency of having a meditative experience while dancing and any of the faith traditions.† However, analysis did show a significant relationship between gender and the frequency with which respondents experienced tango as a meditative experience in different roles.‡ “Figure 18. Women’s Meditative Experiences. Percentage of Women Who Had Meditative Experiences While Following or Leading” shows that more than half of women—36 out of 66 (55 percent)—had a meditative experience while following most of the

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* Spearman’s rho revealed no significant correlations.
† A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no significance.
‡ A Mann-Whitney test revealed an asymptotic significance of .028.
Figure 18. Women’s Meditative Experiences. Percentages of Women Who Had Meditative Experiences While Following or Leading

Data came from Question 27: For some, dancing tango can be a meditative experience. For the purposes of this survey, "meditative" is defined as the quality one reaches upon making a choice to focus one's attention in the present, to not judge, to not strive, and to accept whatever happens from moment to moment. How often is tango meditative in this way for you?

- N = 66 for following.
- N = 29 for leading.

- Some dancers responded to questions about a meditative experience with “not applicable,” meaning that they never led or never followed. Data discussed here includes only those for whom the question was applicable, and these totals were 77 respondents (11 men and 66 women) regarding a meditative experience while following, and 68 respondents (39 men and 29 women) regarding a meditative experience while leading.

* Some dancers responded to questions about a meditative experience with “not applicable,” meaning that they never led or never followed. Data discussed here includes only those for whom the question was applicable, and these totals were 77 respondents (11 men and 66 women) regarding a meditative experience while following, and 68 respondents (39 men and 29 women) regarding a meditative experience while leading.
“Figure 19. Men’s Meditative Experiences. Percentages of Men Who Had Meditative Experiences While Following or Leading” shows that 14 out of 39 men (36 percent) had a meditative experience while *leading* most of the time, almost every time, or every time. Conversely, only 3 out of 11 men (27 percent) had a meditative experience while *following*.

While the numbers of respondents represented in both of these charts are small, they raise interesting questions about how gender may relate to the frequency of meditative experiences and how following and leading may compare in allowing a dancer to achieve a meditative state.
Bivariate analysis revealed a relationship between gender and one’s role in tango—men were much more likely to lead and women much more likely to follow—so the reason for differences in the genders’ meditative experiences while leading or following could lie in their different levels of skill or comfort in these roles. Bivariate analysis supported this hypothesis for leaders and leading only, not for followers and following. There was a positive correlation between how often respondents led and how often they had a meditative experience while leading—the more they led, the more often they had a meditative experience while leading. The same was not true for followers or following—how often one followed did not correlate with how often one had a meditative experience while following. These data could indicate that the nature of following lends itself to having a meditative experience more easily than the nature of leading. Followers must be in an entirely receptive state of mind—anticipating nothing and being ready for anything. Many followers close their eyes in order to better “listen” with their senses to what their partner is leading, and in this state it is not difficult to make the leap to a meditative experience. However, the complexity of leading—which involves planning ahead, paying attention to the positions of both dancers, responding to the music, and navigating around other dancers—may require a certain level of skill before a leader can shift into a meditative state.

There is another factor that could have been at play. Bivariate analysis showed that the more often a respondent had a meditative experience in either role, the more often he or she had

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* A Mann-Whitney test revealed an asymptotic significance of less than .001. Out of 77 who followed, 66 were women (86 percent) and 11 were men (14 percent). Out of 68 who led, 29 were women (43 percent) and 39 were men (57 percent).

† The Spearman’s rho for how often one led and experiencing tango as meditative while leading was .376 at p = .002. However, Spearman’s rho revealed no significant correlation for frequency of following and a meditative experience while following.
it in the opposite role as well. * It seems that some respondents were more apt to experience tango as meditative overall than others. One factor that could explain this correlation was respondents’ varying levels of experience with meditation outside of tango. The only data that the survey collected related to this topic was respondents’ years of experience doing yoga, which, in most yoga traditions, includes a meditative component. † It may be no coincidence that 59 out of 106 tango survey respondents (66 percent) had some experience practicing yoga, 36 of them (34 percent) had practiced it for three years or more, and 41 of them (35 percent) were still practicing yoga when they filled out the survey.

Bivariate analysis showed no correlation between years practicing yoga and a meditative experience while leading, but it did reveal a positive correlation with following—the more years of experience respondents had practiced yoga, the more frequently tango was meditative for them while following. ‡ Because far more women than men reported dancing as followers, it was logical to test for a relationship between gender and experience practicing yoga, and there was a significant one. § Out of 106 respondents to the question about yoga experience, 24 women (36 percent) had practiced yoga for 5 years or more, while only 6 men (15 percent) had practiced it for that long. “Figure 20. Yoga Practice. Percentages of Men and Women by Years

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* The Spearman’s rho for having a meditative experience while leading and while following was .341 at p = .031.

† I base this claim on my training to become a certified Kripalu yoga instructor in the year 2000 and my experiences teaching yoga and taking many types of yoga classes (including Kripalu, Iyengar, Flow, Kali Ray, and Ashtanga) since 1996 in Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts with teachers who received certification from studios across the United States and abroad.

‡ The Spearman’s rho for the years one had practiced yoga and how frequently one experienced tango as meditative while following was .243 at p = .033.

§ A Mann-Whitney test revealed an asymptotic significance of .001.
of Yoga Practice” shows that men outnumbered women only in the group of respondents who had never

![Figure 20. Yoga Practice. Percentages of Men and Women by Years of Yoga Practice](chart)

Data came from Question 36: Please indicate whether you have done the following dance and movement forms and for how long.

N = 106

practiced yoga. In all other categories, women outnumbered men, and twice the percentage of women than men had practiced yoga for three years or more. It is possible that some women developed knowledge of and skill in meditation through practicing yoga, making it easier for them to achieve a meditative state while dancing tango than for men who had fewer years of experience practicing yoga. It could also be that women and men with yoga and/or meditation experience were drawn to tango precisely because its technique, including close embrace, allows
dancers to achieve a meditative state while moving the body, as does yoga. These bivariate analyses revealed interesting intersections among yoga, meditation, and tango that warrant more comprehensive research and that point back to the spiritual construct from a different perspective. How might respondents’ years of yoga practice relate to the spiritual construct and to their faith traditions?

Bivariate analysis revealed only one significant correlation between yoga and any of the enhancement and positive experience indicators—a positive correlation between yoga and spiritual enhancement, meaning that the longer respondents had practiced yoga, the more they reported that tango had enhanced their spiritual lives.* These data encourage exploration of intersections among yoga, spirituality, and tango. In the spirit of challenging my research biases, I tested for other factors that might be at play in the yoga data, like how long respondents had danced tango and their faith traditions. There were no significant correlations between how long respondents had practiced yoga and how long they had danced tango, and the only faith tradition that showed correlation was “self-designed spirituality.”

Question number 52 asked respondents to indicate their faith tradition(s) from among 14 choices, including Western religions, Eastern religions, “self-designed spirituality,” and “other,” which they could specify. The third most frequent response after Catholic and Protestant was self-designed spirituality, which 25 out of 116 respondents (22 percent) practiced. Bivariate analysis revealed a significant relationship between practicing yoga and practicing self-designed spirituality—the more years that respondents had practiced yoga, the more likely they were to

* The Spearman’s rho for years practicing yoga and spiritual enhancement through tango was .211 p = .030.
also practice self-designed spirituality. * “Figure 21. Yoga and Self-Designed Spirituality. Percentage of Respondents Who Did or Did Not Practice Self-designed Spirituality by Years of Yoga Practice” shows nearly inverse relationships at either end of the horizontal axis. Among those with no yoga experience, twice as many respondents did not practice self-designed spirituality as those who did. On the other end of the spectrum, among those with six or more years of yoga experience the reverse was true—twice as many respondents did practice self-

* A Mann-Whitney test revealed an asymptotic significance of .016.
designed spirituality as those who did not. According to Wuthnow (2001), it is common for people in the United States who are seeking non-traditional sources of spiritual meaning and guidance to seek it through multiple sources, including Eastern and Western religions, body-mind practices, and the arts. Perhaps yoga plays a significant role for respondents who are forging their own spiritual paths, and analysis that reveals intersections among yoga, spirituality, and tango suggests that tango may play an important role as well. These intersections are most striking in light of another surprising piece of data.

Intersections Between Spirituality and Sexual Arousal: New Questions within the Spiritual Construct

Dancing tango can be a very sensual and intimate experience, and it is often portrayed by the media as sexy and erotic. For some dancers, tango can lead to sexual arousal, however, in my experience in the Philadelphia area tango community and in other cities in the United States and Canada, this element of the dance is hidden or peripheral in social interaction at tango events as part of a culture that encourages clear boundaries. Based on my observations of and participation in the Philadelphia area tango community, for sensual and intimate interaction between friends and strangers to function socially, it is understood among dancers that physical contact ends after dancing with no expectations for sexual interaction. That is not to claim that people do not become attracted to or date each other, it is only to clarify that the sexual experience one may have while dancing tango is primarily an internal one. One’s dance partner may be having an entirely different and completely non sexual experience.

Because the sexual realm could have been an aspect of a dancer’s internal experiences, question number 17 asked respondents to rate how often they felt sexually aroused while dancing
tango at milongas. Only 10 respondents (9.2 percent) felt aroused most of the time, nearly every time, or every time. Nineteen respondents (17.4 percent) felt sexually aroused some of the time, 42 (38.5 percent) felt so once in a while, and 38 (34.9 percent) felt so never or almost never. Bivariate analysis revealed no significant correlations between sexual arousal and a) gender, b) age, or c) length of years dancing tango. However, analysis did reveal positive correlations between sexual arousal and the physical and emotional experience indicators, meaning that the more often a respondent felt sexually aroused, the more often he or she also had positive physical and emotional experiences while dancing tango. Most intriguing were the positive correlations between sexual arousal and both spiritual indicators—there was a correlation with the positive spiritual experience indicator and a correlation with the spiritual enhancement indicator. In other words, the more frequently respondents felt sexually aroused while dancing tango, the higher their positive spiritual experience of dancing tango and the more they felt that tango had enhanced their spiritual lives.

These data raise intriguing questions about intersections among tango, sexuality, and the spiritual realm of dancers’ experiences. Is sexuality as expressed through tango a spiritual experience for some? Is spirituality as expressed through tango a sexual experience for others? How does tango intersect with the duality of body and spirit common in Western culture? Could tango offer human beings a way to challenge and heal this duality, embrace by embrace, dance by dance? Wuthnow (2001) writes, “...the relationship between the body and spirituality has been the focus of much debate and rethinking in the past three or four decades” (170). Noting

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* For the physical enhancement indicator, Spearman’s rho was .231 at p = .016. For the emotional enhancement indicator, Spearman’s rho was .244 at p = .011.

† For the spiritual enhancement indicator, Spearman’s rho was .194 at p = .043. For the positive spiritual experience indicator without connection, Spearman’s rho was .333 at p = .000. For the positive spiritual experience indicator with connection, Spearman’s rho was .315 at p = .001.
the influence of Eastern religions, alternative and complementary medicine, feminist spirituality, and other cultural phenomena, he argues that “boundaries between the sacred and profane that are symbolized by the body become blurred, and works of art that challenge these boundaries sometimes become charged with special significance” (170). Although Wuthnow is referring to visual art in this passage, the current national debate regarding the body and spirituality that he identifies offers a useful lens through which to analyze tango survey data.

Although none of the qualitative survey questions asked about sexuality directly, seven respondents wrote about it in two distinct ways—three respondents explicitly compared tango with making love or called it a sexual activity, and four referred to sexuality in describing what tango was not. Regarding the former, the only man who wrote about sexuality began dancing tango because he had heard that it was “like having sex in the vertical position,” and a woman echoed this comparison by writing, “I have found a dance that has awakened my emotions, and I feel the connections with my partners in a way I only did when making love.” Both draw clear parallels between dancing tango and being sexually intimate. A second woman wrote that tango was unique because “It has the possibility to be intense emotionally, sexually, [and] creatively; it's a dialogue.” She seems quite comfortable defining tango in emotional, sexual, and creative terms. By contrast, four women defined tango as sensual or intimate but not necessarily sexual, one of whom made this distinction within the spiritual construct. She wrote, “It fills up your soul and senses; it is sensual without being 'in your face' sexual.” By referring to one’s soul, she described tango in spiritual terms. In my experience, the colloquial term “in your face” means overt, explicit, or direct. I take her statement to mean that tango is spiritual and sensual without being overtly sexual. The second woman wrote that tango was unique because of the
“connection and intimacy…not necessarily sexual, but definitely sensual and pleasurable.” The third wrote that tango was unique because there was “more connection between partners, more sensual. (I wouldn't use the word sexual, that's more in the mind than in the dance.) With tango there's a softness and blending of energies that I don't feel with other dances.” Finally, the fourth woman wrote that close embrace made tango “…by far the most intimate (emotionally, intellectually, not necessarily sexually) social dance I have ever done.” These women wrote of connection, intimacy, the senses, the soul, and/or a blending of energies, which certainly have much in common with the act of making love. However, they also wrote that tango was not necessarily sexual, meaning that it could be sexual but did not have to be so. To me, they sound tentative about making the comparison, as if they needed to qualify their experience of tango as potentially sexual. The tentative nature of their statements contrasted with quantitative data indicating positive correlations between sexual arousal and the spiritual construct suggests an internal conflict or questioning. Tango may challenge cultural and religious boundaries between sexuality and the creative process and/or between the body and spirituality. Recall that Wuthnow (2001) noted a variety of religious, medical, and social phenomena that are helping to blur such boundaries in American society. “Growing numbers of Americans have been exposed to Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religious traditions in which ideas about energy provide a way of conceptualizing a more complex relationship between the body and spirituality” (Wuthnow 2001, 200). Given that many tango survey respondents have studied yoga and that they come from extremely diverse cultural, professional, and religious/spiritual backgrounds, they could have been in the process of questioning traditional body-spirit dualities even before dancing tango, and the tango experience could have deepened this questioning.
To explore possible intersections between sexual arousal and the spiritual construct further, I conducted additional bivariate analyses of quantitative data. Tests revealed no significant correlations between sexual arousal and faith category (Eastern religions, Western religions, and “other”) nor with whether or not respondents had meditative experiences while leading or following.* However, there was a relationship between sexual arousal and self-designed spirituality.† Further analysis revealed that slightly higher percentages of those who did not practice self-designed spirituality felt sexually aroused while dancing tango than those who did.‡ That is, slightly higher percentages of respondents whose faith traditions were strictly religious in nature or who were atheist, agnostic, or practiced no faith tradition felt sexually aroused while dancing tango compared to those who practiced self-designed spirituality (which could have included one or more religions).§ “Figure 22. Self-designed Spirituality and Sexual Arousal. Percentages Who Did and Did Not Practice Self-designed Spirituality by Frequency of Sexual Arousal While Dancing Tango” illustrates these differences. While the frequency of sexual arousal is quite low for both groups, precluding any conclusive discussion, higher rates of sexual arousal for those whose spiritual practices do not include self-designed spirituality raise intriguing questions.** Given that 44 percent of respondents practice some form of Western faith

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* A Kruskal-Wallis test and Spearman’s rho revealed no significant correlations.

† A Mann-Whitney test revealed an asymptotic significance of .045.

‡ This statement is based on a Cross-tabulation, the results of which are presented in “Chart 8. Percentages Who Did and Did Not Practice Self-designed Spirituality by Frequency of Sexual Arousal While Dancing Tango.”

§ Out of 109 respondents who answered the question regarding sexual arousal, 24 of them (22 percent) practiced self-designed spirituality and 85 (78 percent) did not.

** Note that out of 101 respondents, 44 of them (44 percent) practiced Western religions, 3 of them (3 percent) practiced Eastern religions, and 54 of them (54 percent) practiced other faiths, including 23 (23 percent) who practiced multiple faiths and 16 (16 percent) who were atheist, agnostic, or indicated “none” for faith tradition.
tradition, does tango offer a private way to challenge the Western religious dualism between body and spirit? Is sexual arousal through tango a conscious or unconscious reaction to repression of the body and sexuality? What is involved in practicing self-designed spirituality that may diffuse the sexual aspect of dancing tango?

If the tango survey had gathered data from 500 dancers rather than about 100, these questions and others would have been best addressed through multivariate analysis. However,
given the limitations of this research, this exploration of sexual arousal and the spiritual construct ends, for now, with Wuthnow (2001) who interviewed many artists for Creative Spirituality. Among them was sculptor Barry Johnston, who believes that body, mind, emotions, and spirituality are interconnected and that spirituality is the foundation or base upon which all other aspects of the self rests and relies (187). Indeed, tango survey respondents often referred to the physical, emotional, and spiritual constructs in tandem, and I would agree with Johnston that spirituality serves a foundational role in human health and well-being. After interviewing many artists, Wuthnow concludes that they “…are interested mainly in encouraging the wider public to recognize that spiritual journeys are likely to be richer if the body is included” (2001, 200). Tango survey data suggests that respondents—as artists engaging their own bodies and their partners’ bodies as creative mediums—may know consciously or unconsciously that tango offers a means for healing the wounds of dualism by allowing them to express their creative, spiritual selves while simultaneously honoring their physical, sensual, and sexual selves.

Tango as Art, Tango as Love: Concluding Thoughts

Analysis and interpretation of tango survey data led to many new discoveries and opened doors for further exploration. Univariate analysis of the enhancement and positive experience indicators showed that dancing tango had improved respondents’ lives in all of the five constructs—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual—and that benefits were highest in the social construct. Qualitative data allowed exploration of precisely how tango had enhanced their lives. In the physical and mental constructs, they felt more healthy and capable, and they appreciated the intellectual challenge and sense of accomplishment that came from learning
tango. In the emotional construct, they wrote of experiencing great joy from tango, of their own personal growth, and of increased confidence in themselves and their abilities. Their social lives expanded by meeting new people, learning to accept or to befriend people who were quite different from them, and becoming part of the tango community. Tango enhanced their spiritual lives by inviting them to be completely in the present, connect deeply with each other, achieve a meditative state, have transcendent experiences, and express themselves creatively. Most interesting was the considerable overlap among the emotional, social, and spiritual constructs born out of tango dance technique, wherein dancers engaged in non-verbal communication that short-circuited old thought patterns, allowed them to discover self and other in a new context, and invited collaborative artistic creation. Dancers’ intimate, creative, and spiritually rich experiences seem to have inspired them to grow into more trusting, relaxed, and socially engaged people, and the more comfortable they became, the more their dancing improved.

Analysis and interpretation using mixed methods revealed answers to some of the questions that emerged in Chapter 5, but left other questions to be explored in subsequent chapters or future research. Data showed that respondents who were divorced were also likely to be members of the baby boom generation but did not explain why a disproportionately high number of divorcees danced tango compared to the percentage of divorcees who lived in Philadelphia. Data also did not clarify why a disproportionately high percentage of tango survey respondents born outside of the continental United States danced tango. However data revealed that they felt that tango had enhanced their mental abilities more than did those born in the United States, while the latter was more inclined to value the cross-cultural exposure that tango provided. Data did not reveal why a disproportionately high number of artists responded to the
tango survey, but data did show that health care professionals and educators were heavily
motivated to dance tango for physical reasons. Regarding how previous experience in dance and
movement forms might correlate with tango, data showed a strong link between interest in tango
and experience in swing, ballroom, and Latin dancing. Regarding the resources needed to dance
tango, quantitative data also showed that neither respondents’ levels of education nor their levels
of income affected their rates of attendance at tango activities. As expected, analysis did show
that those with higher levels of education also had higher incomes, but more research is needed
to explore how resources like time, patience, and persistence might affect tango involvement.

Analysis revealed unexpected results regarding how respondents’ perceptions of tango
changed over time. The longer they had danced tango, the more they disagreed that tango had
enhanced their spiritual and emotional lives, and for those who had been dancing for 6.01 to 8
years, emotional experiences while dancing tango were less positive than for those with other
levels of experience. While it was not feasible to explore these results through qualitative data
because of limitations in the research methods, anecdotal evidence suggested that dancers’
perceptions might shift over time as they decode tango’s structure and encounter their own
plateaus of learning.

Analysis revealed more conclusive yet surprising results regarding other questions raised
in Chapter 5, particularly intersections between age and tango. Members of the baby boom
generation did not report higher levels of enhancement in any of the five constructs even though
there was a disproportionately high number of them among respondents. Even more surprising
was that analyses using actual ages revealed that the older the respondent, the less likely s/he was
to perceive that tango enhanced his or her spiritual, emotional, and social life. I had expected
data to show greater spiritual enhancement, in particular, for older respondents because spiritual
issues tend to become more important to people as they age, particularly for those at mid-life (Ai and Mackenzie 2006, Irwin 2002, Jewell 1999). Data actually showed more clear intersections between spirituality and tango for younger dancers, but analyses of age and faith traditions showed that it was unlikely that the faith traditions of different age groups played a role in this intersection. While it was beyond the scope of this research to address questions regarding age and the emotional and social constructs further, the research did address how age and other variables intersected with meditation and yoga as components of the spirituality construct. Unexpected correlations among faith tradition, spirituality, meditation, yoga, gender, and/or sexual arousal led discussion down unexpected paths regarding the role tango may play in challenging and possibly allowing dancers to heal the predominant body-spirit dichotomy common in Western culture and religion.

In closing, I return to the concept of love and how it relates to making art through tango. In *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began*, Ellen Dissanayake (2000) argues that from infancy human survival is dependent on rhythms and modes of behavior between mothers and their children that embody intimacy as love. She uses the word “love” to mean “close affiliation or relationships as well as sexual intimacy,” (xi) and she presents interdisciplinary research showing that from these early interactions come “…adult expressions of love…and the arts.” That is to say, in their origins in ourselves and in our species, love and art are…inherently related” (xi, italics Dissanayake’s). Most relevant to this tango research is her assertion that love and art “…are valid, age-old, if today neglected, ways to instill a sense of belonging, meaning, and competence in people in modern societies who require more from their lives than diversion” (Dissanayake 2000, 13). More than 100 dancers in the Philadelphia area demonstrated clearly that they required more from their lives than diversion and that they met essential adult needs
through tango—both as an art form and as a form of love. They cultivated a sense of belonging to the dance itself, to each other while dancing, and to the tango community. They made meaning through creating art together, growing internally, and growing to hold and behold each other differently. And they became more confident through gaining competence in a challenging dance form and developing skills that enriched their lives. Art and love combined through tango in a potent blend that had the power to transform them and their lives. In the next chapter, entitled “New Paradigms of Consciousness: A Phenomenological Exploration of Tango and Spirituality,” nine dancers take this exploration further. They reveal their lived experiences of dancing tango, definitions of spirituality, and how some of them make spiritual meaning from tango experiences.
CHAPTER 7

DANCING WITH MUSIC AND SPIRIT:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF “REALLY DANCING TANGO”

Introduction

Having moved through the broad strokes of history, demographics, ethnography, statistics, and mixed methods in Chapters 4 through 6 to create a portrait of the community as a whole and explore why people dance tango, this chapter focuses on the rich yet ephemeral momentary experiences of a few dancers in detail. It explores dancers’ lived experiences of dancing tango and interprets those experiences in a spiritual context. Discussion centers on nine dancers’ experiences of “really dancing tango,” however they defined it, a concept developed by Professor Karen Bond as described in Chapter 2. Given limits of time and space, the chapter focuses on four major topics, leaving much data and a host of other topics for future papers. The first section explores dancers’ sensory experiences of sight, touch, and hearing as well as their internal sensations. Discussion then moves to metaphors they used to describe their experiences, including creating art, flying, and intimate relationships. The third section weaves discussion of dancers’ definitions of the word “spiritual” with discussion of whether and how they made spiritual meaning from dancing. Throughout the chapter, I explore my own relationship with dancers’ texts, with dancing tango, and with how my understanding of key terms like “spirituality” and “really dancing tango” shifted and evolved in the course of writing and rewriting this chapter. Key findings revolve around: a) intersections between the emotional and spiritual realms that expand upon this discussion begun in Chapter 6, b) dancers’ experiences of
tango music, c) the concept of “tango love,” and d) how my intersubjective experience of dancers’ comfort levels with discussing the spiritual realm clarified my own personal mission.

Collecting Data on Dancers’ Experiences

Recall that I conducted nine tape-recorded interviews in November and December of 2006 and January of 2007. In addition, seven dancers submitted journals, and two submitted visual art representing their experiences of really dancing tango. Interviewees’ demographics and characteristics were consistent with those of the survey population in terms of their ages, occupations, years of experience dancing tango, countries of origin, and roles when dancing tango. I chose dancers with whom I had some rapport, hoping that they would be inclined to share intimate, personal information with me about their experiences of dancing tango. Given the small number of dancers in the Philadelphia area tango community and my commitment to ensuring interviewees’ anonymity, I offer only broad strokes to describe them. Five were women and four were men, three were born in Argentina and six in the United States, and they ranged in age from 35 to 62. They were professionals in the arts, scientific research, mental health, communications, and education and represented a wide range of years dancing tango. At the time of the interviews, three had danced tango for two years or less, four had danced for three to seven years, and two had danced for eight years or more. Two were inclined to experiment with dancing in non-traditional gender roles at milongas—that is, men dancing as followers or women dancing as leaders.

Interviews used both phenomenological and hermeneutic questions, the former to understand dancers’ sensory, lived experiences of dancing tango and the latter to explore the
meaning they made from those experiences, methods developed at length by Max van Manen (1990). To assist them in recalling their lived experiences, interview questions focused on a specific frame of reference—a recent time when they felt that they were “really dance tango,” however they defined it. In “Consciousness Matters,” Fraleigh (2000) writes about capturing the “sense” level of description (59). To gather such phenomenological data, I used open-ended questions that asked interviewees to recount sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and other sensory experiences. Fraleigh (2000) writes also about “…an attempt to come to an understanding that bridges the ‘sense’ level of description with the fuller context of our ‘being-in-the-world’” (59). To explore one aspect of this fuller context, I asked specifically about dancers’ definitions of the word “spiritual,” a central organizing concept of this research, and how it might apply to dancing.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In “Witnessing the Frog Pond,” Sondra Horton Fraleigh (1999) traces how the researcher follows her intuition to discover the core of dancers’ lived experiences and allows such insight to lead her to new theories (215). She relates this phenomenological process to a spiral in which we “write quickly and fearlessly without editing or censoring” (215), re-read and experience what we have written from different perspectives, write again, read again, and continue in this reflexive and creative process until we discover what we believe is the essence or core of a phenomenon. Fraleigh emphasizes that the researcher wants to come to new understanding through the process: “In short, she seeks to surpass her self, that bundle of bodymind habits that identifies with a limited ego, a separate self” (212). With these words, Fraleigh describes the
method of writing and reflection that I use in this chapter. She also foreshadows one of my core discoveries—through “really dancing tango,” dancers may transcend existential separateness and experience moments of union with self, partner, tango music, or all that is.

