Constructing Community: The Symbols of Social Power in Competitive Clogging in the Intermountain West of the United States

Gary J. Larsen

Supervisor: Dr Catherine E. Foley

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Abstract

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This study, one of the few academic analyses of the socio-cultural aspects of contemporary competitive clogging, briefly summarises the history of group clogging from its rural beginnings in the Southeastern Appalachian Mountains to one of its many contemporary manifestations, that of competitive clogging in the Intermountain West of the United States. During its journey from a rural, local expression to a national practice, clogging experienced processes of standardisation, institutionalisation, transformation, appropriation and competition. These processes were influenced by cultural brokers, individuals and organisations that variously exerted social power in shaping the history, traditions, technique and the participatory and performative contexts of the dance.

This objective of this study is to examine the America On Stage (AOS) organisation as a cultural broker by investigating its efforts to build and maintain a community of clog dancers in the Intermountain West. The principal findings of this study are grounded in the understanding that AOS is a competition-sanctioning organisation with stated motivations of spreading clogging and strengthening dance studios in the Intermountain West. In order to achieve success in these aims, AOS undertakes deliberate activities and initiatives to promote, stabilise, and energise perceptions of community and membership among participants. These include: 1) the creation and distribution of symbolic representations of identity, 2) the sponsorship of the means of production and mise en scène for pragmatic performance (competition), 3) the dissemination of culturally significant aesthetics through the All-Around Solo programme, and 4) the assignment of value to symbolic representations delivered therein (adjudication).

As a cultural broker, AOS succeeds in creating an expansive, cohesive community in many ways; the appealing iconography it projects both internally and externally attracts young, technology-savvy dancers, and its awards structure is particularly motivating. However, AOS policies are limited in other significant ways, including: 1) an institutionalised aesthetic and loss of regional diversity 2) the hierarchisation of competition 3) limited, sustained social interaction and ‘mutually affirming engagement’, and 4) an absence of recreational options that enable enduring participation and community reification.
Declaration

The work described in this thesis is, except where otherwise indicated, entirely that of the author and has not been previously published or submitted in any part for a degree at this or any other University.

Signed:

Gary J. Larsen

Date:
Acknowledgement

There are so many individuals that have earned my gratitude for their role in the completion of this work. It would be impossible to remember and acknowledge each individual that touched my life and influenced this work during its various phases, so I will not attempt a comprehensive list. However, there are many whom I wish to recognise formally.

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Dedication

To Mom and Dad, for sacrificing so much to help me to succeed and follow my dreams.
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List of Abbreviations

AOS – America On Stage
CLOG – National Clogging Organisation, formerly the Clogging Leaders of Georgia.
CCA – Clogging Champions of America
NCHC – National Clogging and Hoedown Council
BYU – Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah
LDS – The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.
WSD – Western Square Dance
ACHF – America’s Clogging Hall of Fame
AAU – Amateur Athletic Union
DT – Double Toe
Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis investigates a community of dancers in the Western United States participating in competitive American clogging. It focuses on issues of appropriation, cultural identity, standardisation, social power, and the creation and development of community, particularly regarding organisational behaviour and cultural performance. It examines the relationship between a governing body, which produces and sanctions interactive community events, and the participants at these events. This chapter introduces the clogging community being studied and my location within it, the topic, the research question, the rationale, and investigative methodologies.

1.1 Introduction: Clogging as Expressive Culture

Clogging and clog dancing are terms used to identify multiple current and historical practices of foot-percussive dance found throughout Europe and North America. American clogging (often referred to as Appalachian clogging) is the result of the cross-pollination of various early European immigrant, Native American, and African slave music and dance elements in the Southern Appalachian Mountain region of the United States (highlighted in Figure 1). The most distinctive feature of the diverse practices of American clogging is the rhythmic beating, brushing, sliding and tapping of the feet upon the floor. This characteristic embeds American clogging within the larger body of percussive step dancing styles known by many names throughout Western Europe and North America. For the purposes of this study, and unless otherwise noted, the term ‘clogging’ will be used to identify the American or Appalachian style of clog dancing and its derivatives.

The historical development of clogging is delineated in depth in Chapter 3, but the following is a succinct description of the dance for introductory purposes. From the beginning of its existence as a cultural movement expression, clogging has undergone numerous significant phases of transformation, appropriation, exportation, and urbanisation (Hall 1985, Jamieson 2015, Spalding 1995 and 2013, Whisnant 1983). The earliest manifestations of foot-percussive dancing in the Southern Appalachian Mountain region had neither common name nor widespread practice. They were extremely diverse, improvisational, solo expressions that borrowed heavily from dance
traditions imported in the 18th and 19th century by mainly Irish, English, and Scottish settlers of these rural mountain communities (see Chapter 3.1).

Figure 1. Map of the United States. Southern Appalachian mountain region highlighted (added by the author). The Appalachian Mountain Range runs roughly parallel to the eastern seaboard of the United States in a Southwest to Northeast direction, from Northern Georgia to Eastern Canada. The original image was found at: http://www.docstoc.com/docs/2386312/Blank-US-Map accessed 12 Oct 2012.

The earliest accounts of clogging note the multi-generational, communal nature of rural Appalachian dance. Parents taught children and neighbours learned from neighbours, on back porches, at seasonal festivals and other local social events in the small towns and hillside settlements of the Appalachian region (Callaway 1999, Jamieson 2015, Lawson 1982, Queen personal interview, 2003). Prior to the 20th century, social dancing among the inhabitants of the region generally consisted of two separate practices: rhythmic solo footwork displays and social figure dances. Performed solo and improvisationally to a rhythm set by the clapping hands or strumming fiddle, the footwork form expressed codes of freedom, self-reliance, and energetic exuberance. The rhythmic percussive footwork could be practised with or without instrumental accompaniment, but was often accompanied by what has become known as ‘old-time’ or ‘bluegrass’ music, which features instruments such as the dulcimer and banjo joining the guitar and the fiddle with tunes reminiscent of those imported by Irish, English, and Scottish settlers (Knowles 2002, Spalding 1995).

Danced at the same social events, the group dances were composed of intertwining figures that celebrated familial and communal relations. The social dance protocols
associated with them, like those of their Western European ancestry, emphasised community and camaraderie through intertwining patterns of interaction and interdependence. The significance of the male and female partnership in the dance confirmed the value associated with gender and marital roles central to the Christian attitudes prevalent among the European immigrants (Feintuch 1981). Both the solo percussive and the group figure dances held significant shared values as part of a wider display of community interaction.

In the late 1920s, clogging’s solo, percussive footwork patterns, still highly improvisational and uncodified in nature, were added to the existing social, square and round dances (Duke 1984, Matthews-DeNatale 1995, Spalding 1995, Smith F. 1955), and performed at local gatherings (Chapter 3.2). At that time, the rapidly expanding interstate highway system and the tourism it facilitated in Appalachia prompted the emergence of rural dance festivals and competitions throughout the region. The percussive footwork dance and its emerging group partner context began to be performed and taught throughout the Appalachian region. During the next few decades, the term ‘clogging’ became widely recognised as the name of the dance, and the dance gained cross-continental exposure and popularity through mass media and the creation of national organisations (Devin 1993, Lawson 1982). The 1970s witnessed the emergence of organising bodies attempting to define, present and codify the culturally expressive performance of clogging to facilitate instructional and competitive interaction between groups from different regions. In the mid-1980s, clogging groups and individuals emerged in locations outside the geographical Appalachian homeland, and formed their own regional clogging organisations.

As clogging spread to other locations outside the Southern Appalachian region, the movement vocabulary, technique, theme, and accompaniment initially remained insular, dominated by the rural, ‘Appalachian’ aesthetic of ‘country western’ attire (bib overalls or plaid shirts and blue jeans for men, and short, fluffy skirts and petticoats for women), ‘old style music’ (featuring vernacular instruments like the banjo and harmonica), and the basic ‘drag-slide’ movement described in Chapter 3.3. Eventually, within this growing national community of clog dancers, the status of and connection to rural Appalachia began to decline (see Chapter 3.4). Influenced by ‘cultural brokers’ (Young 1976) or ‘change agents’ (Whisnant 1983) adhering to specific sociocultural or economic motivations, the power and spread of mass media, the cross-training of
dancers, and the incentivising nature of competition, some clog dancers began to appropriate movement from other dance genres like tap, hip-hop, jazz, and Irish dance. Currently, clogging is practised in multiple locations around the world\textsuperscript{1} and includes a wide variety of movement practices, themes, costuming, footwear, and modes of communal participation.

America On Stage (also referred to hereafter as AOS) is the only clogging organising and competition-sanctioning body headquartered outside the Appalachian homeland, founded in a region broadly referred to as the Intermountain West\textsuperscript{2} (Figure 2). It has been the most progressive of the four major organisational bodies (see below and Appendix F for a side by side comparison) in enabling and rewarding stylistic innovation, paying little attention to, and exerting little influence over, the other organising bodies for clogging in the United States.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{us_map.png}
\caption{Map of the United States. Intermountain West region highlighted (added by the author). The original image was found at: http://www.docstoc.com/docs/2386312/Blank-US-Map accessed 12 Oct 2012.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{1} According to a number of websites (www.clogdancing.com) (http://www.clog.org/clogtoday/index.html) (http://iclog.us/Find_A_Clogging_Group.html) (all accessed 12 Oct 2012), American clogging groups and organisations are found in almost every state of the union, as well as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, Scotland, and the UK.

\textsuperscript{2} The Intermountain West is located in the western half of the United States between the Rocky Mountains on the east and the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Mountain ranges on the west. It does not include the large population centres found on the west coast of the country.
While National Clogging Organization (CLOG), America’s Clogging Hall of Fame (ACHF), and Clogging Champions of America (CCA) have all instituted efforts to preserve and promote various aspects of the traditional practice of American clogging, America On Stage has focused its attention and efforts on innovation and modernisation of the competitive form. It steers the attention, energy and financial backing of its participants into a marketable, interactive, and motivating clogging experience.

Like the other national organisations, America On Stage sanctions a number of regional competitions as well as a ‘national championship’, and maintains a Hall of Fame, or honorary award for highly achieving or contributing community members (see Chapter 5.1 and 6.3). Unlike the other governing bodies, AOS has a unique set of rules (see Chapter 5.3) and does not vie for participants with events from other organisations within the same territory. It has established a captivating and complex awards system to motivate dancers and compelling financial grants for the teachers who bring participants to their events. The organisation regularly creates new awards, competition categories, and events, aiming to keep dancers engaged and challenged. It has also successfully established separate competitions for jazz, hip-hop, ballet, and contemporary dance styles.

1.2 Research Question and Focus

This research examines how the America On Stage organisation seeks to create, maintain, and cultivate a sense of community among its participants. It investigates efforts by AOS to produce, distribute and project socially significant symbols, and then assign value to those symbols within the context of the community’s primary means of social interaction: the clogging competition. This study provides historical contextualisation of this unique dance community, discusses its current socioeconomic and cultural composition, and studies the ‘brokers’ actively shaping the community. The concepts and issues of identity, community, social power, history, tradition, standardisation, and transformation are central to this work.

1.3 Research Rationale

Of the small number of previous studies conducted on American clogging, the vast majority focus on the historical and traditional aspects of the recreational and revival
contexts, from a distinct preservationist perspective. Only one of these studies (Howard 2009) was conducted on the competitive segment of a clogging community, focusing on the composition and maintenance of community among competitive teams in the Southeastern United States. To my knowledge, no scholarly attention has been given, besides my own MA thesis (Larsen 2001), to competitive clog dancers living outside the Southern Appalachian region. This work seeks to add an alternative perspective to the overall understanding of American clogging: that of contemporary competitive clog dancing in the Intermountain West.


1.4 My Location in the Research Community

My thirty-year involvement with clogging spans a fascinating period of time when the dance form transitioned from a rural, regional expression to a national and ultimately a global one. I was born and raised just under 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometres) away from the Southern Appalachian Mountains in a middle-class suburban neighbourhood of Salt Lake City, Utah, in the heart of the Intermountain West (see Figure 2).

In 1983, my mother saw a local clogging group perform at a Christmas festival. She instinctively felt the physical and recreational nature of the dance would benefit a shy, ten-year old boy and immediately enrolled me in classes. At the time, clogging was still a relatively new import to the region and maintained predominantly ‘southern’ and ‘rural’ themes and presentation. It was precisely these characteristics that appealed to many, including my mother, who saw the dance as a wholesome and energetic
connection to the past at a time when modernity and pop culture seemed to permeate every aspect of a suburban life like mine. I was not at all interested in snubbing mainstream cultural life in favour of a traditional partner-oriented dance performed to old-time, bluegrass music in historicised, nineteenth century rural ‘western’ costumes (seen in Plate 1 below). Additionally, it was well established among my peers at the time that dance was a female pursuit and social acceptance was based on conformity to current cultural trends. Therefore, clogging did not fit into my notion of appropriate undertakings. My mother forced me into the classroom every week for the first year.

Plate 1. Undated photograph of the Wild West Cloggers, of which I was a member (crouching in the front row on the right hand side), shortly after competing at the Utah Open Clogging competition held at the Murray Amphitheatre in Murray, Utah, in the Spring of 1985. Take note of the girl’s skirts with petticoats, the men’s pants with white fringe down each side, and the wagon wheel props added to complete the stereotypical ‘country’ iconography. Photograph © the author.

The clogging I came to know in the early 1980s was embodied in rehearsals, performances and competitive events during the public school year (September to June). As far as I was aware, I was the only member of my family, neighbourhood, and school who clogged. Unlike its manifestations in the Southeast, where clogging was originally performed and transmitted at social functions and through intergenerational interaction, clogging in the Intermountain West was studio-based. Weekly, hour-long lessons were held in a dance-specific space within a twenty-minute driving distance from my
suburban home. The teaching done in those classes focused exclusively on preparing for performances and competitions.

During my early years of participation, the structure and content of the dancing was similar to the Southeastern style at the time. This was a direct result of the importation of teachers and adjudicators from the Southern Appalachian region brought to the Intermountain West by event organisers. The southern aesthetic of the dance was seemingly adhered to as a symbol of authenticity. ‘Expert’ Appalachian-based instructors and groups contributed regularly to workshop and competition settings throughout Utah in the early 1980s. Because of this imported authority, clog dancers in the Intermountain West generally imitated the prevalent footwork patterns, costuming, theme, music, and body styling found in group, duet and solo clogging in the Southern Appalachian region.

Beginning with my first lesson in an exercise room at the local recreational centre, when clogging was a recent import to my area, I was taught that clogging was a cultural heritage. The word ‘traditional’ was employed casually and used in nearly every conversation or instruction about step patterns and group figures. I understood that clogging was culturally meaningful; however I did not experience a profound connection to that cultural meaning, nor did I have a desire to establish such a bond. I was young and uninterested in re-enacting the past or relating to some ancestral condition. There were various motivations for clogging participation in those days. For some dancers, the appeal of the historical and cultural significance embedded within the practice brought them to clogging. In retrospect, I can see how some of my instructors were interested in passing on more than movement patterns and a good time; they wanted to convey the appeal of the rural lifestyle and a simpler life, less technologically-overloaded and market-driven. However, many instructors and dancers in the Intermountain West were not at all interested in ‘Southern tradition’. Like me, they enjoyed the social, kinaesthetic and competitive aspects of clog dancing. It was these dancers and instructors that initially began to push the aesthetic and kinaesthetic boundaries of clogging in the Intermountain West, to express their own, rather than imported, identities.

Clogging set me apart from my high achieving older brothers and helped solidify my own identity. As shown in the image below (Plate 2), I was a contemporary
suburban adolescent from Utah who loved clogging and the recreational and physical experience it provided, but had little fondness for country music or the rural lifestyle.

Plate 2. Undated photograph of the author at the fourth annual Clog America Clogging Camp held in Park City, Utah, in 1986. Take note of the fashionable flattop hair cut and no socks. Photograph © the author.

The team I joined was called the Wild West Clogging team, and we participated in the Clog America (later, America On Stage) competitive circuit. Within two years of my joining this team, ‘innovation’ began to supplant ‘tradition’ in the Intermountain West clogging community and the dance’s connection to the Southeast began to wane. Teachers and choreographers began experimenting with new movement and thematic material, often copied or borrowed from other dance forms like jazz, cheerleading, ballroom dance or tap dancing. New musical choices were introduced, and country music was joined by everything from pop and hip-hop to Broadway tunes and even world music. Movement and contextual choices in the Intermountain West had more to do with competitive and social success, rather than the maintenance or continuance of a cultural tradition. Many dancers chose to participate in clogging for its cardiovascular or recreational features, creating a distinct separation between those who sought cultural connection and those desiring vigorous leisure activity or competitive victory.

These transformations, based increasingly on the influence of popular culture and the geographical and cultural distance from Appalachia, were also driven by the competitive nature of the community (see Chapter 3.5 and 3.6). Competitive clogging
in the Intermountain West had gradually become the domain of individuals who abandoned older practices (particularly in step patterns and techniques, costume, theme, and music) in favour of more current and relevant ways to use the movement.

At the age of fifteen, after participating and winning at the highest levels of group and solo clogging in the Intermountain West, I left competition behind and joined a traveling American folk dance company and spent three years performing across the United States and Europe. At eighteen, I began my post-secondary education (receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in European Studies and French at Brigham Young University in 1998, and a Master of Arts degree in Dance Ethnography at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2001), developing talents in other dance styles and travelling extensively throughout North America and Europe (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Russia, Czech Republic, France, Belgium, Canada, Spain, Portugal) as a performer of American and world dance forms. During this time, I continued to perform, teach and interact with clogging, but primarily in locations and contexts outside the Intermountain West competitive circuit. These travels and experiences gave me a broad perspective of the professional, competitive, and recreational dance worlds, and of clogging in its numerous social and cultural manifestations. I learned about the processes that influence change in dance and became familiar with numerous styles and manifestations of dance.

During my Master’s Program at UCLA I again re-entered the competitive clogging circuit, not limited this time to the Intermountain West, as a competitor, choreographer, adjudicator and researcher. When the time came to conduct research for my MA Thesis, I chose to return to my dance roots and study the Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition (Larsen 2001), which had played a significant role in the growth of clogging in the region and my own personal development as a clog dancer. I renewed contact with old clogging friends, met and interviewed cloggers from numerous communities, and formed helpful relationships with participants at every level of involvement. With this return to Intermountain West clogging, I more fully recognised the unique nature of clogging in this community. This uniqueness was not limited to aesthetic choices or practices alone, but extended to communal interactions and organisational initiatives.
In preparation for doctoral studies, I travelled across the country, attending classes, performances, and competitions, and interviewing dancers, teachers, organization leaders and key figures on the national level of clogging’s development and dissemination. Living two years in North Carolina, a state in the Southeastern United States and home to what is widely considered to be the birthplace of organised clogging (Maggie Valley and Fontana), gave me further awareness of the motivations and practices, cultural and pragmatic, of differing clogging communities. When I moved back to the Intermountain West, I renewed my active participation in AOS, and became a studio owner, director, teacher, choreographer, and adjudicator.

1.5 My Role as Researcher in the Research Community

I grew up as a participant in the America On Stage (formerly Clog America) competition system, first as a dancer, then as an instructor and choreographer for studios and workshops, and finally as a competition adjudicator and studio owner. My experience as a participant in this community has shaped my identity and has greatly influenced my perspective and understanding of clogging. I therefore approached this research with a substantial amount of insider knowledge about the practice and the institutions that support it. My history of involvement with the America On Stage organisation and with clogging nationwide has been instrumental in my understanding of the Intermountain West community and the processes that influence it. However, I contend that it was the numerous years spent away from the community, in the academic study of dance and in contact with other forms of dance practices and contexts (from 1992 to 2005), that provided me with the distanciation I needed to recognise the impact of the institutional, competitive, and cultural processes on the practice of the dance. I had access to the embodied cultural knowledge as a participant, but I also had a comparative perspective that was intimately aware of the changes that had taken place over the duration of my involvement with clogging. This dual insider and outsider perspective, I believe, has been an invaluable asset in pursuing this study.

Being a longstanding member of this community provided access to certain information and viewpoints that might not have been possible had I been a cultural outsider. However, I was fully aware that ‘knowing’ people in the community did not
necessarily mean more accurate or honest information. Due to my ‘fellow’ and even ‘rival’ status among other instructors and dancers, I knew my sources might conceal or modify their responses to protect themselves or others. I therefore continually acknowledged my presence as an insider in the community as potentially problematic in influencing my and others’ points of view and interpretations. By continually re-evaluating my relationship with others and the research, I tried to do as Ricœur (1991) suggested in *From Text to Action*, and frame my viewpoints through a lens of self-understanding, which, he explained, is necessary for any explanation to be convincing (Ricoeur 1991, p. 118). I cannot change or deny my membership in this group, nor do I try to diminish it. On the contrary, I scrutinise my experience and understanding to provide insight and interpretation, despite the inherent risks. The phenomenological hermeneutic approach, which I have chosen to employ with this study, provides a method for the continual appraisal of self within the investigation and analysis so as to give value to the perceptions and understandings gained during the process.