Given the intensity of such experiences, I explore the meaning that I and other dancers make from “really dancing tango.” In “Dance in the Hermeneutic Circle,” Joann McNamara (1999) describes an approach for examining “…the meaning of a text and how its meaning is constructed” (163). Moving beyond the reflective consciousness of lived experience description, she interprets a text’s meaning within her own historical and sociocultural context as well as the larger context of those she studies (167). Not only her data but also the language in which she expresses her ideas become the subject of study (172). As she gains insight into both, she is more fully revealed to herself and thus comes to better understand the human condition (172). For Van Manen (1990), it is the act of interviewer and interviewee mutually focusing on a theme—in the case of this research, how dancers may make spiritual meaning from their tango experiences—that makes a process of inquiry hermeneutic.

Just as Fraleigh foreshadows one of the themes in this chapter, so does McNamara (1999) introduce a concept central to my exploration of tango—the power of language. McNamara writes of three realms of consciousness—that which is aware of its separateness from the world, that which understands that its awareness of knowing depends on interaction with others, and that which experiences its own and others’ consciousness within a worldly context (178-9). She writes, “By means of the hermeneutic dialectic circle, the interpreter passes on his or her experiences to others, and the existential solitude of existence is bridged” (180). In other words, through the intersubjective process of writing, the researcher shares her inner experience with the
outer world, bridging the divide between self and other. In teaching tango, I liken the dance to a language with words (steps), grammar (rules), and phrasing (timing) with which dancers create “sentences” and non-verbal conversations unique to the moment and to their interaction. As dancers become more adept at dancing tango, they make it their own just as human beings make language their own through style and habits of speech. It is in the process of “speaking tango” while in intimate physical contact with a partner that dancers can blur the boundaries of self and other.

To analyze and interpret interview texts, I first created a summary sheet for each interview that listed categories, key pieces of text, and page numbers—a kind of transcription index. I noted themes and categories of meaning, both pre-determined and those that emerged from dancers’ words. Pre-determined categories were based on the interview questions, including sensory and emotional experiences, their state of mind as they danced, thoughts they had while dancing, and how they defined the word “spiritual.” Examples of categories that emerged from the texts were their internal experiences of dancing and metaphors like flying and playing music as well as differing views on defining and employing the word “spiritual.” Further categories emerged as I read and re-read earlier versions of this chapter, namely, my desire to explore dancers’ comfort levels with discussing the spiritual realm, how dancing tango encourages acceptance, why it can feel like love, and why it feels spiritual to me.

As I read each interview closely, I found some statements particularly creative, evocative, or unique, and those I chose to fashion into poetic transcriptions. As a research tool, poetic transcriptions embrace the intersubjectivity of data analysis and representation (Bond 1994, Bond and Stinson 2000/2001, Glesne 1997, Vieira 2007, Wu 2005). There are many ways to
create such transcriptions. I chose to retain the exact words and word order of the original texts, cutting phrases or words that were redundant or seemed to obscure what I perceived as the dancers’ essential ideas, like “I think” and “you know.” Unlike quotations, in which I indicate text that I deleted with ellipses, poetic transcriptions do not show what I chose to eliminate. To provide a window into this process and, most important, into my interaction with the data, I present the original text for the first poetic transcription and show, step by step, how I created the poetic transcription. The process of creating them helped me greatly to understand dancers’ lived experiences as well as my own biases, beliefs, assumptions, values, and experiences of dancing tango. As I pared away what I perceived as unnecessary words, I discovered not only what I believed were the essences of dancers’ experiences but also facets of my personal lens. While I created all of the poetic transcriptions using the same method described above, I had a unique aesthetic response to each one. As I became less and less attached to them over time, I was able to better bracket out my biases, pair them down further, and reveal their essences.

From among a number of topics that I could have discussed, I chose this chapter’s topics based on questions that emerged in Chapter 6 and on my own intersections with the texts. Questions from Chapter 6 revolved around how dancers might define the word “spiritual” and whether they made spiritual meaning from their experiences. My intersections with dancers’ texts were most apparent through working with poetic transcriptions. Out of forty poetic transcriptions that I created, I chose a handful that I found most aesthetically pleasing because of how I believed they reflected dancers’ experiences or my own lens or moved me as a reader. Essentially, I let my poetic sensibility along with my research goals drive the content of this chapter.
Finally, I kept a journal for noting my emotions, reactions, thoughts, biases, disappointments, and triumphs, and I wrote and re-rewrote portions of this chapter many times, finding new meaning and learning more about myself as a researcher, dancer, and human being with each pass. The most challenging aspect was to accept and recount the myriad understandings of “spiritual” offered by dancers, particularly when I perceived that dancers had rejected the spiritual realm or limited their exploration of it. I believe that the spiritual realm is a largely untapped resource and that our survival as a species is dependent upon our spiritual evolution as we navigate the challenges of climate change, poverty, war, and ignorance. While I may find some dancers’ definitions of spirituality limited, I believe that striving to understand our individual understandings and experiences of the spiritual realm is an essential part of our spiritual evolution. In service of this conviction and in an effort to highlight data that both support and challenge my beliefs, I present a wide range of dancers’ understandings of spirituality—from non-believers to those who view their lives largely through a spiritual lens. I present dancers’ quotations along with my poetic transcriptions of their texts, discussing my interpretation of their meaning interspersed with reflection on the interpretive process and my intersubjective experience.

Inner and Outer Worlds: Sensory Experiences of Really Dancing Tango

In the sensory realm, a few dancers recalled specific tastes or smells, like a woman who had eaten chocolate before she danced and another who recalled a man’s cologne, but dancers offered far more detail in terms of sight, touch, and hearing as well as what their bodies felt like on the inside. Discussion begins with what dancers saw and what they chose to look at while
“really dancing tango.” It then moves to their experiences of touch and close embrace, of music and other sounds, and finally of what their internal experiences of their bodies.

Seeing and Looking

Followers and leaders recalled different experiences of sight. Some followers spoke of what was happening around them, impressions of their partners, or a blur of images.

It’s nice to feel like you can see other people. Not that you’re consciously looking like “oh what steps are they doing?” or “that’s a nice skirt” but just that sense, to me it’s part of the whole—other people having fun dancing.

You can’t miss [his] chest. (laughing) …his shoulders, too, and…his head. I always notice the posture, his posture is…very pronouncedly good. So that’s…what I see.

Another follower explored different ways of seeing while dancing—keeping her eyes closed, opening them to help with her balance, seeing snapshots of her partner, and looking into his eyes.

I created a poetic transcription from her text for a number of reasons, but primarily because her words brought tears to my eyes and I wanted to understand why. This poetic transcription and others are placed either alone on the page or surrounded by white space to allow the reader to interpret them without my commentary.
Looking

I open my eyes
we'll be turning
flipping in and out
I'll be watching to help me with my balance
I'll see snapshots of him
cheek
shoulder
really close up

Sometimes
because the connection is so good
I don't look
it's almost too personal
too much
to actually look in someone's face

But when I do
I'll look up
filled with appreciation of the experience we're having
"yes, it's real, there he is and we're doing this."

I feel like he's thinking the same thing
how do I know
we've never talked about it
but I burst into a smile
he bursts into a smile
and sometimes we laugh
we start looking at each other 'cause we're happy
Both the process of creating the poetic transcription and the final product itself helped me come to clarity. I used a similar process to create each poetic transcription, and I present my process below for creating this one as an example. Here is the original text with names deleted to protect dancers’ anonymity.

Dancer: Yeah, they’re almost like photographs. It's almost like, it becomes like little frozen moments because I'm, sometimes my eyes are closed. So I'm not seeing anything. I'm just totally feeling. But sometimes if I'm doing open, you know if we go from close to open, I open my eyes. And we'll be doing something that's, you know, requires a turning, flipping in and out and something, and I'll be watching different parts to help me with my balance and stuff. And so I'll see images of … [him], I mean to say like snapshots.

Elizabeth: So what would be in those pictures?

Dancer: Ah, …[him], you know. Different part of …[him, his] cheek, or …[his] shoulder, or …[his] this, or …[his] that because I'm looking at …[him] when I dance. And sometimes really, I'd say really close up, you know, really be, you know, a very close part of …[him]. Sometimes when we're dancing, sometimes when we're dancing, ah, because the connection is so good I think I don't look. Because it's almost too personal. You know? And then, so sometimes I'll open my eyes and there he is. And, um, he's right there! And I'll look at him and he'll be looking at me and then we'll smile or we'll laugh because we're so happy, you know. And, um, then it will seem like a super close up. (laughing)

E: Kind of shocking? (laughing)

A: Aaah!! Yeah. (laughing) Or sometimes I just, I'm looking like at his shoulder so that I'm not making eye contact because it is such a personal thing that it's almost too much sometimes to actually look in someone's face when you're dancing with them. So, but when I do, I'll look up and then I'm just filled with this appreciation of the experience that we're having, and "yes, it's real, there he is and we're doing this." And I feel like he's thinking the same thing. I feel like it's the same thing for him that, how do I know because we've never talked about it, but he usually, you know, I burst into a smile and he bursts into a smile and sometimes we laugh if we're looking, we start looking at each other 'cause we're happy.

To create the poetic transcription, I first deleted my question as well as words or phrases that held little meaning, like “um” and “you know.” I did not indicate these deletions with ellipses.
also deleted redundancies of meaning, which are indicated with ellipses, leaving the following version of the text.

They’re almost like photographs. It becomes like little frozen moments because, sometimes my eyes are closed. So I'm not seeing anything. I'm just totally feeling. But sometimes if we go from close to open, I open my eyes. And we'll be doing something that requires a turning, flipping in and out, and I'll be watching different parts to help me with my balance and stuff. And so I'll see images of … [him], I mean to say like snapshots.

Different part of …[him, his] cheek, or …[his] shoulder, or …[his] this, or …[his] that because I'm looking at …[him] when I dance. And sometimes I'd say really close up, a very close part of …[him]. Sometimes when we're dancing, because the connection is so good I think I don't look. Because it's almost too personal. And sometimes I'll open my eyes and there he is. He's right there! And I'll look at him and he'll be looking at me and then we'll smile or we'll laugh because we're so happy. Then it will seem like a super close up. (laughing)

I'm looking at his shoulder so that I’m not making eye contact because it is such a personal thing; it's almost too much sometimes to actually look in someone's face when you're dancing with them. But when I do, I'll look up and then I'm just filled with this appreciation of the experience that we're having, and "yes, it's real, there he is and we're doing this." And I feel like he's thinking the same thing. How do I know because we've never talked about it, but I burst into a smile and he bursts into a smile and sometimes we laugh if we're looking, we start looking at each other 'cause we're happy.

It was in the next phase that the meaning of her words and my relationship to them became more clear. I placed her text in poetic format with phrases stacked line by line, which revealed patterns in her expression as well as what I perceived as core ideas. For example, her ideas seemed to revolve around what happened when she opened her eyes and started looking, so I began the poetic transcription with that moment. As she opened her eyes to see, we as a readers were suddenly able to witness her world. I have known such moments, so I used my own tango history along with what I sensed were her key phrases to reveal the essence of her experience as
They're almost like photographs.
It becomes like little frozen moments
sometimes my eyes are closed. So I'm not seeing anything. I'm just totally feeling.
But sometimes if we go from close to open, I open my eyes.
And we'll be doing something that requires a turning,
flipping in and out,
and I'll be watching different parts
to help me with my balance and stuff.
And so I'll see images of ... [him], I mean to say like snapshots.
Different part of ... [him, his] cheek, or ... [his] shoulder
... or ... [his] this, or ... [his] that because I'm looking at ... [him] when I dance.
And sometimes I'd say—really close up,
a very close part of ... [him].

Sometimes when we're dancing,
because the connection is so good
I think I don't look.
Because it's almost too personal.
And sometimes I'll open my eyes and there he is.
He's right there!
And I'll look at him
and he'll be looking at me
and then we'll smile or we'll laugh
because we're so happy.
Then it will seem like a super close up.

I'm looking at his shoulder so that I'm not making eye contact
because it is such a personal thing;
it's almost too much sometimes to actually look in someone's face when you're dancing
with them.
But when I do,
I'll look up and then I'm just
filled with this appreciation of the experience that we're having, and
"yes, it's real, there he is and we're doing this."

And I feel like he's thinking the same thing.
How do I know because we've never talked about it,
but I burst into a smile and
he bursts into a smile.
I am not entirely sure why this poetic transcription brought tears to my eyes, but it has something to do with realizing that there is an unlimited supply of joy accessible to us through tango every time we dance. The moments when I break into laughter with my partner are some of the best. In addition, I know that this dancer and the partner of whom she spoke are good friends outside of tango, and being allowed to witness their world was an honor and a gift. On a less emotional level, I appreciate how her text portrays tango’s complexity—intimacy juxtaposed with shyness, communication mingled with mystery, a code of movement contrasted with spontaneous laughter. Oddly, I’m not aware of the complexity and poignancy of these moments while dancing, only as I engage in the process of understanding another dancers’ text and interweaving it with my own memories. I am reminded of Max van Manen’s words: “In a phenomenological sense, the research produces knowledge in the form of texts that not only describe and analyze phenomena of the lifeworld but also evoke understandings that otherwise lie beyond their reach” (2006, 715). In this research, I am learning as much about the dancers I interviewed as I am about my own experience of dancing and writing about dancing.

Returning to the data at hand, while some followers enjoyed a range of options through sight, others closed their eyes to block out sights that could distract them.

I’m in a trance. I don’t know anything that’s going on around, and I…dance with my eyes closed, so it’s very intimate. It’s to me and only to me.* I don’t care what other people are doing. I just want to dance.

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* Given that English is not her first language, I believe that by the phrase “to me and only to me” she meant “for me and only for me.”
I understand her words to mean that, with eyes closed, the experience with her partner is more intimate and also more personal—less about how others might view her than about her internal world. For me, closing my eyes is like erasing a source of static, allowing me to hear my partner, the music, and myself more clearly.

Using sight was optional for followers, but leaders had to keep their eyes open in order to navigate effectively. One leader intentionally limited his sight by not wearing his glasses when he danced, and another chose his focus carefully.

I can’t actually see the faces, they’re all somewhat blurred. …I can tell who it is only by posture…. I can’t see expression. …it…keeps me in my own space…

When I’m leading I have to see what’s going on around, so that’s what I pay attention to…. glimpses of people and maybe lights. I’m very, very, very focused on the music when I’m dancing. I really don’t pay much attention to anything else other than what I need to in order to navigate.

Eyes open or closed, sight blurry or clear, looking or not looking—dancers made choices that shaped their experiences of the dance. While they could choose their sights, they could not choose whether or not to experience touch as they danced.

**Touching and Close Embrace**

I first asked dancers to describe their experiences of touch in general while really dancing tango, and only one dancer could recall her sensations.

Body warmth, actual physical heat…. I feel the…signaling of movement...like when the leader will guide my body with the hand on the lower torso…and… that’s very comforting, because it’s like, “Ok, now I know where he wants me to go.” I know where I’m going next….

For the other dancers, it was as if they were unaware of touch as a sense to consider unless in the context of something specific, like describing their experiences of close embrace. When I asked
about their experience of this embrace, followers described it in terms of comfort or discomfort.

The first follower quoted below has danced tango for many years and the second for less than a year.

Well, it’s so comfortable. (laughing) It feels perfect. It’s just like, I don’t know, my size, my way. I feel very comfortable dancing close embrace.

I slide down while I’m dancing with him…sometimes I have to rebalance myself…with my torso, back up…. It’s a little disconcerting because I find that the lean is even greater than I had intended…a feeling of slightly losing my balance…and needing to recalibrate.

Learning how to position one’s body in close embrace to allow for comfort and dancing in unison is tricky and takes much practice. A leader with many years of tango experience spoke of what he did with his arm and hand to make his partner more comfortable and what that felt like to him.
Close Embrace

What I remember that night is the way I grab her with my right hand on the back the Argentinean way.

I think that makes a woman feel very comfortable and creates a connection and passion. Just having the hand in the back disconnects me from the person. I need to feel the curvature of the body of the woman in my lower arm. It has to be the most comfortable position of protection by the man.

I’m protecting not from other people hitting her because obviously I try to do that but in a way it’s like because having her so I mean it’s like a wrapping around her body it’s like “you’re all mine.”
I chose to create a poetic transcription from his words because they captured my perception of what a heterosexual male experience of leading tango could be like—part passion, part protection, and part ownership. I hear references to loving his partner, doing well by her, and figuratively “claiming” her the way a man might in sexual interaction. It was his halting speech at the end of this exchange that caught my attention. Following is the unedited text from which I culled the last sentence of the poetic transcription.

But in a way, it’s like, it is, it is in a way because, having her so, I mean like, it’s like a wrapping, you know, around her body. It’s like “you’re all mine,” and protect you from the other dancers, and I’m protecting you from the bad dancers (laughs).

His halting language followed by the joke and laughter betrayed what I sensed was deep honesty along with some vulnerability for having revealed this experience of close embrace. I found it refreshing to hear him describe what it was like to hold a woman in tango, unfiltered and uncensored. His words brought to mind discussion in Chapter 6 of what leaders and followers sought in dance partners: leaders wanted to feel competent and followers wanted to be well cared for. For me, his words also echoed the timidity with which some tango survey respondents compared dancing tango with having sex.

In touching each other through close embrace, dancers felt not only warmth and the movements of the dance but also comfort, discomfort, or protective ownership. In this context, close embrace took on more meaning for dancers than just its physical properties. It became part of their emotional and social experiences of dancing. One follower found that dancing in close embrace informed her about the level of trust between her and her partner.
Total Body

When there’s leg touching
not throwing out of the leg
but a leg hugging
that’s embrace also.
It goes all the way down the body.

He’s very present
and the close embrace lets me feel that
gives me hints about trust
a way of sensing the trust between us.

Creating this poetic transcription helped me to understand more fully why I close my eyes—I only do so when I feel that I can trust our connection to be consistent and strong, when I trust the leader to be clear and careful to keep me on my axis, and when he has good floorcraft. This same follower was also keenly aware of her partner’s breathing, which she sensed through touch and sound.
Breath

A component of really dancing tango is being aware of my breath and the leader’s breath and when it is in unison.

That’s why it doesn’t almost matter with whom. When it’s really tango that’s one of the constants.

Breath is sound and touch mostly in the chest area it emanates from there but is an all-over feeling.

It’s probably a little easier to hear and maybe feel in close embrace but I’m aware of it when it’s not close embrace, too.

The way breathing is effortless it makes the dancing effortless very, very flowing ease of moving along with another person in time to the music.

She used her senses of hearing and touch to make dancing as effortless as breathing. Her experience of breath extended to music, as well. When asked to describe her experience of the music, she said:

[it was] a very close one…almost inhaled one. It’s like taking the music in and…being a…part of it in that…the flow to the music becomes very easy.
Hearing Music and Other Sounds

Dancers spoke of tango music in terms that extended beyond hearing and listening. Some experienced it as an entity in itself that guided their dancing.

It’s so with the music that you could almost say… it’s like you’re dancing with a third entity, with a third being…the music is so important.

My experience…was…having the music come up through the floor and lead the steps, and that’s part of your connection to the floor,…having the music be what determines what I do, what I lead, and what steps I do…what interprets the dance. …it’s so full in the moment, I walk out the door…[and] I remember if I liked it or something, but I have no idea what the music was.

Just as this leader allowed the music to come through him, another leader felt as if he blended with the music and expanded with it into the room.

I’m really blending with the music. I was able to…connect with the music in a way that was very satisfying. It’s nice to dance to live music, and it was powerful, it was strong…. I like the volume to be something that you can really blend with. … It envelopes you…; there’s energy…in the air that you can blend with. When you can feel the rhythm so clearly and dance it effortlessly…you feel the cycles of your own body movement blend. They harmonize exactly with the cycles of the music, the rhythmic cycles…there’s no disharmony…. That’s a particular kind of oneness right there. …it frees you from the constraints of your own body, because if you blend with the music, then you go out.

As he spoke those last words, he gestured with his arms to indicate expanding out into the room.

Through his experience of blending with the music, he became one with it, transcended his own body, and spread out into the dance hall. Along similar lines, a follower experienced an altered state through the music.
I was struck by her phrase, “I’m not hearing it as much as I’m in it.” She and the leader quoted above provide depth and nuance to our understanding of dancers’ altered states in relation to tango music. In Chapter 6, we discovered that tango survey respondents fell in love with tango music or felt that tango music touched their “inner being” or transported them “to another planet.” This chapter revealed that dancers blended with the music or felt that they existed within it while dancing. The self was no longer separate—it had joined with tango music.

While dancers had transcendent experiences of the music, few were able to recall the names of the songs to which they had danced. Some recalled whether they had danced to tango, vals, or milonga, but most experienced the music as an overarching force or presence, almost like another person. Those who spoke Spanish responded to the lyrics as well as the melody and rhythm.
Tango *always* triggers—good tangos—very good feelings. I grew up with it. It’s a whole social context.

When I listen to...music...that I like...I can cry eventually. ...yesterday I was listening to some music in the car and it made me almost cry. Nothing special, just songs, but songs that break my heart.... And then obviously Pugliese, for example, it just [snaps his fingers] makes me...feel like...I never took any cocaine or anything like that, but that’s it. That’s the closest I can imagine. It is the best of myself.

I pay a lot of attention to the lyrics...and I really dance the lyrics more than the music. I feel like I’m in a little movie and I’m acting a role.

I really like this music... It’s almost like a weekly dosage.... it’s therapeutic...to listen to it.... It’s like wallowing...because the music is very melancholy.... That sense of “OK, I’m recognizing that my job is difficult and most people’s is, but...let’s appreciate the difficult parts of life....” To me, the music is like a metaphor for...how I hope that I can...withstand whatever nonsense that’s swirling around or that I cause myself. The music reminds me...[that] it’s OK to get frustrated...and that’s the way life is.... The music is so enjoyable at the same time, but I find it depressing. Sadness is fine.... It’s OK to welcome dark thoughts.

Tango music triggered memories from the past, moved them to tears, inspired different states of mind, and helped them deal with the darker parts of life. I am reminded of a recent experience I had listening to tango music and then dancing to the same music. Along with members of Queen City Tango in Burlington, VT, I helped host Orquesta Típica Imperial, a professional ten-piece tango orchestra from Buenos Aires, who played at a local milonga in July of 2008. Before their visit, I listened intently to their recordings and found them extremely dark and maudlin. I couldn’t listen for longer than a half hour without getting truly depressed, and that was *without* understanding the lyrics. But when I danced to their music at our milonga, the same songs seemed deeply inspirational, beautiful, and moving, almost uplifting in their sadness. Somehow, moving to the music with another person, creatively expressing ourselves, almost comforting each other through the sadness seemed to transform negative into positive. Even when I wasn’t
dancing but just watching and listening, the collective act of many people dancing elegantly to music that mined the darkness of life shifted my experience from melancholy to wistful joy. I understood better the therapeutic value of tango music and dance.

Returning to dancers’ interviews, in addition to responding to tango music, they recalled that hearing the sounds of others in the room was pleasing.

…I was kind of distracted at one point…because somebody was having a conversation that became really animated, and at first it really annoyed me, like “be quiet, person,” but then I thought “that’s nice…to be in a place where people get that animated talking to other people.” …after I got over being annoyed, it kind of reinforced why I liked going there; …here’s a bunch of people who have become friends and…it’s a place where a lot of people end up laughing and having a good time.

…there is an aural awareness…that kind of enriches the whole experience. …the sounds of the room probably make a bigger context for the music,…they make the landscape get really big…the emotional landscape you’re dancing to.

The leader quoted directly above also recalled sounds that he and his partner made that seemed to enhance his experience.

…we would laugh together…because something was particularly fun or…maybe she would say, “that was really good”…a brief comment. Not conversation. I’m not even sure, but I think there were a few words exchanged…sounds of enjoyment.

For others, the sound of people talking was problematic.

If I hear other sounds, like other dancers talking, it really interferes…and I try to ignore it. …when other dancers are not talking while they dance is when I have a much better time.

While dancers felt either challenged or enriched by other sounds in the room, all experienced tango music as pleasurable in some way. It was an entity that guided them or inspired them to enter an altered state, or they found it emotionally uplifting or therapeutic.
Sensing from the Inside-out: Internal Experiences

Not only did dancers speak of their sensory experiences of the external world, but also of their internal experiences of their bodies. In these texts, in particular, dancers described and interpreted their experiences, the former speaking to what they experienced and the latter to assessing, evaluating, labeling, or understanding their experience.

In milonga…I just get such a kick out of…the quick, fast movements…. You can actually feel a happiness, a kind of joy in the feet…. And when there’s…more dramatic tango, …more sensuous, slow, …gliding…that’s happening with the feet, that kind of rises up into the whole body from the feet.

What did my body feel like? It felt light and powerful, well grounded and balanced, …uninhibited, …like it was porous…not closed off…somewhat transparent. Reaching out to the music, …like my actual physical body was not so contained but blending with the music, with the motion, with her movement…. Maybe a little expansive, …not so bounded. Out with the music, somewhere out here [indicating the space around him], although very strong in my legs. …I feel strong legs, and then this is able to relax and open [pointing to his torso and heart]…blending with the bigger environment.

As the leader quoted directly above described how his body felt, he came to a new understanding of self and what he called the “self-other mystery.”

It’s almost like…a truer sense of self where your sense of self is actually nothing there…. Yourself is more a matter of participation than of actual substance; …you are actually the events that are happening…. That’s what you are—the events that you are participating in. …part of something else but still you have a sense of this…central system…. I’ve had this lifelong question about how to understand self and other, and this experience…is actually a living experience of whatever that self-other mystery is. It’s that porousness, that being the events at the same time as being in some ways a separate self, even though there is nothing there.

As he moves beyond describing his internal physical experience to interpreting it, he recalls becoming more action that substance—part of the dancing or the milonga in which he was participating. He was simultaneously aware of being an individual and of being permeable or
porous. Earlier in the interview, he spoke of blending with the music, and through the course of
the interview, he seemed to come to more clarity about how he experienced himself through
dancing. His words remind me of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*
(1962) in which the author exposes the limitations of mind-body dualism and proposes in its
stead a philosophy of intersubjectivity that recognizes the body’s ability to both think and
perceive. A seminal author on phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty (1962) argues that there is no
lived distinction between the act of perceiving and the thing perceived. The dancer quoted above
seems to have experienced this phenomenon through sensing self even as he blended with the
music and his surroundings. In his words, I also hear echoes of the spiritual construct—oneness,
connection, and being completely present to what was happening around him.

While dancers described rich experiences of their internal worlds and of seeing, touching,
and hearing, they also used metaphors to describe what it was like to really dance tango.

Creating, Flying, and Intimate Relationships: Metaphoric Descriptions

In the article, “‘I Feel Like I’m Going to Take Off!’: Young People’s Experiences of the
Superordinary in Dance,” authors Karen E. Bond and Susan W. Stinson (2000/01) explore
children’s lived experiences of dancing and what dancing means to them. While some children
found it easy to describe how they experienced dance, many found it difficult, some refused to
talk about it, and others used metaphors to express themselves (Bond and Stinson 2000/01).
Showing absolutely no reluctance to talk about their dance experiences, tango dancers used a
range of metaphors to describe their dancing, from flying to putting together a puzzle.
Creating Art

Artists and non-artists alike described their tango experiences in terms of other art forms with which they were familiar—creating stories, working with clay, painting, or making music.

Stories

The music isn't a song anymore or even a melody
it's a vehicle
a story
an expression of someone's emotion

we are feeling that emotion
our legs and arms pushing that emotion through expressing it
the same way I push clay around
get my feelings in the clay or through the clay

with dance
you move your arm in a certain way
or your leg
maybe the peak of it is three quarters of the way down then up
rather than an even circle
because you're expressing something nonverbal

when the dancing is going well, I'm making a story
he and I are making a story
it's amazing
collaborative art, really

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Creating

Every time I have a good dance experience
I’m creating something new.
This particular time
this particular tango
this particular person
    is different from any other
even with the same person to the same music.

If you do a painting
you don’t go and do the same painting again.
The next one is going to be different
no matter what.
If you do it exactly the same
  it’s a bore
  there is something wrong.

The same when you’re dancing
you’re creating every time you dance
if that doesn’t happen
  it’s not satisfying.

These dancers experienced tango as a means for expressing emotion through collaborative story-telling or creating art that was unique every time. Others dancers likened dancing to making music. One leader shared the following words about his experience of really dancing milonga, the form of tango with the fastest tempo.

…how I put my feet on the floor…is similar to how you push down the keys on a piano…. Actually, there’s this tangible experience about pushing the key down with your finger that felt similar. I suddenly realized what I was doing…in milonga. I was…touching, …not just hitting the floor, but …pushing down a key, like the floor is a living thing…almost like a keyboard.
Playing Music

I’ve been playing music for a long time. It was quite a surprise when I started dancing. I use the same approach as I do to playing music.

What I’m doing with my body is the same: making comments on the music, responding to what the music is doing.

I was amazed when I found that.

Technically as well:
- anticipating what is coming
- listening to what other people are doing
- because there are patterns
- and then it’s very clear.

When I’m dancing, I do the same:
- match the music.
- That gives me enormous pleasure
- It’s like I’m playing along with the orchestra.

One dancer’s body becomes his instrument with which he plays along with orchestra; another plays the floor as if it were a keyboard. I understand their experiences, in part because of my training in voice, piano, percussion, and tap dance. I, too, enjoy responding to the music’s phrasing, melody, and rhythms and using my body as a musical instrument. Like other artists, these dancers and I draw on our musical knowledge not only to enrich our dance experiences but also to describe how we experience the dance.
Flying and Other Unique Experiences

Other dancers drew not on the arts but on the natural world to describe what it was like to really dance tango.

We were…flying, not touching the floor…it was so smooth… continuous flow of movement. That’s what I like.

I try to isolate myself…like I am in my own world. That milonga was particularly noisy because it was full of beginners, so they don’t understand the concepts and the rules. But nevertheless, if I’m into the music, I don’t care. I’m flying. That’s how I feel it.

Flying

I remember the first sensation when it finally felt like Wow it felt like flying something I hadn’t experienced before.

This must be what birds feel like a little bit out of control caught up in the wind. You can’t predict what the leader is going to lead.

It’s the transition. Maybe I’m not a beginner anymore that sense of freedom you can almost do it without thinking you just know what they’re leading.

The feeling of flying.
For these dancers, smooth movement, being in one’s own world, or the unpredictable nature of following felt like flying. I chose to create the above poetic transcription because I liked how her words captured the transition from beginner to more advanced dancer—the freedom one feels when no longer thinking about the steps but rather being swept along, like a bird on the wind. I had never conceived of following in that way, but it’s an apt metaphor for what one does as a follower—manage one’s own body as a bird would respond to the lead, which can feel in the moment as unpredictable as the wind. This dancer created the visual representation shown on the next page of how she experienced flying while dancing. The original image is 11 inches wide and 8.5 inches tall, and the phrase “Human flight” appears in the upper right corner. The image was reduced by about 20 percent to fit within the margins of this document. The researcher invites the reader to interpret the image on his or her own.
Paloma blanca vuelo noche y día de mi nido en busca y escribí en el cielo con sereno vuelo te oí en el amor, te oí en el amor, sólo piensa.

F.G. Jimer.
In addition to feeling like they were flying, dancers experienced being able to do unexpected things through tango.

**Fifth Language**

It’s like a drug-induced state
euphoria
glee
mesmerizing
you’re talking to another person
   in a fifth language
you didn’t know you could do it
there you are doing it
and they’re doing it
you’ve all of a sudden discovered…
It’s like a blind date—
“You like Chinese food?
Oh, I like Chinese food, too.”
I didn’t know you had that in you
and I didn’t know it could meet together, either
this wonder of that surprise
that connection
that ability
what you did together.

Dancing tango allowed her to communicate with another in unforeseen and somewhat mysterious ways, and it was this mystery that first inspired me to explore the spiritual realm of dancing tango. When I dance well with a new partner—when there is a strong connection, similar levels of musicality, and shared creativity—the physics of the lead-follow structure don’t
seem adequate to describe what is happening. It feels as if we communicate on both physical and metaphysical levels. I explore this phenomenon further as the chapter progresses.

Another follower wove together metaphors of living in eternity or death, creating art, or doing magic in a description of dancing tango as the ultimate state of freedom or escape—living someone else’s life.

Somebody Else’s Life

It’s like living in a second world, in eternity
When you’re at milonga, it’s like death
    someplace where the rules that you have in real life don’t count

You go there
    perform your art
    go home
But in that time it’s like magic
    you are living somebody else’s life
    you can do whatever you want
    because you’re dancing
    you can feel whatever you want
    because you’re dancing

It’s probably what most people do when they have drinks
    get drunk
    relax
    “Everything is OK. I’m drunk.”*

Well, to me
    it’s that when I’m dancing.

* At the end of this statement, her original words were, “Whatever thing is OK. I’m drunk.” To make the poetic transcription grammatically correct and improve its flow, I changed the phrase to “Everything is OK. I’m drunk,” which, I believe, maintains her meaning.
Her words remind me of dancers discussed in Chapter 6 who experienced altered states when dancing and felt as if they could access and express emotions and sensuality beyond what was possible in everyday life. Just as she felt free to do and feel whatever she wanted because she was dancing, so other dancers felt able to create art, play music, fly, and speak in a fifth language through tango.

During each interview, I asked not only about how it felt to really dance tango in general, but also about their experiences of what I call “non-mirrored movements.” Tango dancers are often in close contact in their torsos while doing very different movements with their hips and legs; they are not mirroring each other’s bodies. Recall that in discussion of my personal biases in Chapter 2, I described the expectation that “non-mirrored movements” were an aspect of tango that could be experienced as spiritual. Interviewees did not confirm this expectation; rather, they experienced such movements as an exchange of energy, solving a puzzle, or navigating an intimate relationship.

There’s an element of surprise in it, but it’s extremely dynamic because what happens is that we’re exchanging energy…. What I’m doing is…sending her, and so I am transferring all my energy to her. And then at a certain point I use her to pivot and so she is transferring energy to me, and then I transfer it. So there is this constant transfer back and forth of energy that’s really nice.

In this passage, he touches on an element of tango that I, too, enjoy immensely—the continuous build and release of energy within dancers’ bodies and between them. Each time we twist our torsos, we build energy in our spines that is released when we pivot; it feels as if it travels from the crown of the head all the way out to the tips of the toes. When both dancers alternately twist their spines and pivot to release energy, the centrifugal force is quite strong, creating energy that is exponentially greater than what I imagine one dancer could generate alone. Again, I wonder

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whether there are both physical and metaphysical aspects to this energy. My experience in these moments is of being a conduit for something greater than the dance, as if my partner and I were sending and receiving energy in exchange with the universe.

Another metaphor that a dancer used to describe “non-mirrored movement” was a puzzle. In the following poetic transcription, she speaks of the tango step called a volcada. In this step, the follower balances on one foot and, as the leader steps backwards, sideways, and forward as if tracing the shape of a pie wedge, the follower’s unweighted leg swings forward, across in front of her body in an arc, and back next to her weighted leg.

The Puzzle

The volcada
beautiful
exciting
I don’t know what I’m doing
I’m just led
and when they’re good
I can follow
it works

You know you’re not mirroring each other
you’re doing this
they’re doing that
you’re stepping
they’re stepping
but their doing it enables us somehow to get back together

I’m thinking of a puzzle piece
there’s a part there
a part here
and you want to put them together somehow
there is a tension
when there’s an empty space
As she was describing this metaphor for her experience of non-mirrored movements, she realized that she was also describing the dynamics of intimate relationships.

Puzzle or Relationship?

If you want to tease it out even further it’s very much about relationship especially if you’re talking partnership relationship.

You’ve got one person they’re themselves you got another person they’re themselves they want to go off and do their own thing but to have a lasting relationship they’d better be coming back together every now and then or else they’ve got nothing.

This idea of dancing in unison is almost like drawing a picture of that.

Here again, in the course of the interview, a dancer went from description to interpretation, exploring not only her experience of dancing but also its meaning—how interaction through tango might be a metaphor for relationships. Taking the metaphor a step further, a leader argued that dancing tango with a partner is a relationship.
I think what we were doing was a real relationship between two real beings…. There are obstructions that come up in the dance…story lines and resistances and problems…so it’s complete, even though it’s limited in its scope…. It’s a real relationship; just because the scope is limited doesn’t mean it’s not real. It’s complete within its scope, and all the stuff that can come up within that scope comes up in the more expansive relationship.

This interpretation of his experience takes discussion full circle from metaphors for tango to tango as metaphor or as real relationship. I agree that dancing with a partner is a rich and complex experience that can include many of the aspects of a relationship off the dance floor. However, I would not go so far as to claim that a “tango relationship,” meaning what is shared while two people dance, holds the same potential as a friendship or romantic relationship. A recent experience caused me to call this comparison into question.

I danced with a man whom I did not know but with whom I felt the most profound synchronicity. We seemed to be of one mind, body, and soul, responding to the music in absolute harmony, listening to each other intently, holding each other in the kindest of embrace. After dancing together on a few occasions, the tango relationship felt so real and intimate that I began to wonder whether it might exist off the dance floor as well. At the core of my wondering was the degree to which I could rely on my senses to inform me about “Edward” (a pseudonym), given that we’d had very little everyday conversation. Recall discussion in Chapter 6 of how dancers valued nonverbal communication in tango. They felt that such communication might be more honest or direct than “small talk” or normal conversation. As it became clear that Edward wanted to begin a romantic relationship with me, I had to remind myself to ask the everyday questions that I ask any man before getting involved. Our way of dancing together had nearly convinced me that this type of conversation was not necessary; but it was. I learned that he already had a partner and children, information that he had not offered for some weeks and that,
for me, precluded any romantic involvement. I describe this experience not to denigrate the beauty, power, and intimacy of what can happen between tango dancers, but to make clear tango’s limitations. While we communicate and create and share through tango, and there is an honesty in the body that is pure and real, we communicate in very limited ways within a limited structure that cannot replace verbal communication off the dance floor or the time it takes to get to know someone.

That said, I wish to share a poetic transcription that reflects how dancing tango can simulate or generate the tender emotions of intimate relationships.

Like Love

There are times
when I feel like
he has brought me to a state of bliss
and I can’t help but feel love
which is when I don’t look
I feel so full of emotion
an elated, grateful, very trusting, safe connection
almost held by the other person
whatever you do
they're with you
back and forth
cradling each other
like love
Like a few other poetic transcriptions, this one invariably brings tears to my eyes. It describes how I felt with Edward and have felt with others. Perhaps it was precisely these feelings that helped me to quickly put my experience with Edward into perspective. Before dancing tango, I might have had a more visceral, angry, victim-oriented response to him. I would have been inclined to judge him for his secrets and myself for my gullibility. But I had danced with him, really danced. I had held and felt the beauty of his soul, and this transformed my view of him and of myself. Recall discussion in Chapter 6 of how dancing tango helped people become more tolerant and accepting of those different from them. I believe that having danced tango with Edward allowed me to accept that our goals for romance were different, perhaps because of our cultural differences. Creating the above poetic transcription coupled with my experience with Edward clarified further for me how tango encourages this capacity to accept, why dancing tango feels like love, and why it feels spiritual to me. While I have touched on some of these ideas in earlier chapters, they have come together more coherently as of this writing.

First, the etiquette of dancing tango at a milonga requires that the two dancers not leave each other during a song or, in some communities, during a tanda (a set of three or four songs). In other words, for three to four minutes during a song or fifteen to twenty minutes during a tanda, my partner and I will not leave each other. We will stay together regardless of how well we dance or how much we do or don’t enjoy dancing together or how we experience the music. For that period of time, we are committed to each other and can release fear of abandonment or separation. We can count on each other to be there. We experience a reprieve from the constant change that defines life on earth. I find this tango tradition supremely comforting and reassuring. It makes dancing with people like Edward feel safe and nurturing, it mirrors the commitment of
love, and it reminds me that I am not separate or alone in the universe. Recall that my definition of “spiritual” for this research is the part of our existence that is of the non-physical world that helps us find and create meaning; guides our behavior, beliefs, and sense of identity; and unites us with everyone and everything in the universe. In those minutes of union with my dance partner, I have stronger faith in our universal oneness.

My second realization was of the power of unconditional acceptance in tango. As we dance with each other for the song or tanda, tango etiquette also requires that we not correct, criticize, or teach each other. There is no blame, no right or wrong, no need to apologize. The dance is what it is. We adjust to each other, to the conditions of the milonga, and to the music. We do our best, and it is enough. The parallel with unconditional love is unmistakable. The poetic transcription reads, “I feel so full of emotion / an elated, grateful, very trusting, safe / connection / almost held by the other person / whatever you do / they're with you.” In those last two lines, I hear unconditional acceptance both of each other’s tango skill and of who we are at that moment. Of course, there are limits to what a dancer will accept in a partner, but the intention behind tango culture as I have experienced it in Philadelphia and other North America cities is one of acceptance at the very least, and appreciation in its more gracious form. So I look back and appreciate the sublime dances I had with Edward, I understand how our acceptance of each other could feel like unconditional love, and I am reminded of the unconditional love that I believe abounds in the spiritual realm.

Third, I appreciate how the poetic transcription captures the feeling of the embrace: “back and forth / cradling each other.” In the continuous hug of close embrace, in particular, there is a sense of not only holding but also caring for each other. Even in open embrace, dancers strive to
touch each other without gripping or grasping, using the least amount of force necessary to maintain their connection, to lead and follow. Such gentleness in how we touch, combined with unconditional acceptance and no fear of abandonment, allow us to relax, appreciate, and even feel love for our partners. A friend of mine calls it “tango love,” a term that honors the intensity of the feelings while acknowledging their limitations. She has felt tango love for a man while dancing, only to find that she has nothing in common with him or even finds him unlikable off the dance floor. She keeps the feelings in perspective by enjoying tango love on the dance floor without expecting to experience it elsewhere.

In tango we may experience union and unconditional acceptance while holding each other’s bodies in a tender embrace. This description calls to mind discussion in Chapter 6 of how tango may help dancers challenge the body-spirit duality present in many Western religions and cultures. We engage in a collaborative, creative process in which we use our own and each other’s bodies as creative mediums. We enter into a vulnerable, intimate, artistic act together, often with complete strangers, that can evoke strong feelings of love and affection, inviting us into both the sensual and the spiritual realms.

Through the use of metaphors and descriptions of their sensory experiences, dancers provided intimate views into their lived experiences of really dancing tango. Through crafting poetic transcriptions and reflecting on my own experiences of tango, I came to new realizations about my experience with a specific dancer, with how I conceive of love as expressed in tango, and with my own spiritual meaning making about the dance.*

* Some would describe this process as “autoethnography” as defined by scholars Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis (2002). They write, “Autoethnography represents a significant expansion in both ethnographic form and relational potential. In using oneself as an ethnographic exemplar, the researcher is freed from the traditional conventions of writing. One’s unique voicing…is honored. In this way the reader gains a sense of the writer as a
Recall from Chapter 6 that when tango survey respondents wrote about why they danced in the present and how tango had changed them or their lives, four themes arose regarding the spiritual construct—1) conceiving the concept of spirituality or the soul in general, 2) connecting with themselves or others, 3) expressing themselves creatively, and 4) having meditative or transcendent experiences. In describing what it was like to really dance tango, interviewees touched on some of the same spiritual themes—awareness of dancers’ souls, connecting deeply with their partners, creating art together, and experiencing meditative or altered states. Given my own quest to understand intersections between tango and spirituality as well as themes in dancers’ texts, the next section of this chapter explores how dancers define “spiritual” and how they may have made spiritual meaning from their tango experiences.

Dancing with Meaning:

Defining “Spiritual” and Making Spiritual Meaning (or Not)

One of the central theses of this dissertation is that tango is a spiritual practice for some dancers and that love lies at the heart of this practice. After I had asked many phenomenological questions in the interviews, I ventured further into an interpretive process with two goals in mind—1) to understand their definitions of the word “spiritual” and 2) to explore whether or not they made spiritual meaning from really dancing tango and, if so, how. Upon reading and re-reading earlier versions of this chapter, I identified a third goal as well—to explore each dancer’s level of comfort with discussing the spiritual realm. Determining someone’s comfort level is a highly subjective process. What might seem like discomfort to one researcher could appear as...
simple confusion to another. With hindsight, I wish I had asked them directly about their comfort with the topic, but barring that data, the intersubjective nature of reading, interpreting, and writing became even more apparent and important. My decision to group dancers’ texts by whether they were hesitant or clear in their definitions of “spiritual” was rooted in a personal mission. Through this research and the work I do, I wish to encourage and inspire others to explore and challenge their beliefs about spirituality, particularly as it relates to Western religions, with an eye to encouraging them to evolve spiritually. My engagement with the phenomenological process clarified this mission for me, and I explore it further in this chapter.

In the following section, I first present texts of dancers who described tango in spiritual terms on their own—that is, without my invitation to speak of this construct. I then explore the different ways in which dancers responded when I invited them to discuss spirituality and to explore how it might relate to their experiences of really dancing tango.

“Spiritual” as Emergent Theme: When Dancers Mentioned it on Their Own

Some dancers spoke of the spiritual realm before I asked about it specifically. For example, in describing the sensations he experienced while really dancing tango, one leader said:

It’s actually a very spiritual thing;… it doesn’t matter whether the song is fast or slow, when you’re in sync with someone dancing…. It’s timeless and…there’s no smells, there’s no vision, there’s no sight, there’s no light, there’s nothing there but just the movement.

Most sensory input faded and he was left with an awareness of movement, which he considered “a very spiritual thing.” Similarly, a follower described dancing tango in spiritual terms as she spoke of her experience of touch.
It’s very pure. …that’s what I mean about saying who and what is this soul that I’m dancing with. …it’s a very pure, wonderful connection. I’m going to go further because I think…it’s spiritual in that…I feel like our spirits are dancing. Our bodies are touching but our spirits are dancing together…and…with the music. …that’s when it’s the best.

I was thrilled to hear her say, “Our bodies are touching but our spirits are dancing” because she captured beautifully my experience of the physical and metaphysical levels of tango and because I had found a kindred spirit in this experience. She, too, did not create meaning or understand tango’s lead-follow structure solely in physical terms. For her, really dancing tango meant seeking to discover her partner’s soul and dance with his spirit.

“Spiritual” as Suggested Theme:

When The Researcher Prompted Discussion of the Spiritual Construct

Whether or not dancers mentioned spirituality without my prompting, I brought up the topic near the end of each interview. One leader’s response was a stark contrast to the follower quoted above. He did not believe in the spiritual realm and did not make any spiritual meaning from dancing.

The Spiritual Realm Does Not Exist

I don’t believe in anything spiritual. …I have a problem with the word spiritual. I think that it’s been overused, I think it’s used as…a place holder when people don’t know how to express what they really feel. So, what is spiritual? It’s something that I don’t understand, or if you’re asking me if there was…any sort of emotion, of course there’s emotion when you’re dancing…well. Or else why do it? It’s not physical exercise. If I want exercise, I go ride my bike. I don’t like the word spiritual. I think it implies that there is a part of us that has nothing to do with our material constitution, while I think that we are purely material…that’s all we are. We are matter organized that knows how to process energy.
I found this statement curious, particularly in light of new discoveries made in quantum physics, so I asked him about them.

Elizabeth: Have you heard about the new quantum physics where they say that matter is really just tendencies?
Dancer: No, I didn’t know that. (laughing)
E: (laughing)
Dancer: But I have a big problem with modern, with contemporary physics. It’s incomprehensible, and my training is in science!

A physical chemist and researcher, he believed that science was the only viable paradigm for understanding human experience and reality. Later in the interview, he clarified his perspective by saying, “I don’t want to dismiss emotion and feelings and these kinds of things, I just don’t want to attach a metaphysical attribute.”

I found his comments puzzling and remain intrigued by how he came to his beliefs. During the interview, I sensed it best to move on to a new topic, but I wanted to press him further. What was his concern about the word “spiritual”? How had it been misused? What was his worst fear about its misuse? He stated both that he didn’t believe in anything spiritual and that he did not understand the word. How can one not believe in something they do not understand? Perhaps his comment that he had a problem with the word and didn’t like it was at the core of his response. I also wondered: if we are just matter organized and chemical reactions, why do we have emotions? Where do they come from? What are they for? Perhaps they have nothing to do with a spiritual realm of existence or perhaps they are integral.

Two contemporary authors on spirituality hold that emotions are the link between our physical and spiritual selves (Esther and Jerry Hicks 2004). They claim that all emotions occur in response to our thoughts and that positive emotions indicate thoughts consistent with what our spiritual self knows to be true, whereas negative emotions indicate thoughts inconsistent with
what our spiritual self knows to be true. Hicks and Hicks (2004) believe that our emotions are an internal guidance system helping us align our thoughts and our intention with what the non-physical, higher, or larger part of us knows. While these authors are not juried research scholars, they have been exploring the spiritual realm and offering their teachings to others since 1991, and I find value in their paradigm as a way of conceptualizing how the emotional and spiritual constructs may interact.* For example, I recently sold the house I had owned for 11 years and found myself thinking I had made a huge mistake by selling it, which made me feel sad, regretful, and even panicked. It finally occurred to me that these negative emotions could be my spiritual self’s way of indicating that my thoughts were not in alignment with what that wiser self knew to be true. I began searching for thoughts that would feel a bit better, like how eager I was to live in a place where I could dance tango more frequently, how good it felt to pay off some student debt, and how skilled I was at making a new residence feel like home. These thoughts made me feel hopeful, proud, and confident, indications that they were in alignment with my spirit’s perspective. One might call this process cognitive therapy, but whatever the term, my belief that I am both physical and spiritual, the latter uniting me with a wisdom and perspective much larger and more holistic than that of my mortal mind, offers me great peace.

Returning to the interview in discussion, I found it difficult to understand why he argued against the existence of a spiritual realm. But just as dancing tango with Edward expanded my ability to accept someone different from me, many enjoyable dances with this interviewee encouraged me to accept his views on spirituality as a logical outcome of his historical and

* Research in the neuroscience of emotion by scholars like Antonio R. Damasio (1999) offers a more scientific paradigm for exploring the interplay between our emotional and spiritual lives. Limits of time and scope did not allow for its inclusion in this dissertation.
sociocultural contexts. His beliefs were a valuable part of the contrast inherent in living on this planet, and grappling with them brought me to more clarity on my own beliefs.

Preferring Not to Use the Word “Spiritual”

Two dancers who believed in a spiritual dimension and provided definitions of it preferred either not to use the word “spiritual” or not to use it to describe dancing tango.

…probably, most accurately it means wholeness, my whole mind. A sense of myself…, of my whole mind in my whole life context, in the whole context of being. I don’t want to use the word spirit…. I don’t like it…. I could say spirituality, but that sounds like an activity, too. Or you could say reality maybe. …I guess spiritual means…our behavior in regard to reality,…our sense of reality.

This leader was the second interviewee to say that he did not like the word “spiritual,” a recurrence that begs future research. However, he gave a complex definition of “spiritual” that was multi-faceted, including wholeness, a sense of one’s whole life context, and one’s behavior, and he found spiritual meaning in really dancing tango.