The ‘insider’ location can facilitate certain levels of understanding that are highlighted and enhanced through a physical, emotional, and intellectual investment by the researcher. Cohen suggests just such a kind of research practice.

What passes as understanding is often based on interpretation, and the interpretation is generally accomplished by reconstructing other people’s behaviour as if it was our own: in other words, by attempting to put ourselves in their shoes, our minds in their bodies…interpretation of others’ interpretations (2003, p. 73).

Gadamer (2004) suggests that we enter into observation and interpretation with certain expectations as to the outcomes (Gadamer 2004, pp. 269-70). I agree with this statement based on my research experience. I began this journey with a clear set of assumptions based on my previous experience and knowledge. It was therefore somewhat surprising when findings yielded slightly different results than I had anticipated (such as with the survey I took of AOS clogging teachers in Chapter 4 revealing that they all ‘value’ traditional clogging practices, which I had not predicted). I immediately recognised my biased expectations and tried to allow the fieldwork to reveal its own conclusions. This process of observation and interpretation is not seen as a singular rational reading of a text, or a dance, but as a process of continual investment, self-reflection and revision.
According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), the study of knowledge “must concern itself with whatever passes for ‘knowledge’ in a society” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 3). This knowledge is created, transmitted and maintained symbolically through social interaction and ultimately guides the conduct of individuals (Habermas 1968, Berger and Luckmann 1966). In order for the researcher to access this deeply embedded knowledge, they must pass through what is referred to as the hermeneutic circle or arc, referring to the continual gaining of new levels of understanding (Rice 1994, McNamara 1999, Foley 2013). In this pattern, insight is gained only through the contesting of previously held assumptions, prejudices, perspectives and experience (McNamara 1999). For an outsider, this would mean entering into the very core and heart of the society through acts of appropriation. Ricoeur (1981) describes this process as “understanding at and through distance”, or to “make one’s own” that which was “alien” (Ricoeur 1981, p. 185). Rice (1994) similarly suggests that insiders must go through a process of “distanciation” in order to gain new levels of understanding and appropriately recognise and critically assess their own culture (p. 6).

My experience in both the local and national contexts of clogging are useful in understanding this community. My intent is to use the knowledge and understanding I have as a participant, balanced with my awareness of the limitations of such an approach, to access and interpret the values and symbols on display. I am well aware that investigation and communication are coloured and distorted by political, economic, social, ethnic and cultural symbols (Habermas 1968). The reading of a text, or the observation of a performance, is always accompanied by a particular expectation. “That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 278). “The Truth”, according to Buckland (1999), “is a kaleidoscope of possibilities and, in the field, it depends who is lifting that kaleidoscope to his or her eye, when and in which direction it is pointing” (Buckland 1999, p. 205). Buckland goes on to encourage those using the historical and ethnographic approach to dance research to “acknowledge the many constructions of narrative and account for our own; but it also remains our responsibility to aim to distinguish stories from fantasies” (Buckland 1999, p. 205). This advice has been helpful to me during the fieldwork phases of this research in which my own ‘truth’ was contrasted with the many histories and viewpoints I encountered.
Gadamer (1975) and Ricoeur (1981) both urge and demonstrate ways of interpreting through the act of being. Rather than observing only, the hermeneutic approach requires that an investigator like myself becomes a character in the encounter within the world observed. Additionally, phenomenology emphasises the immediate concrete sensory happening as the basis for solidly grounding knowledge in the world of lived experience. Therefore, as Rice suggested, “neither the self nor the other is exclusively the object of understanding; rather, interpretation seeks to expose the world or culture referenced by symbols and symbolic behaviours, a process necessarily finite, open-ended, and contestable” (Rice 1994, p. 7). Armed with the above theoretical considerations, I re-entered a culture I knew well in an attempt to ascertain how a competitive clogging community is historically conceived, contemporarily generated and practised, and socially maintained.

1.6 Research Methodology

Training in the field of Ethnochoreology has empowered me to engage with a wide variety of theoretical approaches and methods in order to access, contextualise, and analyse the pertinent issues of a complex subject. This research utilises a diverse theoretical toolkit from anthropological, sociological, and ethnochoreological models, as well as historical and ethnographic information collection. The historical summary in Chapter 3 provides insight into how the dance and its community of participants have adapted to change over time, resulting in their current manifestations. Historical contextualisation, according to Alexander (2004), builds a ‘system of collective representations’ where social expectations, aspirations, needs and motivations of individuals are grounded and expressed. On the other hand, the ethnographic approach accesses current opinions, trends, and attitudes toward the challenges and opportunities of individuals located within a community or practice.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) encourage investigators of culture to study the historical processes that produce the present culture and examine it from both an internal and external perspective (p. 60). For this purpose, I have briefly documented historical events as well as adaptations of the movement practice within the national context to access the wider cultural and embodied knowledge associated with its expression. It is my intent to contextualise this study of clogging in its historical past, to
demonstrate how and why current Intermountain West clogging participants’ organisational and artistic choices are significant and revelatory of their subjective reality.

Throughout this dissertation, I will use the term ‘practice’ of clogging to encompass the broadest definition of participation in the clogging community in the Intermountain West. Its application is threefold: 1) technical execution of the dance, 2) organisational structure and 3) social function. It will denote the processes, which create the *habitus* of the dancers (footwork precision, hard work, respect for teachers, mental and physical discipline) including the aspects of rehearsal and competition attendance. The participants’ interactions with structural and managerial efforts, community texts and symbolic representation are encompassed within this definition of ‘practice’. In short, it will signify the experience of clogging in this region as a whole. Such a definition will of necessity involve generalisation, and it must be kept in mind that each participant’s level of participation in this community will vary according to the various motivations, tastes, talents, and other ‘parts of self’ that influence their identities. The term ‘participant’ will also be defined broadly, including anyone who actively engages in or supports clogging in the region, including non-dancing administrators, event volunteers, and dancer’s parents, who pay tuition, and attend events.

The term ‘performance’ will be used herein to denote the ephemeral performative event itself, in real time, both observed and lived, “where different forms of social relationships converge, where aesthetics, sociology and ideology meet” (Keeler in Kapchan 2003, p. 131).

In September 2003, I set forth on a three-month, cross-country journey to better understand the historical roots and current state of American clogging. This field excursion, covering more than ten thousand miles (16,000 kilometres), took me through the heartland of American clogging where I gathered written and verbal testimony and artefacts about the individuals, organisations, and events that have led to the clogging found nationwide. Living in North Carolina (home of Maggie Valley, Fontana and Asheville) for two years, from 2006 to 2008, permitted valuable access to the Southeastern clogging community as an instructor and participant, and the ability to conduct further fieldwork on its history and culture. This historical, cultural, and geographical contextualisation, coupled with my experience as a participant, instructor,
and adjudicator nationwide, has greatly informed my understanding of the processes at work within the community at local and national levels.

Notwithstanding my lengthy association with this community and dance form, this study is a product of current ethnographic fieldwork, participation, and observation. I completed extensive fieldwork at the 2012 (May 11th and 12th), 2013 (May 10th and 11th), and 2014 (May 9th and 10th) AOS Nationals competitions, with numerous supplementary observations, interviews and interactions. Additionally, numerous hours were spent examining the yearly AOS produced and copyrighted All-Around Solo DVD’s that are sold to dancers and instructors containing the sanctioned movement patterns and sequences for the competitive events.

My familiarity with participants and previous experience with the events and practice made it possible to gain valuable insight into the processes at work and the embodied experiences of the community. Furthermore, I held extensive interviews with the owner and director of America On Stage, Greg Tucker, with his predecessor Bryan Steele, and with the director of the AOS All-Around Solo Programme, Bethany Hulse. These interviews were recorded with digital audio equipment for accuracy and archival purposes and have provided valuable insight into the creation and maintenance of the organisational programmes and efforts. Additionally, hundreds of interviews and communications were held, both formally and informally, in person, by phone and electronically, with hundreds of instructors, choreographers, adjudicators, dancers, and spectators, in order to ascertain the opinions and motivations of those actively participating in the community. Some of these interviews were recorded with audio equipment, some were recorded in field notes, and others were conducted via electronic mail.

In order to access a wide range of viewpoints of individuals in key decision-making positions, I directed a formal survey to clogging studio directors (including owners, operators, instructors, choreographers) throughout the Intermountain West to ascertain further community demographics and ideology. This survey (see Appendix 1) was conducted on seventy-one clogging studio directors from throughout the Intermountain West, including those who do not actively participate in AOS community events, like the Nationals competition at Lagoon. Having outsider insight on the topics central to
this study brought balance and perspective to issues that might have otherwise appeared artificially uniform.

1.7 Thesis Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature on clogging and related theoretical and ethnographic topics central to this study. Chapter 3 constructs an account of the historical background of the American clogging community both nationally and in the Intermountain West. Chapter 4 details the demographic information for, and provides a cultural overview of the contemporary competitive clogging community in the Intermountain West. Chapter 5 delivers an analysis of the structural and organisational efforts of AOS to stabilise and expand its community, through the production and dissemination of cultural symbols. Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the AOS system of assigning and reinforcing value to cultural symbols and performance. Chapter 6 also includes analysis of the results of AOS cultural brokerage, the influence of competition in the community, possible suggestions for potential community growth, and the argument that the dance in its current manifestation is more sport than art. Finally, Chapter 7 offers conclusions and points of discussion for topics of further enquiry.
Chapter 2
Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews existing literature on the subject of American Clogging and on the concepts and issues relevant to this study on cultural brokerage in the clogging community of the Intermountain West. These are: 1) identity and community construction and maintenance, 2) social power, 3) history, 4) tradition, 5) standardisation and 6) transformation. The pluralistic nature of these central concepts, with their subjective and multifaceted expressions, contexts, and performance, defies exact, all-encompassing definitions. According to Feintuch, the definition and discussion of such terms is “slippery…as meaning is always circumstantial” (Feintuch 2003, p. 2). However, a general understanding of the concepts is helpful to this research on the conscious creation of community.

2.1 Identity and Community

At its centre, this study is an analysis of an interest-based community, unified by a culturally significant dance form, which has been exported from its cultural homeland and transformed in a new context. Therefore the concepts of community and identity play a significant role. They are closely related and intrinsically intertwined (Foley 2011); a community is made up of multiple individual identities, and an individual may belong to multiple communities.

On identity, Roger D. Abrahams writes, “there is no more important keyword in the vocabulary of cultural discussions” (Abrahams 2003, p. 198). Dundes describes identity as a way of discussing the basic features of an individual or a people negotiating “social” or “national boundary markings” (Dundes 1983, pp. 236-37). I consider an individual’s identity to be a unique, multi-strata summation of their experience, environment, education and genetics. Its many facets may be ephemeral or entrenched, superficial or profound, chronologically or simultaneously experienced. I agree with Manuel Castells, who explains the development of a person’s identity in the following way:

The construction of identity uses building materials from history, from geography, from biology, from productive and reproductive institutions, from collective memory
and from personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and religious revelations. But individuals, social groups, and societies process all these materials, and rearrange their meaning, according to social determinations and cultural projects that are rooted in their social structure, and in their space/time framework.

(Castells 2010, p. 7)

Turino proposes that the “total constellations of habits that make up any individual are more numerous and varied than we normally think about” (Turino 2008, p. 101). Consequently, the sum of the conscious and sub-conscious self is composed of countless multidimensional relationships, habits, and cognitive layers that together determine the tendencies for possible action and self-presentation. He additionally notes how

a person’s internalized dispositions and habits (Bourdieu uses the term *habitus*) are products of relations to the conditions around her and her concrete experiences in and of the environment. Habits and dispositions guide what we think, do and make (practices). Our practices and the things we produce affect, to greater or lesser degree, our environment, which in turn affects our dispositions, which in turn affect our practices, which in turn affect external conditions, and so on. Our practices thus become the mediators between the internalized constellations of habit and the social and physical world around us.

(Turino 2008, p. 120)

A study of *habitus* can lead to the interpretation of social and cultural meaning. Such meaning in competitive clogging can be eventually deduced, then, by the analysis of its ‘constellation’ of the motivations, loyalties, choices and habits of its participants.

A community is comprised of individual members drawn together through sympathetic aspects of their identities, with at least one “common factor” (Dundes 1965, p. 2) among the constellation, uniting participants in any way. The ‘common factor’ could be any aspect of the individual’s personal identity signifiers, noting that both personal and communal cultural terrains are subject to constant readjustments (Abrahams 2003).

Turino (2008) introduces the terms cultural/identity ‘cohorts’, which are variously composed groupings of individuals in relation to their ways of thinking and acting, or habits they possess. These habits, Turino points out, are adopted and developed through socialisation, contain historical reference, provide stability, and are ever evolving and

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4Alan Merriam (1974) takes a similar approach, warning against the study of music simply as product, but suggested rather that it is a sophisticated collection of behaviours and actions.
adapting to external circumstances (though I choose not use the term ‘cohort’ exclusively, these criteria are applied to the effectiveness of the community-building efforts of AOS in Chapter 6). The actions of the cohort reflect the values and habitus of its participants in a constant, dynamic interplay of expectations and aspirations. A cultural or identity cohort is a socially constructed relationship based on similarities of segments of the self-ascribed identity. In application, Turino (2008) uses the emergence of the middle-class, old-time music and dance revival of the 1960s, of which American clogging was at one time a part, as an example of a counter-culture cohort of individuals seeking opposition to the basic philosophies and tendencies of the capitalist cultural formation. Individuals use communities to connect with those who share their interests.

**Symbolic Map References**

Like Cohen (2003), I choose to think of a community as “a cluster of symbolic and ideological map references with which the individual is socially oriented” (Cohen 2003, p. 57), resulting in what Benedict Anderson (1991) describes as “a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 1991, p. 7). Similarly, Crawford Young (1993) maintains that the identities of the individual as well as the collective are continually defined through social participation and engagement with recognisable cultural symbols (Young 1993, p. 98). In his *Theory of Cultural Pragmatics*, Alexander (2004) uses the term ‘systems of collective representations’ to describe the enormous backdrop of symbols representing “the social, physical, natural, and cosmological worlds within which actors and audience live” (Alexander 2004, p. 530), which helps form individual and collective identities.

If one or more of these cultural symbols do not resonate with an individual’s values or concept of self, he or she may choose to not align with a particular interest-based community. If Cohen’s ‘map references’ lead to an undesired result, or boundaries are renegotiated upon objectionable lines, a member may modify or cease participation. For example, if a political party changes its platform or fails to meet a voter’s expectations, the voter could join or create another. This is not necessarily the case for certain communities based on identifiers like race, caste, or religion. In these communities, it may be impossible or dangerous to disassociate oneself. But interest-based communities generally feature flexible membership.
One aspect of community identity that became more and more important as I studied the Intermountain West clogging community is that some traits are stronger than others in creating and maintaining a community identity. Michael Mann (1986) suggests “an ideological movement that increases the mutual trust and collective morale of a group may enhance their collective powers and be rewarded with more zealous adherence” (Mann 1986, p. 22). Like Victor Turner (1975), Mann attributes a large part of the ideological power of trust and morale to the presence of aesthetic/ritual practices. According to Mann, the authority of this ideological power is found in the way in which it supersedes experience (Mann 1986, p. 23).

It cannot be totally tested by experience, and therein lies its distinctive power to persuade and dominate. But it need not be false; if it is, it is less likely to spread. People are not manipulated fools. And though ideologies always do contain legitimations of private interests and material domination, they are unlikely to attain a hold over people if they are merely this. (Mann 1986, p. 23)

When applied to dance, which is a powerful embodied cultural practice, ideological ritual practices can further formalise and intensify a relational identity through public or private performance. The spinning of the Whirling Dervishes of the Mevlevi Order, for example, is an integral part of their worship practice, its several phases symbolising the dancer’s personal spiritual journey.5

For Victor Turner, participation in a community climaxes in the experience of communitas, which he characterises as “an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society” (Turner 1969, p. 97). Communitas is an intense, intangible sense of homogeneity and unity created and felt between members of the community, usually through ritualised behaviour and rites of passage. According to Turner, the construction of communitas, and in like manner the factors underlying the creation and maintenance of community, becomes visible through performance. Paul Spencer (1985) expands this theory by studying how socially performed dancing provides more than just an emotional connection to communitas, but a physicalised embodiment of the dynamic forces at play in community building (Spencer 1985, p. 35).

5 From the Mevlevi Order of America’s website at http://www.hayatidede.org, accessed December 10, 2015
Community Boundary Negotiation

Cultural symbols allow participants to negotiate the boundaries of their community in an imagined way that solidifies their membership within the group and dissimilarity with those on the outside (Anderson 1991, Fabian 1983). Boundary negotiation is an important aspect of community formation and maintenance. Throughout its history, clogging experienced significant phases of development (see Chapter 3), each presenting participants with innovations and appropriations they could choose to accept or reject. In each case, these phases resulted in a division within the community between those individuals who sought to maintain the earlier practice and those who accepted the change. Most communities are ever adapting to internal and external stimuli and circumstance in this way (Turino 2008).

Cohen (2003) presents a logical approach to observing and understanding the process of community reification and boundary negotiation. He characterises communal boundaries as a façade, which represents the public face of the group through the projection of cultural symbols to the outside world. The projected symbols represent the modalities through which individuals recognise and externalise their individual and communal experience.

This projection of cultural symbols, the creation of the public façade of an individual or community, can be used consciously and selectively. According to Turino, “people typically shape their self-presentation to fit their goals in particular situations and rarely reveal all the habits that constitute the self” (Turino 2008, p. 102). In the revelatory process or action, the actor tends to project symbolic markers that are deemed important or beneficial at the time, and background others that might be found to be unfavourable, depending on context and motivation. Individuals therefore unconsciously and consciously choose to project the cultural imagery they consider beneficial, desirable and appropriate for a given social context. This theory is applied to the AOS clogging community in Chapter 5.

The Pluralistic Nature of Self and Collective

Folklorists have long held an expansive view of cultural performance and expression by interest in more vernacular, non-canonical subject matter. “From long before it was fashionable, folklorists claimed that culture is plural” (Feintuch 2003, p. 3). In his work
on musical communities, Turino (2008) emphasises the pluralistic nature of identities and cultures. He sets out

> to break up the holistic conception of unified cultures so that we can understand how individuals within the same society group themselves and differentiate themselves from others along a variety of axes depending on the parts of the self that are salient for a given social situation.

(Turino 2008, p. 112)

No communities are perfectly homogenous (Noyes 2003). Each individual approaches her or his role in the community from the perspective of a personal and unique worldview. Cohen asserts that “people’s perception of their community as a whole is mediated by the particularities of their membership of it” (Cohen 2003, p.88). The Intermountain clogging community shares a love of percussive dance, but within that community exist limitless subsets with individual motivations and identities. Each dancer on a clogging team or at a competition, each teacher of a class, each judge at a competition or parent in the audience approaches the dance community laden with numerous tastes, expectations, opinions, and aspirations, which flavour and inform their experience. Participation is not always harmonious; dissension and frustration are common, on a wide range of issues at all levels of the community. This makes broad conclusions difficult, as there will always be more to the picture than a single qualitative analysis can capture.

Ultimately, the sensations of belonging to a community are ‘imagined’ (Anderson 1991). Anderson (1991) proposes that members of a community invent or imagine the perception of culture-wide spiritual, mental, or emotional communion; “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined” (Anderson 1991 p. 6). Noyes (2003) designates the community as a cultural creation; Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) call it ‘invented’. Cohen (2003) suggests that

> Community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of ‘fact’. By extension, the distinctiveness of communities and, thus, the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them, not in their structural forms. As we have seen, this reality of community is expressed and embellished symbolically.

(Cohen 2003, p. 98)
That a community is ‘imagined’ or is a cultural ‘invention’ does not make it insignificant; perceptions of community bonds can be among the strongest ‘parts of self’ in an identity. As Noyes states, “a felt reality is quite real enough” (Noyes 2003, p. 27). Anderson (1991) explores the power of communal bonds formed on the deepest level and presented examples of ‘imagined communities’ so potent that their members kill and die for them, defending against the ‘other’. In dance communities, boundary negotiation does not normally extend to such extremes, but passions can still rage and discontent prevail when participants are confronted with innovations or boundary negotiations with which they disagree (see Chapters 4 and 7).