…all this stuff I’ve described—the delight, the joy of it—actually has to do with a feeling of the reality of it and my participation through this vehicle in reality…as it’s lived out and manifested in the conditional world…. So, it’s all…a metaphor for reality, whatever that is. It was spiritual because it was an experience of participation in reality to a very full extent.

He was fully present to his experience of dancing. This description was reminiscent of his comment, discussed earlier in this chapter, that when he was really dancing tango he became the events taking place around him. Another interviewee, who dances as a follower, gave a similar definition of spiritual.

A connection with things larger than myself. I don’t think that my understanding of spiritual is specifically religious per se. I think it’s more an orientation and a set of creeds, for example, and I think that many aspects of life can be spiritual,
…a lot of secular things can be spiritual. So, for example, this might be stretching it, but I do meditate, and one thing I try to do is to make my sessions with…patients into meditations so that…I’m fully present for the person and take my attention back into the moment every time it strays. So I think that can be a spiritual connection even though I’m not sure that that’s how the patients perceive it. …Preparing soup can be spiritual.

She differentiated between a religious definition and her own definition of spiritual, she believed that secular activates could be spiritual, and like the leader quoted before her, she linked spirituality to a state of mind—in this case, meditation. There had been nothing spiritual for her about the moment of really dancing tango we were discussing, but she had experienced what she called a “heart-to-heart connection” before and felt it was spiritual in an emotional way.

…what I like about dancing tango is the fact that it has that larger quality. It’s not just…a dance, …it allows that kind of meditative mind set and that kind of heart-to-heart connection with another person and with the music, which I think is…not spiritual in the sense of religion but in the sense of a felt emotional connection. …I think I would be more comfortable calling it meditative…a meditative connection with all of humanity…a meditative experience that gets me out of myself. That process allows me to connect with the whole community really and the music itself and ideas about connection that are bigger than the day’s dancing.

She described the concept of “connection” in complex and intriguing ways—heart-to-heart, emotional, and meditative. While she preferred to describe really dancing tango as meditative rather than spiritual, I note that her language echoes elements of the spiritual construct under examination in this research. Most notable is how she speaks of a connection not only with her partner but with the whole community. When I asked what she meant by “connection bigger than the day’s dancing,” she said:

…it’s a shared value in the community, the ideas of respect from the leader to the follower, for example, or the leader doing his best to make things safe and comfortable for the follower, and the follower being in charge of regulating the amount of connection or distance between the leader and the follower. There’s a lot of respect that’s built in, and I think that’s what I meant by the larger connection among the people who dance.
An ethos of respect between dancers and her own meditative experience led her to feel connected to her partner and to the larger tango community in a heartfelt way. Both she and the leader quoted above preferred to describe really dancing tango not in spiritual terms but relative to how they experienced reality. The leader felt that he was participating in reality to a very full extent, and the follower entered a meditative state that got her “out of” herself and in connection with others. While these dancers may not have described dancing tango in spiritual terms had I not suggested that construct, their words are reminiscent of tango survey respondents who spoke of connecting to themselves or others or to having meditative or transcendent experiences—spiritual themes being explored in this research.

*Tentative Definitions and Uses of “Spiritual”*

Other dancers who used the word “spiritual” to describe dancing tango were unsure how to define it or were clear on some parts of it but not others.

I always had trouble with that word “spiritual” because…I don’t think it means what other people think….It’s always been an ambiguous word to me. But now…I think of it as something that’s…more emotional than intellectual…like a state of mind or something that’s beyond an individualistic…I really don’t know what it means actually. (laughing) When I feel like, “Oh, I had a spiritual experience,” …I think of it as meaning something that’s outside the normal every day.
What *Spiritual* Means

How many years do you have to talk about this?

I guess the purest
best essence of your soul, your being.

Spiritual to me is connected to the word God,
but I’ll be very, very brief in saying
that I certainly don’t profess to know what God is
for me, it’s a convention to use that word
a shorthand.

If someone says, “Do you believe in God?”
I’ll say, “Yeah, I believe in God.
Now, if you want to talk for the rest of our lives,
we could try and discuss what God is.”

I don’t know what that is exactly.
I just have some feelings about it.

Spiritual’s probably
it should be easier
but they’re so connected
that’s what I get into
in my head
intangibles
hard to describe.
“Essence” keeps coming up.
I guess that’s the connection to yourself...being very close to yourself and having an interest in the bigger picture meaning of your existence and your values and living your values. I guess that’s what it means. I’m not a religious person. I like Eastern thought but I’m not a God person.

For these followers, “spiritual” was ambiguous or could take years to define. It meant something emotional or outside of the everyday, the best of one’s essence or soul, or one’s connection to oneself and to a broader purpose and values. They explored spirituality further in describing whether there was anything spiritual about dancing tango. The first dancer quoted above, who felt that the word “spiritual” was ambiguous, said:

That unique tango feeling...is outside the realm of other feelings that you come across on any given day. ...When I first started [dancing tango], ...I somehow considered it more spiritual, and then it just became...tango, even though it’s still that spiritual feeling. Now it’s like its own.... I don’t think of it as spiritual per se, ...not that it’s less spiritual, but I just never would have thought of it that way until you mentioned it. ...I guess...it takes me beyond the realm of the everyday...everything else can stand still. Like...riding my bike in perfect weather...if I only get that sensation doing a few certain things, there must be something about it that makes it unique. So I guess it still has that ability to...lose yourself in it, inexplicably.... You go, and it happens.

She indicated that she considered dancing tango a more spiritual experience when she first started studying it because it was so different from her other experiences. While tango had since become “its own” and less spiritual as her familiarity with it increased, she still included it among spiritual activities in which she lost herself or had an experience outside the everyday.

The follower whose definition of spiritual included one’s best essence had found spiritual meaning in dancing tango long before our conversation.
Listening to What’s Invisible

Real tango dancing is all about a spiritual connection.

My brother passed away a couple months ago
I’ve been thinking a lot
about people’s spirits and essences
and how do you experience that?

Here we have the tango
a very together physical touching thing
and you contrast that with when a person’s not here anymore
and you still feel their spirit
so you know that in tango I’m not just talking about the physical part of it.

The real part of it seems to be this essential part of a person that you’re dancing with
that’s invisible
you really don’t know what it’s like
but you’re listening to hear and feel it
what this particular spirit is like.

She was one of the two dancers who described tango in spiritual terms before I had broached the subject, and I found her description of this realm heartfelt and compelling. As she spoke of her brother, we were both moved to tears—she, I imagine, in sadness because of the loss, and I in appreciation of her sensitivity: “listening to hear and feel what…this particular spirit is like.” I found such sentiments particularly moving in light of her humility. While she didn’t profess to know what “God” was, and thus her texts appear in this section on tentative definitions of “spiritual,” the level at which she was grappling with such questions was profound. She was
sure that a spiritual realm existed and that it was central to her tango experience, but she was in a lifelong process of defining and understanding that realm.

Finally, the follower whose definition of spiritual involved the meaning of existence and one’s values took her thoughts a step further within the context of really dancing tango.

I…feel very close to myself, …very accepting of myself. I’m not critical of myself. I feel in touch with another human being, which makes me feel in touch with the whole world, and I feel a connection to emotions that I think is the bigger picture in some ways, not all ways, but I think that’s part of it. …it’s a heightened state of awareness, and I guess a state of awareness is a spiritual thing, a heightened state of awareness....

Although she initially defined “spiritual” in terms of her connecting to herself and her purpose and values, she expanded her definition to include connecting with the whole world as she considered whether really dancing tango had had spiritual meaning for her. Like other dancers discussed earlier in this chapter, she linked spirituality with emotions, with a heightened state of awareness, and with connecting to others. In text from the first five minutes of the interview, this same follower gave a beautiful description of what it was like to really dance tango, touching on a number of the themes in this chapter.
The Three of Us

We become of the same mind
there's a language between us
I can't say that there's no leader and no follower
because he is leading and I am following
but it seems like there's an understanding between us
a language between us
a give and take that's easy and comfortable
when it's really great
there's the music
we're feeling the music
and then we're expressing our movements through the music
but somehow it's going in a circle between the two of us
between the three of us—the music and ...[him] and me
somehow it becomes its own entity
the dance takes on its own state
and we're just pieces of it
cogs in the wheel
it's like a higher form

This poetic transcription clarifies for me her statement from earlier in the chapter that she and her partner shared a language. They became “of the same mind,” creating an understanding between them, an easy give and take. The lines between leading and following blurred, as did the lines between them, the music, and the dance. Like other dancers, she experienced the music as its own entity but added that the dance, too, took on “its own state.” She, her partner, and the music became “cogs in the wheel” of tango, which she likened to “a higher form.” While it is not entirely clear what she meant by “higher,” I take it to mean of the spiritual or metaphysical realm. Upon re-reading her words, I have many more questions. How is tango a “higher form”?
What is it like to be cogs in the wheel of tango? Again, I wish I had explored these ideas with her further during the interview, but they remain intriguing questions for further research.

Clear Definitions and Uses of “Spiritual”

Finally, three dancers were very clear on their definitions of “spiritual” and did not hesitate to apply it to their experiences of really dancing tango. One leader defined spiritual in terms of values and caring about others.

The first thing that comes to my mind when you say spiritual is...caring more about high values than material. I know that’s not the definition, but that’s...how I feel,...people that care about human values, the spirit of other people. ...being spiritual...means many things. But...it’s like having the spirit to care about other people.... If somebody else is suffering next to you...; if you care about the person, you suffer, too.

When I asked whether there had been anything spiritual for him about really dancing tango, he said there had. The moment of really dancing tango of which he spoke during the interview had taken place shortly after a death in his wife’s family. He had been feeling very protective and caring toward her that evening.

...That was a very special night, so I was really caring about her. ...it fits exactly...the values of caring, so it was very spiritual for me, very comforting also.... “I could do something for you.” These are...the moral values that I have.

By contrast, a follower who was just as clear on her definition of “spiritual” explained it not in terms of values or how she treated others but in terms of her inner experience.

...it’s the mind thing. It’s where...you can be...a thousand miles away while your body is doing something else, like the dissociation, like the astral body, whatever it is. (laughing) And when I go dancing, sometimes I feel the dissociation, sometimes I don’t even remember how I danced, what my body did. I know it was good because I felt good, but I can’t really remember, or I don’t remember which tango or if it was tango, vals, or milonga that I just danced. ...I
feet high and…really comforted or very depressive if things didn’t go as I wanted.*

Really dancing tango was spiritual for her in that the part of her mind that remembers was disconnected from her body’s experience—a kind of altered state. Like other dancers, she also associated spirituality with having strong emotions—being either “high” or depressed.

The third dancer who was quite clear on his definition of “spiritual” spoke in terms of emotions as well, but included other dimensions.

Oh, spiritual, it’s got a very, very clear meaning for me. Spiritual is something that is nourishing, it’s freeing, it’s moving, it’s validating, it’s inclusive, it’s real, it’s full of emotion, and it’s completely void of emotion depending on where in the spirit you are.

He began the interview by likening the experience of really dancing tango to being inside a bubble. As the interview progressed, he clarified more of the bubble’s details, eventually describing it in spiritual terms. Here is a poetic transcription of his first description of the bubble. It is a visual representation of what it’s like for him to be fully present and connected to others.

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* According to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (1993) the word “dissociation” when applied to human psychology means “the separation of whole segments of the personality (as in multiple personality) or of discrete mental processes (as in the schizophrenias) from the mainstream of consciousness or of behavior.” However, in her native language of Spanish, “dissociate” means to disunite or to act separately and is not associated with mental illness. Therefore, I took her statement to mean that the part of her mind that remembers was disconnected from her body’s experience of dancing.
He gives the image of dancing inside a bubble that is floating in a sea of people, architecture, and furniture. While it is not clear to me exactly what is inside the bubble—i.e., whether the music is there or whether it disappears—his bubble metaphor echoes the words of other dancers who entered an altered state when they danced. I also hear references to spirituality in the phrase, “we’re all one.” Toward the middle of the interview, he described what happened when he was outside the bubble.
Bubble II

Occasionally, I’m aware of somebody mostly I can just go right back.

See, when I’m aware of anybody outside I’m outside the bubble. My intention is to get back in the bubble as quickly as possible get back in the music and let the music overtake me again so I’m completely in the dance because I don’t want to be outside the bubble.

When I’m outside the bubble I think “Am I doing that step right? I want to do this step really good because they’re watching.” That’s crap! Destroying the whole thing. No, I just want to be right in the bubble. I don’t care if it’s one person or a thousand people just be right there with the dance the movement in communication with my partner.

Like the dancer who felt that she, her partner, and the music became “cogs in the wheel” of tango, he experienced really dancing tango like being inside tango, perhaps equating being inside the dance with being inside the bubble. He referred to the bubble one last time in describing how really dancing tango was spiritual for him.
Bubble III

There’s being in the bubble, which is a certain spiritual level and then being completely unaware of the bubble.

When you’re aware of the bubble it’s wonderful, it’s a whole free thing.

When you’re aware of the bubble and then the bubble disappears well that’s magic that’s dancing that’s the spirit dancing. When I’m dancing that way, it’s always the spirit dancing.

But to have the full experience of it is complete freedom complete expression complete validation complete oneness acknowledging fully the partner validating everything you’ve ever done being acknowledged for everything you’ve ever done it’s all those things rolled into one
He referred to two levels of spiritual experience: 1) being aware of the bubble, and 2) having the bubble disappear. The difference between the two became clearer to me upon viewing all three poetic transcriptions together. I believe that “being aware of the bubble” for him means being in the music and in the dance in communication with his partner. He described the experience as “wonderful” and “a whole free thing.” When the bubble disappears, all of these elements merge and become one: “I disappear / my partner disappears / the music disappears / we’re all one / that’s it.” The experience was magical for him. He felt that his spirit was dancing and described it in terms of freedom, expression, validation, oneness, and acknowledgement.

Just as I resonated with the dancer who spoke of “bodies touching but spirits dancing,” I enjoyed his comments immensely because he had viewed tango through a spiritual lens long before our conversation and because his understanding of spirituality seemed quite different from mine. While my definition of spiritual revolves around concepts of meaning, guidance, and unity, his seems to view the spiritual realm as a force or entity that supports him. Words like “validation and acknowledgement” from Bubble III and “nourishing” from his definition of spiritual lead me to this observation. He also described multiple aspects or levels of the spiritual realm—being aware of the bubble or having it disappear as well as this text from his definition of the word “spiritual”: “full of emotion or completely void of emotion depending on where in the spirit you are.” This concept of the spiritual realm being multidimensional was new to me and has encouraged me to further question and expand my definition.
Concluding Reflections

Regarding the spiritual construct, many themes that emerged in Chapter 6 also appeared in interview texts. Some dancers spoke of spirituality or the soul in general before I brought up the subject; others spoke poignantly of the spiritual realm in terms of connecting with themselves and others. I heard many references to the spiritual elements of creating art and of achieving a meditative or altered state of mind. However, a new twist appeared in how dancers spoke of spirituality and emotions. Chapter 6 explored how the emotional, social, and spiritual constructs intersected in survey respondents’ qualitative texts, giving equal weight to each of these three constructs. However, in interviews, dancers spoke much more frequently and passionately about a link between spirituality and their emotional lives. One dancer believed that speaking of spirituality was simply a replacement for speaking of emotions. Others included the affective realm in their definitions of the word “spiritual” or referenced their emotional lives as they described what was spiritual for them about dancing tango. Are the emotional and spiritual constructs more directly intertwined during the lived moments of dancing tango than they are when speaking or thinking of tango in the abstract? One path for exploring this question lies in another theme that emerged from interview data.

I was struck by how consistently and creatively dancers spoke of their experiences of tango music. Whether speaking of their sensory experiences, in metaphor, or of the spiritual realm, the music was central to their experiences of really dancing tango. I found it intriguing that none recalled the actual songs to which they had danced. A few recalled the form of tango that had played (tango, vals, or milonga), and one recalled the composer, but more prevalent were detailed recollections of how they had experienced the music. Two experienced it as a
third being or entity, and five described it as having special qualities. It was powerful and strong, came up through the floor and led the steps, triggered good feelings, made a leader cry and inspired him to be his best self, and helped a follower deal with the difficulties of life. Dancers almost anthropomorphized the music, giving it human qualities, including emotion. Recall one follower’s comment: “The music isn’t a song anymore or even a melody; it’s a vehicle, a story, it’s an expression of someone’s emotion.” Dancers could have been unable to recall the specific songs precisely because the music became human to them, the same way one might not recall the exact words of a friend’s story but rather the gist or highlights. A key instrument in tango music may support this phenomenon—the bandoneon. This instrument produces sound by pulling air in and out with large bellows, much like human lungs. The bandoneon is said to speak or sing as it is played and can sound very much like a human voice. I am reminded of the follower who said that her experience of the music was “a very close one…almost inhaled.”

Along these lines, other dancers spoke of the music not in human terms but as if it were a larger entity. One dancer blended with it and felt the cycles of his body harmonize with the music’s cycles. Others experienced being inside the music, like the follower who said, “I’m not hearing it as much as I’m in it. There is no delay.” In these descriptions, the music appears less human and more universal—an entity or force with which dancers blended or united and which is reminiscent of the spiritual realm. It appears that dancers linked the emotional and spiritual realms in their lived experiences of really dancing tango either through viewing the music as an entity with which to merge and/or by anthropomorphizing it. I am reminded of a famous quotation by veteran professional tango dancer and choreographer Carlos Gavito:
Cuando dejás de bailar el tiempo, es cuando comenzás a bailar el sentimiento. El sentimiento no tiene tiempo: tiene alma, tiene espíritu. (When you give up dancing to the beat is when you start dancing to the feeling. The feeling has no beat; it has soul, it has spirit.*) (Boedo Tango Escuela 2007)

For him, the emotional and spiritual realms are intertwined within the music, and one truly dances tango when responding to its human-like elements.

Another human-like element explored in this chapter was love. Recall discussion in Chapter 6 of Ellen Dissanayake’s work (2000) showing that adult expressions of love and art are inherently related. Recall also that one of the central theses of this dissertation is that tango is a spiritual practice for some dancers and that love lies at the heart of this practice. Exploring dancers’ lived experiences of tango as well as my own revealed new insights into how tango, love, and spirituality relate. Tango provides the opportunity to experience union and unconditional acceptance of each other while creating collaborative art through a tender embrace. The feelings generated by dancing tango can feel very much like love or can be a kind of “tango love,” and they can remind us that we are not alone in the universe, that we are connected to everyone and all that is. As discussed in Chapter 6, Charlotte Sophia Kasl (1997) believes that spirit or God exists both within individuals and in the space between them as they come together. Verbal conversation is one common way of coming together, but in dancing tango we converse non-verbally with our bodies, minds, and souls. In such communication, we bridge the existential gap of separateness by creating a sacred space between us that unites, soothes, and inspires.

Through writing this chapter, I came to better understand my own personal mission: to encourage spiritual dialogue and evolution. This mission greatly influenced the questions I

*A friend from Argentina helped me translate the nuances of this quotation.
asked of dancers at the end of each interview as well as my hermeneutic process. I believe that simply by inviting dialogue with dancers, I have worked in service of my mission. While some dancers did not enjoy speaking of the spiritual realm, others enjoyed it, came to greater personal clarity, and/or were inspired to continue questioning and exploring. For all dancers and those who read this dissertation, I hope to have at least made clear my belief that dancing tango can expand, deepen, and enrich our spiritual lives and that such pursuit is a worthy endeavor.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION: CENTRAL THEMES AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter revisits the research subquestions and how the dissertation addresses them. It summarizes findings for subquestions one through five, then offers new data and analysis to address question number six regarding the future of the tango community and implications of this study. Discussion then moves to the research as a whole, identifying central themes, how they intertwine, and what such intertwining reveals about tango, tango dancers, and the community. It includes advice for instructors/organizers and dancers in the Philadelphia area that could apply to other tango communities and explores the implications of the study for scholars in a range of fields. Finally, an epilogue speaks to my efforts to give back to the tango community in the Philadelphia area.

Revisiting the Research Subquestions

The primary research question was, “What is the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area, who are its current members, and how do dancers perceive that dancing tango affects them?” As the research progressed, it became clear that the study sought to identify not only the community’s history but also key forces behind its growth, not only how dancers perceived that tango affected them but also their motivations for dancing. Therefore, a more accurate way to phrase the primary question became, “What forces have driven growth of the Philadelphia tango community, who exactly are its members, and why do they dance tango?”
Chapters 1 through 3 set the stage by introducing research concepts, explaining research methods used, and exploring existing literature on the topics at hand. Chapters 4 through 8 address the following six research subquestions.

1. What is the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area? What roles have particular teachers, event organizers, regular events, and special events played in this history?

2. Who are the members of the Philadelphia Argentine tango community, and what are their backgrounds and demographic characteristics? What is their level of involvement in tango and what motivates them to participate? What would dancers like to see happen in the community in the next 5-10 years and can they recommend resources to support these changes?

3. Do dancers perceive that participating in Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area affects their physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual health/well-being or growth? If so, in what ways?

4. What are dancers’ lived experiences of dancing tango?

5. What are dancers’ religious or spiritual traditions, and do dancers make meaning spiritually in and/or through dancing tango?

6. What are the implications of this research for the Philadelphia area tango community and other tango communities? What are the implications of this research for adult health/well-being and growth?
What is the History of Argentine Tango in the Philadelphia Area?

“Chapter 4. Tango Through Time: The History of Argentine Tango in the Philadelphia Area” traces the community’s growth from 1986 to 2006. Twenty-six instructors and event organizers provided data that revealed forces of growth originating from within and outside the community. Forces outside the community centered on films and traveling tango shows that captured public attention, while forces inside the community revolved around instructors/organizers who modeled an ethos that placed a premium on tango’s community-building capacity. A number of themes in their behavior could be viewed as elements of this ethos—altruism, collaboration, outreach and advocacy, and being of service to others. With these forces at work, the community grew faster from early 2000 through 2006 than it had in the preceding fourteen years. The number of milongas more than doubled, the number of instructors nearly quadrupled, and the number of event organizers increased six times over. Twenty instructors/organizers provided data on trends from 2004 to 2006, which revealed that attendance rates were increasing, the ratio of leaders to followers was decreasing, dancers wanted more nuevo music, and larger numbers of youthful dancers were joining the community. In these data, the voices of instructors/organizers became even more apparent as they described their perceptions of the community’s needs and their efforts to meet them.

Who Are the Members of the Philadelphia Argentine Tango Community?

The second research question inquires about dancers’ backgrounds and characteristics. The first section of “Chapter 5. Who is Dancing?: Profiling Dancers and What They Reveal About Tango” finds that instructors/organizers were quite diverse in terms of country of origin,
ethnic background, occupation, and level of dance and movement experience. They were also
diverse in their tango studies (length of time and particular teachers with whom they had studied)
and the frequency and levels of their teaching. They described a range of personal and altruistic
motivations for working in tango. Personal motivations included improving their own
understanding of the dance, enhancing their lives, and earning income. Altruistic motivations,
which became more important to them over time, included giving students opportunities to
dance, helping the community grow, promoting knowledge of Argentine arts and culture, and
building bridges between communities. While instructors/organizers ranged in age from their
late twenties to their sixties, the majority of the most visible and active ones were in their fifties
and sixties. Ethnographic observations of the community coupled with these data raised
questions about whether and how instructors/organizers may have attracted dance populations
that mirrored their own demographics and characteristics.

Indeed, data presented in the second section of Chapter 5 show that 95 percent of more
than 100 tango survey respondents began learning tango in the Philadelphia area, which suggests
that instructors/organizers had opportunities to influence the constellation of dancers. Like
instructors/organizers, these dancers were diverse in terms of country of origin, ethnic
background, occupation, and level of dance and movement experience. In addition, a majority
was of the same age group as instructors/organizers: two-thirds of dancers who responded to the
tango survey were aged 45 to 64. While instructors/organizers could have modeled inclusivity
for these dancers, the nature of the dance itself could also have drawn a unique cohort. The
discussion compares tango survey data with United States Census Data on Philadelphia County,
finding that dancers represented an anomalous cohort. They were about 15 years older on
average, more likely to be divorced, more likely to have been born outside of the continental United States, and better educated. They also were more likely to work in the arts or in professional, scientific, or management occupations and had much higher incomes. These differences invited exploration of whether and how tango may serve specific cohorts.

**Why Do They Dance?**

“Chapter 6. Understanding Tango’s Appeal: Dancers’ Perceptions of Tango’s Effects on Health and Well-being” employs mixed-methods analysis to address questions raised in Chapter 5 and to reveal intriguing correlations. The chapter also addresses two research subquestions simultaneously—the remainder of question number two, which asks about their levels of involvement and motivations for dancing, and question number three, which asks whether and how dancers perceive that tango affects their physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual lives.

Regarding questions raised in Chapter 5, most surprising were analyses showing that although members of the baby boom generation comprised a disproportionately high number of survey respondents and perceived that tango enhanced their lives, they did not perceive more enhancement than younger dancers. In fact, the older the respondent, the less likely that s/he perceived that tango enhanced his or her emotional, social, or spiritual life in particular. I had expected data to show that tango helps dancers at mid-life and beyond grapple with spiritually motivated questions of mortality, life purpose, and/or life’s meaning in particular. While quantitative and qualitative data affirm that dancers of all ages perceived significant benefits
from dancing tango, further research with a larger sample population is needed to better understand how it may serve members of the baby boom generation in particular.

Similarly, data reveal perplexing results regarding other cohorts. Data show that dancers who were divorced were also likely to be members of the baby boom generation, but data do not explain why a disproportionately high number of divorcees dance tango compared to their Philadelphia counterparts. Data reveal that dancers born in the continental United States were more likely than their foreign-born counterparts to value the cross-cultural exposure that tango provides, but data do not clarify why tango draws a disproportionately high percentage of foreign-born dancers. Regarding occupations, data do not clarify why a disproportionately high number of artists dance tango but do show that health care professionals and educators were heavily motivated by perceived physical gains from the dance. Regarding the resources needed to dance tango, which can require large outlays of time and money, data show that neither respondents’ levels of education nor their levels of income affected their frequency of attendance at tango activities. Results are too numerous to summarize here, so suffice it to say that they indicate the need for additional research using a randomly generated and much larger sample size that would allow for multivariate analysis of why tango draws a unique cohort of dancers.

Chapter 6 also discusses dancers’ levels of involvement in the form of attendance rates at tango activities per month. Survey data show that, in a three-month period, 93 percent of respondents attended milongas, 74 percent attended classes, 74 percent attended prácticas, and 31 percent attended private classes. Many respondents attended multiple tango activities per month, and 25 percent of them attended three or more milongas, classes, and prácticas, meaning
that they spent from 22 to 40 hours dancing tango each month. Tango was a central component of their recreational lives to which they devoted a substantial amount of time.

In response to the third research subquestion, the heart of Chapter 6 presents quantitative and qualitative data on the degree to which dancers perceived that tango enhanced their lives in five domains or constructs—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. Univariate analysis of two statistical indicators shows that dancers perceived that tango enhanced their lives in all five domains, with social enhancement rated highest and spiritual enhancement lowest. Qualitative data reveals the nuances of these enhancements. In the physical domain, respondents reported that tango was good exercise or helped them to stay physically fit. They felt more coordinated and stronger, had better balance and more energy, and were less stressed. Tango offered opportunities to experience self and other in enjoyable ways through touch, opening doors for personal growth and meaningful social interaction. In the mental or intellectual domain, dancers appreciated the benefits that tango brought to the mind, including intellectual stimulation and improved mental health. They enjoyed learning about Argentine culture and the diligence, effort, and perseverance required to grasp what they considered a very difficult dance. In the emotional realm, tango made dancers feel extremely happy, joyful, exhilarated, and euphoric. It helped them to become more confident in their dancing abilities and in their lives in general. While some enjoyed opportunities for self-reflection, self-development, and emotional growth, others valued tango’s capacity to restore, nourish, or relax them.

Closely related to the emotional construct was the social construct. Respondents deepened existing relationships, made new friends, and enjoyed being part of a community of people who shared a common passion. They enjoyed the honesty and intimacy of
communicating physically with their partners, finding that tango circumvented the limitations and misunderstandings of verbal communication. Tango not only invited familiarity and trust, but these states were essential to being able to dance together, a phenomenon explored at more length later in this chapter.

Finally, data revealed a rich portrait of how tango had enhanced dancers’ spiritual lives. Drawing on my own research and the work of contemporary authors, I define spiritual as the part of our existence that is of the non-physical world that helps us find and create meaning; guides our behavior, beliefs, and sense of identity; and unites us with everyone and everything in the universe. Some survey respondents wrote about spirituality or the soul directly, but more common were statements relating to themes clustered within the spiritual construct. Dancers felt connected to their partners and/or to others and the world in a broad sense. They experienced satisfaction and joy from these connections that stemmed from both individual growth and the sacred space that they created between them when they danced. Many also viewed themselves as artists and found spiritual meaning in the creative process. They collaborated with their partners to create art through tango, combining the intimacy and richness of human interaction with the spiritual act of creation and self-expression. In this personal and interpersonal integration, the emotional, social and spiritual constructs were theorized to intersect in a web of music, movement, and art. A third theme evident in respondents’ texts was that of being completely in the present, achieving a meditative state, or having a transcendent experience. For some respondents, tango was transformative at metaphysical levels—they disappeared and flowed, were transported elsewhere, entered altered states, and became channels for something beyond them.
Overall, tango survey respondents’ motivations for dancing tango were numerous given its power to enhance and transform their lives in the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual domains. Elements of the emotional and social constructs intersected repeatedly with elements of the spiritual construct as tango invited personal growth, intimate interpersonal interaction, and collaborative artistic creation. These results inspired further exploration of the spiritual realm through bivariate analysis of a number of inter-related variables. For example, the survey gathered data on how often dancers had a meditative experience while dancing tango.* While a meditative experience may not be considered part of the spiritual realm by everyone, it is a central component of many non-Western religions and, for some scholars, it is synonymous with prayer. Analysis revealed that while followers were able to have a meditative experience regardless of how long they had studied tango, leaders were more likely to have such an experience the longer they had studied. These results suggest that while following and leading are equally challenging, leading’s complexity requires a degree of mastery before a meditative experience is possible.

Following the meditation thread further, analysis revealed that the longer dancers had practiced yoga (which combines focused movement of the body with a meditative state of mind), the more likely they were to have a meditative experience while dancing, to perceive that tango had enhanced their spiritual lives, and to practice self-designed spirituality. According to Wuthnow (2001), it is common for people in the United States who are seeking non-traditional sources of spiritual meaning and guidance to seek it through multiple sources, including Eastern and Western religions, body-mind practices, and the arts. Just as yoga may play a significant

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* Recall that, for the purposes of this research, "meditative" is defined as the state of mind one reaches upon making a choice to focus one's attention in the present, not to judge, not to strive, and to accept whatever happens from moment to moment.
role in the lives of those forging their own spiritual paths, survey data suggest that tango may play an important role as well.

A final correlation raised intriguing questions about intersections between tango and spirituality. Sixty-five percent of tango survey respondents felt some sexual arousal while dancing at milongas. Interestingly, bivariate analysis revealed no significant correlations between sexual arousal and respondents’ gender, age, or length of years dancing tango. However, analysis did reveal positive correlations between sexual arousal and the spiritual enhancement indicator. The more frequently respondents felt sexually aroused while dancing tango, the more they felt that tango had enhanced their spiritual lives and vice versa. In addition, while qualitative questions did not ask about the sexual realm, seven dancers volunteered descriptions of how tango and sexuality were linked in their experience, and their texts conveyed some internal conflicts or questioning. These data inspire exploration of how tango relates to the duality of body and spirit common in Western culture. Could tango offer human beings a way to challenge and heal this duality? Data suggest that respondents may know consciously or unconsciously that tango offers a powerful tool for healing the wounds of dualism by allowing them to express their creative, spiritual selves while simultaneously honoring their physical, sensual, and sexual selves.

*What Are Their Lived Experiences and Does Spirituality Play a Role?*

Chapter 7 addresses research subquestions four and five by presenting nine dancers’ lived experiences of “really dancing tango” and whether and how they made spiritual meaning from such experiences. Using phenomenological and hermeneutic methods, I categorized dancers’
interview and journal texts, created poetic transcriptions from their words, kept a journal to
witness my own biases and assumptions, and wrote and rewrote the chapter many times. The
chapter focuses on four major topics: 1) dancers’ sensory experiences of sight, touch, and
hearing as well as their internal sensations; 2) their use of metaphors, including creating art,
 flying, and intimate relationships off the dance floor; 3) their definitions of the word “spiritual”; and 4) whether and how they made spiritual meaning from really dancing tango. Throughout the
chapter, I explore my own relationship with dancers’ texts and how my understanding of
spirituality expanded. Key findings revolve around: a) intersections between the emotional and
spiritual realms that expand upon discussion begun in Chapter 6, b) dancers’ inclination to
anthropomorphize tango music, c) the concept of “tango love,” and d) how my intersubjective
experience of dancers’ comfort levels with discussing the spiritual realm clarified my own
personal mission.

View from the Pinnacle

Recall the metaphoric pyramid that is the structure of this study as described in Chapters
1 and 2 and illustrated in Figure 1. Research Design. Standing at the pinnacle where nine
dancers’ experiences of really dancing tango rest, one may look below to where more than 100
dancers gave testimony to how tango enhances their lives, a kind of platform on which rests the
deep experiences of a few. Looking further down, one sees from whence these dancers and their
26 teachers and mentors came—their previous experience in dance and movement, their ages and
marital status, their cultures and educations. We witness the skill and kindness that dancers seek
in each other and the personal and altruistic motivations that invigorate instructors and event
organizers. Finally, we see the pyramid’s base where it all began 20 years ago, formed of the attitudes and actions of those who built the community. It is a large and multi-faceted pyramid, with qualitative and quantitative mortar shaped by the dancers, the researchers’ own interests, and scholars before her. The study progressed from communal history involving hundreds to uniquely individual experience near the summit. Broad context grounded exploration of individual experience, and, in turn, individual experience enriched and informed understanding of group phenomena.
Central Themes as Spirals

In viewing the dissertation as a whole from two perspectives—from the top downward and from the bottom up—four central themes appear: dancers’ experiences of tango music, their experiences of tango dance, their interactive experiences, and their internal experiences. In a nutshell, tango music drives the dance, tango music and dance drive human interaction, and through that interaction, individuals have internal experiences that may enhance their lives and/or inspire them to grow.

I invite the reader to visualize these four themes as spirals that travel upward and downward through the dissertation, as shown in “Figure 23. Themes as Spirals.” With these images in mind, a cone becomes a more apt metaphor for the study than a pyramid because a cone’s shape better mirrors that of a spiral. Just as layers of the dissertation enrich each other, I

![Figure 23. Themes as Spirals. Flowing Upwards and Downwards Within the Dissertation “Cone”](image)
propose that these themes or spirals flow among the different levels of dancers’ experience, shaping how the community functions. In discussing these themes, I present data in broad strokes, trading some of the variety in dancers’ responses for the opportunity to theorize about tango and the Philadelphia community on a larger scale. Though I begin by describing thematic spirals separately, it is in their intertwining that the most interesting findings appear. Discussion of each theme moves from the bottom of the research cone to the top (or from the bottom of the thematic spiral to the top)—from the experiences of instructors/organizers to those of survey respondents to those of interviewees. We begin with tango music.

_Tango Music_

At the music spiral’s base are instructors and event organizers who sought to serve and educate dancers. They carefully selected tango music for milongas in deference to dancers’ preferences, and they educated dancers through classes, prácticas, and special presentations about tango music’s structure, history, and artists.

Moving up the spiral, survey respondents indicated that tango music was among the top three reasons why they danced tango in the present. (The other two reasons were the dance itself and the social interaction.) They valued dance partners who responded sensitively and creatively to the music, and they found the music extremely unique. They called it inspiring, dramatic, captivating, passionate, addictive, unpredictable, beautiful, and full of variety.

At the spiral’s apex, music was central to dancers’ experiences of “really dancing tango.” The lyrics triggered memories, inspired them to be their best, or offered therapeutic value. One dancer used his body like an instrument, playing along with the orchestra, and another danced as
if traversing a keyboard. For some, tango music was a third partner with whom they danced or a larger entity that guided them, enveloped them, or with which they blended and expanded into the room. One dancer commented, “I’m not hearing it as much as I’m in it. There is no delay.”

When “really dancing tango,” dancers felt enveloped and guided by the music; when reflecting on what they valued in partners, dancers placed musical sensitivity at the fore; and when hosting activities, instructors and event organizers made thoughtful musical choices. Music played a central role in their tango experience, particularly in how they danced.

Tango Dance

Returning to the spiral’s base, while the research was not designed to gather data on how instructors and event organizers experienced the dance, it did inadvertently yield data on this topic via their motivations for working in tango. In a nutshell, they enjoyed the dance so much that they simply had to share it with others or “spread the joy,” as one man put it. And those who taught classes, in particular, appreciated how the process deepened their own understanding of the dance.

Moving up the spiral, survey respondents’ perceptions of the dance were most apparent in how they viewed it as unique compared to other dances they had done. Ninety-five out of 116 respondents (90 percent) believed tango was unique because of its complexity as a form and/or because of what happens between dance partners. They wrote of technical aspects like the crossed-system of walking and the movement vocabulary that allows for infinite patterns. They felt free to improvise, express themselves, and be creative, and they felt challenged by what they considered a very difficult dance. They also found the dance unique because of the intimate
connection and non-verbal communication between partners. One wrote, “Close embrace requires more connection; there is little independent or separate movement; the partners become one.” Another commented that tango required “a sense of other while sensing yourself,” and a third, “there’s a softness and blending of energies that I don’t feel with other dances.” In their words, we begin to hear how two themes or spirals intertwine—dance and interpersonal experience. Tango technique influences how dancers interact with each other. In addition, many dancers did not write about the dance and the connection between partners without also writing about the music. “Tango forms a bond between two people, and they communicate with each other in the moment and to the music at a more intense level than with other dances.” The spirals of music, dance, and interactive experience intertwine, a confluence that is even more apparent in the lived experiences of interviewees.

At the top of the spiral, when some interviewees were really dancing tango, they felt as if they were completely inside the dance and the music with their partners. Here is a portion of a poetic transcription that I created from one woman’s interview: “… / we’re feeling the music / and then we’re expressing our movements through the music / but somehow it’s going in a circle between the two of us / between the three of us—the music and…[him] and me / somehow it becomes its own entity / the dance takes on its own state / and we’re just pieces of it / cogs in a wheel / it’s like a higher form.” Just as dancers felt that tango music was a third partner or a larger entity, so they described the dance. It existed on its own terms, and through their interaction with the music and each other, they became part of it.
Interactive Experience

We return to the base to explore the interactive spiral further. History revealed that instructors and event organizers interacted with each other in ways that supported growth of the community. They demonstrated an ethos that placed a premium on community building through acts of altruism, collaboration, being of service to others, and educational activities. Examples include the community website, collaborative events, donating their time to fundraisers, and hosting educational and outreach activities for the public.

Moving up the spiral, survey respondents wrote that dancing tango had enhanced their social lives and that the physical intimacy of the dance transformed how they viewed others. “Spending that amount of time with people, up close and personal, one loses the need for distance. Familiarity breeds understanding and a level of comfort that eliminates a certain…need for judgment, even subtle.” Sixty-six out of 116 dancers (62 percent) became more accepting or tolerant of those different from them, and more than half indicated that tango had made their thoughts, feelings, and behavior toward others better or much better. Here, the spirals of dance and interactive experience intertwine again as tango invites dancers to hold and behold each other at levels that transcend and transform the mind. And as dancers came to treat others in new ways, they also wanted to be treated well by their partners. They valued such treatment nearly as highly as they valued good tango technique.

At the level of “really dancing tango,” interviewees spoke of their interactive experiences at varying levels of intimacy. One felt connected to the entire community through a shared value of respect, while others experienced speaking in a “fifth language” or making collaborative art with their partners. A few likened dancing tango to being in intimate relationships, complete
with the challenges of a relationship off the dance floor. In this vein, another portion of a poetic transcription reads: “… / I feel so full of emotion / an elated, grateful, very trusting, safe / connection / almost held by the other person / whatever you do / they're with you / back and forth / cradling each other / like love.”

Considering the entire spiral of interactive experience, we see that instructors and event organizers acted with the good of the community in mind, many dancers grew to treat each other better, and some had profoundly intimate experiences. When viewing the spirals of music, dance, and interactive experience together, we see that in their intertwining, the tango form—its aesthetic, technique, and codes of behavior—can greatly influence the interactions of the people involved.

**Internal Experience**

Tango can influence not only dancers’ interactive experiences but also their internal ones. While the dissertation was not designed to gather data on the internal experiences of instructors and organizers, it gathered these data from dancers in many forms. In quantitative and qualitative survey data, dancers perceived that tango enhanced their lives in all five domains or constructs—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social. For example, they felt more healthy and physically capable, they appreciated the intellectual challenge and sense of accomplishment from learning tango. They felt great joy, became more trusting, grew emotionally, and had increased confidence in themselves and their abilities. Their social lives improved by embracing new people and engaging in the community. And spiritually, tango allowed them to be completely in the present, connect on a deep level with their partners, achieve
a meditative state, and have transcendent experiences. Tango music and dance invited them to interact in ways that enhanced their internal lives and supported their personal growth. In turn, such growth increased their ability to connect with each other, thereby improving their capacity to communicate and collaborate in the dance. As shown in “Figure 24. Tango Cycle,” the four thematic spirals can be theorized to intertwine in a cycle wherein tango invites interaction that leads to internal growth, which improves one’s capacity to dance tango, thus creating a more satisfying interactive and internal experience.

Figure 24. Tango Cycle.

An intriguing question arises if we apply this cycle not only to interaction between dancers but also to the actions of instructors and event organizers. Might this loop function on both the micro and macro levels with tango music and dance shaping how communities are created and then function? In other words, does an art form that invites intimacy, respect, and
trust also inspire altruism, collaboration, service, and education among those at the helm—actions that build community? And might such behavior by instructors and event organizers, in turn, encourage positive interaction among dancers, like learning to accept those who are different from us? “Figure 25. Community Tango Cycle” illustrates these phenomena. This study suggests that both may be true, which is why spirals are apt metaphors for the four themes, with energy and information flowing in both directions. What happens at one end of the spiral influences what happens at the other end, and vice versa. It may be no coincidence that a spiral epitomizes how energy moves through the bodies of tango dancers. Dancers twist and untwist, wind and release, call and respond to each other, sending energy back and forth from crown to toe and from toe to crown.

Figure 25. Community Tango Cycle.
To conclude discussion of these four themes as spirals, I present comments of interviewees, who take our understanding of dancers’ internal experiences to a deeper level. Some experienced “really dancing tango” in sensory terms, like a woman who was keenly aware of her partner’s breathing and found herself matching his rhythm, making the dancing feel effortless. Another found that looking at her partner’s face while dancing was almost too intimate to bear. Others spoke in metaphoric terms, like a man who felt that he was flying when he danced, and a woman who said, “… / It’s like living in a second world, in eternity / …it’s like death—someplace where the rules that you have in real life don’t count.” Most intriguing was a man who compared dancing tango with being in a bubble. When he was aware of the bubble, he was in the music and in the dance with his partner. When the bubble disappeared, all of these elements merged: “… / I disappear / my partner disappears / the music disappears / we’re all one / that’s it.” He was among dancers who made spiritual meaning from dancing tango, and in his words I hear a reference to feelings of oneness or union, a spiritual concept explored at length in the dissertation. Another dancer defined spirituality as “…the purest best essence of your soul…,” and felt that when really dancing tango, “…our bodies are touching, but our spirits are dancing.” While some did not believe in a spiritual realm or preferred not to define tango in those terms, others experienced tango as a spiritual practice. A portion of another poetic transcription reads, “Real tango dancing is all about spiritual connection / … this essential part of a person that you’re dancing with that’s invisible / you really don’t know… / but you’re listening to hear and feel / what this particular spirit is like.” In her experience, the internal and interactive spirals seem almost indistinguishable—she listens with her senses to know her partner’s spirit. Perhaps that is one of tango’s greatest gifts. The poignancy of the music and the intimacy of the
dance invite us into a realm in which self and other blend in unexpected and transformative ways.

While exploring these four themes—tango music, tango dance, interactive experience, and internal experience—illuminates how individuals and communities may respond to tango, questions remain about what this study offers to the Philadelphia area tango community, other tango communities, and those beyond the world of tango.

Addressing Final Subquestions

Returning to the pragmatic world of research design, the two final research subquestions are: a) what dancers desire for the future of the community and b) implications of this research for tango communities and for adult health/well-being and growth. Discussion first addresses what dancers want for the future of tango, primarily in terms of milongas and tango instruction, including analysis of a few final sets of quantitative and qualitative data, then explores the implications of this study for dancers and others.

What Do Dancers Want for the Future of Tango in the Philadelphia Area?

The tango survey gathered data on dancers’ preferences from two perspectives: a) their immediate feelings regarding milongas and tango instruction, and b) their desires for the tango community five to ten years in the future. Data came from one rating-scale quantitative question and three open-ended qualitative questions. Discussion first focuses on their responses regarding milongas and general changes in the community, then on responses related to tango instruction.
Milongas: Present Criteria and Future Improvements

Question number 31 asked dancers to rank 25 variables on how important they were in the choice to attend (or not attend) a milonga in the Philadelphia area. One hundred and six respondents rated variables on a five-point scale related to styles of tango music and dance, venue characteristics, refreshments, when milongas were held, and logistics.* “Table 15. Frequencies of the Top Six Variables that Drew Dancers to Milongas” shows how dancers rated the six variables with the highest mean scores, all of which had medians and modes of “very important” or “extremely important.”

Table 15. Frequencies of the Top Six Variables that Drew Dancers to Milongas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>friendly, welcoming</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good floorcraft</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wooden floor</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weekends</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traditional music</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traditional dancing</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 106

Moving down the list in terms of importance to dancers, “Table 16. Frequencies of the Seven Secondary Variables that Drew Dancers to Milongas” shows how they rated the seven variables with the next highest mean scores, all of which had medians of

* The scale for Tables 8 and 9 was: 1 = not at all important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = important, 4 = very important, and 5 = extremely important.
“important” and modes of “important” to “extremely important.”  (Means, medians, and modes for the remaining 12 variables ranged between “somewhat important” and “not at all important.”)

Table 16. Frequencies of the Seven Secondary Variables that Drew Dancers to Milongas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low price -- $15 or less</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>night -- 8:30pm to 1am or later</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within 10 miles of my home zip code</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>live tango music</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large space for more open embrace</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evening -- 5pm to 8:30pm</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>off-street parking</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 106

Considering data by category (like interpersonal issues, music, and dance styles) gives a more comprehensive view of dancers’ criteria for attending milongas. While only one variable addressed interpersonal issues directly, it was rated most important of all—a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. The next most important variable—floorcraft—related to interpersonal issues indirectly because floorcraft is, in essence, showing consideration for other dancers. Leaders exhibit good floorcraft by progressing steadily around the dance floor and leading movements that will not interfere with other couples by jostling, kicking, crowding, or blocking.

* These 12 variables and their means from high to low were “alternative or nuevo tango music” 2.51, “light refreshments” 2.46, “weekdays” 2.42, “nuevo tango dancing” 2.34, “day—10am to 5pm” 2.25, “mostly instrumental music with little or no singing” 2.18, “small space for more close embrace” 1.92, “convenient access to public transportation” 1.96, “all night—9pm to 5 or 6am” 1.87, “wine and other alcoholic beverages” 1.75, “mostly singing with little that is just instrumental” 1.66, and “a full meal of some kind (buffet)” 1.64.
them. Followers exhibit good floorcraft by choosing embellishments that will not kick or hit other dancers. Finally, those not dancing are expected to stay off the dance floor or to navigate carefully along the edges if they need to traverse it. When dancers at a milonga engage in good floorcraft, the entire milonga is more enjoyable for most dancers.

Regarding music, dancers felt that traditional music was most important, followed by live music and alternative or nuevo music. They did not have strong opinions about whether music should or should not include singing, but they leaned slightly toward preferring instrumentals. Regarding dance styles, traditional dancing was more important than nuevo, and having a large space that accommodated open embrace was more important than a small space conducive to more close embrace. It was more important to have milongas on weekends than weekdays, but having milongas in the evening (5:00 pm to 9:00 pm) was nearly as important as having them at night (9:00 pm to 1:00 am). Few felt it was important to have all-night milongas (9:00 pm to 5 or 6:00 pm) or milongas during the day (10:00 am to 5:00 pm).

A wooden dance floor was very important, while low prices and off-street parking were moderately important. Finally, with respect to meals or refreshments, dancers did not feel strongly that these were important, but given the choice, they preferred light refreshments and wine and other alcoholic beverages over having a full buffet meal.

Overall, these data echo earlier data on what dancers sought in dance partners presented in Chapter 6. Recall that they wanted partners who were skilled and who treated them well. Similarly, dancers chose milongas where they felt well treated—welcomed and respected by other dancers. While the social aspect of tango was important in quantitative data, its importance was even more apparent in qualitative data.
Question number 32 asked in an open-ended manner, “What two or three things would improve milongas in the Philadelphia area the most?” I categorized respondents’ statements according to the variables in Question number 31—that is, styles of tango music and dance, venue characteristics, refreshments, etcetera. However, the most frequent response (given by 30 out of 102 respondents or 30 percent) related to a variable that was not included in the rating-scale question—issues of partnering. Dancers wanted more leaders in order to balance the ratio of leaders to followers, more switching of partners so that more people got to dance, and more dancers in the community in general. One dancer wrote, “more interaction between newer dancers and older dancers,” and another wrote, “If experienced dancers were encouraged to dance at least a little bit at most milongas with those of us who are less experienced it would make for a more satisfying experience, and faster learning.”

Two themes appeared in these and other responses regarding partnering. First, beginning dancers wanted more opportunities to dance with intermediate or advanced dancers. And second, dancers were frustrated by what they perceived as cliques or individuals who did not dance with others enough. A few dancers suggested planned activities to encourage partner-switching, like designating songs as mixers (when people must switch partners frequently during a song) or scheduling times when followers could invite leaders to dance.

At the root of these complaints and suggestions is the fact that, at milongas in Philadelphia and in most cities where I have danced, it is customary for leaders to invite followers to dance. In my experience, this system works reasonably well when the ratio of leaders and followers in attendance is equal or nearly equal and when dancers switch partners after dancing together for four to eight songs. However, when dancers switch partners less often
or when there are many more followers than leaders, which is more common than the reverse, dancers experience strain—leaders because they feel pressure to invite many women to dance, whether they feel inspired by the music and the partner or not, and followers because they have even less control than usual over how frequently they get to dance during an evening. For example, one dancer wrote, “This area needs more good leaders who dance with multiple partners at a milonga.” Some women, including the researcher, learn to lead in order to teach tango and/or to increase the frequency with which we get to dance and reduce the numbers of women sitting on the sidelines. There is much debate in the international tango community regarding issues of inviting others to dance, gender balance at milongas, and dancing in non-traditional gender roles.* Some dancers believe that the very fabric of tango unravels when people dance in non-traditional roles and when women invite men to dance; others are more open to experimentation and change. While dancers in the Philadelphia area indicated through this research that they accepted such shifts from tradition, most preferred to dance in traditional roles, and many women, in particular, were dissatisfied with the gender imbalance and patterns of partnering.

Related to these desires was another common suggestion for improving milongas—a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Recall that this variable was rated highest in quantitative responses for why dancers chose to attend milongas. In qualitative texts, dancers stated that a friendly and welcoming atmosphere was created first and foremost by the milonga hosts, who greeted them warmly and made them feel accepted and comfortable. It was also important that hosts dance with many attendees. One dancer wrote that a milonga was appealing “If the host or

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*I belong to “Tango-L,” an international internet mailing list for discussion related to Argentine tango. For more information about this list as well as “Tango-A,” which is for posting information on tango events, visit www.Tango-L.com.
hostess of the milonga...[made] everyone feel welcome and dance[d] with those on the sidelines instead of just their friends.” Another dancer wanted, “friendliness and acceptance of all levels of dance, all ages and all types of people,” and a third wanted milongas to have a “friendly atmosphere, especially toward new people. They are the future.” In these quotations, one hears more references to the importance of treating others well.