**Defining Self, Defining Other**

The definition of ‘self’ brings the inevitable corollary creation of ‘other’. Young points out that since identities have distinguishing characteristics, the appreciation of this uniqueness requires a contrast to a ‘relevant other’ with contrastive qualities (Young 1993, p. 41). He applies this to attributes such as language, religion, physical appearance, and nationality. Though some of the boundaries of these attributes are subjective, pluralistic and “situationally flexible”, Young argues, “they are not infinitely elastic” (Young 1993, p. 43). Identities such a skin colour or caste are highly indelible, whereas those based on interests (such as knitting or salsa dancing) are not.

Creating boundaries of any kind invariably produces an us/them dichotomy (Turino 2008, pp. 104-106). This distinction can be positive and necessary, as in the formation of unions, support groups or philanthropies; it can also be derogatory and devastating if communities espouse exclusionary policies like sexism, racism or ageism. When members of a dance team win a championship; they may exult in well-earned success while deriding teams they defeated during the event. Boundary creation has the potential of being both a unifying and alienating process.

**Dance as an Expression of Identity and Community**

Dance is a powerful embodied symbol that formalises and intensifies a relational identity through public or private performance. Theresa Buckland states, “dance has a particular propensity to foreground cultural memory as embodied practice by virtue of its predominantly somatic modes of transmission” (Buckland 2001, p. 1). Like language, dancing is itself a form of transmitting history, or history as a construct of
community. Furthermore, in the case of traditional dance forms, Buckland poetically argues, “that longevity of human memory is publicly enacted, demonstrating the ethereality of human existence and the continuity of human experience, as successive generations re-present the dancing” (Buckland 2001, p. 1). Dance may be able to record aspects of the human experience of which we may not even consciously be aware.

Significant academic study has been done on the subject of dance as an expression of community/identity (notably Buckland 2006, Cowan 1990, Foley 2013, Kaeppler 1972, Savigliano 1995). In her work on Irish Dance, Catherine Foley (2000, 2011, and 2013) confronts issues of standardisation, globalisation, the transformation of community, and the formation of cultural identity. She indicates that dance practices “have the power to actively construct, reinforce, contest and shape a sense of place, history and identity” (Foley 2013, p. 20). Her research describes how step dancing was a “potent cultural signifier” (Foley 2013, p. 227), reflecting and participating in the formation of communal structure and identity within the Irish dance community.

Similarly, Vivien Moore (2007) indicates how practicing English clog dancing can provide an avenue for a participant, despite being located far from England, to express English identity and nostalgic association. These examples, and many others like them (Davies 1998 and Hughes-Freeland 1998 for example), reveal deeply rooted associations between dance and cultural identity.

Two recent publications by Spalding (2014) and Jamison (2015), illustrate the historical traditions of Southern Appalachian dance within their associated communities. Spalding (2014) focuses specifically on the transformations of community and practice over time in six separate locations and the unique challenges faced by each. Jamison (2015) addresses the dance more generally and calls attention to the little discussed history of square dance calling, which he suggests is an African-American addition to the tradition.

Burt Feintuch’s (1981) ethnographic study of community square dancing in south-central Kentucky, *Dancing to the Music: Domestic Square Dances and Community in South Central Kentucky (1880-1940)*, was an early and significant academic inquest into Appalachian mountain dance. In it, Feintuch laments the lack of scholarly work carried out on square dancing, and hinted that issues of “disciplinary territoriality” within academia could possibly explain its absence (Feintuch 1981, p. 50). He was one
of the first academics to focus, not so much on the dancing alone, but on the role that dance plays in the lives of the rural mountain inhabitants. He discusses in great detail how the community dances, including the solo ‘jigging’ and ‘buck dancing’, can be seen as a microcosm for the values, lifestyle and history of the isolated people. The metaphors and symbols are then juxtaposed against the increasing social and cultural mobility and instability, which developed around World War II (Feintuch 1981, p. 65). He concludes that the structure of the square dance changed alongside shifting societal structures, from a small and closed to a larger, more fluid structure. These findings he dared not determine to be unique or typical. Instead he sees his work as a case study that furnished “a preliminary examination of an indigenous square dance tradition in its historical context” (Feintuch 1981, p. 49).

In a similar approach, Gail Matthews (1983) focuses her attention on the relationship between community and dance in her MA Thesis on mountain dance in Haywood County, North Carolina. Matthews compares the varying socio-cultural perspectives and attitudes of three different groups of clog dancers within a relatively small geographic area, and how slightly different external and internal stimuli in those three communities (which otherwise were fairly similar) translated into significant artistic dance choices. Dance as a cultural signifier can reveal both subtle and overt layers of cultural meaning.

Community Enactment: The Theory of Cultural Pragmatics

As I conducted my research, deeper layers of cultural meaning became more manifest as I studied them through the filter of Jeffrey Alexander’s (2004) theory of cultural pragmatics. Grounded in the phenomenological hermeneutic approach of self-reflexive interpretation of texts, Alexander suggests that cultural performance is the “social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of their social situation” (Alexander 2004, p. 529), and can be analysed through an examination of six interdependent elements that comprise a social performance. These are: 1) the systems of collective representations, 2) the actors, 3) the audience and observers, 4) the means of symbolic production, 5) mise-en-scene, and 6) social power. This “macro-sociological model of social action as cultural performance” (Alexander 2004, p. 529) has been useful in helping me recognise and analyse the complex
interactions, motivations and relationships of the varied participants in the Intermountain West clogging community.

According to Alexander, each of the interrelated elements plays a fundamental role in the development, realisation, and result of the performance. The ‘systems of collective representations’ is comprised of an enormous backdrop of symbols representing “the social, physical, natural, and cosmological worlds within which actors and audience live” (Alexander 2004, p. 530). These symbols carry deeply embedded socially constructed meaning and are communicated through performance. Alexander refers to the ideological construction of the physicalized act of performance as ‘text’ with varying levels of predetermined or ‘scripted’ content through which actors and audiences interrelate. The movement and ancillary choices presented in the performance of competitive clogging in the Intermountain West carries significant cultural meaning and is the primary focus of Chapters 5 and 6.

The actors are the human individuals who interpret and actualise this system of collective representations through social performance. The actor’s performance is a set of ‘cultural extensions’ expanding from the chosen material, or ‘text’, and actor to audience (Alexander 2004). Actors relate symbiotically to the third element of the theory, the audience. The role of the audience is not merely to receive, but to reflect back to the performer. The audience has social expectations and subjective aesthetic tastes. It receives, decodes, and evaluates the presented symbols of the performance, but in inherently unpredictable ways. In this dialectic arrangement, both actor and audience are agents in the achievement of the ultimate goal: ‘fusion’. Alexander claims that these six elements have become ‘de-fused’ as societies have become more complex, and successful performances are those that can ‘re-fuse’ these increasingly disentangled elements into a unified and symbiotic totality (Alexander 2004, p. 527).

The ‘means of symbolic production’ includes all the environmental and material elements that the actor needs to accomplish a performance, the tools used by choreographers and instructors to actualise the system of collective representations, performed by the actors. These range from the physical spaces needed for learning, rehearsing and performing to matching tee shirts for an event’s staff, in the case of a clogging competition. In clogging, the competition hosts, including the provided venue
and the sanctioning organisation, are influential in many ways that contextualise the performance.

The fifth element, the ‘mise-en-scene’, is the moment of real-time performance and involves subtle matters of style, projection, artistic sensibility, and reaction to contextual stimuli. The actor interprets the text to the audience and receives feedback, which in turn influences the actor’s connection to the text (see Figure 3 below). For the audience, every performance functions to clarify and redefine the meaning of authentic or inauthentic, successful or unsuccessful.

![Figure 3 - The Actors' relationship to the collective representations and the audience through the act of performance (Alexander 2004, p. 531).](image-url)

The concept of ‘social power’ (discussed further in the next section) within the system implies that “not all texts are equally legitimate in the eyes of the powers that be, whether possessors of material or interpretive power” (Alexander 2004, p. 532). In a community like the Intermountain West where most clogging practices centre on competition, social power is a key element of communal formation and interaction.

Alexander’s theory of cultural pragmatics provides a framework for describing the processes of community formation, cultural performance and inter-communal interaction, which was extremely useful to this study. The competitive clogging community in the Intermountain West, examined here, is actualised through active social participation culminating in clogging competitions (see below). Success in this competitive community is determined through familiarity with the community’s system of collective representations, alignment with the recognised means of symbolic production, and ultimately the execution of the movement by the actor in front of an audience.
2.2 Social Power

Frith (1996) claims, “community self-awareness is the result of social conditioning and commercial manipulation” (Frith 1996, p. 120). If this is true, who directs the social conditioning? Who manipulates the community, and for what purpose?

An understanding of the term ‘power’ is requisite in discussions of a communities’ cultural constructs. Much like Bourdieu (1977) and Turino (2008), Michael Mann (1986) warns about speaking of societies as monolithic wholes. “Societies,” Mann states, “are constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting socio-spatial networks of power” (1986, p. 1). Since these networks overlap and intersect in any community, there is bound to be tension and social manoeuvring.

My use of the term ‘power’ is informed by numerous sources and is defined for purposes here as the influence exerted by one individual over another, whether intentional or inadvertent, through both direct and indirect interaction. Many of my sources cite power and its negotiation as the core element of every human interaction (Russell 1938, Wrong 1968, Mann 1986). According to Adorno (1991), any study involving the interrelations of people will involve structures of power because “whoever speaks of culture speaks of administration as well, whether this is his intention or not” (Adorno 1991, p. 107). Power is manifest in a broad range of relations from oppressive overt control to the simple tension of potential differences that might exist among any combination of participants.

Michel Foucault (1984) elaborates on the notions of power and its ability to harness and allocate energy flow, and was particularly interested in the ability of power to govern consciousness. All systems of knowledge, and their modes of expression and transmission, are controlled from a position of power. Foucault seeks to arouse awareness of this assertion of power so individuals can decide whether or not to subscribe to that system. Foucault and Wolf (1990) both suggest that the establishment of cultural power structures can shape social fields of action, which render some types of behaviour possible and others less desirable or impossible. I argue that these processes are on display particularly in the All Around Solo Programme (see Chapter 5), wherein movement patterns within particular competitive levels are set by the AOS committee and reinforced by adjudication.
An important point for Mann (and for this research) is the notion that power is only effective through “social cooperation” (Mann 1986, p. 5). Shared meaning and understanding embedded within organisational structures and modes of behaviour and interaction, or norms, are necessary for sustaining social cooperation. Therefore, the creation and maintenance of meaning associated with such activities and relationships is a fundamental task for those seeking to build a community ethos.

Cultural Brokers: Primary Players in the Politics of Social Power

Abrahams (2003) notes, “practices and objects that carry the patina of tradition, custom, and especially cultural memory are manipulated by those most deeply engaged in the exchange” (Abrahams 2003, p. 214). Agents distributed throughout the community, stratified in the political, economic, and social structures, influence aspects of symbolic cultural representation. Judges, choreographers, administrators, financial sponsors, audiences and performers can be arbiters of socially constructed symbolic value in a performance or competitive context. In his book The Politics of Cultural Pluralism, Young (1976) employs the term ‘broker’ to such an individual or group. Noyes refers to cultural brokers as “high-status marginals of a network… those accustomed to dealing with outsiders and representing the inside to them” (Noyes 2003, p. 13). My definition encompasses a slightly broader application of the term. I define a ‘broker’ as any participant who contributes to shaping a community in a significant way. I will use the term ‘broker’ to refer to primary players in the politics of social power in the clogging communities of the Intermountain West.

The term ‘brokerage’ connotes aspects of interplay, negotiation, and mobility within a communal organisation rather than autocratic dictation. Most brokers of cultural ethos give and take in exploring, defining and expanding their communities’ symbol sets and boundaries. For the purposes of this research, a broker could be a particularly innovative choreographer, a wealthy sponsor or insightful parent, an adjudicator, an organisational decision maker, or a dancer who appropriates a new element to their performance, which becomes admired and copied.

Cultural brokerage involves several primary functions. Brokers produce, distribute, and assign value to symbolic material, and negotiate and redefine cultural boundaries in response to external and internal stimuli. They create, stabilise, and perpetuate the community and defend it from challenges of the ‘other’. These functions involve
processes of institutionalisation, commodification, and the manipulation of tradition, ritual, and history. They are important aspects of this study and I have therefore structured this dissertation with these functions in mind:

- Chapter 4 introduces the members of this community, and discusses the location and subsets of cultural brokers in the socio-spatial networks of power that constitute the Intermountain West clogging community.

- Chapter 5 investigates why and how AOS produces and markets symbolic material, stabilising and expanding its membership base.

- Chapter 6 contains analysis on the assignation of value to those symbols and discusses artistic choice as it represents boundary negotiation. It also describes the results of AOS structural and cultural choices and how they affect the preservation and expansion of its community.

2.3 History: ‘An Artful Assembly of Materials from the Past’

An important component in a community member’s perception of his community is that of history. Glassie deftly states that “history is not the past; it is an artful assembly of materials from the past, designed for usefulness in the future” (Glassie 1995, p. 395). Cultural brokers can ‘design’ a community’s history in order to make it ‘useful’ in stabilising or growing their membership. History, or the perception thereof, has also been used as a tool by governing bodies and organisations to regulate and direct the affairs of constituents. Arthur Schlesinger (1992) warns that, as a subjective discipline, we sometimes exploit the past for non-historical purposes, taking from the past, or projecting upon it, what suits our own society or ideology. History thus manipulated becomes an instrument less of disinterested intellectual inquiry than of social cohesion and political purpose.

(Schlesinger 1992, pp. 46-7)

Regardless of their accuracy, the creation, preservation, dissemination and maintenance of historical symbols has a powerful influence on the identities and actions of community members, which is why social power brokers generally ensure their editorial control over their transmission. Formalisation of historical ideas and ritualised performances encourage members to locate themselves and their dance experience in
relation to others. The community’s perception of history is a powerful symbolic frontier that imbues its members with a sense of belonging while concurrently constructing a boundary between themselves and those on the outside, or ‘the other’ (Fabian 1983, Cohen 2003).

The notion of cultural or communal memory is further explored in Alexander’s (2004) concept of a ‘system of collective representations’. These representations hold a powerful place within the conscious and subconscious choices and actions of participants. But, Alexander points out, “no matter how intrinsically effective, collective representations do not speak themselves” (Alexander 2004, p. 530). When viewed as isolated events or concepts, these symbolic representations may hold little relevant meaning. However, when viewed within an assemblage of representative actions and ideas as part of a specific cultural context, it is possible to gain insight into the collective memory and conscious choice making among community members. This helps constitute a community’s perceived notion of history.

Despite the recognised limitations of generalisation and possible oversimplification, this insight into Alexander’s notion of collective representations is significant. For this study, this theory would imply that the actions of individuals, even newer members, are influenced by a commonly held and transmitted knowledge of the past pertaining to its aesthetic and purpose. Likewise it suggests that choices being made today are constructed from the values and acumens gained from previous decisions. The competitive clogging community in the Intermountain West follows a unique route in applying that philosophy (see Chapters 5 and 6).

I believe that for this study to be significant, it must be contextualised within the larger framework of American clogging nationwide and its historical development. Regarding it in a completely isolated way does little to contribute to the wider understanding of the genre and the location of the community within it (Royce 1977, Williams 1991). Discovering how decision makers locate and imagine their roles within this larger context, and understanding their language and terminology displays a reflexive signification that demonstrates both identity and motivation (Royce 1977). I will discuss the ways in which history is perceived and interpreted in the Intermountain West clogging community throughout Chapters 4, 5 and 6.
Nationwide, the academic accounts of clogging’s cultural history are few. Numerous magazine articles and journal publications have been written since the 1970s with the intent to proselytise clogging to a wider participatory audience. Most are colloquial in style and tone, composed for a general rather than a selective audience. Some target readers with a general interest in dance (Popwell 1974 and 1975, Lay 1985, Lourdeaux 1989, Austin 1999, Idol 2003, DeVelin 2004, Strong 2009); others focus on cultural practices (Stocker 1980, Charlton 1997, Milling 2003, Terrell 2003, Maeshiro 2004), and some study both (Duke 1974, Thomas 1984, Devin 1993). It is regrettably common in accounts like these to find unsubstantiated claims about the historical development of the dance.

These anecdotal treatises generally do little more than provide the layperson with a ‘vignette’ or ‘snapshot’ understanding of clogging, its history, and practice. There are some excellent examples of this type of mass-market writing (Duke 1998, Jamison 2002, March and Holt 1977, Myers 1983, Peterson 1995, Smith 1955, Williams 1995); however, from them only a brief, generally accessible, though generalised understanding can be gained.

One insightful resource on Appalachian clogging is a published companion to the 1988 documentary film called Talking Feet. In this documentary, folklorist and musician Mike Seeger (1992) provides supplemental information and analysis about prominent individuals and Southern Appalachian dance styles shown in the film to offer a more complete history and contextualisation of traditional Appalachian step dancing than the video documentary alone. It contains little or no analysis, besides the written testimonials of the dance participants involved. Rather, it provides a glimpse at the broad range of practices and styles in a relatively small geographic region, and ethnographic insights on dance as culture in Appalachia. The movement presented in the film is performed, not by trained dancers, but by every day practitioners of all ages and genders in the original social contexts where the dance evolved and was

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6 Kight (2010), for instance, declares that the method of the Kentucky Running Set dance was the result “of a practical joke played by the residents of one Kentucky town who demonstrated an unnaturally fast BCD [Big Circle Dance] for Cecil Sharp, a Brit who travelled across America to document “folk” traditions—particularly those associated with music. Sharp failed to realize that he’d been misled and is responsible for introducing the KRS [Kentucky Running Set] style to Britain and popularizing its aerobically challenging manoeuvres among contemporary British folk dancers” (Kight 2010, p. 41). This bold assertion, which challenges the prevailing understanding on the topic, appeared with no stated differentiation between guesswork and reliable source documentation.
transmitted; back porches, front rooms and rural dance halls. The accompanying book provides interviews with, and first-hand stories about, these and other influential individuals who played a part of or witnessed the historical presence and development of Southern Appalachian dancing. The book and video together are intended to provide its audience with an understanding of the variety of dancing in the area and its connection to the daily life of its participants. Seeger avoids discussing the more contemporary styles of clogging and the issues of tradition and transformation that separate them from other expressions. Rather, his intent is to “provide a precious record of what the older dancers have to offer as well as inspiration to younger enthusiasts who want to absorb the tradition and make it their own” (Seeger 1992, p. i).

Through my research, I’ve found that treatment of more contemporary expressions of clogging among the overall academic survey of American clogging is tolerant at best. Most of these accounts describe the ‘precision’ or ‘modern’ clogging varieties only to highlight the contrasting virtues found in the pureness of the historical mountain style. Take March and Holt’s (1977) statement for example:

> Precision clogging seems to be here to stay; the style is used by many teams of young people in the Asheville area. Often real precision is lacking, however, leaving only the sound of the dancers stomping out the same rhythmic patterns with no attention given to the music or to the subtleties of the dance.

(March and Holt 1977, p. 46)

It is rare, but some accounts approach modern and competitive clogging with more philosophical acceptance:

> Modern clogging is more complicated than the simple rhythmic dance begun by our ancestors. Since clogging is a living folk dance, it reflects the time in which the dancers live. As with other forms of personal expression, each generation adds its own creativity to the art form. New inspirations creep into the dance because of popular culture.

(Carr 2009, p. 1)

It is interesting to note that the above statement comes from the publication called the Tar Heel (a name given to individuals native to North Carolina) Junior Historian. Like Idol (2004), Carr’s audience is younger and would likely be more interested in the contemporary manifestations of clogging.

A simple search on the Internet garners dozens of blog entries and web site postings containing often-contradictory or speculative histories of clogging. The list below is a
list of the top eight Google search results for ‘History of Clogging’ as of April 2013. There were hundreds more. Each of the websites below (accessed 16 April 2013) contains varying bits of information, dates, and sources presented (or no sources at all).

- http://sharonwilcox1003.tripod.com/history.htm
- http://newlenoxclogging.org/history.html
- http://www.dancelessons.net/dance_history/clog_dance_history.html
- http://www.doubletoe.com/history.htm

The enormity and accessibility of the online world provides a surplus of predisposed, unsubstantiated, and generalised descriptions and definitions of clogging, all subject to the personal interpretation, agenda, bias, and whim of their authors. Almost every clogging group with a web page appears obligated to declaim information on the history of the form. Within this vast collection of commentaries it is possible to find everything from tenuous speculation to interesting and thoughtful historical explanation. The apparent need to describe the history of the form does demonstrate a perceived connection to, and a desire to inform others of, the past. In 1985, before many of the modern and competitive innovations had occurred in clogging nationwide, Hall (1985) described the importance placed on this historical contextualisation for clog dancers. He wrote, “regardless of the specific history of clogging, a significant aspect of the idiom is that nearly all cloggers have a sense that there is a history, heritage, or tradition of the dancing” (p. 202). Historical commentaries are more commonly found among those groups and individuals oriented toward the more traditional practices of clogging or related forms. The majority of modern-oriented and competitive groups and individuals do not appear to have the same connection with or seek to express historical descriptions (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Despite their scholarly limitations, the literature in this category is instructive in understanding the needs and values of this community. On one hand, a preservationist, recreational and revivalist bias reflects a common desire for cultural preservation and

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7 Accessed 16 April 2013
transmission. Whether this is the result of dissatisfaction with the contemporary state of American society, the desire to legitimise and sustain its ‘traditional’ practice, or simply a fondness for the rural mountain dance expression, it is indicative of the desire to spread and sustain traditional/Southern cultural clogging mores, loose arms, ruffled petticoats, old-time music and all.