Finally, in addition to improving partnering and creating a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, dancers echoed other quantitative data. They wrote that milongas would be improved by holding more of them in the afternoon or evening, providing more live music, and locating them in larger dance halls with good air conditioning and heating. They also wanted to see better floorcraft and parking options.

In summary, while quantitative data addressed choosing to attend milongas and qualitative data addressed improving milongas, at the core these questions explored the same phenomenon—what dancers value in milongas. The data sets diverged in some ways. For example, there was more emphasis on interpersonal issues in the qualitative data and more emphasis on logistical issues in the quantitative because of how the latter question was constructed. Viewing the two data sets as complimentary, they reveal that dancers valued a few things quite highly, roughly in this order. First and foremost, they valued being treated well, which included: a friendly, welcoming atmosphere in which they felt comfortable and accepted; partnering frequently with dancers at or above their level, which was particularly important for beginners; and good floorcraft. Second, dancers preferred milongas that took place on weekends in the afternoon or evening. Third, they preferred traditional tango music and live music as well as traditional tango dancing. Fourth, and finally, they preferred large venues with wooden floors.
When asked to focus on the future of the tango community, 97 dancers wrote about some of the same issues. Open-ended question number 34 asked, “Imagine 5-10 years into the future. What would you ideally like to see happening in tango in the Philadelphia area?” The most frequent response (made by 34 dancers or 35 percent) related to partnering—wanting more dancers, particularly leaders; wanting dancers with higher skill levels; and wanting more young people to be involved. The next most common response (made by 32 dancers or 33 percent) related to tango venues. Most notably, dancers wanted to see milongas in restaurants, bars, and other public places where they could enjoy meals, socialize, and encourage more people to join the community. A number hoped that more tango activities would be offered in their neighborhoods or states, including Center City, Old City, the South Jersey Shore, Delaware, and New Jersey. While two hoped to see a milonga specifically at the Philadelphia Art Museum, and two wanted more outdoor milongas in the summer, many simply desired an increase in the number of large tango venues with good dance floors and comfortable indoor temperatures.

Moving to more general changes for the future of the community, 19 dancers (20 percent) wanted a higher number of milongas, prácticas, and classes; ten (12 percent) wanted more live tango music; and ten wanted an annual weekend or week-long festival that would draw dancers from other cities and countries. Respondents lamented having to travel to festivals in order to dance with new partners, and they felt that an annual festival in Philadelphia would help the community improve and grow.

When asked if they could suggest individuals, businesses, colleges, or organizations that might help the community make these changes, 32 dancers offered ideas. Some suggested businesses that might sponsor tango events, hire dancers to augment their own corporate events,
or rent space for events.* Others suggested that the tango community collaborate with the dance and/or fine art departments at local colleges and universities, consider artist-in-residence programs, and/or contact alumni associations. Finally, a handful of dancers suggested working with churches, parishes, schools, and retiree organizations.

Overall, dancers wanted the tango community to grow in the next five to ten years to feature a larger, more skilled, and more leader-follower-balanced group of dancers; more tango activities in more venues in the area; tango groups that played live music regularly at milongas; an annual festival; and more collaboration within the community and with businesses, colleges, and not-for-profit organizations outside the community. One of the ways in which dancers indicated that these goals could be met was through improved tango instruction.

**Tango Instruction: Present Desires and Future Improvements**

As with milongas, the survey gathered data on what dancers wanted in tango instruction in the present as well as what they desired for the future. Regarding the present, question number 18 asked, “Are you pleased with the tango instruction that is available in the Philadelphia area?” Out of 110 respondents, 89 (77 percent) were pleased, and 21 (18 percent) were not. Those who answered in the negative were invited to answer an open-ended question (number 19) regarding the changes they would like to see. Nineteen out of 21 dancers described changes, and ten of these volunteered specific complaints, which centered around questioning teachers’ qualifications, criticizing class structure or content, lamenting the imbalance of leaders

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*Dancers suggested American Express, Aramark Catering, Comcast, the Hemispheric Institute of Politics & Performance, International House, New Jersey Central Dance Society, the Parlor (dance studio), Philadelphia Dance Academy, private country clubs, roller-skating rinks, Spanish restaurants like Amada, Stardust Ballroom, Target, and Verizon.*
and followers, feeling that they didn’t get enough attention from instructors, or experiencing instructional environments as competitive or unfriendly. The most commonly mentioned changes they wished to see involved class content. Thirteen of them wanted more of the following: advanced instruction, options for beginners, tango nuevo, workshops by guest instructors, and a focus on tango etiquette, floorcraft, social codes, or musicality. A handful wanted instructors to be more welcoming to beginners and to attend to students more evenly, and a few wanted lower class fees, better leader-follower balance, and classes that were on weeknights to begin earlier in the evening.

In their responses to Question 34 regarding what they wanted 5-10 years in the future, 26 out of 97 respondents (27 percent) desired improved instruction. Half of these (13 respondents or 14 percent) wanted more workshops and/or classes with guest instructors who were internationally respected tango professionals. A handful of dancers wanted each of the following changes: more frequent classes, more advanced classes, clarity on the form of tango that local instructors were teaching, and lower prices. One dancer made a particularly interesting suggestion. S/he wanted “an academic discourse/dialogue in the form of a weekend of workshops/panel discussions/demonstrations. (I've been to these elsewhere, and find them very satisfying).” Similarities between what dancers wanted to change in the present and what they sought for the future were threefold—wanting more advanced instruction, lower prices, and workshops and/or classes with internationally respected tango professionals. These requests for changes in instruction coupled with what dancers valued and desired in milongas leads logically to the next section of this chapter—research implications. How feasible are dancers’ desires? If instructors/organizers were to meet all of their needs, how would such changes impact their own
personal and professional goals? What can the researcher offer to the community in the form of observations and recommendations given the wealth of data discussed in this dissertation? Would such advice be applicable to other tango communities in the United States and beyond?

What Are the Implications of This Research?

The sixth and final research subquestion asks, “What are the implications of this research for the Philadelphia area tango community and other tango communities? What are the implications of this research for adult health/well-being and growth?” In response to the first question, I don two hats—that of tango instructor/organizer and that of tango dancer—the former aligns me with providers, the latter with consumers. Both group’s responsibilities for the community’s growth and health are equally important but in different ways.

Having lived in Vermont for the last year and visited the Philadelphia tango community half a dozen times in that period, I have a unique perspective as both insider and observer, but I have also lost track of some aspects of the community. There are new instructors, event organizers, milongas, classes, and prácticas of which I know little. Therefore, these implications and recommendations are offered with a caveat—they are based on data gathered more than a year ago by a community member who is now gazing from afar. Regardless, I believe they may be useful both to the tango community in the Philadelphia area and to communities in other cities that also wish to grow.
Implications and Advice for Instructors/Organizers

First, I offer hearty congratulations to instructors/organizers for creating a vibrant tango community in the Philadelphia area. Most dancers who responded to the survey were impassioned about how tango had enhanced their lives and were committed to seeing the community improve and grow. To achieve this goal, I recommend the following to instructors/organizers, and I acknowledge that many already do these things.

Collaborate, communicate, and “do no harm.” To the best of your ability, work collaboratively with other instructors/organizers, keep the lines of communication open between you, and, at the very least, do no harm. Do not voice criticism or plan events that impede the efforts of your peers. Any instructor/organizer who is truly committed to helping the community grow and improve would not want to obstruct another’s efforts. Ultimately, what we do to one we do to the entire community. I have seen milongas die and instructors lose students, in part, because their colleagues were not conscious of or did not care how their actions affected others. Be respectful, considerate, and appreciative of those who came before you in building the community and of those whose earnings come from working in tango. Be cognizant, also of how your actions affect dancers. Scheduling competing events and denouncing others splinters the community and detracts from dancers’ enjoyment of the dance.

Create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Do your best to be egalitarian in how much attention you give each student in a class; dance with many people at your milongas and prácticas, particularly those who sit out often; greet dancers by name; and, basically, practice
what you preach. Model the kind of behavior you would like to see at your tango activities. If you notice a dancer being particularly offensive or rude to others, speak with them in private about tango etiquette.

*Circulate tango etiquette and floorcraft guidelines.* Remind dancers of tango etiquette and floorcraft in classes and prácticas and distribute written guidelines. Perhaps these could be posted on the Tango Philadelphia website, and you could refer people to them when you see problems.

Not everyone agrees on tango etiquette and floorcraft, and these elements of tango differ somewhat from community to community. However, in the Philadelphia area, my understanding of good tango etiquette at milongas includes refraining from teaching others, dancing at least one tanda with each partner, not dancing more than two tandas in a row with a partner, not talking while dancing, and using good personal hygiene. Good floorcraft includes allowing for a steady flow of dancers around the room and not doing movements that will impede, bang into, or kick anyone. Through creating guidelines collaboratively, instructors/organizers could strive to teach dancers consistent concepts of good etiquette and floorcraft.

*Encourage partner switching.* Experiment with mixers or other methods of encouraging people to dance with partners whom they don’t know or with beginners. For example, offer free admission to your milonga to leaders who agree to dancing graciously and sincerely with five followers with whom they had never danced. While we cannot police with whom people dance, we can create incentives and opportunities for more blending of dance partners.
Share the real costs of activities. Dancers in the Philadelphia area want more live music and international guest instructors. Consider being more transparent about the real costs involved so that dancers understand their role in making such activities feasible. Ask them to volunteer to transport, house, and/or feed musicians and guest artists, for example.

Improve milongas. Continue to seek venues throughout the city and suburbs that are large enough for 80 to 100 dancers and have wooden floors, air conditioning, and adequate off-street parking. Offer more live music and keep the focus on traditional tango music and dance. Seek restaurants, bars, and other public places for milongas or prácticas where dancers may eat, socialize, and encourage more people to join the community. Hold more milongas on the weekends in the afternoon or evening.

Expand instruction. Offer more advanced level classes and tango nuevo classes.

Create an annual festival. Consider creating an annual tango festival that takes advantage of Philadelphia’s strengths, like University of the Arts and Temple University’s Boyer College of Music and Dance, which has housed faculty, staff, and students interested in tango dance and music. Use the outcomes of past large tango events to help with festival design—“Tango Vivo” in 1997 and “Dancing for Schools” in 2004 and 2006.*

* For information about “Tango Vivo,” contact Lesley Mitchell and Kelly Ray at www.dancephiladelphia.com. For information about the “Dancing for Schools” events, contact the author (who was event director) at eseyler@temple.edu or request event reports from the Temple University Department of Dance.
Contribute to a “non-partisan” community tango calendar. In the age of the internet, one of the most effective and inexpensive ways to advertise and promote tango activities, to keep dancers informed of what is happening, and to encourage newcomers to join is for all instructors/organizers to contribute to a community website. The Tango Philadelphia website, begun and maintained gratis for many years by Michael VanBuskirk, has been central to the growth of the community and continues to be an essential clearing house of information. Many large cities have similar sites. Any community that wishes to grow and does not have one is at a great disadvantage, and instructors/organizers who do not contribute to it undermine their activities and the reputation and vitality of the entire community.

Implications and Advice for Dancers

I believe that responsibility for the vitality and growth of a tango community lies equally with instructors/organizers and with dancers. While those at the helm can create wonderful tango activities with warm and welcoming atmospheres, the community would not exist nor thrive without dancers who attended, participated, and contributed their own enthusiasm and energy. Here is what I recommend dancers do to support their communities, and I acknowledge that many in the Philadelphia area have engaged in these pursuits for years.

Take full responsibility for your tango experience. While being in good physical condition and using good tango technique are important, what we bring to the dance on non-physical levels is central to our enjoyment. We cannot control the behavior of others. We can only control our own thoughts, feelings, attitude, and actions and, through those, create a wonderful experience or
a frustrating one. While it is tempting to complain about others who don’t switch partners often enough or hosts who aren’t welcoming enough, placing the locus of control for our tango experience in someone else’s hands is a recipe for disappointment. It has helped me greatly to be clear on my intention to enjoy tango and to do everything in my power to allow that to happen. For example, I am improving my skills as a leader, which gives me a greater appreciation for the leader’s role, a better understanding of the dance, and more opportunities to dance. I encourage dancers to experiment with non-traditional dance roles and partnerings, to bring their best intention to the dance, and to notice their role in creating wonderful tango experiences.

*Use good tango etiquette and floorcraft.* As mentioned above under advice for instructors/organizers, my understanding of good tango etiquette at milongas includes refraining from teaching others, dancing at least one tanda with each partner, not dancing more than two tandas in a row with a partner, not talking while dancing, and using good personal hygiene. Good floorcraft includes moving steadily around the room with the flow of other dancers and not doing movements that will block or injure anyone. Note that it is traditional to make exceptions for beginners who may not yet have enough skill to use good floorcraft.

*Treat each other well.* Data show that dancers seek partners who dance well, but almost equally important are partners who treat them well, meaning they are respectful, appreciative, patient, and kind. A positive attitude goes a long way toward being a desirable partner.
Support the fees that instructors/organizers set. Dancing tango is among the least expensive forms of recreation and entertainment available. Data show that instructors/organizers set fees just high enough to make their activities feasible, and that bringing in international professionals for guest workshops, for example, may result in financial loss for hosts. (That’s one reason why workshops can be infrequent.) Given the unpredictable nature of attendance rates and other forces beyond their control, it is a testament to their entrepreneurial skill that so many instructors/organizers succeed at working in tango. I encourage dancers to pay fees willingly and to explore how they may support instructors/organizers in other ways, as in the next item.

Volunteer. Tango survey question number 16 asked, “How often have you volunteered to cook, register attendees, help clean up, or do other things at milongas in the Philadelphia area during the last three months?” Out of 110 respondents, 62 of them (53 percent) had not volunteered at all, and 38 (33 percent) had volunteered one or two times per month. Nine respondents (8 percent) had volunteered between three and six times per month, and only one had volunteered more than seven times per month.

I co-hosted “Tango Brunch” for two years when it was a monthly milonga. It included a yoga lesson or a tango warm-up and a buffet brunch, so it involved a bit more work than some milongas, but not much. Jackie Stahl and I invariably worked at least eight hours in advance of the event doing publicity and preparing food and music and another eight hours on the day of the event setting up, hosting, and cleaning up. After covering expenses, we earned little for the hours worked. Granted, like other instructors/organizers, our motivations were not solely financial. We sought to expand the community, enjoy an event of our own design, serve our
students, and attract newcomers. However, the milonga was much more enjoyable for us and certainly more feasible when other dancers volunteered to help out. Given how much work it is to host a milonga and how many dancers who completed the tango survey had strong opinions about friendliness, partnering, music, and other milonga components, it seems logical to suggest that if dancers would like milongas to improve and become more frequent, more of them would do well to volunteer more often.

Support newcomers and beginners. Everyone was a beginner once, and learning tango comes more easily to some than to others. If you would like the community to flourish and grow, dance in a sincere way (not begrudgingly) with a few newcomers and/or beginners at each milonga. I know some men and women who never attend a milonga without inviting at least two newcomers to dance. Dancers can hone their skills by dancing with beginners and, at the very least, contribute to their partners’ enjoyment and the friendly, welcoming culture of the community that will, undoubtedly, help it to flourish.

Contributions to Scholarship and Implications for Adult Health/Well-being and Growth

In addressing the implications of this research, I again don two hats—that of researcher and that of concerned citizen—the former to speak to how this study builds upon existing scholarship, and the latter to advocate for tango as a tool for improving our quality of life, particularly our spiritual development.
Contributions to Research on Tango, Dance, Aging, and Other Fields

To the best of my knowledge, only two studies exist in English on specific tango communities in the United States. Anahi Viladrich (2003) studied the tango community in New York City as a component of her doctoral dissertation on immigrants’ access to health care, and Carmen Maret (2005) studied aspects of the community in Ann Arbor, Michigan for her master’s thesis in music. This research represents the first formal, large-scale study of a tango community for the sole purpose of understanding its history and members—in Philadelphia or any major United States city. It documents the creation of a popular social dance community and offers new data and theories on community building.

It also contributes to dance scholarship by shifting away from what has been a traditional focus on ballet, modern dance, and children’s dance to adults’ experiences of social pairs dance. Not only does the study document who dances tango but also why they dance—their perceptions of how tango affects them and their lives.* In particular, it contributes to literature on health and well-being for those at mid-life and beyond. Existing studies on social dance and aging (Vorghese et al. 2003) and on tango and aging (McKinley 2008) have focused primarily on the elderly and staving off forms of degenerative decline like Alzheimer’s disease, frailty, and risk of falling. This research looks specifically at members of the baby boom generation (those aged 45 to 64), seeking to discover why the tango community in the Philadelphia area is comprised of so many of them. While results are somewhat surprising and inconclusive, the numbers of dancers

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* To those who might challenge the fact that data were self-reported regarding tango’s effects, the researcher responds that if dancers (and all human beings) indeed create their reality, then what they perceive and therefore believe is what matters. Their thoughts about tango’s effects are their reality. Recent discoveries in quantum physics pointing to the causal power of thought, attention, and intention would support this claim.
in this age group suggests the need for further research on how tango serves those at mid-life and beyond.

This study also contributes to the field of mixed-methods research, which is still in its infancy compared to purely quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell 2003, Tashakkorie and Teddlie 2003). To my knowledge, this is the first mixed-methods study of an adult dance community.

Finally, it is also the first formal study to explore intersections between spirituality and tango. While popular texts have explored tango within paradigms of Eastern religions (Park 2004, Seigmann 2000), and one dissertation explores tango as a metaphor for soul from a theoretical psychology perspective (Abat 2006), this study reveals the voices of many tango dancers regarding whether and how they experience links between their spiritual and their tango lives.

_Improving Quality of Life: A Focus on Spiritual Development_

Quantitative and qualitative data show that dancers reported clear and life-altering gains in their physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual lives. While some cohorts reported more enhancement than others, all dancers contributed data showing that tango serves a multigenerational community of people from very diverse social, ethnic, cultural, economic, occupational, educational, and dance and movement backgrounds. As such, tango offers great opportunities for enjoyment, growth, and well-being to many, and it invites and may strengthen cultural pluralism. Data showing that people become more accepting and tolerant of those
different from them through tango provides ample evidence of its value not only to the individual but also to a society that is increasingly diverse.

It is precisely tango’s capacity to invite human growth in many domains, but particularly the spiritual domain, that I find most hopeful. Recall from the literature review presented in Chapter 3 that scholars propose theories of human spiritual development distinct from theories of psychological development (Ai and Mackenzie 2006, Irwin 2002, Mustakova-Possardt 2000, Sinnott 2000). Among them is Irwin’s theory that if consciousness were the underlying structure that developed over the life span as opposed to ego or self development, we might gauge human maturity by how well one learned to transcend the ego, let go, surrender, and achieve “…a nonattached acceptance of things as they are” (2002, 7). Might tango be a vehicle for such spiritual development as dancers use tango to transcend everyday life, surrender to and trust each other, achieve meditative states, and accept self, other, and the dance from moment to moment, movement to movement? The researcher proposes that tango is such a vehicle. For me and for dancers in this study, tango invites our spiritual development by reminding us that we are not alone and separate, that we are all one and connected to each other. It cultivates non-judgment and teaches unconditional love of self and other. It encourages us to take full responsibility for our realities and for what we do or do not create. It invites us to express ourselves artistically. It celebrates the sensuality of our bodies while honoring the complexity of our minds. It is a pathway to bliss, an opportunity to experience heaven in each other’s arms, a gift to us all from people of the past and present of Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and other cities around the world.
Tango for Its Own Sake

While it is wonderful that dancing tango enhances our lives spiritually and in other domains, I value tango for its own sake as well. Among my goals for this study was to illuminate tango’s complexity and beauty, to capture in words its elegance, paradoxes, darkness, and light. Like the dancers in this study who anthropomorphized tango, I too view it as an entity in itself, worthy of our time and attention like any great work of art—part of the richness of life on Earth. No matter that it is a living form that exists in the people who make its music and dance its sequences. It is as real as my breath and my spirit, as real as life and love.

I can’t wait to get out of this chair and dance.

Epilogue – Giving Back to the Community

At the risk of driving my readers beyond their limits, I must present one more set of qualitative data. Near the end of the tango survey, Question number 53 asked, “How might the researcher make the results of this study useful to you and others?” Out of 82 respondents, a majority (51 dancers or 62 percent) wanted me to share results by making presentations, publishing papers, sending results via email, and/or creating a website. Another 19 (23 percent) requested that I share the results with instructors/organizers and others who could use the information to improve the tango community. Taking a broader view, a few suggested using the results to advocate for the arts with foundations, community development organizations, arts organizations, and local and state policy-making offices. Others suggested that I become a liaison between these groups and the tango community, or that I brainstorm feasible changes with community members after publishing the dissertation.
I appreciate all of these suggestions and, while I cannot implement some of them until this opus is well on its way to becoming a book, I have implemented others and will continue to do so. For example, I presented papers based on this research at two international conferences—the first in 2007 at the joint SDHS/CORD conference in Paris, and the second in 2008 at the ACFAS conference in Québec City, Québec, Canada.* The latter is scheduled to be published in French by Presses de l’Université du Québec as a chapter in a book on tango. I will continue to publish articles and deliver presentations based on this research, including a presentation for the Philadelphia area tango community in 2009.

Instructors/organizers and dancers will have access to the dissertation in printed form. In addition, I am in the process of creating a website that will provide them and others with easy access to key results.†

Finally, I provided dancers with preliminary results (before my defense) on two different occasions. First, in March of 2007, I created “Selected Demographic Results,” a three-page document that summarized demographic data gathered through the tango survey, thanked dancers for their participation, and encouraged them to contact me with comments or questions. It is included in the appendices. I distributed it at milongas and other tango events rather than provide it via email or the internet in order to limit its distribution. (At that time, I had not yet presented or published any papers related to this research.)


† This website is located at www.elizabethseyler.com and www.elizabethseyler.net.
The second occasion took place on June 20, 2008, when I made a formal, 30-minute presentation on research results to date at a milonga that I co-hosted at Temple University’s Conwell Dance Theater. Lesley Mitchell, Kelly Ray, Rob Connaire, and I collaborated with the Boyer College of Music and Dance to transform the black box theater into a striking milonga venue for “Friday Night Live: Argentine Tango.” The milonga featured a beginner lesson by Mitchell and Ray, live music by Mandrágora Tango Quartet from Minnesota, a large-screen slideshow of dancers and other tango-related photographs, and video clips of vintage tango movies. After the beginner lesson and before the milonga, an audience of 60 dancers, friends, and Temple affiliates enjoyed a riveting performance of Astor Piazzolla’s “Flute Etude #6” by Rebecca Kauffmann, an accomplished Temple University music student. I then took the stage to present “The Tango Philadelphia Story—Part 1: Our History, Who’s Dancing, and Why” with Connaire’s assistance on PowerPoint. I shared basic data on why survey respondents danced, what they sought in partners, and how they had changed through tango. After a brief question and answer session, the milonga began.

In closing, I offer the words of a tango dancer who attended the presentation and contacted me shortly thereafter by email to describe her experience and wish me well with my work. Her words epitomize what tango means to many of us.

I have channeled my emotions into the dance. I feel blessed that I discovered my cancer early—and I attribute that to dance. Before dancing, I would probably not have been as aware of my body. Ten years ago, I would never have thought dance would play such an integral part of my daily living. I think everyone should have the joy of dancing in their1 life. Tango is life, with all of its highs and lows combined.
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APPENDIX A

ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUALITY

Transcendent dimension—a dimension of life that goes beyond what we experience with our senses; “harmonious contact with, and adjustment to, this dimension is beneficial” (Elkins et al. 1988: 10)

Connection—feeling connected to oneself, others, and one’s environment (from my research)

Sense of wholeness and internal integration—“deep inner peace or harmony” (Underwood 2003: 13)

Gratitude—feeling grateful for our lives and for our experiences, both positive and negative, as teaching tools; “I feel thankful for my blessings” (Underwood 2003: 13)

Sense of awe, wonder, or deep respect for life—“can be provoked by exposure to nature, human beings, or the night sky” (Underwood 2003: 13)

Limits of materialism—one appreciates material things, but does not place their value above that which is spiritual (Elkins et al. 1988: 11)

Meaning and purpose in life—individual “fills the ‘existential vacuum’ with an authentic sense that life inherently has meaning and purpose” (Elkins et al. 1988: 11)

Mission in life—“a sense of responsibility to life, a calling to answer, a mission to accomplish, or in some cases, even a destiny to fulfill” (Elkins et al. 1988: 11)

Creativity—creating something from nothing or building on what exists; expressing one’s nature or essence through creativity (from my research)

Idealism—“committed to the betterment of the world” (Elkins et al. 1988: 11)

Altruism—giving of oneself toward the betterment of others and/or the world, which in turn feeds the self (from my research)

Awareness of suffering—“deeply aware of pain, suffering, and death…but paradoxically…the tragic enhances the…person’s joy, appreciation, and valuing of life” (Elkins et al. 1988: 11)

Compassion—empathizing with oneself and others and remaining aware that we are all doing our best (from my research)

Patience—patience with oneself and others when we make mistakes or are imperfect (from my research)

Acceptance—accepting oneself, others, and the situation as it is; letting go of judgment, expectations, and attachments (from my research)

I created the above based on elements from the following three sources.

2. Underwood (2003), who identified connection with transcendent, sense of support from the transcendent, strength and comfort from spirituality RELIGION, loved by transcendent, inspired/guided by transcendent, sense of wholeness and internal integration, transcending daily life, sense of awe, gratitude, compassion, mercy, and longing for the transcendent.

My note: In this model, six out of twelve concepts have to do with one’s relationship with a transcendent being or dimension. I find this common in many religions, which seem to place a great deal of power and weight in the concept of an omnipotent “other.” I also find it limiting and counter-productive for adult health/well-being and growth because it is reminiscent of elements of the parent-child relationship that imply dependency more than responsibility and agency.