On the other hand, many of the modern-oriented or competitive dance studios, bloggers and organizations (and their websites), generally among those displaced (like America On Stage) from the Appalachian ‘heartland’, with invested commercial interests, seek to downplay the unsophisticated, rural connotations of clogging. Instead, they select vocabulary and imagery substantiating the modern, excitement and social applicability of the contemporary, competitive context of clogging they promote (see Chapter 5). Economic and social pressure for studio growth or prestige fuel these decisions as well. Histories and commentaries from these sources will naturally be affected by their bias.

Since the majority of the historical research has been in the hands of amateur investigators and writers, and since so much of the early dance development happened quietly and unobtrusively on rural front porches and dance halls, much has been lost, changed, or neglected. This is another reason why I feel that the historical research contained within this work (see Chapter 4) is so important to understanding this community and its multiple layers of cultural awareness.

2.4 Tradition: A Resource in the Construction of Community

The perception of tradition is closely related to the concept of history. In scholarly circles, the conventional understanding and nature of tradition has been debated, interpreted, and defined, particularly in the areas of folklore studies. Through these conversations, tradition has been examined as a way to objectively classify behaviour (Ben-Amos 1984, Bronner 1988 and 2000, Finnegan 1991, Gailey 1989, Holbeck 1983), as perceived, unaltered connections to the past (Handler 1984, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992), and as an essential facet of human experience for which we are scholastically accountable (Clifford 2004, Glassie 1995 and 2003). Henry Glassie claims “tradition is the creation of the future out of the past” (Glassie 2003, p. 176).
Kim Whitta asserts “that ‘tradition’ becomes constructed reality through social convention which itself is created out of the social interrelatedness and sharedness of meanings of people played out in the social process” (Whitta 1982, p. 171). For the purposes of this research, the term tradition will be defined as the sum of the acquired material and nonmaterial knowledge and experience received by an actor from a prior participant, experience or community.

Tradition can be marketed, essentialised, and reinforced by cultural brokers to increase community involvement, loyalty, and centralisation. The folklorist Simon Bronner states, “individuals creatively, strategically, control their cultural traditions” (Bronner in Spalding 1993, pp. 9-10). They are an important aspect of community. Thomas (2001) views the construction of community and the perception of tradition as mutually reinforcing ideals. “Tradition is a resource in the construction of community, just as the existence of a community is integral for the maintenance of a viable tradition” (Thomas 2001, p. 166).

Often closely linked with research on tradition, numerous studies focus on the ideas of authenticity within traditional practices from multiple angles like that of preservation (Bevil 1987, Felfoldi 2002, Gable and Handler 1996, Turino 2008), representation (Linnekin 1991, Underwood 2000), tourism (Collison 2011, Hashimoto 2003, Kim 2004) and nationalism (Overholser 2010, Shay 2002). Though not directly implicated in my research, these works contribute to my understanding of the meaning and implication of tradition in dance.

Anne Thomas (2001) produced an article on the establishment and meaning of community and tradition, two topics initially central to this study, among a group of recreational cloggers in Virginia. Within this community, Thomas discussed ‘tradition’ in the context of ‘cultural capital’,

in which the word [tradition] itself becomes a badge of honor, retains vestiges of a more "traditional" tradition, characterized by an individual's unconscious submission to a transcendent force flowing freely through groups of presumably unmodern people.

(Thomas 2001, pp. 164-5)

Thomas sought to examine the conceptualisation of tradition among members of a local clogging community. Her conclusions indicate the vital role of history and memory in the production of social meaning and the maintenance of a practical
tradition, particularly in contrast with more contemporary precision clogging groups. This lived and experienced tradition produces, frames, and inspires a sense of community among the dancers (Thomas 2001, p. 179).

Thomas applied a theoretical model of community architecture espoused by Etienne Wenger (1998) to examine the construction and maintenance of her recreational clogging community in Virginia. According to Thomas, Wenger’s “community of practice” is a method of analysing activities which produce structure and meaning for participants in three ways: 1) sustained interpersonal relationships, 2) a common, central activity, and 3) the development of shared resources (Thomas 2001, p. 173). Within this paradigm, learning occurs constantly in a social setting as individual identities are formed and interwoven with the group. Meaning is created and recreated through the on-going processes of participation and reification. I apply these principles in my examination of how AOS provides structure and meaning for its participants in Chapter 5.

Thomas’ writings were instrumental in helping me formulate a definition for and application of the term ‘traditional’ as it relates to clogging. For this study, the term ‘traditional clogging’ will refer to the emotional and communal awareness of and connectedness to Southern clogging history, heritage, and motifs, symbols of which include bluegrass music, white clogging shoes, flat footed dancing (circa 1980 technique), and country/cowboy costuming themes. Frank Hall (1985) states that if one was asked from where their dancing comes, a pre-1980s clogger would likely respond, “from the mountains” (Hall 1985 p. 202).

Traditional dance is often perceived, especially in my field of artistic dance expertise, as a definable object or state of being rather than as a process. In essence it becomes a mystical, sacred, conveniently ambiguous standard though which many choices are measured and validated. Keali‘inohomoku (2001) indicated that notions of an unchanging and authentic tradition appear to satisfy “our own ethnocentric needs to believe in the uniqueness of our dance forms” (p. 35). I have seen numerous examples of this attitude throughout my career as a dancer, choreographer, and instructor. Richard Carlin (1995) corroborates this point of view in his essay on American contra dance in Communities in Motion;
Leaving aside the notion of whether contra dancing is truly “traditional,” it seems that it is at least important for the dancers to believe it is. They like the notion that they are upholding some “ancient art” and carrying it forward in the face of terrible odds, despite the pressures of the twentieth century. The fact that most of the dances were created recently – and many of the traditional ones have been rearranged beyond recognition – does not seem to have much of an impact on their thinking. In fact, many of them seem to be aware of the history of the contra revival.

(Carlin 1995, p. 234)

For some dancers, the important thing is not the actual detailed knowledge of the history of the art form itself – just the perception that that history exists somewhere, that it is important, and that they are passing it on through kinaesthetic, emotional and financial participation in its perpetuation.

I initially assumed that analysing ‘tradition’ in the many manifestations of clogging would be an important aspect of this thesis. However, as my focus sharpened on the community and socio-political processes and cultural brokerage represented therein, I realised how relatively small a role ‘tradition’ actually plays in the Intermountain West community. As a central research topic, the issue of tradition diminished in significance. Still, as an important aspect of most community reification and interaction, it necessitates representation and discussion in this chapter.

*Building Community Through Tradition: Ritual, Homeland, and Pilgrimage*

Hobsbawm suggests a theoretical approach to the “invention of tradition”, defining it as “a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992, p. 4). Tradition is repetitive in nature, a recurrent act or motif reflecting some aspect of a community’s culture or shared experience. Over time those elements become firmly fixed into place within the shared consciousness of the community, with little resistance or memory of their origin.

Rituals can be highly significant cultural performances. Kapchan elucidates, ritual performances encode and transmit the core values of society, implanting ideologies such as religion, patriarchy and social hierarchy in the very bones of children, in their flesh and breath… Rituals involve a repertoire of emotional and aesthetic phenomena, the understanding of which brings us to a deeper comprehension of what constitutes self and society.

(Kapchan 2003, p. 130)
Rituals are ‘tradition’, embodied. And traditions can serve to unite and stabilise a community. Both can be shaped by cultural brokers to serve ideological or commercial ends.

Pilgrimage, a particular kind of ritual, is another effective resource in community construction. Applying Turner’s (1969) theories of *communitas*, ritual and pilgrimage, Andrew Howard (2009) describes the intense bonds of homogeneity and unity he felt as a member of a competitive clogging team attending the America’s Clogging Hall of Fame (ACHF) national competition. Every autumn, during the height of fall colour in the mountains of western North Carolina, hundreds of dancers and spectators travel to Maggie Valley, the ancestral homeland of clogging in the Smoky Mountains. According to Howard, this competition provides a larger-than-life sense of communal bonding and unity. Turner’s theories of *communitas* enabled Howard to advance an explanation for the intense association experienced by a group of people from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds, drawn together through the practice of clogging. Howard suggested that the vagueness with which notions of tradition and authenticity had been defined within the community was exactly what gave the form its widest appeal, while locating the event geographically and emotionally in the heart of the Southeastern cultural aesthetic invoked sharedness with the past (Howard 2009, p. 78).

Despite a lack of wider contextualisation of the groups and organisation described within a larger nationwide frame of reference, I agree with Howard’s ultimate assessment that community building and maintenance was facilitated through ritualised behaviour, the creation of a homeland, and pilgrimage.

*A Note on Participatory Versus Presentational Events*

In the sections above, I have claimed that history and tradition can be resources to cultural brokers in shaping their community, and that social interaction is an important element of communal reification. What form that social interaction takes is also an important consideration. Turino (2008) distinguishes important differences between performances that are *participatory* and those that are *presentational*. The motivations, values and practices within each differ greatly (Turino 2008). Participatory involvement is centred on *the doing* of the activity (which is established dialectically and reflective of the nature and values of the community), the social bonding and
associative relationships through formulaic, inclusive and mutually reassuring engagement. The large gatherings of square and contra dancing across the United States are an example of participatory involvement; actors interact socially while moving in prescribed patterns, the familiarity with and repetition of which creates feelings of connectedness to the past and belonging in the present.

Conversely, presentational performance focuses on the result of an endeavour. Presentational performers are generally more disposed to change or innovate movement because they need not worry about the overall inclusivity of the performance; rather, they seek to set themselves apart, gain entrance to the elite of their community by virtue of their abilities and achievements. Dramatic contrasts and dynamics that are not possible with large numbers of participants are often crucial elements in presentational music and dance (Turino 2008).

The difference between these two dance contexts is particularly relevant to my research in Chapter 6, in which I discuss the outcomes of AOS policies and efforts to stabilise and grow their community.

2.5 Standardisation and Institutionalisation

For background representations to express meaning and be accepted by a community, they have to be recognisable and accessible to its membership. Standardisation can be generally defined as the process whereby methods of practice are made common to a group. “Standardisation refers to a process that affects the general features as well as the details of a work. Structural similarities arise in cultural forms as a result of the technique of the culture industry – distribution and mechanical reproduction” (Held 1980, pp. 94-95). Ballet is a good example of standardisation in a dance genre. Louis XIV’s first official decree as king in 1661 was to create the Académie Royale de Danse in 1661, and he appointed Pierre Beauchamps as its first ballet master. Beauchamps created and standardised the basic ballet vocabulary still in use today (Homans 2010; Foley 2013).

Institutionalisation is a similar process by which a set of behaviours or ideas are generated, disseminated and controlled by a central governing body or power (Berger and Luckmann 1966). “Institutions, by the very fact of their existence, control human
conduct by setting up redefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, pp. 54-55). Institutions, or organisations, facilitate social interactions and accomplish set purposes. This is typically accomplished through the construction and maintenance of communally shared symbols, language, history and social structures, the *ethos* of a community. It includes values, beliefs, myths, wisdom, legends, proverbs, and most importantly, rules of conduct. When these elements become common and standardised within the group, the result is a more controllable and predictable, or stable, community (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

The institution’s strength lies in its ability to influence the establishment and dissemination of knowledge, create common, recognisable text (like dance motifs), and enforce the codes of behaviour. Institutional knowledge is distilled in streamlined symbols and messages in order to facilitate and simplify its enforcement and transmission.

Turner explains that the manipulation of symbols in the political processes of standardisation is key in creating a stable community, and codifying its cultural core (Turner 1975). Therefore, the exhibition of symbols to participants and the enactment of symbolic activities by them are culturally significant. This implies that cultural brokers (those who hold authority over others by virtue of experience, age, skill, wit or wealth), sway the creation and use of symbols, boundaries, and behaviours in order to establish officially acceptable conduct. Failure to comply with this set of imposed modes of conduct brings boundary-clarifying sanctions from the institution, which “must and do claim authority over the individual, independently of the subjective meanings that he may attach to any particular situation” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 62). Notwithstanding the personal feelings a dancer may have about their performance in competition, the arbiter’s final decision has lasting and powerful weight within the community.

Standardisation and institutionalisation are social processes rooted in *habitus*, the habitualised activities of individuals and groups (Berger and Luckmann 1966). As activities become a matter of routine and habit, they likewise become predictable and alternatives diminish. The subliminal backgrounding of routine establishes programmed boundaries of practice and allows the liminal foreground to explore and
interact with current context and stimuli. Or essentially, routine enables individuals to confront and adapt to novel situations and learn new things while subconsciously measuring them against previous knowledge and understanding.

In a stable community, there are rules organising participation. Burns and Carson (2002) describe motivations for rules compliance, varying from the desire for elevated status and reward to the fear of pain or being ostracised from the community. Conformity to communal boundaries can be a matter of ritualised habit, subconsciously carried out, or choices can be made based on the concept of consequences. The most effective rule systems, and those easiest to follow, “are associated with very basic values and meanings – even personal and collective identity – motivating at a deep emotional level commitment to the rules and a profound personal satisfaction in enacting them” (Burns and Carson 2002, p. 7). This would include religious or other communities that reflect the grander aspirations or passions in life. For example, a devout Christian follows the rules of compliance of his community, including going to church, reading the Bible, and serving in the community. In doing so, his concept of self can be validated through feelings of peace, contentment, and personal satisfaction.

The relationship between the actor and the community or institution is a dialectical one, based on the externalisation of institutional knowledge. “Knowledge about society is thus a realization in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing this reality” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 66). The result is an externalised product encoded with established institutional meaning, filtered and negotiated with internalised conscious reality.

Variability in the transmission and interpretation of cultural symbols require institutions to carefully control the efficacy of both symbolic production and enforcement. The longevity of the institution is based on its ability to regulate and standardise the transmission of this knowledge to new generations (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Its authority is justified through ritual and historical precedent or myth where “the reality of the social world gains in massivity in the course of its transmission” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 61). Once this skeletal framework “attains a firmness in consciousness; it becomes real in an ever more massive way and it can no longer be changed so readily” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 59). In this way
the institution is perceived and eventually transmitted to new participants as self-evident and believable, and even if a participant does not fully appreciate all facets of purpose or methodology, the “objective reality” of the institution is not diminished (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 60).

Processes of institutionalisation and codification construct imagined boundaries between perceived ‘authentic’ or ‘acceptable’ behaviours and their opposite. This creates an ‘us/them’ dichotomy, rendering the community, at some level, exclusionary in nature. The negotiation of those boundaries is often contentious. Considering the frequent existence of multiple sub-communities within the ‘constellation’ of the whole, internal and external discord and dissatisfaction can occur. For example, Kim Whitta’s master’s thesis on Scottish Highland Dancing (1982) explores the problematic aspects of standardisation and institutionalisation subsequent to differing technical models among competitive dancers. Whitta’s research centred on two separate but ‘official’ syllabi, or standardised techniques, which arose in the early 1950s from organising bodies in both Scotland and New Zealand. In a dance so closely tied to cultural heritage and identity, such issues and their resolution carried profound consequences. The Scottish authority, referred to as “the board”, professed its intent “not to standardize Highland Dancing, but to stabilize it so that Caledonian Societies and Highland Societies all over the world would have a technique that would remain constant for a considerable number of years” (Whitta 1982, p. 15). Whitta then went on to identify the ways in which the board systematically codified the technique and transmission of Scottish Highland dancing, everywhere but New Zealand. Despite the creative format, and presence of opposing viewpoints, there is little attempt to conceal his bias against the dictatorial Scottish board seeking to achieve external legitimisation by projecting a mythological purity, in favour of the more democratic methods of the New Zealand authoritative body.

A similar study by Foley (2001) examines the issues of identity and standardisation in Ireland and Irish step dancing. An Coimisiun le Rinci Gaelacha (the Irish Dance Commission), the oldest of the Irish Dance organisations, has a long history of organisational control exerted over aspects of competitive Irish step dance, such as valid technique, rules of participation, production of events and feiseanna, allowable costuming, and musical accompaniment (Foley 2001, p. 36). Foley states that the “agenda and the rulings of this hierarchical cultural and political organisation served to
centralise, homogenise, institutionalise, and standardise Irish step dance” while consciously or unconsciously pushing alternative forms to the periphery (Foley 2001, p. 36). In this case, standardisation and institutionalisation defined, stabilised and unified many components of the community, while marginalising or alienating others.

*Early and Recreational Clogging Standardisation*

In clogging’s early phases, there was no common repertoire, terminology, or even a name. From the mid-1960s through the 1980s, a number of informal booklets and manuals, many of them self-published, were written describing the patterns, techniques, and history of Southern Appalachian clogging. Their appearance coincides with a period of folk revival within the South-eastern United States music and dance communities and an increasing popularity of clogging in distant parts the country (see Chapter 3). These documents were created to satisfy the growing need for instructional and informational material at a time when the dance was spreading across the country. As groups of dancers from various locations began interacting on social, recreational, and competitive levels, these instructional manuals also began to fill the growing need for a common linguistic and movement vocabulary. Despite varying terminology, content, and notation style, each manual or leaflet contains a brief introduction to clogging, always framing it within an historical/Southern ‘mountain’ context, then proceeds with descriptions of movement technique and patterns in an attempt to standardise its practice (Austin 1977 and 1981, Bernstein 1984, Bonner 1983, Collins 1989, Driggs 2000, Fairchild 1984, Hinds 1984, Nichols and Steele 1996, Popwell 1980 and 1983). In the introduction of Austin’s (1977) manual we are told unequivocally that “the primary purpose of this book is to classify and standardise beginning, intermediate and advanced clog steps” (Austin 1977, p. 6). Others were not as forthcoming as Austin but nonetheless their intentions appear similar. The standardising effectiveness of these manuals was incomplete on a national level but some success is manifest (Popwell) by the continued usage of certain steps, terminology, and ideas by cloggers today.

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Each of the manuals mentioned above exhibit unique characteristics or traits. Pam Collins (1989) begins the majority of her footwork patterns with the right foot, while the rest predominantly start with the left. Popwell (1983) and Bonner (1983) emphasise the use of Appalachian Square Dance figures within the practice while the others focus solely on footwork patterns. Bernstein (1984) strays the furthest from the mainstream by terming the widely accepted ‘double-toe’ action of the foot a “shuffle”, which he describes as “two non-weight-bearing contacts of the ball of the foot to the floor produced by brushing the foot F[orward] and then B[ack]” (Bernstein 1984, p. 25). A similar movement description is found in Popwell’s (1980) explanation of the “double-toe”, where “the ball of the foot strikes the floor during the forward motion of a short kick and the knee straightens; immediately the same foot swings backward and the ball of the foot strikes the floor again in the same spot as the knee bends upward” (Popwell 1980, p. 5).

Popwell’s work has had the most influence of any of the early manuals on mainstream clogging terminology and movement vocabulary. She herself was a founding officer in the earliest established competition-sanctioning organisation in the United States, called the National Clogging and Hoedown Council (NCHC). Popwell’s position and abilities (an intelligent, energetic woman with both square dance and clogging backgrounds who helped found both NCHC and Clogging Leaders of Georgia, or CLOG) made her a likely candidate to successfully initiate the processes of codification and standardisation. She wrote teaching manuals and edited the CLOG’s newsletter, the Flop-Eared Mule, published six times a year. It is likely that due to her organisational affiliation, and her maintenance of the organisation’s primary means of communication, the information contained in her publications was promoted and sustained because she had such a profound influence over the dissemination of information and terminology. More information will be provided about Popwell and the early organisational structures in Chapter 3, but it is important to note that her role in the standardisation of clogging was significant.

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9 This deviation from generally accepted clogging vernacular is explained in the sentence that follows the description: “This is the same as a shuffle in tap dancing” (Bernstein 1984, p. 25). Bernstein’s deliberate decision to use tap dance terminology (shuffle) over that of conventional clogging (double-toe) was likely made because the audience for his book, and for the majority of his professional work, would be more familiar with tap dance vocabulary as he specialised in lecture/demonstrations in non-clogging communities across the country.
Academic Scholarship on Clogging Standardisation

The study of American clogging in an academic and scholarly fashion, particularly the contemporary competitive expression, is still very much in its infancy. Not an immaturity of age or quality, but of quantity. A handful of theses and dissertations, one published compilation, a few journal articles and a couple of book chapters constitute the whole of this collection. The intent of these works do not reflect a simple desire to share clogging with the outside world, but to extract some deeper layers of meaning in the movement and its connection to culture.

In the self-published adaptation of his PhD dissertation, Jerry Duke’s *Clog Dance in the Appalachians* (1984) provides an historical and regional analysis of clogging history and practice throughout the Southeast United States. The research is based on the recording and comparative analysis of various clog dance systems from multiple locations in order to identify patterns of stylistic diffusion, and involved fairly extensive fieldwork in the collection of said patterns. Duke chooses to employ his own unique method of recording and describing the movement phrases. Here is an example of one of the patterns notated by Duke:

Step 9

A step sometimes called the “Blue Ridge Hoedown” from Virginia combines the Missouri Hoedown step with the Double-Toe Hoedown of North Carolina. To execute the Blue Ridge Hoedown step the dancer executes a double-to-flat with one foot, then leaps to the other foot and stamps beside it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td>Toe bounce (tap) right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>uh</td>
<td>Toe bounce (tap) right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Step flat right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td>Stamp left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stamp left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp;</td>
<td>Toe bounce (tap) right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>uh</td>
<td>Toe bounce (tap) right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat actions of Measure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Duke 1984, p. 47)

There has never been a universally accepted style or format to notate or record clogging patterns or sequences. There have been many iterations of clogging notation by instructors and organisations since the 1970s, but the style used here by Duke is
unlike any I have seen before. Furthermore, Duke did not use the common terms found in the national clogging community of the time, nor is his preferred terminology in circulation found today. For instance, the term ‘toe bounce’ is not one that I have ever encountered in research or interactions. He may have chosen it due to his desire to extend the reach of his work beyond the clogging community alone and therefore sought more universal terminology. In spite of its limitations, Duke’s *Clog Dance In the Appalachians* represents an early effort to record and analyse a wide variety of clog dance movement practices.

One year after Duke’s publication, Frank Hall (1985) submitted an analysis of improvisation and fixed composition in clogging to the Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human Movement (JASHM). After a brief historical and cultural contextualisation, Hall employed Kaeppler’s (1972) influential structural analysis methods in a comparative study between traditional improvisational solo dancing and contemporary choreographic group practices. Using Kaeppler’s structural terms to delineate the basic elements of phrase construction, (kinemes, morphokines, and so on) he demonstrated how these differing uses of similar movement techniques and vocabulary adhered to a unified set of unwritten rules. Through this analysis, Hall identified rules that provide a framework for the range of artistic choices available to clog dancers at the time. This was the first serious study of the technical composition of the processes by which patterns were constructed, and was an important documentation of clogging as it was widely and recognisably performed nationwide, including in the Intermountain West, in 1985.

At that time, clogging still retained distinct, ‘traditional’ Southern aesthetics (see above), and was consistent with the technique and style of clogging that I first learned in the 1980s in Utah. Shortly thereafter, the style in the West began to radically change (described in detail in Chapter 3). External elements were introduced, from tap and 10 There is no unified method or style in clogging notation. Since the 1970s, instructors have typically written out the instructions in key words or phrases coupled with timing and direction cues. Popwell’s (1980) efforts at standardization introduced popular abbreviations still in use today, like DS (double-step), R (Rock), S (step), and H (hop). Movement phrases would be written in the following way: “DS DS DS R S H S R S”. Directly below the abbreviated action symbol would be indicated the right or left foot and any directional or effort directions. Some instructors include time and rhythmic markers such as: “& a 1 e & 2” in the space above the action symbol. Among recreational dancers, it is common to name sequences of two, four, and eight counts, then those names like, ‘Mountain Goat’, ‘Triple Loop’, or ‘Samantha’ would be used to describe and record patterns.
cheerleading and hip-hop, while bluegrass music was freely passed over in favour of popular songs of all kinds as the processes of transformation were applied to a culturally expressive dance form in diaspora.

Hall had predicted probable outcomes of rule-breaking in future developments, and in 2011, I published an article in the same journal (JASHM) wherein I addressed the means by which the rules he identified had been challenged and broken during the twenty-five years that had transpired since that time (Larsen 2011). After specifically analysing each of Hall’s five rules and the predicted consequences of their contravention, my findings validated Hall’s assumptions and related them to the greater concept of culture in the contemporary clogging community.

As a direct result of the proliferation of competitions, those making choreographic choices have pushed each of the rules or boundaries up to and past its limits. Whatever the reasons for or manifestations of these marked changes, it is clear that participants have made choices about what they prefer to perform and present about themselves, in this case, for the most part, reflecting a desire to move away from the tradition. Dancers making choices about the way they prefer to move and be seen reveals much about the way in which they see themselves within their world, which is increasingly motivated by popular culture and facilitated by high-speed mass communication.  

(Larsen 2011, p. 11)

2.6 Transformation of the Dance Practice

Culture is by no means a static entity. Not only is a community made up of many different parts, but those parts are constantly in flux in relationship to each other and to the outside world. The ‘us/them’ duality inherent in the creation of a community indicates the existence of external and internal stimuli. Social, commercial, political and/or theological differences entail the continual navigation of cultural boundaries.

Ben-Amos (1984) describes three perceived threats seeking to undermine the stability and authenticity of a given tradition. These he places in three dichotomous pairs: (a) little tradition vs. great tradition; (b) tradition vs. popular culture; and (c) tradition vs. creativity (Ben-Amos 1984, p. 107). The first refers to the presence of two side by side traditions, one more and one less influential. The second represents an introduction of new ideas from outside sources, and the third suggests innovation from
within. This explanation of the various challenges to tradition is helpful in understanding and describing how ‘change’ is enacted in cultural processes.

Gail Matthews (1983) focuses her attention on the relationship between community and dance in her MA Thesis on mountain dance in Haywood County, North Carolina. Matthews compares the varying socio-cultural perspectives and attitudes of three different groups of clog dancers within a relatively small geographic area, and how they resulted in significant artistic dance choices. The research abounds with strong interplay between the traditional and innovative approaches to dance and music. The vast majority of the population interviewed by Matthews in this rural Southern community perceived the more modern “precision clogging, a highly choreographed interpretation of the mountain dance, as a threat to the survival of traditional dance characteristics” (Matthews 1983, pp. 32-33). A few members of the community, primarily the youth, had embraced precision (or modern) clogging as an exciting and motivating use of the movement vocabulary. The increasing popularity of modern clogging among the youth was troubling to the traditionalists.

Several dancers stated that they were afraid their children would only learn precision style dance and the “mountain” style would fade away. Although Kesterson [who introduced precision style to the area] hails from nearby Hendersonville, precision dance is perceived as being the product of an outsider’s misinterpretations of the essential elements of mountain dance and is sometimes referred to as “flatland” dancing.

(Matthews 1983, p. 33)

Matthews identifies a number of aesthetic principles locally regarded as rules for correct and appropriate dancing, sought after and valued by traditional mountain, or ‘freestyle’, dancers. Through multiple interviews with mountain dancers, Matthews relates how many freestyle cloggers believed that precision dancers “broke the rules” (p. 122) “According to most mountain dancers” Matthews says, “precision cloggers violate an aspect of the mountain dance aesthetic that appreciates simplicity” (Matthews 1983, pp. 122-123). The individuality and improvisational expressiveness of mountain dancing was lost in the uniformity of precision clogging.

Due to a relative lack of contemporary viewpoints, coupled with a discernible distaste for modern clogging, it appears that Matthews sympathises with the ‘freestyle’ viewpoint and the virtues of traditional dancing. Despite the bias, Matthews’ efforts
give voice to the aesthetic values of the traditional dance community and registers their concerns about its transformation.

In 1995, Susan Spalding teamed up with Jane Harris Woodside as joint contributors and editors for a publication called *Communities in Motion*, which is an extensive compilation of research conducted on Southern Appalachian styles of dance. This book presents chapters from numerous experts in various fields of study and genres of dance, including clogging, within this region. The majority of the submissions focus on issues of culture, tradition, transformation and cultural negotiation. Most of the articles exude a dominantly traditionalist or preservationist perspective. Despite the obvious bias, the publication’s focus on processes, attention to detail, and well-documented sources makes it a vital resource for any study of the transformation processes at work in historical Southern Appalachian dance.

Subjects of *Communities in Motion* include communal dancing in Southwest Virginia (a condensed version of Spalding’s dissertation on the subject), African American step shows, Appalachian and Midwestern square dancing, and Newfoundland step dancing, all addressing the general processes of innovation in traditional dance practices. In one chapter, David Whisnant (1995) explores the impact of the life and work of Bascom Lamar Lunsford on mountain music and dance, and adds important insights on the early processes of clogging standardisation and transformation. Whisnant draws an important distinction between the dancing done before the institution of Lunsford’s Dance and Folk Festival and that performed afterward. The concepts of performance, competition, dance teams, costuming, and even large social, public dance gatherings were all transformed, shaped by the aesthetic and politics of Lunsford as well as the nature of mountain dancing. The Festival, which mirrored Lunsford’s vision and energy, “substantially revised popular perception of the mountain music and dance of his native counties and enhanced the musicians’ and dancers’ respect for themselves” (Whisnant 1995, p. 105). However, Whisnant pointed out, the framework for what and how mountain music and dance should be expressed at the Festival was always filtered through Lunsford’s romanticised ideology. This essay provokes meditation on the influence one actor can have on the shaping of cultural identity in a community, and relates to my study on the American On Stage founders in later chapters.
In one of the chapters in Communities in Motion entitled ‘Wild and Yet Really Subdued: Cultural Change, Stylistic Diversification, and Personal Choice in Traditional Appalachian Dance’, Gail Matthews-DeNatale (1983) revisits her thesis findings, mentioned above, in an examination of the divisive tradition versus innovation debate. She recognises that “clogging has a strong contemporary following”, but argues “the dance’s appeal is that it is considered to be an old dance that is part of our heritage” (Matthews-DeNatale 1995, p. 113). It was precisely through juxtaposition of contemporary and traditional practices that led Matthews-DeNatale to say

Ironically, it is often a confrontation with change that helps us clarify the essence, importance, and meaning of our traditions. Folk dance, as well as folklore in general must continually change in order to keep up the needs of the people who engage in it. We are constantly figuring out which new cultural options we will embrace or reject. (Matthews-DeNatale 1995, p. 116)

Matthews-DeNatale determines that wider exposure to outside influences had had a great impact on the changes introduced into clogging, which supports my findings in Chapter 3.6. “This mobility has resulted in an increased awareness of non-traditional lifestyle options and an increased diversification of square dance styles” (Matthews-DeNatale 1995, p. 118), just as mass media influences and dancer cross-training expanded the movement options of clogging in the 1990s (see Chapter 3.6).

Communities in Motion does include an essay by Jane Harris Woodside (1995), who presents excerpts from an interview with precision clogger Barbara Bogart, in a chapter entitled ‘Clogging is Country’. From the transcription we learn that Bogart locates herself as a ‘precision’ clogger, which is considered more contemporary, but still labels what she does as “old style clogging” (Woodside 1995, p. 134). This is a demonstration of a common quandary among clog dancers throughout the country: determining what level of innovation and modernisation is suitable and acceptable for their personal worldview and identity. Bogart dislikes the idea of competition but acknowledges the right of others to compete, or make changes to dance structures that seem viable to them. Yet her interview concludes with, “I like bluegrasss music for dancing because that’s where clogging comes from…clogging is country” (Woodside 1995, p. 136). In spite of being a precision clogger, Bogart, and by association Woodside, still represents a traditionalist perspective.
It would have been a valuable addition to *Communities in Motion* to have seen an interview with a contemporary, competitive clogger to present a different perspective. I suggest that my research is adding just such a perspective to the dialogue.

*Competition and its Transformative Ramifications in Expressive Culture*

Alexander (2004), Kapchan (2003), Thomas (2001), Whitta (1982) and others emphasise the importance of social interaction in communal reification. Clogging competitions constitute the officially recognised method of participation and accomplishment within the America On Stage community, their most prominent context for community social enactment. To use a term coined by Turner (1974), a competition is an interactive site of ‘social drama’ where actors display various levels of constructed symbolic identity for validation and adjudication. Abrahams (2003) refers to a ‘ritual’ or ‘display event,’ wherein these identities are subject to being tested or re-evaluated through significant interaction and comparison with other participants and with the community’s structural and organisational paradigms. “Within these worlds of play, fun, spectacle, even war and other kinds of high-intensity display, the very concept of identity implicitly comes under question” (Abrahams 2003, p. 214). In this thesis I argue that self and community definition is constantly enacted and transformation of the dance is made manifest at these AOS ‘display events’.

Nancy Biehler (1985) is the first author I am aware of to study issues of transformation, culture and identity related to the competitive aspect of clogging in her MA thesis entitled *Clogging Competitions – Can They Preserve the Heritage of the American Clog Dance?* As the title suggests, her intent is to determine the value of clogging competitions as a possible means of cultural preservation of ‘traditional’ practices in spite of changing values and innovation (Biehler 1985, p. 5). She seeks to explore the processes of cultural perception and articulation among the so-called standard bearers and leaders of the clog dancing community. After observing a series of the top national competitions at various locations in 1985, she compares the structures of each competition in relation to the stated concept of preserving ‘tradition’. Biehler’s findings reveal that by 1985 the tradition had already undergone major changes in the areas of commercialisation, standardisation and modernisation (Biehler 1985, pp. 40-41). Despite this statement, she goes on to claim that in the opinion of the experts she interviewed that, despite the significant changes in technique and aesthetics, “the
traditional styles would ultimately prevail” (Biehler 1985, p. 41). Biehler concludes that the competitions had made great efforts to maintain traditional practices through the implementation of rules, categories and standards at events, which are adjudicated by a team of expert judges who reward and validate participants for attempts at cultural preservation.

However, due to the free nature of the form and the influence of newly added participants, Biehler realises that her “investigation into survival of that heritage has left room for serious doubts” (Biehler 1985, p. 62). She advocates for the use of more educational efforts to be made on behalf of those living outside the traditional geographic locale of the dance in order for the transmission of cultural heritage and awareness to continue. Based on her findings, Biehler conveys confidence that competitions can potentially “strengthen the tradition, as long as clogging professionals nationwide can support that intent with thoughtful influence over the students they teach” (Biehler 1985, p. 63).

I too have serious doubts about Biehler’s fundamental contention that competition can act as a culturally preservative process. I concur with her assertion that any energy expended in adherence to and participation in traditional clogging practices would be based on the actions and motivations of the teachers and organisers. As I have found in my own work, which will be expounded in the forthcoming chapters, the rate and extent of transformation and innovation experienced within the community relates directly to flexible organisational structures and the motivations of the instructors and directors.

As in other competitive arts, winning in the context of a clogging competition is not based necessarily on fact. In the America On Stage organisation, it is achieved through the subjective appraisal of the performance based on a loosely prescribed AOS rubric (see Appendix C) interpreted by an adjudicator’s own personally defined set of values and experience (see Chapter 6). The rubric and the adjudication values become part of the cultural mechanisms, which influence the social structures and creative agency of participants seeking communal validation.

numerous parallels between Irish step dance and clog dance, these studies have had a
great influence on my work with competitive clogging. These studies endeavour to
frame the current practice and its related nationalistic signification within an historical
and organisational context. The role of the governing bodies at both the dancing (Irish
Dancing Commission) and cultural (Gaelic League and Gaelic Athletic Association)
levels have been to exert influence on the performed product and its relationship to
Ireland and ‘Irishness’. Foley (1988) asserts that the establishment of Irish cultural
associations resulted in institutionalisation of the native Irish language, sports, and
eventually music and dance within the collective consciousness in order to project the
idealised image of Ireland and its people (Foley 1988, p. 89). These configurations
would gradually become a symbolic embodiment of Ireland, and would represent
Ireland culturally, shaping both the Irish people’s views of themselves and their
culture, and outsiders’ views and perceptions of Ireland.

(Foley 2013, pp. 143-144)

All three authors make reference to the impact that the competitive process has on
to a narrowing of style occurring, while Ni Bhriain (2010) demonstrated a deepening of
style through more subtle technical and artistic changes. Hall notes two processes,
which lead to a narrowing of style: imitation of the winning form, and the consistent
placement of value on a set of formal characteristics by adjudicators (Hall 1995, p. 58).
According to all three studies, this effect eventually leads to the existence of less
variation and difference among competitors. Ni Bhriain describes the nature of
successful competitiveness as paradoxical, in which a competitor “is required to stand
out in a fashion appropriate to the event and tradition while simultaneously appearing
to hover on the edge of the prescribed boundaries” (Ni Bhriain 2010, p. 51). It is
precisely the variations that flirt with imposed boundaries that attract the most attention
and result in either acceptance or rejection through the adjudication process.
Negotiation between the risk of failure and the possibility of success is played out as
participants pursue appropriate advantages over fellow competitors.

The competitive context encourages innovation and enhancement, yet Irish dance
organisational structures claim to strive for maintenance and consistency. This
condition led Hall to ask, “how can Irish dancing be preserved when the very
mechanism which keeps it going, lively and interesting, i.e., competition, causes it to
change?” (Hall 1995, p. 106). In a similar strain, Ni Bhriain discusses the processes of standardisation as it applies to impeding or inspiring creativity, and how one can create ‘new’ in an art form while honouring its tradition (Ni Bhriain 2010, pp. 65-66). Ni Bhriain contends that the feis, or the Irish dance competitive event, “is an opportunity for dialogical performance where movement systems are presented and traditional boundaries are constantly negotiated” (Ni Bhriain 2010, p. 27). Due to external influences, the governing bodies have tried to legislate the pace and extent of change occurring within the form. Ni Bhriain’s investigation led her to conclude that the act of performance is the creative product where “subtle spontaneity is still possible” through careful negotiation with perceived structural limitations (Ni Bhriain 2010, p. 62). Foley explains how these limitations are placed within the mechanisms used to adjudicate dancers.

Dancers are measured according to time, carriage, steps and execution – all elements that are measurable… Creativity does occur within the genre, and step dance consistently develops, but it does so under these constraints… Anything measured to be ‘too far out’ is not placed in the ranking; it is not considered ‘normal’ practice, and the dancer is punished by not being placed.

(Foley 2013, p. 191)

Foley also explored a similar process inherent in competitive Irish Dance, where the expressions of established Irish dance mores become progressively but subtly redefined.

Solo step dancers accommodate, for the most part, the accepted kinaesthetic vocabulary of the day; however, it may be negotiated by highly skilled performers, and even then very subtly. Informed step dancers and teachers are all aware of those impressive novelty movements that won last years’ Oireachts Rince na Cruinne championships, and which they have inserted in steps for this current years’ championships.

(Foley 2013, p. 191)

In a similar way, my study seeks to determine how artistic choice and creativity interact in relation to culturally constructed ideals of performance or behaviour, and how and why that ideal is established and propagated. Unlike the Irish dance example, innovation in competitive clogging in the Intermountain West was influenced less by the constraints of historically (nationalistic) predetermined and adjudicated measures and more by the creativity of participants and the motivations of the competition organisers.
In 2001, I completed an MA thesis on the competitive clogging community in Utah, documenting and analysing changes in movement, costuming, styling, musical and thematic elements of the performance at the Nationals clogging competition in Utah between 1984 and 2000. For example, in 1984, the footwork was performed close to the ground and fast, using music averaging 170 beats per minute\textsuperscript{11}. By 2000, due to the gradual incorporation of larger and more complex movement of the feet and legs, the speed of the music averaged 131 beats per minute (Larsen 2001, p. 186). This change, among many others, was the result of a series of appropriated motifs from external dance genres into the base repertoire (Larsen 2001, Larsen 2011). I attribute these developments, adaptations, and innovations to the dance practice in which the participants’ motivation to win superseded their desire to maintain the traditional elements of the practice, transforming the dance practice.

Competition plays a contentiously transformative role in other arts as well. A 2003 issue of *The World of Music, Contesting Tradition: Cross-Cultural Studies of Musical Competition* (45/1) includes a number of case studies on competitive musical events and performances. Its purpose is to address the effect of competition on the transmission of musical traditions and on the musical sound itself (Gunderson 2003) by asking:

> How do competitions affect the development of musical traditions and communities? How do music competitions act as mechanisms of innovation, or conversely, as keepers of the status quo? How do music competitions serve their communities in the formation of identity? What, specifically, do competitive music practices communicate, and to whom? How are lines drawn to distinguish informal and formal contest settings? Whose interests do organized competitions serve, and how do they function to control, preserve, or promote musical values and identities? (Gunderson 2003, pp. 7-8)

I ask some of these same questions in this dissertation, in relation to clogging.