3. My research to date on social partner dancers who dance tango, swing, salsa, and ballroom and who identified connection, creativity, self-expression, identity, altruism, meditation, being present, and acceptance.
APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED ARGENTINE TANGO TERMS

Note: This is a partial list of common tango terms and brief definitions. They are not meant to be used widely as others have written more extensively on tango terminology. I use masculine pronouns to identify the leader and feminine pronouns to identify the follower for clarity’s sake only. I do not wish to imply that I espouse rigid gender-specific roles in tango. Spanish words are listed in italics.

Boleo – From bolear (to throw). The follower’s non-weight-bearing leg swings from the hip socket forward, backward, or to the side proportional to the force given by the leader. The leader may invite the follower to pivot during the boleo so that the follower’s leg travels in a circular motion around her pivot point. The follower may bend her knee or ankle to accentuate the motion of the leg.

Cabaceo – From cabeza (head). A traditional method for selecting dance partners from across the room at a milonga by making steady eye contact with a potential partner.

Calecita – From calecita (carousel, merry-go-round). With a slight lift of his frame, the leader invites the follower to remain balanced on one foot while the leader circles around her, pivoting the follower in place. The follower may make small circles and other embellishments (adornos) with her non-weighted leg.

Caricias – From cariciar (to caress). While standing in place, the dancer makes a gentle stroking motion with her or her foot or lower leg against his or her own foot or lower leg or that of the partner, somewhat like a cat rubbing up against its owner.

Cortina – From cortina (curtain). A brief musical interlude when dancers traditionally switch partners between tandas at a milonga.

Enganche – From enganchar (to hook, to couple). Either dancer wraps his/her leg around the partner’s leg, or uses his or her two feet to sandwich and hold one of the partner’s feet still for a moment.

Gancho – From gancho (hook). With both feet apart at least 1.5 feet, the leader pivots his body and presses with his upper thigh against the follower’s upper thigh, inviting her to pivot as well and quickly send her unweighted leg through his two legs by sliding her foot along the floor quickly until her leg hits his and her knee bends against the force.

Milonga – From milonga (fib, tale). May refer to a form of tango music generally played in 4/4 time, to the dance one executes to tango music, or to a social dance for tango dancers.
Molinete – From *molinetes* (windmill). Either dancer moves in a circular motion around his or her partner’ axis or around an axis located between them by stepping sideways, backwards, sideways, forwards, sideways, backwards, etc. In European dance forms, this pattern of steps is known as a “grapevine.”

Tanda – From *tanda* (batch or series). A set of three to five songs played as a group of the same or similar tango genre. The tandas are separated by brief interludes of non-dance music, called *cortinas*, that usually last 15 to 20 seconds. It is customary to dance an entire tanda with the same partner, but a dancer may choose to stop dancing with his/her partner after a song within a tanda by saying, “Thank you,” a cue that their temporary dance partnership has ended.
APPENDIX C

CRAFTING THE HISTORY OF ARGENTINE TANGO IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INSTRUCTORS AND EVENT ORGANIZERS
Crafting the History of Argentine Tango in the Philadelphia Area
~ Questionnaire for Instructors and Event Organizers ~

You are invited to complete this questionnaire to help the researcher write about the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area. For the purposes of this questionnaire, “the Philadelphia area” includes Princeton, NJ, and all cities and towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey within a 20-mile radius of Center City, including Blue Bell, Camden, Cherry Hill, Collegeville, King of Prussia, and Media. The researcher will use data for her doctoral research (and possible publication) and will make general results available to you. She will also give you a copy of your completed questionnaire. Your identity will be kept confidential as described in the attached Consent Form.

Directions: Use a black or blue pen. Please complete and mail with the signed Consent Form in the enclosed envelope by October 14, 2006. You may write on the back and/or attach sheets as needed. Estimated completion time: 50 minutes.

1. Your Name: ____________________________

2. Today’s Date: _____(month)/_____(day)/______(year)

3. What is your home address?
   Street
   City
   State
   Zip

4. Phone: ________________________________

5. Email: ________________________________

A. YOUR TANGO HISTORY
6. When did you begin to learn Argentine tango? _____(month)/_____(year)

7. Where did you begin to learn Argentine tango? __________________________ (city), ___________ (state/country)

8. Who have been your most influential/important Argentine tango teachers (i.e., not all of your teachers)? Please list their name(s), where you have studied with them, and for how long you studied or have been studying with them. (If you have used videos, please list the instructors’ names and write “video” in parentheses next to the instructor(s) name(s).) Example: Gerd Hirschman, Burlington, VT, 2001-2002.
   a. __________________________________________
   b. __________________________________________
   c. __________________________________________
   d. __________________________________________
   e. __________________________________________

B. TEACHING TANGO
9. Have you ever taught Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   If “Yes,” please continue to the next question. If “No,” please go directly to Question #35 on page 4.

10. When did you begin to teach Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area? ________ (mo)/________ (yr)

11. Why did you begin to teach Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area? ____________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
12. Please describe the first class or workshop in Argentine tango that you taught as best you can remember. Include its name, with whom you taught (if anyone), how long it continued, the focus/content, how many people attended, where it was, and the fees (if any).

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

13. Are you still teaching Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area?  ○ Yes  ○ No
If “Yes,” please continue to next question. If “No,” please go directly to Question #15 below.

14. Why do you want to continue teaching Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area?

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

15. Why did you stop teaching Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area?

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

16. Please answer the following for the three-month period of March to May 2006. If a question does not apply to you, write “N/A.” If you stopped teaching before March 2006, please respond regarding the last three months of the last year when you taught, and write that time frame here: ____________ (months) of ____________ (yr).

17. On average, how many of each activity did you teach per week? classes/practicas  private lessons

18. On average, how many students attended each type of activity per week?

19. What level students did you teach? Indicate all that apply: beginner, intermediate, and/or advanced.

20. On average, what percentage of your students was leading?

21. How much did you charge? Examples: $15/$12 student; OR $12 per class or $80 per 6 classes; OR $75 per private.
22. Please answer the following questions for the three-month period of March to May 2004 (two years ago). If you stopped teaching before March 2004, please go directly to Question #28 below.

23. On average, how many of each activity did you teach per week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Classes/Practicas</th>
<th>Private Lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

24. On average, how many students attended each type of activity per week?

25. What level students did you teach? Indicate all that apply: beginner, intermediate, and/or advanced.

26. On average, what percentage of your students was leading?

27. How much did you charge? Examples: $15/$12 student; OR $12 per class or $80 per 6 classes; OR $75 per private.

28. What content have you taught since May 2004? If you stopped teaching before May 2004, please respond regarding the last two years when you taught and write the years here: _____________. (select all that apply)

- [ ] tango
- [ ] tango vals
- [ ] milonga
- [ ] tango nuevo
- [ ] Tango dance history
- [ ] tango music history
- [ ] tango music structure
- [ ] musicality for dancing

29. What embrace(s) have you taught since May 2004 or ____________ (the last two years when you taught)? (select all that apply)

- [ ] close embrace
- [ ] open embrace
- [ ] mixture/continuum of close & open embraces

30. Where have you taught Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area? Please list multiple studios, if appropriate, the city and state where each studio is located, and for how long you worked / have worked in each location.

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

31. Did you / have you stopped teaching Argentine tango at particular studio(s) in the Philadelphia area?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  If so, why?
32. Since May 2004 or ______ (the last two years when you taught), in your classes/prácticas and private lessons, have you noticed or did you notice changes or trends in students’ attendance, preferences/interests, behaviors, or other phenomena?  O Yes  O No

33. If “yes,” what have you noticed / did you notice? Please be as specific as possible. __________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

34. What, if anything, would help you improve/enhance your teaching of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area? ____________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

C. HOSTING WORKSHOPS WITH GUEST TEACHERS
35. Have you ever hosted workshops in the Philadelphia area taught by guest Argentine tango instructors from outside Philadelphia? O Yes  O No  If “Yes,” please continue to next question. If “No,” please go directly to Question #51 on page 6.

36. When did you begin to host workshops in the Philadelphia area? ________ (mo)/________ (yr)

37. Why have you offered Argentine tango workshops in the Philadelphia area with guest teachers? _______

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________

38. Who have been the guest instructors that you brought in to teach workshops in the Philadelphia area since you began offering workshops? For each one, please list their name(s); the city, state/country where they are based; and when they have taught workshops here. Example: Brigitta Winkler, NYC, NY, Oct 2004

1. __________________________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________________________________________

4. __________________________________________________________________________________________

5. __________________________________________________________________________________________

6. __________________________________________________________________________________________

You are half way through the questionnaire. Keep on truckin’!
39. What content has been taught in the workshops you have hosted? (select all that apply)
- □ tango
- □ tango vals
- □ milonga
- □ tango nuevo
- □ Tango dance history
- □ tango music history
- □ tango music structure
- □ musicality for dancing

40. What embrace(s) has/have been taught in the workshops you have hosted?
- □ close embrace
- □ open embrace
- □ mixture/continuum of close & open embraces

41. Please describe the workshop series you have hosted since May 2005, if any. Include instructor name(s), the dates, and how many attended. Example: Angeles Chanaha & Michael Nadtochi, May 13, 2006, 20 dancers
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

42. At the most recent workshop series that you hosted, please indicate whether there were extra leaders or extra followers and how many. There were ___ extra leaders. There were ____ extra followers.

43. What were the fees for those most recent workshop series that you hosted? Example: $25 1 week ahead, $27 at door

44. How much did the artist(s) charge for the most recent workshop series that you hosted? Example: $600 for two workshops, which included 1 free tango demonstration

45. When you have offered intermediate or advanced level workshops, have you required that dancers who register be able to dance at an intermediate or advanced level? □ Yes □ No
If “Yes,” please continue to next question. If “No,” please go directly to Question #47 below.

46. If “Yes,” how have you implemented this policy?

47. If “No,” why have you decided not to implement a policy?

48. If you have hosted workshops since May of 2005, have you noticed changes or trends in students’ attendance, preferences/interests, behaviors, or other phenomena? □ Yes □ No □ Not applicable

49. If “yes,” what have you noticed? Please be as specific as possible.
50. What, if anything, would help you improve/enhance your capacity to offer Argentine tango workshops with guest instructors in the Philadelphia area? ____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

D. HOSTING MILONGAS

51. Have you ever hosted a milonga in the Philadelphia area? ○ Yes ○ No
If “Yes,” please continue to next question. If “No,” please go directly to Question #65 on page 8.

52. When did you begin hosting milongas in the Philadelphia area? (mo)/________ (yr)

53. Are you still hosting milongas in the Philadelphia area? ○ Yes ○ No
If “Yes,” please continue to next question. If “No,” please skip to Question #55 below.

54. Why do you continue hosting milongas in the Philadelphia area? ____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

55. Why did you stop hosting milongas in the Philadelphia area? ____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

56. What milongas did/do you host? Please list the name(s), the start month and year, the frequency (e.g., 1st Sunday of the month; OR 1-2 per year), and the studio name(s) and location(s). Please include milongas that are on temporary hiatus. Example: Tango Brunch, Jan 2006, 2nd Sunday, Atrium Studio, Pennsauken, NJ
a. ____________________________________________________
b. ____________________________________________________
c. ____________________________________________________
d. ____________________________________________________
e. ____________________________________________________

You are two-thirds of the way through the questionnaire. Great job! Not much more to go.
57. If you host weekly or monthly milongas, please complete one row for each milonga you host with data for the three-month period of March through May 2006. List the name, its frequency, average attendance for the three-month period, numbers of dancers leading and following, the price, and the % of non-traditional tango music that you played. (Use your definition of non-traditional tango music.) The first row in italics is an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Avg Attendance</th>
<th>Lead/ Follow</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>% Non-traditional Tango Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tango Brunch</td>
<td>2nd Sun of Month</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15 lead, 20 follow</td>
<td>$12</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58. Have the fee(s) changed over time for your milonga(s)?  ○ Yes  ○ No

59. If “Yes,” please describe how they have changed. __________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

60. If you indicated that you have played non-traditional tango music at your milongas, please give examples of your favorite artists and recordings. __________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

61. If your milonga(s) have unique or special characteristics, please list the milonga(s) name(s) and describe the characteristics. Example: Tango Brunch, 1-hour yoga warm-up, home-cooked full brunch, large wooden dance floor
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

62. During the past year at your milongas, have you noticed changes or trends in dancers’ attendance, preferences/interests, behaviors, or other phenomena?  ○ Yes  ○ No

63. If “yes,” what have you noticed? __________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
64. What, if anything, would help you improve/enhance your milongas in the Philadelphia area? __________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

E. THE FUTURE AND PAST OF ARGENTINE TANGO IN PHILADELPHIA
65. Imagine 5-10 years into the future. What would you ideally like to see happening in Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area? _____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

66. What plans do you have, if any, to make these changes occur? If your plans include collaborating with others, please describe who and the nature of your collaboration. _________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

67. Can you think of any individuals, businesses, colleges, or organizations that might want to help make these changes? _________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

68. If you could ask Argentine tango dancers in the Philadelphia area anything, what would you most like to know? (The researcher plans to conduct a survey in October 2006 and will invite all area dancers to participate.)
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

Only ¼ left to go. Your information will be extremely helpful.
What was your involvement (if any) in the following large Philadelphia area tango events? (For example: organized it, performed, DJed, helped publicize it, volunteered to teach at it, etc.)

69. ¡Tango Vivo! In 1997

70. Silvie Liberman Memorial Milonga in 2003

71. Dancing for Schools 2004

72. Dancing for Schools 2006

73. Do you know of other large past Argentine tango events in the Philadelphia area?  
   ☐ Yes  ☐ No

74. If “Yes,” what were their names and where and when did they take place?

75. To the best of your knowledge, when was the first Argentine tango milonga in the Philadelphia area?  
   ____ (month)/____ (year)

76. If any Argentine tango milongas took place in the Philadelphia area before the 1990s, please describe when, where, who was dancing, and what style(s) of tango they danced to the best of your knowledge.

F. DEMOGRAPHICS AND MISCELLANY

77. What is your gender?  ☐ Female  ☐ Male

78. What is your date of birth?  ____ (month)/____ (day)/______ (year)

79. What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?  
   (For example: Italian, Jamaican, African American, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian, and so on.)

You are nearly done. Just a few more questions.
80. Please indicate whether you have done the following dance and movement forms and, if so, for how long.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dance Form</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>1-6 Months</th>
<th>6-11 Months</th>
<th>1-2 Years</th>
<th>3-4 Years</th>
<th>More than 4 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>swing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ballroom (e.g., waltz, fox trot, quick step)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salsa, cha-cha-cha, rumba, and other Latin</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>folk</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>tap</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other form of dance not listed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tai chi</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>karate</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other martial art not listed</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yoga</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pilates</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Technique</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other body/mind practice not listed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

81. Indicate how important each of the following motivations are for why you work in Argentine tango.

- To contribute to the tango community
- To enhance my knowledge of tango
- To earn income / financial reasons
- To support my dance-related business
- To interact with people
- To enhance my physical life
- To enhance my mental life (e.g., intelligence)
- To enhance my emotional life (e.g., feelings)
- To enhance my spiritual life

82. Please list any other motivations not listed above for why you work in Argentine tango. ________________
83. On a separate piece of paper (that you will keep), please write your gross 2005 tango-related income generated in the Philadelphia area. What percentage of this income came from the following activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>none</th>
<th>1-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching group classes</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching private classes</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosting prácticas</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosting milongas</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running guest teacher workshops</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing tango tours</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling tango-related merchandise</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

84. What is your primary occupation? (For example: registered nurse, personnel manager, auto mechanic, accountant, veterinarian, lawyer, medical doctor, carpenter, dance instructor, visual artist, musician.)

_________________________________________________________________________________________

85. Where were you born?

- O In the United States – Print name of state ____________________________
- O Outside the United States – Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc. _______________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

86. How might the researcher make the results of this study available and useful to you and others in the Philadelphia area? ___________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

87. Is there anything else you would like to say about Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area? ___________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________

You have completed the questionnaire. Congratulations!

Please mail with your signed Consent Form by October 14, 2006 in the enclosed envelope to the address below.

Thank You!

Elizabeth M. Seyler * 119 Sumac Street, Philadelphia, PA 19128  * eseyler@temple.edu  * 215-487-6461

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APPENDIX D

PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Setting the Stage:
Turn off phones and make other arrangement so not interrupted for the next 40 minutes.

I am going to ask you questions about your internal experience of dancing tango. I invite you to
get in a position where you will be comfortable. For some, it is helpful to close one’s eyes in
order to recall the experience in detail. I will give you plenty of time to answer the questions, so
please relax and take as much time as you need.

1. Can you recall a time recently when you felt that you were really dancing tango?
   a. When and where was it?
   b. Do you remember what were you wearing?
   c. With whom were you dancing?
   d. What was it like to dance with him/her?

2. Tell me about the experience—what happened when you were really dancing tango?

3. What did your body feel like as you danced?
   a. What was your experience of the music?
   b. Do you recall any other specific sounds?
   c. Do you recall any specific aromas?
   d. Do you recall any specific sights?
   e. Had you been tasting anything before you danced?
   f. Do you recall any other sensations while you danced?

4. Do you remember having any feelings as you danced? If so, what feelings did you
   experience?
   a. Did you have feelings about yourself?
   b. Did you have feelings about your partner(s)?
   c. Did you have feelings about others or the world in general?

5. Do you have any particular memories of close embrace with your partner?

6. What was it is like when your partner did something different with his/her body from
   what you were doing?

7. What else were you aware of as you danced?

8. Please describe your state of mind while you danced.

9. Did any thoughts pass through your mind as you danced?

10. What does the word “spiritual” mean to you?

11. Was there anything spiritual about dancing tango for you?

12. Has dancing tango changed you or your life somehow?

13. Why do you dance tango now?

14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience of really dancing
    tango or dancing tango in general?
APPENDIX E

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHENOMENOLOGICAL JOURNALS AND JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Please journal in response to the following questions within twelve hours of attending a milonga in the Philadelphia area. Please journal about a time during that milonga when you felt that you were “really dancing tango.” Please type or print clearly, and please send me your journal in the attached envelope within two or three weeks of our interview. I will keep your journal confidential and secure, as described in the Consent Form, and I will return it to you after I defend my dissertation, currently scheduled for August 2007. Thank you.

1. Please write your name and today’s date at the top of the page.
2. When and where was the milonga you attended?
3. With whom were you dancing and what were you and your partner(s) wearing?
4. What was it like to dance with your partner(s)?
5. Please write about the experience—what happened when you were “really dancing tango”?
6. What did your body feel like as you danced?
7. What sensory experiences do you recall, including sounds, aromas, sights, tastes, or other sensations?
8. Do you remember having any feelings as you danced? If so, what feelings did you experience about yourself, your partner(s), and/or the world in general?
9. Do you have any particular memories of close embrace with your partner?
10. What was it is like when your partner did something different with his/her body from what you were doing?
11. What else were you aware of as you danced?
12. Please describe your state of mind while you danced.
13. Did any thoughts pass through your mind as you danced?
14. What does the word “spiritual” mean to you?
15. Was there anything spiritual about dancing for you?
16. Has dancing tango changed you or your life somehow?
17. Why do you dance tango?
18. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience of really dancing tango or dancing tango in general?
APPENDIX F

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CREATING VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

I invite you to create one or more visual representations of your experience of “really dancing tango.” Visual representations may allow you to describe elements of your experience that are not easy to express or understand through words.

Please base the visual representation(s) on the same moment of “really dancing tango” that you chose to describe in your journal. Feel free to create the representation(s) using any method or combination of methods you choose. Examples include drawing, painting, making sculpture, taking photographs, making models, and/or making collages.

Please send me your visual representation(s) along with your journals within two or three weeks of our interview. If your visual representation(s) cannot be sent by mail, please contact me and I will pick it or them up. I will keep your representation(s) confidential and secure, as described in the Consent Form, and I will return it/them to you along with your journal after I defend my dissertation, currently scheduled for August 2007.

Thank you.
APPENDIX G

SURVEY FOR PHILADELPHIA AREA ARGENTINE TANGO DANCERS
Survey of Argentine Tango Dancers in the Philadelphia Area

Online At: www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=812053012824

Survey Completion Deadline: Postmarked or entered on February 5, 2007

To Enter Raffle: Complete all questions with an asterisk (*). Details on last page.

Eligibility Requirements: You are eligible to take the survey if:
- you are aged 18 or older, AND
- you regularly dance or study Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area, AND
- you are NOT participating in this research project in another capacity.

You are NOT eligible if:
- you are younger than age 18, OR
- you are a tango instructor or event organizer who completed a questionnaire, OR
- you are a dancer who completed an interview, OR
- you do not regularly dance or study Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area.

The Philadelphia Area:
For the purposes of this survey, it includes Princeton, NJ, and all cities and towns in PA and NJ within a 20-mile radius of Center City, including Bensalem, Blue Bell, Camden, Cherry Hill, Collegeville, King of Prussia, Media, Pennsauken, and Trenton.

Survey Terms:
1. One survey per person.
2. You may share or discuss this survey with others who are eligible to take it or who have participated in this research in another capacity (questionnaire or interview).
3. Do not share or discuss this survey with those who are not eligible to participate in this research until after Elizabeth Seyler publishes her dissertation (approximately late 2007).
4. Do not duplicate this survey for any reason.

Directions:
Use a blue or black pen. Attach additional pages as needed. Completion time: 35-50 minutes, depending upon the length of your answers. Place completed paper surveys in the collection box (at milongas) or send to: Elizabeth Seyler, 119 Sumac St, Philadelphia, PA 19128.

Important Note:
The use of the word “tango” in this survey always refers to Argentine tango, not ballroom or international tango.

For Questions: Contact Elizabeth Seyler at eseyler@temple.edu or 215-432-1023
The Survey

*1. Are you eligible to take this survey?  ____Yes       ____No

*2. Do you agree to the Survey Terms?  More specifically, do you agree to share and discuss this survey ONLY with other tango dancers in the Philadelphia area who are eligible to participate in this research until Elizabeth Seyler publishes her dissertation (approximately late 2007)?  ____Yes       ____No

*3. Do you wish to take this survey?  ____Yes       ____No

IMPORTANT: If you answered “No” to any of the above questions, please put the survey in the box at milongas or send to Elizabeth Seyler by mail. Doing so will help her track response rates. Thank you.

*4. What is today’s date?  ____ (day) / _______________ (month) / ________ (year)

*5. Where do you currently live?  ________________________________, ______

   city/town                      state         zip code

A. YOUR TANGO DANCING

*6. When did you begin to learn to dance Argentine tango?  __________ (month)/__________ (year)
   (Estimate if you are not sure.)

*7. Where did you begin to learn to dance Argentine tango?  ________________ (city), ___________ (state/country)

*8. When did you begin to attend milongas?  __________ (month)/__________ (year)
   (Estimate if you are not sure.)

*9. Please rank the following factors according to how important they were in your choice to begin studying Argentine tango dancing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>extremely important</th>
<th>very important</th>
<th>important</th>
<th>somewhat important</th>
<th>not at all important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The dancing</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The music</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience/logistics</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional reasons (e.g., feelings)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental reasons (e.g., thoughts, intellect)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional or academic reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*10. What was the inspiration or inspiring moment that made you decide to learn to dance tango?  _________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________

473
*11. Please rank the following factors according to how important they are now in your tango dancing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The dancing</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The music</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience/logistics</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental/intellectual reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/academic reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial reasons</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*12. Please describe the two or three most important reasons why you dance tango now.

_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________

*13. Please indicate to what degree dancing tango has affected you in the following areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Made much better</th>
<th>Made better</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Made worse</th>
<th>Made much worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your physical health</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your emotional health (e.g., your feelings)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mental health (e.g., your thoughts or intellect)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your spiritual well-being</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your social life</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your work life (including academic pursuits)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your thoughts about yourself</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your feelings about yourself</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your behavior toward yourself</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your thoughts about other people</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your feelings about other people</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your behavior toward other people</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*14. On average, how much have you spent per month during the last three months on tango classes, prácticas, workshops, and milongas in the Philadelphia area? Estimate if you are not sure.

O $0-30       O $31-60       O $61-90       O $91-120       O $121-150       O $151-180       O more than $180
*15. How often have you attended the following tango activities in the Philadelphia area during the last three months? Estimate if you are not sure. If you have studied tango for less than 3 months, please answer the question for the number of months you have been studying tango.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>None per month</th>
<th>1 to 2 per month</th>
<th>3 to 4 per month</th>
<th>5 to 6 per month</th>
<th>7 to 8 per month</th>
<th>9 or more per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group classes</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private classes</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prácticas</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milongas</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*16. How often have you volunteered to cook, register attendees, help clean up, or do other things at milongas in the Philadelphia area during the last three months?

| O 0 per month | O 1-2 per month | O 3-4 per month | O 5-6 per month | O 7 or more per month |

*17. Please indicate how often you felt this way while dancing tango at milongas during the last three months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Every time or nearly every time</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
<th>Never or almost never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>healthy and strong</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creative</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connected to myself</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accepted</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncoordinated</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grateful</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pleased with how my body is functioning</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alert</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whole and peaceful</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trusting</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pleased with how my mind is working</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anxious</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connected to my partner</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competitive</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotionally balanced</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respected</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confused</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connected to the music</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexually aroused</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>altruistic</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intimidated</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appreciated</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alone and separate</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connected to a transcendent, spiritual dimension</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*18. Are you pleased with the tango instruction that is available in the Philadelphia area?  O Yes  O No
If “Yes,” please skip the next question and go to Question #20. If “No,” please go to the next question.

19. If “No,” what changes would you like in tango instruction in the Philadelphia area? ________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

*20. Has dancing tango changed you or your life somehow?  O Yes  O No
If “Yes,” please go to the next question. If “No,” please skip the next question and go to Question #22.