Blaustein (1975), Goertzen (1988,1996), Graf (1999), Trew (2000), Johnson (2000, 2006), and others have authored dissertations and articles on the topic of fiddle

\textsuperscript{11} This number is mostly corroborated in research conducted by Jerry Duke in 1984, which found that precision dancers at that time were dancing at 160 beats per minute. Interestingly, he also mentions that the traditional clog dancers (in the hoedown style) were dancing to 120 beats per minute during the same period of time (Duke 1984, p. 39). This would indicate that precision dancers nationwide were intentionally dancing faster than the traditional style. It also demonstrates that there is a common aesthetic among the competitive precision dancers at that time.
contests. They have variously investigated how tradition and competition interplay within “organizations devoted to the preservation and perpetuation of old-time fiddling as a living art form” (Blaustein 1993, p. 259). Johnson (2006) analyses the continual creation of tradition through the interaction between individual and community (fiddle contests in Ontario, Canada), its challenge through competition dynamics, and how the fiddling tradition can remain integral expression of personal identity while meeting the criteria of the competition (Johnson 2006, p. 6). Graf presents contradiction between the stated intent of the National Old-time Fiddler’s Contest to preserve old-time fiddling and the reality of the competition phenomenon (Graf 1999). Trew details the homogenising influence that the fiddle contest had on technical style and repertoire (Trew 2000, p. 138). She also attributes similar processes to the styles and repertoires found in the local step dance competitions (Trew 2000, p. 152). These case studies demonstrate that fiddlers are in a constant state of negotiation with the tradition they follow and current trends, which work for or against them in competition. Competition creates a dramatic interplay between individual and community which “is both complex and in constant flux” (Johnson 2006, p. 507).

Sarah Loten (1994) approaches her examination of a bagpiping competition at the Glengarry Highland Games by asking “how is tradition defined within the competition, by whom, in whose interests?” (Loten 1994, p. 29). She describes how the music making at this event was not judged on any previously recognised reality, but rather by the evolving interpretation of the governing body. Bakan (1999) describes competitions increasing in complexity, standardisation, and conflict between the older musicians who seek maintenance and younger musicians who desire to push the boundaries within Balinese traditional gamelan performance. Davies (1998) explores how the competitive structure found at the annual Welsh National Eisteddfod (culture competition and festival) has become a staging ground for participation and performance of ‘Welshness’. She concluded that the ritualistic pilgrimage to the performance site and the resulting spectacle “provides the boundaries within which communitas may be sought and approximated, but never totally created”, therefore providing motivation for continued participation in future events (Davies 1998, p. 157). Each of the folkloric studies I have found on competition in the arts mentioned, at least in part, the struggle of cultural stability and redefinition through the catalyst of competition.
Competition, as stated earlier, can transform many aspects of the dance practice. It has a narrowing effect on style and performance, which predictably standardises and homogenises the practice. Those who wish to succeed in competition must conform to the shifting and modifying process. Groups and individuals who do not stay current with such trends will gradually become outdated from the mainstream of the practice and may eventually find themselves peripheralised in the community. On the other hand, Foley (2013) insightfully states, “this homogenization has contributed to a sense of community and belonging” for those who actively participate in the process (Foley 2013, p. 191), which Howard (2009) corroborates.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the extent and scope of known literature on American clogging as well as the literature associated with the principal theoretical issues addressed in this study. It began with an analysis of the terms ‘community’ and ‘identity’, noting the interrelatedness of the two, their pluralistic natures, and their vital role in self and collective definition and cohesion. Social power and its brokers were discussed, as were the ways in which community participants navigate the socio-spatial networks of power inherent in cultural formation. Processes of community stabilisation, perpetuation and expansion were noted as key functions of cultural brokers, who also create, distribute and assign value to cultural symbol sets to achieve these objectives. I argued that history and tradition, commodities in shaping a community, are important aspects of collective affiliation as well as malleable tools for the creation of communal bonds. I demonstrated that the role of the governing body or institution is to codify and standardise participatory practices for its members in an attempt to organise the core elements of a community. In dance, a transformation of the dance is often the result as well as incessantly renegotiated boundaries in response to internal and external stimuli. The concepts of identity, community, tradition, history, standardisation and transformation were critically examined to provide the theoretical framework for the thesis and to assist in identifying and analysing AOS motivations and constructs in building the Intermountain West clogging community.
Chapter 3
Historical Background

This chapter summarises the historical development of American clogging from its roots as a communal, recreational expression in the Southern Appalachian Mountains to a nationwide contemporary competitive form of dance. It provides early historical reference, the identification of significant cultural brokers throughout the history of the dance’s development, and a delineation of the major developmental phases of American clogging pertinent to this research, which are 1) early mountain dancing, 2) the transformation from solo to hoedown to precision, 3) standardisation and dissemination, 4) the exportation of clogging to the Intermountain West, and 5) the mass appropriation of foreign elements into clogging. It briefly outlines the histories of the four national clogging organisations, highlighting the unique position of the contemporary competitive clogging community in the Intermountain West within the larger, national context.

3.1 Historical Contextualisation

Due to the diverse range of movement styles and functions within the larger community of clog dancers, as well as a lack of historical documentation, a comprehensive linear history of American clogging is not possible, nor is it the goal of this study. I have gathered available resources, and have conducted extensive field research during several extended trips and a two-year residency in the Southeastern United States to better understand the culture and history of the wider community of clog dancers. The contemporary, competitive portion of the American clogging community in the Intermountain West, which is the subject of this study and represents a sizeable percentage of the total number of nationwide participants, is a complex construction resulting from a relatively brief history of social, cultural, political and economic influences. An understanding of its position in relation to clogging’s wider national and historical context is critical in coming to know the subtle character and disposition of its participants and organisers.

The historical growth and development of clogging repeatedly follows the dialectic described by Wolf (1990) in which societal arrangements become most visible when
challenged by crisis and change. The research presented in this chapter will
demonstrate how intersecting ideological, social, practical, and behavioural choices
within the broad American clogging community have resulted in new organisations,
new leaders, and new manifestations of the dance as its practitioners have continuously
defined and redefined the dance and its relevance in the subjective realities of their
lives. In function as well as appearance, current clogging practices range from
recreational to competitive, participatory to presentational, and preservationist to
innovative.

3.2 Phase One: Early Mountain Dancing (1600-1928)

The Immigration Era (1600-1865)

The vernacular dance traditions of Colonial America (1600-1776) were primarily
related to those of immigrants who colonised its diverse regions. In the Southern
Appalachian Mountains, these included English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Dutch, German,
West African, and Native American influences, to name a few. The general structure
and nature of Appalachian dance was formed through the social and cultural co-existing
and commingling that took place in varying degrees between European immigrants,
Native American inhabitants, and emancipated African slaves (Jamison 2015, Knowles

The Europeans imported solo dances (like jigs, reels, hornpipes, and step dances),
couple dances (like polkas and waltzes), group figure dances (like the quadrille and the
cotillion) (Knowles 2002), and the dancing master. It is widely recognised that the Irish
fiddling tradition became the foundation of Appalachian ‘old time’ and ‘bluegrass’
music (Hill 2010). Imported slaves, for whom dance was a “fundamental element of the
African aesthetic expression” (Emery 1988, p. 2), contributed significantly to
syncopated rhythmic patterns and a low centre of gravity, expressing humanity’s
connectedness to and kinship with nature and the earth (Jamison 2015. Knowles 2002).
The banjo, a central instrument in old time and bluegrass music ensembles, was another
key African contributions to Appalachian cultural expression (Jamison 2015, Spalding
1995, Voloshin 1998). Rhythmic sliding of the feet forward and back, bent knees and a
forward inclination of the torso were central features of Native American dance
traditions that may well have contributed to Appalachian dance features (Cooper personal interview, October 2003, Williams 1995). While few definitive associations are possible, or sought for within the scope of this study, it is clear that Appalachian mountain dance styles are a mixture of numerous antecedents.

Southern Appalachian percussive dancing (including clogging, flatfooting, buckdancing, and jigging traditions) is generally differentiated from other styles found in North America in two ways. It is uniquely characterised by a slight bend forward from the waist, and it has a heavier, flat-footed, sliding contact with the floor. This difference is a significant contrast with those percussive practices, such as the Canadian step dance styles of mainland Nova Scotia, in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Ontario and Ottawa Valley (Melin 2012), where the torso is held more erect and the steps are performed in a lifted way, on the balls of the feet. Early Appalachian step dancing is not generally characterised as “light as a feather” (Melin 2012, p. 149), as are many of the Canadian step dance styles. It has been suggested that this difference is due to the influence of Native American and West African dance practices, which are both characterised by similar downward oriented posture with grounded and weighty footwork (Glass 2007), on the imported European traditions. The close proximity of the three cultural groups, coupled with relatively undefined codes of racial interaction and interdependence in the remote mountain environment, facilitated interaction between them to an extent not found elsewhere during this early period of American dance history (Marsh and Holt 1977).

From the earliest period of European settlement until the late nineteenth century, the Appalachian Mountains represented a cultural separation between the urban and rural conditions of life in America. The relative seclusion of the Southern Appalachian Mountains provided shelter from many of the ever-changing fads of urban centres (Becker 1998). Many authors have pointed to the preservation of historical and regional dialects of language, music, song, and dance in the Southern Appalachian Mountains (Davis 1999, Duke 1984, Sharp 1932, Shaw 1948). However, Spalding (2014) suggests “the region was never as homogeneous, as poor, or as isolated as was once believed, and many kinds of social and theatrical dance were available to residents of the region as early as the 1790s” (Spalding 2014, p. 11).
One of the largest of immigrant groups found in the southern mountains, which is still often referenced today by Southern Appalachians when speaking of their ancestry, was the ‘Scotch-Irish’ (sometimes called the Ulster Scots or Highland Scots) (Webb 2005). This is a term that is specifically directed toward those immigrants who came to the United States from Northern Ireland, but who may have initially come to Northern Ireland from England, the Scottish lowlands, Flanders, France and Germany (Leyburn 1962). In 1735, the Scotch-Irish began coming to North Carolina in relatively large numbers seeking land and independence. Some estimates put the number of Scotch-Irish immigrants in North Carolina alone at 600,000 by 1775 (Duke 1984, p. 8). In the mountainous backcountry of North and South Carolina the Scotch-Irish population had grown from almost zero in 1750 to a quarter million settlers by 1780 (Webb 2005, p. 147).

Due to their multiple forced and voluntary migrations, the Scotch-Irish had become a ruggedly independent and hardworking people. Webb (2005) called them “a culture of isolation, hard luck, and infinite stubbornness that has always shunned formal education and mistrusted—even hated—any form of aristocracy” (Webb 2005, p. 12). This hardy nature was likely a factor in their choice to settle in the untamed mountains of the Appalachians. The stereotypes established by the Scots-Irish in eighteenth century Appalachia of a self-sufficient, individualistic, isolated, and uncivilised lifestyle has endured well into the twenty-first century.

By the end of the eighteenth century, relations between Native Americans and European immigrants were strained. Due to imported illness and violent territorial disputes, the Cherokee tribe, estimated at over 32,000 in 1685 was reduced to fewer than 8,000 by 1790 (Yarnell 1998, p. 8). Those that remained either moved further into more secluded pockets of the mountains or tried to assimilate by farming and intermarrying. After the War of Independence (1775-1783), Native American land was ceded and filled by a rush of new settlers of English, Irish, Scotch-Irish, Swede, Finnish, French, Dutch and German descent (Williams 1995). The increase of European settlers and the discovery of gold in northern Georgia resulted in increased pressure for the complete removal of the Cherokee from the mountains. In 1838, after being forced to accept the Treaty of New Echota, the Cherokee were forcibly removed to Oklahoma (Yarnell 1998), nearly 2,200 miles away. Some avoided the eviction, known as the
‘trail of tears’, by hiding out in the mountains, and later became recognised as the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (Williams 1995).

The Irish potato famine of the late 1840s brought new waves of poor Irish immigrants to the United States (Webb 2004). Historical accounts indicate that approximately one million perished due to starvation while another million successfully emigrated (Foley 2013, p. 61). The majority of US-bound Irish arrived in northern port cities already congested with poor immigrant populations. For many, new opportunities and freedom were found in the Appalachian Mountain regions (Smith 2011) where poor and marginalised populations found farming and procuring the natural resources demanded by urban factories as well as relative isolation from racism, cultural prejudice, and conflict.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, as the American industrial revolution began to expand, Appalachia was seen as a resource to supply growing production and manufacturing efforts. The extraction of raw materials, like lumber and coal, brought labourers into the mountains, which consequently brought new influences and expressions of music and dance. These periodic waves of settlement into the Southern Appalachian Mountains and its relative seclusion proved to be advantageous in the importation and maintenance of cultural traditions, less altered by the ever-changing fads of urban centres. According to Davis

Travel was so difficult in the wintertime that the more isolated settlements were left to themselves, with but little ways and means of entertainment. After the crops were harvested and the winter provisions brought in and looked after, there was more time on hand than we today can imagine. So it was, as the chill of the late autumn nights grew on, that parties or “hoe downs” were in order. These dance parties generally alternating in the homes where they were permitted, constituted the main social events of those days... The free-for-all jigging (now called clogging) and duet contests were often real dance marathons, to see which ones could stay on the floor the longest.

(Davis 1999, p. 278)

Like Spalding (2014) and Jamison (2015), Fussell (2003) also warns against thinking “the relative inaccessibility of mountain communities allowed them to preserve their music [and dance] in an unchanged, even primitive, state over the generations” (Fussell 2003, p. 5). Its mountainous topography did slow the advancement of popular trends but facilitated the development and maintenance of regional dialects of language, music, song, and dance.
The American Civil War (1861-1865) brought profound economic and political change to the United States. Because of its location within and adjacent to the Southern States, the Southern Appalachian mountain region suffered greatly during the depression that beleaguered the South for decades after the war, leaving many of the mountain people even more embittered and reclusive. An additional result of this perceived isolation was the establishment of ‘hillbilly’ stereotypes created from the newly discovered and redefined mountain culture by writers like Mary Noailles Murfee, John Esten Cooke, Horace Kephart and Juli Schayer. These authors wrote fictitious stories set in Appalachian contexts for the hungry post-war readers in popular magazines such as Atlantic Monthly, Harper’s Weekly and others. Rehder (2004) calculates that between 1870 and 1890, about ninety travellers’ accounts and sketches plus twelve short stories were published, somewhat sensationalising and spreading stereotypes about Appalachia (Rehder 2004, p. 25).

In 1873, Will Wallace Harney published an essay of his travels through the Cumberland Mountains in “A Strange Land and Peculiar People” for Lippincott’s Magazine (Shapiro 1979). His training as a physician led to his detailed descriptions of the inhabitants and the geological and botanical curiosities:

The natives of this region are characterized by marked peculiarities of the anatomical frame. The elongation of the bones, the contour of the facial angle, the relative proportion or disproportion of the extremities, the loose muscular attachment of the ligatures, and the harsh features were exemplified in the notable instance of the late President Lincoln. A like individuality appears in their idiom... [which] is peculiar to the mountains, as well on the Wabash and Allegheney, I am told, as in Tennessee. (Will Wallace Harney in Shapiro 1979, p. 3)

According to Shapiro (1979), authors like Harney and publications like Lippincott’s Magazine ‘discovered’ Appalachia and asserted an ‘otherness’ “which made the mountainous portions of eight southern states a discrete region, in but not of America, and which, after 1890, would seem to place Appalachia and America in radical opposition” (Shapiro 1979, p. 4). Similarly, in 1899, William Goodell Frost’s Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains stated “it is a longer journey from northern Ohio to eastern Kentucky than from America to Europe; for one day’s ride brings us into the eighteenth century” (William Goodell Frost quoted in Rehder 2004, p. 26). The backward mountaineer stereotype was further perpetuated through tall tales,
literature, minstrel and vaudeville stage acts, and films. Hillbilly humour was extremely popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, characterised by cartoons like Li’l Abner and Snuffy Smith (Shapiro 1979). The power and efficacy of these stereotypes persist to this day.

The Early Twentieth Century (1900-1928)

While some early investigators saw the isolation of the mountains as a detrimental obstruction to progress and advancement, others like Cecil Sharp saw it as a long lost harbour for the values and attributes modern life had abandoned.

Much of what we know of early 20th century historical music and dance practices in the Southern Appalachian region is due to the documentation efforts carried out by the English folklorist Cecil Sharp. Sharp conducted four separate excursions into the Southern Appalachian Mountains (between 1916 and 1918) searching for remnants of English folk songs preserved in the musical repertoire of the isolated inhabitants (Whisnant 1983). In addition to his musical discoveries, Sharp reported discovering a certain ‘country dancing’ in multiple locations with characteristics and patterns that he believed existed in Northern England before 1650 (Shaw 1948). While the Southern Appalachians certainly represented a different lifestyle from that found in the United Kingdom, it was hardly the unspoiled repository for old English culture that was hoped for and ultimately reported by Sharp. The mountains had been a multicultural melting pot for over a century, with European immigration waves mingling with native and African cultural influences. Therefore it is problematic to entirely accept the limited data presented by Sharp to encapsulate such sweeping generalisations about historical origins and preservation. It is even likely that some foreign terminology, interpretations, and assumptions were imposed by Sharp on practices or practitioners which otherwise may not have hitherto applied. For instance, in one of his written

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12 Cecil James Sharp (1859-1924) was a music teacher in North London in 1899 when he became fascinated with English folk songs for educational purposes and publication. By 1903 he was actively collecting thousands of such songs in England, compiling collections of ballads and dances, which were then published (Whisnant 1983). After a visit with American folklorist Olive Dame Campbell during a visit to the United States, Sharp was convinced that many of the songs and ballads she had collected were English folk songs that had been preserved and unspoiled by modern trends and influences (Whisnant 1983). Sharp saw the folk songs, ballads and dances as more than mere historical artefacts. He felt compelled to this work because “posterity will need the primitive songs and ballads to keep their two arts of music and dance real, sincere and pure” (Whisnant 1983, p. 115). Together Sharp and Campbell published nearly 1,500 folk songs from the Southern Appalachians.
accounts, Sharp describes “a species of step- or clog-dance, locally known as the hoe-
down” (Sharp quoted in Shaw 1948, p. 8). It should be noted that Sharp, an
Englishman, referred to the dance as a ‘clog dance’, but the dancers themselves did not.
This type of scholarship makes one wonder what happened to the cultural material that
did not support Sharp’s claims. Perhaps it was ignored, discounted as unimportant, or
not even noticed.

However, in spite of possible inaccuracies of Sharp’s theories and the limited extent
of other historical work done on the topic (including Shaw 1948 and Duke 1984),
mountain dance in the early twentieth century can be roughly assigned into one of two
categories: group figure dances performed by couples, and solo improvisational dances.
The group figure dances were social in nature and had descended from Western
European court/country dance traditions. Long time Appalachian clogger Garland
Steele described some dances from this category to me during an interview in 2003. He
first described a ‘running set’ made up of four couples and with figures closely
resembling the Irish quadrille or a number of the English country dances. The second
was a big circle dance referred to as the “Southern Appalachian”, with a “standard set
of eight couples” (Garland Steele personal interview, 2003). An important aspect of
both styles was the use of a ‘caller’. The caller was typically one of the dancers who
‘called out’ the sequence of patterns through voice commands to the other dancers.
Steele held that the dance reflected and reinforced socially acceptable gender
interaction and emphasised the importance of the marital unit within the community
(Garland Steele personal interview, 2003).

The second category of early 20th century Appalachian dance was that of the solo or
buck dances, which contained more regional stylistic variation than the group dances
because of their individual and improvisational nature. In this primarily percussive
dance, stylistic differences existed widely in rhythmic structure, technique and body
positioning. For example, some areas featured a dominance of heel strikes while in
other areas the ball of the foot or the toe created the rhythmic accents (Duke 1984).
These step dances were solo improvisational rhythmic expressions performed
predominantly in recreational settings throughout the Appalachian region.
Out of the Mountains

Technological advances in communication and transportation (trains, automobiles, radio) in the early twentieth century brought increased access to and awareness of mountain life. Newly established national parks and forests (Skyline Drive in 1931, Great Smoky Mountain National Park in 1934, Blue Ridge Parkway in 1935) enticed visitors to this visually stunning area, and paved roads and railroad lines facilitated access to them. One of the centres of this activity in the Southern Appalachian region was Asheville, North Carolina.

In the booming 1920s, hotels and tourist events multiplied throughout the area. To support the tourism industry, the Asheville Chamber of Commerce planned a Rhododendron Festival for June of 1928 (Jones 1984). Festival officials sought to include indigenous music and dance events as part of the festivities. They solicited the help of Bascom Lamar Lunsford, who had collected and promoted local songs and ballads during his mountain travels as a honey and tree salesman, lawyer, and county solicitor (Callaway 1999). Lunsford was asked to oversee a portion of the Festival that would present mountain music and dance in a competitive framework, where prizes would be offered for the best singing, playing and dancing acts. Lunsford was uneasy with the idea of music and dancing presented in the context of a competition, but accepted the position in order to build a bridge between what he knew of the old, rural, traditional, community, and family-based culture, and the “emerging urban, industrial, media-dominated mass culture” (Whisnant 1983, p. 91). Lunsford, who would later become known as the ‘minstrel of the Appalachians’, was an expert musician, but knew less about dance, so he turned to Sam Queen, locally known as ‘the Square Dance King’, for help.

Sam Queen

Sam Love Queen, a Scotch-Irish farmer, was born in 1889 in Haywood County, North Carolina, thirty-five miles west from Asheville, near the Soco Gap between Maggie and Cherokee Valleys. “He began to buck dance13, or clog, when he was ‘hoe handle

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13 The terms ‘buck dance’ or ‘buck and wing’ have diverse etymological descriptions and relations. It has been suggested that the term “buck” refers to a black sailor, or ‘buccaneer’, from the West Indies (Duke 1984, p. 27). In a similar connection, Mason (1960) takes exception to conventional understanding that the term ‘buckaroo’ was simply a ‘corruption of vaquero’, the Spanish word for cowboy (Mason 1960, p. 51). He points to the Gullah (a culture
high’ as he used to say” (Callaway 1999) and claims to have been taught by his mother Elizabeth, his grandmother Sally, and a black cook at the Sulphur Springs Hotel named Bob Love14 (Williams 1995). According to Queen’s grandson, Joe Sam Queen, music making and step dancing was part of the everyday life in the mountains (Queen personal interview, 2003). “The families would play music every night. That’s just what you did after supper. You’d get your fiddle and your banjo and guitar and you played. Then you’d buck dance right there on the porch with them” (Queen personal interview, 2003). Dancing occurred anywhere, including neighbours’ homes or barns, the gravel country roads, at the Maggie Valley Playhouse or the Waynesville Armoury. Foot attire ranged from work shoes or dress shoes, to no shoes at all. Most just danced in whatever they had on (Seeger 1992).

Queen was an expert in both the improvisational solo and group formation dances of the era (Lawson 1982, Williams 1995, Callaway 1999). He had what his grandson called “a real Scotch-Irish feel to his dancing, up on the balls of his feet, and his head was always held at the same level” (Queen personal interview, 2003). This description of Queen’s dance style is significant as it indicates a posture and carriage that would become stereotypical of the rural, mountain style of clogging. Dancing on the balls of the feet creates a distinct bounce originating in the ankle and knee. If the head were

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14 Queen’s experience is an excellent example of how different cultures blended to influence the dance. He was taught by well-known black dancer, Bob Love. The Native American influence is also present. While documentation is scarce, some scholars speculate that due to the proximity of Maggie Valley to Cherokee (a town on a Cherokee reservation), Smoky Mountain vernacular dance was also influenced by the Cherokee (Native American) nation, particularly with use of heel-toe movement. Some clogging groups included members of Cherokee descent, and Cherokee boasted several championship clogging groups (Williams 1995). I was told by Sam Queen’s grandson that Sam would often assist and board those who had nowhere else to turn for help. In fact, it was one young Cherokee man who was staying at Queen’s home in Maggie Valley, North Carolina who accidentally killed Queen while intoxicated. (Queen personal interview, 2003).
always held at the same level, it would mean that this bounce would be absorbed in the centre of the body, rendering a slight forward bending and cushioning at the waist. This was the standard posture for clogging throughout the country until the late 1980s. Sam Queen, known widely for his charisma and expertise in dancing and dance calling, was periodically employed to entertain hotel guests seeking summertime mountain relief from hot, chaotic urban life with demonstrations of local music and dance. He was a leader in the dance community, with the experience and connections needed by Lunsford to build excitement and participation in Asheville’s new festival.

*The Mountain Dance and Folk Festival in Asheville, North Carolina*

At the behest of Lunsford, Sam Queen convinced numerous mountain communities to gather local dancers together to form square dance teams for the inaugural Rhododendron Festival. Dance teams came from numerous communities across Western North Carolina, Eastern Tennessee, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Virginia, to compete at the festival, which was the first organised mountain square dance competition in the area (Whisnant 1995). Queen’s own team, the Soco Gap Square Dance team, which included family, friends and neighbours from the Maggie Valley area, were participants in the 1928 contest (Williams 1995). However, they did not win that first year (though they were frequent champions in future years at the festival) because of mixed reaction by the crowd and adjudicators about the striking addition they made to the traditional square dance (Lawson 1982). The innovation the Soco Gap Square Dancers made was revolutionary and was met with both excitement and anxiety by practitioners and observers. This transformation is discussed in the next section.

### 3.3 Phase Two: Transformation from Solo To Precision (1928-1959)

*From Solo to Hoedown*

In addition to their clean and energetic execution of formational patterns, the Soco Gap Dancers (see above) became the crowd favourite throughout Western North Carolina because of their unique footwork style. The team replaced the older, traditional gliding step in the group figure dances with a traveling version of the improvisational buck
dance footwork. What would later become known as ‘hoedown’ or ‘freestyle
clogging’ was then seen as revolutionary: a constant, driving rhythm, subtly
underscoring the downbeat of the music via alternating hops, touches, steps, and stamps
of the feet. The dancers did not wear taps on their shoes, as the sounds of the feet were
not central features as much as background rhythmic textures added to the overall look
and sound of the performance.

According to Lawson, ‘hoedowning’ to square dance figures had likely been done
before the 1928 festival performance (Lawson 1982), but that performance formally
introduced a significant paradigm shift in Southern Appalachian mountain percussive step dancing; from then on it had both solo improvisational and group figure
manifestations. This transformation also encapsulated the developmental dialectic of a
cultural dance form. The popularity and competitive success of the Soco Gap Dancers
suggests that many recognised the entertainment value of the new style. However, there
were many who viewed the changes to the dance as a threat. Marguerite Bidstrup,
former director of the John C. Campbell Folk School, “was shocked to see the clog
step in the set dances at the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival” and explained her
dismay when she stated, “I had a high standard for the dance” (Jones 1985, p.129).
Lunsford also resisted mildly but eventually gave in as its popularity increased among
the youth, reasoning “that the clog dance was traditional in the mountains, even if it had
not been the traditional step in a set dance” (Jones 1984, p.127). Though controversial,
the change did not prove to be a passing fad. Festival administrator Jerry Israel stated,
“Why I think it’s terrible, but the crowd likes it. I don’t know what could be done, if
anything, to reverse the trend” (quoted in Jones 1984, p. 128).

After winning the Rhododendron Festival competition (which was renamed the
Mountain Dance and Folk Festival competition in 1930) numerous times, the Soco Gap
Dancers became widely imitated, set up as the standard for other groups who sought
competitive success enjoyed the innovative footwork Queen introduced to the dance

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15 The presence of foot percussive dancing through group figure dancing is not unique to this
group in Appalachia. Similar uses of footwork and group figure work is found in traditional
dances throughout Eastern Canada and in Ireland (an example of which is the Caledonian set
dance done even today in County Clari, Ireland).
16 The school was established 1925 by Olive Dame Campbell (original collaborator with folk
song collector Cecil Sharp), in the name of her recently deceased husband. The school was
created to provide mountaineers with educational and vocational training, as well as a
workshop and outlet for traditional mountain handcrafts (Whisnant 1983).
(Devin 1993, p. 14, Williams 1995, pp. 56-57). This became problematic in regards to the competitive aspect of the festival, as ‘smooth’ teams refused to compete against the energy and excitement of the newer ‘hoedown’ style. This resulted in a separation in categories at the Festival, allowing the ‘smooth’ teams to compete in one category and the ‘hoedown’ teams to compete in another (Jones 1984, p. 128).

The addition of music and dance to the Festival was a great success. In the June 7th, 1929 edition of the *Asheville Citizen*, an editorial suggested that the music and dance additions “should be a permanent thing, something that might be continued from year to year as a festival of western North Carolina - on the order of the greatest festivals of other nations which have been handed down from generation to generation”. By 1930, the Rhododendron Festival was renamed the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival and became a major venue for the projection of Appalachian cultural aesthetics, and the confirmation of Lunsford’s long held contention that individuals of all tastes and backgrounds would like mountain music when they heard it played properly (Jones 1984).

*National Exposure and Branding*

In 1939, United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his wife Eleanor solicited Lunsford, who had by this time become the nationally acknowledged expert on Southern Appalachian music and dance, to organise a programme for the first official state visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England (Williams 1995). The Roosevelts admired the rural dance and music expressions of Appalachia. Furthermore, with World War II approaching, President Roosevelt was eager to enhance and validate social and political ties between the United States and the United Kingdom by exhibiting the musical and dance commonalities between the two nations, initially investigated by Cecil Sharp earlier in the century (Lawson 1982).

Sam Queen and the Soco Gap Dancers were invited to perform in the east ballroom of the White House as part of the evening’s entertainment that included numerous musicians and folk singers. There is a popular and often repeated anecdote that the Queen of England, following the Soco Gap Dancer’s performance, commented, “that’s just like our clog dancing,” which the press widely reported (Williams 1995, March and

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17 [http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/mss/mountain_dance/chronology/time_line.htm](http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/mss/mountain_dance/chronology/time_line.htm) accessed 24 Jun 2014
Holt 1977). My extensive search of available first-hand media reports from the event has garnered no such corroboration. Nevertheless, it is possible that the Queen indeed said those words and the majority of both lay and scholarly clogging historians have pointed to this being the moment when the various names for the dance coalesced into the term ‘clogging’.

The performance at the White House was also groundbreaking because it was the first time that the Soco Gap Dancers had worn costumes for their performance, which according to Richard Queen (son of Sam Queen and member of the group), “was because someone in Washington suggested it” (March and Holt 1977, p. 47). The use of costumes, and eventual use of taps on the shoes at the Asheville festival and the many other festivals that emerged in the 1930s and 1940s, was a reflection of the transformation of the dance from a social, spontaneous, and participatory dance into an organised, presentational one.

Asheville’s Mountain Dance and Music Festival continued to be a popular attraction. The Blue Ridge Parkway, built to facilitate tourism and industry, was completed in 1947, and had one and a half million visitors in that year alone (Yarnell 1998, p. 33). The natural beauty of the Appalachian region became accessible to hundreds of thousands of tourists each year, who came to camp, hike, boat, and attend the numerous new music and dance festivals and competitions which proliferated throughout the Southeast.

As the popularity of the Asheville Festival grew, and as more festivals and competitions were started, community groups and secondary schools throughout Western North Carolina, Eastern Tennessee, Northern Georgia, Kentucky, and Southern Virginia organised square dance teams. Lunsford’s daughter, Jo Lunsford Herron, recalled

Every high school had a square dance team. Some of them were smooth and some of them were clog. The Pless cup was given for the smooth dancers and Bascom Lamar Lunsford cup was given to the clog dancers. I thought that was kind of funny, because daddy didn’t like the taps and such. Mainly because he wanted to preserve it the way it was when we were kids and everybody who was anybody could get up and square dance.

(Herron personal interview, 2003)
The Introduction of Precision Clogging (1950-1959)

In the 1950s, a young man named James Kesterson\(^{18}\) of Hendersonville, North Carolina desired to create a more uniform and presentational performance of group clogging at the Asheville Festival (March and Holt 1977). Instead of simply hoedowning through the socially oriented square dances on stage, Kesterson introduced formations that were visually oriented towards the audience (see Plate 3 below). For instance, in his choreographies, the dancers opened the circular formation into a straight line facing the audience.

Plate 3: James Kesterson (shown front right) and his Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers in an undated photo (likely mid 1960s) of a performance at East Henderson High School. This is one of the earliest images with dancers wearing white shoes with taps attached. Photograph © the Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers. Used here with written permission. (http://blueridgemountaindancers.com/images/08.jpg accessed April 2013)

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\(^{18}\) James Kesterson was born and raised in Hendersonville, North Carolina where he began dancing from an early age with family and friends at community and civic events. His childhood corresponded to a time of great excitement surrounding mountain square dancing and he joined in as soon as he was old enough to swing a partner. His energy and charisma soon earned him the distinction of the ‘caller’ and leader of all dance settings. At the age of 17, he and a group of friends put together a group that called themselves the “Hendersonville Cloggers” (which Lunsford later renamed the “Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers”) and began to participate in local festivals and contests. Eventually the Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers would participate in, and win, the Ashville Dance and Music Festival and become a crowd favourite under the watchful eye of Mr. Lunsford.
Additionally, and most importantly, he coordinated some of the footwork patterns of the dancers at various times throughout the performance (Seeger 1992, p. 10, Austin 1999, p. 122). In the place of the established fluidity and uncertainty of the improvisational freestyle clogging and the socially derived group figures (where many dancers sometimes danced with their back to the audience), Kesterson and his dancers executed choreographed segments of unison footwork and predetermined, audience-oriented formations.

Kesterson personally expressed to me that he did not set out to create a new style of clogging, which would eventually become known as ‘precision’ clogging. He was seeking simply “to improve the appearance of a dance team as it performed in front of a paying audience” (Kesterson personal email correspondence, 2013). Kesterson wanted to challenge the Appalachian stereotype and “change the mindset of those from other sections of the country that came here [to the festival] expecting to see Appalachia in the flesh” (Kesterson personal email correspondence, 2013). His goal was to bring some refinement and order to the perceived ‘backwardness’ of the mountain tradition, which had been propagated nearly a century earlier (see Chapter 3.2). Kesterson stated, “we wanted a class act and I believe we achieved it”, (Kesterson personal email correspondence, April 19 2013). Unable to assess their success in being a ‘class act’, I can undoubtedly agree that the Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers changed the perception of, approach to, and function of the dance.

During the 1960s, Kesterson’s Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers won the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival five times, was featured on national television (1963), and was invited to the prestigious Newport (Rhode Island) Folk Festival in 1963, 1964 and 1965 (March and Hold 1977). As this new innovative style of group clogging became visible in the festival circuit and through national mass media, it began to be adopted by groups throughout the Southeast and beyond.

The innovation brought both enthusiastic support and harsh criticism. Traditionalists claimed that the new precision clogging lacked the attractive subtleties of hoedowning and smooth mountain dance (Spalding and Woodside 1995). These strong objections led some festival and competition organisers to create new style categories for competition and performance (Callaway 1999). Other festivals and competitions that favoured the more traditional practices, like the Asheville festival at a
later point, went so far as to ban precision teams from competing altogether (March and Holt 1977).

3.4 Phase Three: Dissemination and Standardisation (1960-1980)

The decades between 1960 and 1980 were years of expansion and proliferation of clogging. Due to television appearances by groups like the Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers in the 1960s and growing interest from recreational square dance groups throughout the country, clogging spread beyond the Southern Appalachian region. By 1980, due in part to an increasing interstate transportation system and revival of interest in the folk arts in general, it had propagated across the country. Dancers in Appalachia taught clogging to visiting tourists and square dancing groups. One of the most influential of these dancers and teachers was Bill Nichols.

**Bill Nichols and Fontana**

Bill Nichols¹⁹, known by many as the ‘granddaddy of clogging’, was born in 1938 and raised in the remote mountain settlement of Calderwood, Tennessee. From his earliest memories, dance was a common community and familial pastime. Nichols informed me that his “mother danced and there was always someone around with a fiddle to play” and that there were “many people in the community that would share their dancing steps” (Nichols personal interview, 2003).

His experience learning to dance typifies the multicultural processes involved in clogging’s development. Nichols recalled a machinist neighbour from Germany named Van Orden who would play German music on his wind-up gramophone and dance on his front porch to a recording labelled ‘the Dance of the Wooden Shoe’. At the home of the Irish-American Daugherty family next door, Nichols often found the father playing the fiddle while the rest of the family danced (Nichols personal interview, 2003). In his own home, dance was a common pastime. There was even a class at the local school

¹⁹ Bill Nichols was born in 1938 in Graham County, North Carolina to parents of Scottish, Irish, and German heritage. Bill’s father worked for the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) and early in Bill’s life the family moved to the Calderwood, Tennessee after the construction of the Tapoco hydroelectric dam. Calderwood was an extremely secluded settlement deep in the Mountainous border region between the states of North Carolina and Tennessee. As was the case with Nichols family, many local mountaineers found work at the factory and in the town.
where students were taught by local dancers, in which Nichols enrolled five times.

There were no organised sports in the schools then and dance was seen within the community as a positive outlet for energy and socialisation, one of the few social activities available to the young people. Nichols demonstrated his skills at local dances held in Calderwood as well as those held in neighbouring mountain communities. He became highly proficient in the performing and calling of both smooth and ‘hoedown’ style figure dances, as well as improvisational solo buck dancing.

In the spring of 1956, the day after his graduation from High School, Nichols was hired as a photographer at the Fontana Village Resort located several miles upriver from Calderwood in North Carolina. “Of course I was in heaven up there because they had square dancing three nights a week and lots of tourists coming, and a lot of young girls, and boys could get out and show off their dancing skills and always attract the prettiest girls” (Nichols personal interview, 2003). Fontana, and Nichols’ presence there, would eventually play an integral role in the development of organised clogging nationwide.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, America experienced a revival of ‘folk’ culture, particularly among white, rural and suburban, middle-aged and middle class Americans (Cantwell 1996, Casey 1981). Traditional forms of music, dance, and folk art rose in popularity (Georges and Jones 1995), and artists like the Kingston Trio, Joan Baez and Peter Paul and Mary gained national recognition. Riding that trend, Western Square Dancing (WSD)\(^2\) had become a popular pastime nationwide (Cantwell 1996, Georges and Jones 1995). The Fontana Village Resort, where Nichols was employed, was host to hundreds of avid square dancers throughout the summer who would come from across the country to the mountains of North Carolina to participate in numerous WSD workshops and competitions (Turino 2008). Since he was the resident photographer, Nichols was always present at the social events at Fontana, and would offer his services to call a square dance, dance with, or perform the local square dance and flatfoot style for the guests. This, according to Nichols, would nearly always lead to guests asking him how he did “that fancy footwork” (Nichols personal interview, 2003) followed up by a brief lesson in the basic patterns of clogging footwork and group dancing.

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\(^2\) It is important to note here that Western Square Dance (WSD) and the indigenous square dance of the Southern Appalachians were quite different. By this time WSD had become a highly codified system built around the four-couple structure, and Southern Appalachian dance varied widely in form and structure, and typically centred on an eight-couple format.
Remaining true to the oral tradition, Nichols was careful to point out in his teaching that there was no right or wrong way to execute the movement.

His spontaneous students, often vacationing square dance workshop attendees, would sometimes return to Fontana in subsequent weekends or years to learn more from Nichols. Some began teaching clogging to others in the various locations from which they had come. In other cases, individuals and western square dance groups were converted into clogging teams from these interactions. These groups would often invite Nichols to work personally with their groups or to teach at regional square dance workshops (Nichols personal interview, 2003).

The Bill Nichols style of clogging was beginning to spread. This style, which was typical for that period of time in Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee, included a heavy sliding downbeat, a forward inclination of the torso, and an active lifting of the knees to produce the double-strike of the ball of the foot (referred to hereafter as a “double-toe”). Nichols’ terminology was also transmitted to the eager recreational groups of dancers and has endured with only slight changes to the names. To keep things simple for his students, Nichols codified only three basic patterns from which all participants could easily participate, improvise and embellish. These were: 1) a single double-toe followed immediately by a step with the same foot (referred to as a “double-step”), with an accompanying ball-change (called a “single basic” today), 2) two double-steps with an accompanying ball-change (called a “double basic” today), and 3) three double-steps with an accompanying ball-change (called a “triple basic” today). He called these patterns a “one”, “two”, and “three” or he would simply hold up the accompanying number of fingers to cue the dancers. For the decade that followed, Fontana Village and Bill Nichols became the nucleus from which clogging knowledge was disseminated.

Pre-recorded Music and White Shoes with Jingle Taps

Two significant clogging behaviours, borrowed from Western Square Dance, were formalised during the 1970s and 1980s that persist to this day. These were: the use of pre-recorded music and the wearing of white shoes with jingle taps.