21. If Yes,” please describe the two or three most important ways in which dancing tango has changed you
or your life.__________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

*22. How often have you danced in the following roles and with the following people at milongas in the
Philadelphia area during the last three months?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Every time or almost every time</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
<th>Never or almost never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I danced as a leader</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I danced as a follower</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I danced with dancers who are at least 10 years older than I</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I danced with dancers who are at least 10 years younger than I</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I danced with beginners</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I danced with intermediate dancers</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I danced with advanced dancers</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I danced with men</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I danced with women</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*23. What qualities do you value most in a tango dance partner? Please indicate whether you are speaking as a leader and/or as a follower. ________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
*24. What kinds of relationships have you developed with people whom you have met through dancing tango in the Philadelphia area?  
O friend(s)  O business partner(s)/colleagues(s)  O romantic date(s) or partner(s)  O spouse(s)

*25. Through dancing tango in the Philadelphia area, have you become more accepting or tolerant of people who are different from you?  
O Yes  O No  
If “Yes,” please go to the next question. If “No,” please skip the next question and go to Question #27.

26. If “Yes,” please think of a few people toward whom you have become more accepting or tolerant, then describe how tango has helped you to make this change (without naming names).  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________

*27. For some, dancing tango can be a meditative experience. For the purposes of this survey, "meditative" is defined as the quality one reaches upon making a choice to focus one's attention in the present, to not judge, to not strive, and to accept whatever happens from moment to moment. How often is tango meditative in this way for you?  
If you never lead or never follow, select “Not applicable” in the corresponding rows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Every time or almost every time</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
<th>Never or almost never</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I am leading, dancing tango is meditative</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am following, dancing tango is meditative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*28. Has your experience of dancing tango changed over time?  
O Yes  O No  
If “Yes,” please go to the next question. If “No,” please go to Question #30.

29. If “Yes,” please describe two or three key ways in which your experience of dancing tango has changed over time.  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________  
____________________________________________________________________________________________
30. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about how dancing tango affects you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enhances how my body functions</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improves my mental abilities</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps me to be more patient</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes me less able to interact with others</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhances how I feel emotionally</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps me to be more accepting</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes me physically tired and rundown</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps me to be more compassionate</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhances the way my mind works</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reminds me that there is more to life than material things</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhances my sense of spiritual well-being</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhances my social life</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improves my physical health</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps me understand why I am here in this life</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes me feel negative emotions</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps me grow mentally</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adds to my sense of wonder and respect for life</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improves my ability to interact with others</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creates confusion about my religious or spiritual beliefs</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps me grow emotionally</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduces my mental capacity</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps me to make the world a better place</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes me feel positive emotions</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhances how I experience a transcendent, spiritual dimension of life</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** You are 2/3 of the way through the survey. Just a little more to help shape our tango community. **
*31. Please rank the following factors according to how important they are in your choice to attend (or not attend) a milonga in the Philadelphia area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>traditional tango music</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alternative or nuevo tango music</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>live tango music</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly instrumental music with little or no singing</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mostly music with singing; little that is just instrumental</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wooden floor</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traditional tango dancing</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuevo tango dancing</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small space to dance where close embrace and small movements are more appropriate</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large space to dance with room for open embrace and big movements</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good floor craft – leaders navigate to keep couples flowing well in the space without cutting off or bumping into others</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friendly, welcoming atmosphere</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within 10 miles of my home zip code</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>off-street parking</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convenient access to public transportation</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a full meal of some kind (buffet)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light refreshments</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wine and other alcoholic beverages</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low price ($15 or less)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day (10am to 5pm)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evening (5pm to 8:30pm)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>night (8:30pm to 1am or later)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all-night (9pm to 5 or 6am)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weekdays</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weekends</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*32. What two or three things would improve milongas in the Philadelphia area the most? 

_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
*33. Please indicate how many times you have danced in cities outside the Philadelphia area in the last two years. If you have been dancing tango for less than 2 years, please answer the question for the amount of time you have been dancing tango.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>1 to 2</th>
<th>3 to 4</th>
<th>5 to 6</th>
<th>7 to 8</th>
<th>9 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providence, RI</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle, WA</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other U.S. Cities</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Canadian Cities</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Cities outside the U.S. &amp; Canada</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. THE FUTURE OF TANGO IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA

*34. Imagine 5-10 years into the future. What would you ideally like to see happening in tango in the Philadelphia area? Please be as specific as possible. ______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

*35. Please suggest individuals, businesses, colleges, or organizations that might want to help make these changes. ______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________


**C. DEMOGRAPHICS AND MISCELLANY**

**36. Please indicate whether you have done the following dance and movement forms and for how long.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dance Form</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Less than 1 year</th>
<th>1 to 2 years</th>
<th>3 to 4 years</th>
<th>5 to 6 years</th>
<th>More than 6 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>swing</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ballroom/Latin</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salsa</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>folk</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modern</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ballet</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improvisation</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contact improvisation</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flamenco</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tap</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other form of dance not listed</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tai chi</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karate</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other martial art not listed</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yoga</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pilates</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Technique</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feldenkrais Method®</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other body/mind/spirit practice not listed</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**37. Please select any dance or movement forms that you are doing now in addition to tango.**

- O None
- O Swing
- O Ballroom/Latin
- O Salsa
- O Folk
- O Flamenco
- O Tap
- O Modern
- O Ballet
- O Improvisation
- O Contact improvisation
- O Other dance form not listed
- O Tai Chi
- O Karate
- O Other martial art not listed
- O Yoga
- O Pilates
- O Alexander Technique
- O Feldenkrais Method®
- O Other body/mind/spirit practice not listed

**38. Is there anything unique about dancing tango compared to other dances that you’ve done?**

- O Yes
- O No

If Yes,” please go to the next question. If “No,” please go to Question #40.

**39. If “Yes,” please describe what makes dancing tango unique compared to other dances you’ve done.**

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________
*40. What is your gender?  ○ Female  ○ Male

*41. What is your Date of Birth?  ____ (month)/ ____ (day)/ ____ (year)

*42. What is your marital status?
○ Never married  ○ Now married  ○ Widowed  ○ Divorced  ○ Separated

*43. What is the highest degree or level of school you have COMPLETED?  Fill in ONE circle.  If currently enrolled, mark the previous grade or highest degree received.
○ Nursery school to 6th grade  ○ 7th grade or 8th grade  ○ Some high school, but no diploma
○ High school graduate – high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
○ Some college credit, but less than 1 year  ○ 1 or more years of college, no degree
○ Associate degree (for example: AA, AS)  ○ Bachelor’s degree (for example: BA, AB, BS)
○ Master’s degree (for example: MA, MA, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
○ Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
○ Doctorate degree (for example: EdD, PhD)

*44. What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?
(For example: Italian, Jamaican, African American, Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian, and so on.)

*45. Where were you born?
○ In the United States – Print name of state
○ Outside the United States – Print name of foreign country, or Puerto Rico, Guam, etc.

*46. Do you have any conditions that make dancing tango CHALLENGING for you?  ○ Yes  ○ No
If “Yes,” please go to the next question.  If “No,” please go to Question #52.

47. If “Yes,” what allows you to dance tango regardless of or in spite of this condition or these conditions?

____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

*48. What is your primary occupation?  (For example: registered nurse, personnel manager, auto mechanic, accountant, veterinarian, lawyer, medical doctor, carpenter, dance instructor, visual artist, musician.)

*49. What was your gross household income in 2005?  Include wages, salary, commissions, bonuses or tips, NET income from self-employment, interest, dividends, net rental income, royalty income, income from estates and trusts, social security, public assistance, pensions, unemployment compensation, child support, and alimony.
○ less than $20,000  ○ $60,001 to $70,000  ○ $110,001 to $120,000
○ $20,001 to $30,000  ○ $70,001 to $80,000  ○ $120,001 to $130,000
○ $30,001 to $40,000  ○ $80,001 to $90,000  ○ $130,001 to $140,000
○ $40,001 to $50,000  ○ $90,001 to $100,000  ○ $140,001 to $150,000
○ $50,001 to $60,000  ○ $100,001 to $110,000  ○ more than $150,000
*50. What is your sexual orientation?  ○ Heterosexual  ○ Lesbian  ○ Gay  ○ Bisexual

*51. What is your political party affiliation?  ○ Democrat  ○ Republican  ○ No party affiliation
○ Other party – Please print name of party (clearly): ____________________________________________________

*52. What is your faith tradition or traditions? Select all that apply.
○ Atheist  ○ Buddhist  ○ Christian (Catholic)  ○ Christian (Protestant)
○ Christian (Other)  ○ Hindu  ○ Interfaith  ○ Jewish
○ Muslim  ○ Native Peoples  ○ Pagan  ○ Taoist
○ Self-designed spirituality  ○ Other – Please print name of faith clearly: __________________________________

*53. How might the researcher make the results of this study useful to you and others?
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________

54. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience of dancing tango in the Philadelphia area?
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank You!

* * * * * * * * * * * *

The Raffle

If you submit or mail a completed survey by midnight on Monday, February 5, 2007, you may enter a raffle to win one of three thank-you gifts:
• First Prize: an $80 gift certificate from The Rosin Box dance shoe store in Philadelphia
• Second Prize: a $60 gift certificate from the White Dog Café in West Philadelphia
• Third Prize: a $40 gift certificate from Borders Books and Music

To Enter: Please list a phone number where we may contact you: ______________________________

Winners will be randomly selected in February 2007.

Please note: You must answer every question that has an asterisk (*) next to the question number in order to be eligible for the raffle.

Raffle Details: Winning a prize will not compromise your anonymity on the survey. No attempt will be made to link prize winners with their survey results. The researcher will use the phone numbers only for raffle purposes. The researcher will give the list of phone numbers to an administrator in the Temple Department of Dance who will use the numbers to randomly select and contact three raffle winners in February of 2007. The administrator will be someone who does not participate in the local tango community and who will not attempt to identify you by your phone number. He/she will not have access to any other survey data. If you win one of the prizes, the administrator will invite you to pick up your gift certificate at the Temple Department of Dance office or have it sent to an address of your choice.
Hello Tango Friends,

How are you? It feels like forever since we last spoke, laughed, and enjoyed dancing together. I hope this finds you well, happy, and keeping warm.

Up here in the snowy tundra, I've been living at my computer and working hard on the dissertation. Six chapters done and two small ones to go! It's going very well and is truly a labor of love. I write you today for two reasons.

First, I'll be in Philly March 13-18, and it would be lovely to see you at the milongas -- UCAL, Tango Brunch, and Milonga en Casa, at the very least!

Second, I would like to send you the transcript of our interview on your experience of dancing tango from last winter. Is your address still the same as it was then? If there's any doubt, please send your current address.

I would also be happy to send it to you by email. The transcripts are all in MSWord and range in length from 18-27 pages.

Briefly, I seek your OK on the contents of your interview as I work with it to craft the next chapter. I'll send a letter that describes in more detail what that means.

Thank you again for participating in my research. It has been a joy to revisit our interview. Your words are honest, insightful, and a pleasure to read. I am truly blessed to be doing this work!

I hope to see you soon. Call any time with questions or just to say hi. I'd love to hear from you.

Abrazos.
-Elizabeth

802-862-2833 home
215-432-1023 cell
Hi ____,

Attached is our interview for your review. I will email your journal entry soon, too, for the same kind of review as the transcript, but I wanted to get the transcript to you right away.

As a reminder, in the chapter, I will describe you in ways that maintain your anonymity, and I will use pseudonyms for you and anyone you mentioned. Mostly, I will focus on themes that arose among all the interviews. I will give you a chance to edit the chapter prior to publication to ensure that your anonymity was protected.

I seek two things from you as you review the transcript.
* Corrections in punctuation or wording that would clarify your ideas.
* Flagging of statements that you don’t want used at all, if any.

Note that while your experience of dancing tango may have changed since last winter, the interview is still useful and valid for the kind of chapter I’m writing, which is about your in-the-moment experiences. If you like, you may comment (in a separate file) on how your experience of tango has changed since the interview, but this is completely optional.

To indicate changes/edits, please use one of these methods:
* The “Track Changes” feature of MSWord. Call me if you’d like help with this. It’s very easy to use.
* Via email by referencing page numbers
* On hard copy

I would greatly appreciate hearing from you by March 30, and sooner would be fabulous. If I don’t hear from you by March 30, 2008, I will assume that I have your blessing to use the transcript as it is.

Thanks again for participating. I welcome any questions or comments. See you soon!
-Elizabeth

802-862-2833 home
215-432-1023 cell
520 North St, Burlington, VT 05401
APPENDIX J

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS
Dear Tango Dancers,

My deepest thanks to everyone who participated in the survey in January and February of 2007. One hundred and three people completed it (eight on paper and ninety-five online), which was a wonderful response rate out of about four hundred local tango dancers. Though I cannot share most of the results publicly until my dissertation has been approved by my doctoral committee (probably winter 2008), here are selected results that you may find interesting. Please note that these results represent only the people who responded to the survey; they are not intended to represent the entire local tango community. I hope you enjoy reading, and please feel free to contact me with questions or comments.

-Elizabeth M. Seyler, doctoral candidate, Temple University, March 2007
eseyler@temple.edu, 215-432-1023

SUMMARY

Respondents to this survey were very diverse in terms of marital status, country of origin, faith tradition, occupation, level of education, and years dancing tango. Approximately one-third of respondents were married, one-third were divorced, and one-quarter had never married. Approximately two-thirds were born in the continental U.S. and one-third were born outside the continental U.S. in countries in Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Europe, India, Indochina, the Middle East, North America, and South America. Respondents represented more than fifteen faith traditions, worked in seventy-two occupations, and had educations ranging from high school diplomas to doctoral degrees. Some had danced tango for a few months, and others for more than ten years, with forty percent having danced for one to four years. Respondents were less diverse in their ages, with about two-thirds in their fifties and sixties, one-quarter in their thirties or forties, and very few younger than thirty or older than seventy. Nearly half of respondents were Democratic and about one-third had no party affiliation. Finally, the ratio of women to men was approximately two to one. Following is more detailed information on these demographic data.

Gender: Approximately twice as many women as men completed (or nearly completed) the survey: 67 women (62%) and 39 men (36%) (n = 108) *

Age: The mean (average) age of respondents was 51, the median (mid-point) age was 54, and the mode (most common response) age was 58. The numbers of respondents by age category was: 1 teenager, 8 in their twenties, 10 in their thirties, 13 in their forties, 44 in their fifties, 22 in their sixties, and 3 in their seventies (n = 101)

Age by Gender: When comparing the ages of respondents by gender, women were a few years younger than men. For women, the mean was 50, the median was 54, and the mode was 58. For men, the mean was 53, the median was 56, and the mode was 62.

Marital status: 24 never married (23%), 38 were now married (36%), 34 were divorced (32%), 4 were separated (4%), and 6 were widowed (6%) (n = 106)
Country of origin: 76 respondents were born in the continental U.S. (72%), and 30 were born outside of the continental U.S. (28%). (n = 106)

Where respondents were born outside of the continental U.S., organized by region:

- Africa – Oran, Algeria (1)
- Asia – China (1); Hong Kong (1); Philippines (3)
- Eurasia – Istanbul, Turkey (2)
- Europe (country was not specified) (1)
- Eastern Europe – Poland (1); Russia (1); Soviet Union (1)
- India (2)
- Indochina – Vietnam (1)
- Mediterranean (country was not specified) (1)
- Middle East – Syria (1)
- South America – Argentina (1); Colombia (1); Venezuela (1)
- Western Europe – France (2); Greece (2); Italy (3); Netherlands (1); Switzerland (1)

Faith tradition: Respondents represented more than fifteen faiths, and the three most frequently listed were Catholic (27), self-designed spirituality (25), and Protestant (23). (n = 103)

- Atheist (10)
- Agnostic (2)
- Buddhist (3)
- Christian—Catholic (27)
- Christian—Protestant (23)
- Christian—Other (7)
- Hindu (2)
- Interfaith (4)
- Jewish (12)
- Muslim (1)
- Native Peoples (2)
- Pantheist (1)
- Pagan (4)
- Quaker (1)
- Quaker sympathizer—not affiliated with any meeting or church (1)
- Russian orthodox (1)
- Taoist (5)
- Self-designed spirituality (25)
- Twelve-step (1)

One person wrote “I believe in God,” another wrote “humanity,” and a third wrote “tango/dancing is my new belief!” Ten people chose “none,” and one wrote “prefer not to label this.”

Education: More than half of respondents hold master’s, professional, or doctoral degrees (54 people or 50%), and about one-third hold bachelor’s degrees (36 people or 34%). (n = 106)

- 3 (3%) – High School graduate – high school diploma or equivalent (for example: GED)
- 3 (3%) – Some college credit, but less than 1 year
- 3 (3%) – 1 or more years of college, no degree
- 7 (7%) – Associate degree (for example: AA, AS)
- 36 (34%) – Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, AB, BS)
- 30 (28%) – Master's degree (for example: MA, MA, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
- 10 (9%) – Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
- 14 (13%) – Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

Political party affiliation: 47 respondents were Democrats, 10 were Republicans, 39 had no party affiliation, and 7 listed “other,” including 3 Independents, 1 Libertarian, and 3 who wrote that they vote based on the candidates. (n = 103)
**Occupation:** Respondents listed 72 distinct occupations overall, and I grouped them into the following categories. Following are the total numbers of respondents who reported occupations in each category.  
(n=102)

20 – art and architecture, including visual artists, musicians, designers, and dance managers
12 – business, including executives, accountants, a secretary, sole proprietors, an inventor, contractors, and a salesperson
6 – computer science, including computer programmers, software engineers, and consultants
2 – construction – a builder/business owner and a carpenter/contractor
5 – education – professors and teachers
3 – engineering, including biomedical and electrical engineers
19 – health care, including physicians, psychologists, nurses, counselors, and health care managers
2 – law – a lawyer and a paralegal
6 – research and science, including chemists and clinical researchers
6 – students
5 – retirees
16 – other, including development, firefighting, writing and editing, insurance, real estate, currency trading, and being a single parent

**Years Dancing Tango:** I calculated the number of years that respondents had danced tango based on the end-point of 2/19/2007 (the deadline for submitting the survey). The mean number of years respondents had danced was 3.92, the median was 3, and the mode was 3. The mean was nearly one year higher than the median and mode because 13 respondents (12%) had danced tango for 10 years or more, which served to raise the average. 29 respondents (26%) had danced for 5 to 9 years, 46 (41%) had danced for 1 to 4 years, and 24 (21%) had danced for less than 1 year.  
(n = 112)

**BACKGROUND AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

The “Survey of Argentine Tango Dancers in the Philadelphia Area” was conducted in January and February of 2007 as part of Elizabeth M. Seyler’s doctoral dissertation research on Argentine tango dancing in the Philadelphia area. This summary document provides preliminary selected results and is intended only for the personal interest of local tango dancers. It is not intended as a complete analysis of the survey nor should it be cited online or in any publications. The researcher will present detailed survey analysis in her dissertation, due to be completed in early 2008. For more information about this survey or the larger research project or to request a copy of the completed dissertation, please contact Élizabeth at eseyler@temple.edu or 215-432-1023. Thank you.

* Some people completed only a portion of the survey, so the total number of respondents is different for each question. (Though 142 people logged onto the survey site, only 103 completed it through question number 18, and only 95 completed the entire survey.) For each topic (gender, age, etc.), I list the total number of respondents so that the reader knows upon what numbers I based calculations of percentages. I do not calculate percentages for questions with n ≤ 105 because the percentages would be very close to the actual numeric values.
APPENDIX K

RECERTIFICATIONS OF APPROVALS FOR PROJECTS INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
Research Review Committee B

Recertification of Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Number: **10394**

PI: **MEGLIN, JOELLEN**

Expires On: 19-Sep-2009

Committee: B BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Department: DANCE (2232)

Project Title: Crafting the History of Argentine Tango in the Phila. Area: Questionnaire for the Instructors and Event Organizers

Based on a review of your status report, the Institutional Review Board hereby re-approves protocol number **10394**, originally approved on 22-Sep-2006, for the period ending 19-Sep-2009.

* Original Review Date: 22-Sep-2006 *

Re-Review Date: 19-Sep-2008

It is understood that it is the investigators responsibility to notify the Committee immediately of any untoward results of this study to permit review of the matter. In such case, the investigator should call Richard Throm at 707-8757.

ZEBULON KENDRICK, Ph.D.
CHAIRMAN, IRB
Recertification of Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Number: 10570
PI: MEGLIN, JOELEN
Expires On: 19-Nov-2009
Committee: B BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
Department: DANCE (2232)
Project Title: SURVEY OF ARGENTINE TANGO DANCERS IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA

Based on a review of your status report, the Institutional Review Board hereby re-approves protocol number 10570, originally approved on 22-Nov-2006, for the period ending 19-Nov-2009.

* Original Review Date: 11-Oct-2006 *
Re-Review Date: 22-Oct-2008

It is understood that it is the investigator's responsibility to notify the Committee immediately of any untoward results of this study to permit review of the matter. In such case, the investigator should call Richard Throm at 707-8757.

ZEBULON KENDRICK, Ph.D.
CHAIRMAN, IRB
Recertification of Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Number: 10569
PI: MEGLIN, JOELLEN
Expires On: 24-Oct-2009
Committee: B BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
Department: DANCE (2232)
Project Title: PHENOMPHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ARGENTINE TANGO DANCERS IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA

Based on a review of your status report, the Institutional Review Board hereby re-approves protocol number 10569, originally approved on 27-Oct-2006, for the period ending 24-Oct-2009

* Original Review Date: 27-Oct-2006 *
Re-Review Date: 10-Oct-2008

It is understood that it is the investigator’s responsibility to notify the Committee immediately of any untoward results of this study to permit review of the matter. In such case, the investigator should call Richard Throm at 707-8757.

ZEBULON KENDRICK, Ph.D.
CHAIRMAN, IRB

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APPENDIX L

CONSENT FORMS
Consent Form
for "Crafting the History of Argentine Tango in the Philadelphia Areal: A Questionnaire for Instructors and Event Organizers"

Principal Investigator: Professor Joellen Meglin, Ph.D.
Department of Dance, 215-204-6284, jmeglin@temple.edu

Student Investigator: Elizabeth M. Seyler, M.Ed., Doctoral Student
Department of Dance, 215-487-6461 home, 215-432-1023 cell, eseyler@temple.edu

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are an Argentine tango instructor and/or organizer of Argentine tango events in the Philadelphia area. Through this study, I wish to learn about the history of Argentine tango in the Philadelphia area, including your dance training, when and why you began your tango activities, the classes and/or events you run, your observations of local dancers, and your hopes for the future of tango in the Philadelphia area.

I will use only one research method with you: the attached questionnaire to be completed in August 2006. I may request a short follow-up telephone conversation in September 2006 for clarification of meaning. As a token of my gratitude, I will send you a $10 gift certificate to Barnes and Noble Booksellers upon receiving your completed questionnaire.

I do not expect that you will experience any physical or emotional risks, discomforts, or inconveniences as a result of participating in this study. You may receive benefits in the form of new understanding and/or insights from completing the questionnaire. Before I publish, you will have the opportunity to read and edit text relating to your questionnaire.

The data you provide will be held in the strictest confidence. All original questionnaires will be stored in a locked file drawer in my home, and no one but I and my academic advisor will have access to them. I will shred them after five years. In anything I write for public readership, I will use pseudonyms to ensure your anonymity.

Your participation in this study is on a voluntary basis, and you may refuse to participate at any time without consequence or prejudice.

Questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to Richard Throm, Program Manager and Coordinator of the Office of the Vice President for Research at Temple University, at 215-707-8757.

I welcome questions about the study at any time.

Signing your name below indicates that you have read and understand the contents of this Consent Form and that you agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Signature ___________________________ Date ________________

Participant's Name (printed) ___________________________ IRB (COMMITTEE B) ________________

SEP 22 2006
VALID FOR MORE THAN ONE YEAR

Investigator's Signature ___________________________
For the purposes of this questionnaire, "the Philadelphia area" includes Princeton, NJ, and all cities and towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey within a 20-mile radius of Center City, including Blue Bell, Camden, Cherry Hill, Collegeville, King of Prussia, and Media.
Consent Form
For "Phenomenological Study of Argentine Tango Dancers in the Philadelphia Area"

Principal Investigator: Professor Joellen Meglin, Ph.D.
Department of Dance, 215-204-6284, jmeglin@temple.edu

Student Investigator: Elizabeth M. Seyler, M.Ed., Doctoral Candidate
Department of Dance, 215-487-6461 home, 215-432-1023 cell, eseyler@temple.edu

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are an Argentine tango dancer in the Philadelphia area and you are aged 18 or older. I wish to interview you about your lived experience of dancing tango, meaning your sensory experiences, feelings, thoughts, and what tango means to you.

I will use two or three research methods with you in October and November of 2006: 1) a face-to-face, tape-recorded interview; 2) journaling that you complete on your own; and 3) a visual representation of your experience of dancing tango (optional). As a token of my gratitude, I will send you a $25 gift certificate to Barnes and Noble Booksellers upon completion of the interview and receipt of your journal and visual representation (if you choose to create one).

I do not expect that you will experience any physical or emotional risks, discomforts, or inconveniences as a result of participating in this study, and you may receive benefits in the form of new understanding and/or insights.

The data you provide will be held in the strictest confidence. Your identity will be kept confidential, I will use a pseudonym to ensure your anonymity, and you will have the opportunity to read and edit text related to your interview, journal, and visual representation before I publish my dissertation or any part thereof. I will store interview tapes and transcripts, journals, and visual representations in a locked cabinet in my home. I will return journals and visual representations to you after the Temple Graduate College accepts my dissertation some time between May and September 2007. I will keep my copies of journals, interview tapes, and interview transcripts in a locked cabinet in my home until I destroy them no later than five years after the Temple Graduate College accepts my dissertation.

Your participation in this study is on a voluntary basis, and you may refuse to participate at any time without consequence or prejudice.

Questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to Richard Throm, Program Manager and Coordinator of the Office of the Vice President for Research at Temple University, at 215-707-8757. I welcome questions about the study at any time.

Signing your name below indicates that you have read and understand the contents of this Consent Form and that you agree to take part in this study.

[Participant's Signature]  [Date]

[Participant's Name (printed)]

[Investigator's Signature]  [Date]

[Student Investigator's Signature]  [Date]