From its beginnings, clogging had primarily been performed with live accompaniment. At the social gatherings held at the Maggie Valley Playhouse,
performances at hotels, and events like the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, live musical accompaniment was an essential component (Nichols personal interview, 2003). It was a dynamic interplay and exchange of expressive culture between friends, neighbours, and artists. In the 1970s, as Nichols and his protégés spread clogging across the country, the availability and cost of hiring bluegrass bands for accompaniment was challenging and uneconomical. Therefore, cloggers adopted the WSD custom of playing a record as accompaniment\(^{21}\) to their dancing. From this time forward, outside the pre-existing events and live music-specific contexts (such as the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival and as an component of fiddle contests) the use of live accompaniment for dancing became a rarity for this new recreational form of clogging. I have personally never seen live musical accompaniment at any of the studio-oriented clogging workshops or competitions in my nationwide experience in clogging.

Another important transformation of the practice of the dance in this phase involved the addition of metal taps to the shoes clog dancers wore. According to Kesterson, his team was the first to all wear white shoes with taps attached (see Plate 3), though he was unable to recall a date or inspiration for its occurrence (Kesterson personal email correspondence, 2013). From an approximation made by Kesterson and a cursory search of images of the group, the change likely happened in the early 1960s. In nineteenth and early twentieth century Appalachia, the shoes one would wear to a Saturday evening square dance in Western North Carolina would be the same shoes worn to school or to church. Most participants did not have special shoes for dancing; they would simply dance in whatever shoes they had on at the time (Seeger 1992).

As the participation-based mountain dance transformed into a presentational commodity, dancers took inspiration from tap dancers from Broadway productions and

\(^{21}\) The decision to use pre-recorded music was both financial and functional. Since clogging performance is not limited to a select musical canon, each team would need its own band. Training with and transporting a live band would add cost to the practice of clogging and complicate competition setup between dances. The loss of live accompaniment entails the forfeiture of the dynamic interplay and co-dependence between dancers and musicians, and the negation of an important link to past clogging traditions. However, using pre-recorded music does simplify the competitive performance process and provides an increased sense of predictability. The possibility and variability of tempo, structure, timbre, and human error in live music is removed. It is replaced with a less personal accompaniment, but also with an increase in possible music options. A bluegrass band is limited in its tonality; it cannot play all genres of music with equal efficacy. With the introduction of pre-recorded music, all types of music become possible options.
films that wore dance-specific shoes with metal plates attached to the soles in order to amplify the sound of the foot strikes on a wooden floor. As audiences at festivals grew, and public address systems were used to amplify the music being played, so the dancers had an increasing need for their footwork to be heard. They therefore began to wear metal plates or ‘taps’ on their shoes though “Lunsford and others disapproved of them” (Jamison 2002, p. 25, Williams 1995, p. 56). Kesterson himself told me, “interestingly, Mr. Lunsford did not initially like cloggers who used taps on their shoes, but as he started to see the reaction of the crowds at his festival to our dancing, he became one of our biggest fans” (Kesterson personal email correspondence, 2013).

Plate 4: The Stevens Stomper toe tap is on the left. Two plates of shaped steel are fastened together with two rivets, and holes in both plates allow the tap to be attached to the sole of the shoe with nails. The tap on the right is a single-plate tap used in Tap dancing, shown here for contrast. Photograph © Gary Larsen

As the popularity of clogging grew, some groups began using what tap dancers call a ‘cheater tap’, which was a metal tap with a smaller, loose metal insert that allowed for a louder sound when struck, even lightly, against a surface. This led to the creation of a clogging-specific tap, called a “Stomper” tap22 (see Plate 4 above), which would increase the sound made by the foot strike. By the late 1970s, because of influential

22 In 1971, Walt and Marti Stevens formed the Burlington County 4-H Cloggers in Mt. Holly, New Jersey, out of an existing square dance team. As they became more involved in clogging and related dance activities, they saw a need for a better type of tap that would amplify sound but not break as easily as the aluminium taps that were currently on the market. “Walt had the idea to make the taps from STEEL. Since Walt was an engineer, Marti suggested that he go ahead and design a steel tap. This was a totally revolutionary idea. Steel taps would be stronger and have a better sound. Thus STEVENS STOMPERS® taps were born. The strength of steel also allowed them to be thinner and have better tap action”. (Stevens Clogging 2015) Dancers immediately liked the taps because they were loud and durable. Initially the taps were made for the dancers of Stevens’ dance group, but soon clubs and groups around the country were interested in purchasing the new tap. As sales grew Stevens expanded the operations and began to sell the taps and shoes at events across the country and by mail order. Other tap types and brands (notably Bell Taps) have entered the market but none are as widely known and used as that of Stevens Stompers.
groups like the Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers and innovations in dance technology, the white shoes and Stomper taps became the overwhelming choice of recreational and competitive dancers throughout the growing national clogging community.

The use of white shoes for dancing was also borrowed from Western Square Dance trends in the 1970s, and has continued to date as the dominant colour of choice nationwide. For most groups it is a functional choice. White draws the eye; white shoes accentuate the footwork. Most stages used in competition and performance tend to be darker in colour, so the white shoes effectively make the feet more visible in contrast. Some use black shoes, in part because they do not get scuffed and soiled as easily, and they are much easier to locate and purchase. Still other clog dancers might wear more unique coloured shoes; I’ve seen orange, green, gold, and red shoes at different competitions over the years.

Throughout the country in the 1970s and 1980s, it was customary for male cloggers to wear a white Oxford-style (see Plate 5), lace-up shoe, and for the females to wear a Mary Jane-style, buckled shoe (see Plate 6). These came in both black and white, patent leather and matte finish. Most dancers of both genders today wear the Oxford-style shoes (see Chapter 6. 3)

Plate 5 and 6: Images of the Oxford style shoe (left) and the Mary Jane style shoe (right). Both photographs above © Gary Larsen

National Organisations

The increase of workshops and competitions in the 1960s and 1970s made regional artistic differences difficult to navigate. As groups from around the country began to interact and compete with groups at the Asheville Festival, Fontana, and other events, it became apparent that differing ideas and interpretations of the practice were being
pitted against one another. When Nichols took a group of dancers, who danced in eight couple sets, to Kentucky to compete, where they danced in four couple sets “they would tell us that we were dancing two teams at the same time; we would tell them you’re only dancing half a team” (Nichols personal interview, 2003). A dancer or “group going down into Virginia or into North Carolina or somewhere to a competition wouldn’t know how to prepare”, as the local style would often be favoured (Garland Steele personal interview, 2003). This caused confusion and frustration on the part of the dancers, instructors and adjudicators.

For the sake of equity and inclusivity in competitions, governing bodies were established (see below) to find a common movement vocabulary and rules to guide instruction, terminology use, and competitive events at the local level. These organisations were constructed to serve the immediate needs of teachers, adjudicators and dancers of a regional location, but as groups began to travel to compete more widely, the lack of standardised rules and procedures became increasingly evident.

**The National Clogging and Hoedown Council (NCHC)**

In the fall of 1974, Bill Nichols and a handful of like-minded individuals like Garland Steele, John Walters, Violet Marsh, Sheila Popwell and others, met at Nichols’ home in Walhalla, South Carolina to identify a common language and basis for comparison between differing styles on a national level. They set out to classify and record descriptions of movement that would provide a basis for communication and interaction between these groups at competitions, workshops, and performances. What began with an informal working group of friends and concerned dancers soon became a recognised authority and leader in the growing national clogging community. They named themselves the National Clogging and Hoedown Council (NCHC), and began to exert their influence over an increasing number of events throughout the Southeastern United States. They officially recognised and sanctioned the competitive events that used NCHC terminology, definitions, and rules, which allowed groups in attendance to know the criteria by which they would be judged. It would also provide the necessary standardisation “so that this group of cloggers could go anywhere in the

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23 Using both ‘clogging’ and ‘hoedown’ in the name permitted the group to legitimise its authority over the varying groups of interacting parties: the Hoedowners from Kentucky and Tennessee, and the Southern Appalachian cloggers of the Carolinas and Georgia.
On May 13, 1978, the NCHC officially adopted a standard movement vocabulary and descriptions for clogging (Popwell personal interview, 2011). They were published in newsletters and pamphlets for dissemination among the community. Sheila Popwell, who was a member on the committee, presented the standardised NCHC terminology in her booklet entitled *Almost Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Teaching Clogging* (Popwell 1980). She documented the technique and terms of clogging as she knew it, including the terms ‘toe’, ‘double toe’, ‘brush’, ‘shuffle’ and ‘slide’.

Standardising the movement vocabulary was not a stated goal of the group. However, by defining the terminology and identifying those patterns that were, and likewise were not, part of the mountain repertoire, standardisation was the inevitable result. Below are the descriptions of the movement as originally written with additional Labanotated figures provided by the author.

All clogging steps are made up of some combination of the following Basic Movements. The movements themselves fall into two groups—Toe Movements and Heel Movements. Each Toe Movement occurs on the upbeat of the music and is followed by a Heel Movement which occurs on the downbeat, or bass beat, of the music. The rhythm of the dance is kept by the heel; anytime the heel is sounded, the knee is flexed and then straightened, resulting in the characteristic up-and-down motion of the dancer’s body. The word “click” is used to indicate that a tap has sounded. All clicks should have a sharp, clear sound, not scuffed or muffled.

**Toe Movements**

**TOE**

The ball of the foot produces a click while the heel remains out of contact with the floor. TOE implies that the body weight has been transferred to the ball of the foot; the term TOUCH is used with the same sound is produced but the foot is picked up again immediately without transferring any body weight to that foot.

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Figure 4: Toe
DOUBLE TOE
Two clicks are produced in the space of one beat of music. The ball of the foot strikes the floor during the forward motion of a short kick and the knee straightens; immediately the same foot swings backward and the ball of the foot strikes the floor again in the same spot as the knee bends upward. The heel should not touch the floor. The forward and backward motions are considered to be one movement with no hesitation between them. Normally the clicks occur slightly in front of the body, but they may be done in back or to the side.

ROCK
A click is produced by transferring the weight onto the ball of the foot slightly behind the body’s center of gravity; the knee is in a flexed position causing the weight of the body to “rock” slightly to the rear as the center of gravity changes. The opposite foot is always lifted off the floor during a ROCK; the heel of the foot doing the ROCK does not touch the floor.

BRUSH
The foot is allowed to swing from the knee with a pendulum action; the ball of the foot produces a click by striking the floor a glancing blow and continuing in the direction of the swing (which may be to the front, to the rear, or across in front of the opposite leg).

DRAG
The foot is flat on the floor and the knee is flexed when the DRAG begins. With a springing motion which moves the weight of the body up and back, straighten the knee allowing momentum to lift your heel slightly off the floor and drag your foot rearward about half the length of your foot. The heel never entirely loses contact with the floor, and weight is distributed along the length of the foot.
foot at the end of the movement. There is no
distinctive click. (Also done with both feet on
the floor in the same manner.)

Heel Movements

HEEL
The weight of your body is already on the
ball of the foot when the heel movement is
done. Snap the heel down, producing a
sharp click, and flex the knee downward,
distributing the body weight along the
entire length of the foot.

STEP
Place entire foot flat on the floor,
producing a click with the toe and heel
taps at the same time and transferring the
body weight along the length of the foot
while flexing the knee downward.

SLIDE
A down-and-forward counterpart of the up-and-
back motion of the DRAG. With the foot flat on
the floor and the knee straight, roll your weight
up onto the ball of the foot, letting your knee
begin to go slack. As the weight of your body
begins to drop forward and down, let the
instinctive tightening of your thigh muscles save
your (sic) from a fall by sliding your foot forward
(about half the length of your foot) and then
letting your heel snap down, producing the click
and redistributing your weight along the whole
length of your foot. At the end of the SLIDE the
knee will be in a flexed position. (Also done with
both feet on the floor in the same manner.)
**Supplemental Terminology**

**SHUFFLE** [or Chug]
A short hand term applied to the combination of DRAG and SLIDE so common in clogging steps. The movements are done in one continuous action with the clicks of the SLIDE portion always falling on the down beat of the music. The SHUFFLE can be done with both feet on the floor at the same time or with one foot on the floor while the other foot is doing a Toe movement which occurs during the same upbeat as the Drag portion of the SHUFFLE. The body weight first moves back and simultaneously up, then moves down and simultaneously forward. Repeating the SHUFFLE continuously gives the rhythmic-keeping motion characteristic of advanced clogging.

**STOMP**
A strongly accented flatfoot STEP – the term is used in describing a clogging step where a particularly distinctive click is needed.

**HOP**
Any upward motion that causes both feet to lose contact with the floor – the click is produced with the foot comes back into contact with the floor. Landing can be made on the same foot that did the push off or the HOP can be used to change the weight to the opposite foot depending on the demands of the step being done.

(Dopwell 1980, pp.5-6)

During the creation of this vocabulary, there was a conscious effort, according to Garland Steele, one of the founders of NCHC, to avoid the same terminology used by American tap dance, so as to draw a distinction between the two practices (Garland Steele personal interview, 2003). As evidenced by the numerous differences in
terminology found in instructional manuals from the period (Austin 1977, Bonner 1983, Bernstein 1984, Fairchild 1984, and Hinds 1984), NCHC’s efforts were often in conflict with the same work being done by individuals and groups in other locations. However, the growing dominance of NCHC is evidenced in the continued use of its terminology in the dances and manuals created after 1985 (Collins 1989, Driggs 2000).

**Line Dancing and the Clogging Leaders of Georgia (CLOG)**

During Nichols’ tenure at Fontana, he noticed some interesting trends among the dance community, particularly noting the declining interest in dancing of male participants. Nichols noticed that “the wives couldn’t get their husbands to come learn to dance, they wanted to sit around on the couch and drink beer and watch football games” (Nichols personal interview, 2003). The lack of men dancing posed a logistical problem for the performance of traditional Southern Appalachian square dancing, which was entirely based on the movement patterns of couples interacting with other couples. This problem was further complicated by the fact that a large number of Nichols’ students were more interested in the percussive footwork elements of the dance over the communal, partner-based ones. Nichols later realised that when he brought a group of people together to learn the clogging footwork, a remarkable phenomenon was taking place:

> When you take a group of people and stand them up in a room all facing one direction and teach them how to do steps, you’re basically teaching line dances. The term ‘line dance’ is defined as this: a line dance is a dance that is choreographed for one person that is performed by many simultaneously.

(Nichols personal interview, 2003)

The general concept of line dancing was not new, at least within popular American culture. It was simply a new context or adaptation of the percussive footwork found previously in the group and solo mountain dance, and as Nichols put it, was “born out of necessity” (Nichols personal interview, 2003). In many cases it was this footwork-centred dance, not the communal, couple manifestation, which was exported to dance groups and studios around the country by Nichols’ students. One of these was ‘Big’ John Walters, from Chamblee, Georgia who attended a square dance workshop at Fontana in the early 1960s. Walters told me that, “the first time I saw Bill Nichols clog, it set me on fire. I thought, my God, that’s the greatest thing I’ve seen in my life, if I could do that...” (Walters personal interview, 2003). Walters returned home and began
performing and teaching what Nichols had taught him, returning to Fontana often for additional instruction. Many of Walter’s students turned out to be the next generation of influential teachers, like Joyce England, JoAnn Gibbs, Tandy Barrett, Sheila Popwell, Connie Bilz, Amy Carter (all in Georgia), Diane Schell (founded the National Clogging Association), Violet Marsh (California and Texas), Gloria Driver (Texas), and Al “Tex” Brownlee (Texas).

In 1974, Joyce England and JoAnn Gibbs, both students of “Big” John Walters, formed the Possum Trot Cloggers, made up of eight women in their 30s and 40s. The group was one of the first to deal with the growing lack of willing male participants by creating dances done in lines, focusing entirely on the footwork over the group spatial patterning or couple interaction. For many women like Gibbs, the new line dancing was an instant success. “It just exploded because you didn’t have to have a partner, which meant you didn’t have to force your husband to go” (JoAnn Gibbs personal interview, 2003). Additionally, it “exploded” because these women began to dance with more popular musical accompaniment. The songs were typically ‘Country Western’ or ‘pop’ in genre and heard on the radio24, but they were not the old time and bluegrass tunes that had been the staple of the clogging community up to that point. Gibbs and others saw a more contemporarily relevant use of clogging technique that would appeal to a wider, and more youthful, audience.

Matthews-DeNatale (1995) quoted a clogging traditionalist from Canton, North Carolina in 1982, begrudged the increasing use of such technology and musical choice:

The people are so confused today. It’s utter chaos really. I judge, and it’s gotten so bad that now in some areas I refuse to judge. I mean when it comes down to that, I’m blunt. I’m blunt because it’s been a battle for a number of years. So many of the directors honest-to-goodness don’t know the difference. They really don’t know the difference of what they’re teaching. All they’re doing is they’re teaching the footwork. I went over where they brought out a duo, where they’re going to play a record. That’s my first exposure to this type of thing, and they played ‘Boogie Woogie.’ I ‘bout died! I honest-to-goodness about croaked.

(Bob Phillips in Matthews-DeNatale 1995, p. 129)

Because of the new style of line dancing and more popular music, groups like the Possum Trot Cloggers began to appear throughout the greater Atlanta area, and performance and competitive events emerged that catered to the new style of clogging. After unsuccessfully lobbying the NCHC to recognise and include line dancing in the officially recognised organisational structure, Gibbs and others sought to establish workshops and competitions outside of those held at Fontana, which were under the control of the NCHC.

In the summer of 1978, from a perceived lack of support and resources from the tradition-focused NCHC, Gibbs, England and five other instructors founded the Clogging Leaders of Georgia (or CLOG) to address their changing needs (Gibbs personal interview, 2003). The group quickly grew to hundreds of members and a quarterly newsletter was established called *The Flop Eared Mule*, which was first published in September of that year. Due almost entirely to the popularity of the publication and the resources it contained for line dance instructors, CLOG began to receive a large number of applications and requests for membership from teachers and dancers outside of Georgia and was becoming a powerful voice in clogging nationwide. By 1983, the Clogging Leaders of Georgia had become the “National Clogging Organisation” (but retained the acronym CLOG) with increasing reach and influence. In 1984, CLOG organised the first annual National Clogging Convention, bringing instructors and dancers together at a different destination/location each year. In 1985, in part due to the growing influence of CLOG, line dancing and using more current recorded music became officially recognised even at NCHC sanctioned competitions. In 1989, CLOG adopted the NCHC rulebook for its competitive events, and in 1996 the NCHC became a division of CLOG to oversee the traditional and competitive efforts of the organisation.

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*The Flop Eared Mule: the Contrary Critter of Clogging*, was the title of the official publication of the Clogging Leaders of Georgia (CLOG). The name was originally the title of a bluegrass tune popular with cloggers in the late 1970s, and was selected because of its rural, agrarian sounding name with the added bonus of a mascot included with the title that came to be known as “Clabberfoot” the Flop Eared Mule. Between four and six publications annually began in September 1978 and ran through 1996, when CLOG merged with NCHC. The publication was replaced by the *CLOG Today* Newsletter, which continued publishing at six times per year. In 2006 the CLOG Today newsletter became an online and print publication. Due to its stereotypical connotations, the title and mascot were replaced as clogging moved into more urban and contemporary expressions and communities. The image of the mule is still part of the CLOG logo, but there is no mention of the name or the song.
In 1981, an NCHC volunteer and judge named Dan Angel submitted a proposal to the board to create a Hall of Fame of American Clogging to recognise influential and important dancers and teachers. When the board rejected the proposal, finding it unnecessary, Angel pushed ahead with his plans without the approval or support of the NCHC. “So he got some of us who were interested in it together and he started what is now known as America’s Clogging Hall of Fame (ACHF), which is based at Maggie Valley, North Carolina” (Garland Steele personal interview, 2003). In addition to a Hall of Fame, ACHF also began sanctioning competitive events as an alternative to those run by the NCHC, even though there was little difference in the competitive rules, competitors, officers and judges between both organisations. Much like the NCHC, ACHF is committed “to the preservation of the old time square dance and clogging” through “honouring our past leaders and providing a place for dancers of all walks of life to come together and dance” (ACHF 2012a). There are at least two inductees each year to the Hall of Fame that “have been clogging for at least twenty-five years and have been a positive influence in the preservation of the dance” (ACHF 2012a).

Since their founding, the ACHF is widely considered to be the most conservative and ‘traditional’ of the four current sanctioning bodies. They continue to offer the traditional categories of hoedown, running set, flatfooting and ‘smooth’ dancing in their competitions while the other three do not. They sanction between eight and sixteen competitions per year, which then qualify dancers to compete in the ACHF National Championship Dance-Off held the last full weekend in October at the Stompin’ Grounds in Maggie Valley, North Carolina (ACHF 2012a). They pride themselves on being “a family-oriented organisation that promotes clean, family-friendly events that are designed to preserve our traditional art form while welcoming the growth of the modern form of the dance” (ACHF 2012a). Despite claiming to welcome the growth of the modern form, the organisation’s rules state that a dancer will be disqualified “for dancing more than twice in a contemporary dance category”, however there is “no limit for [participation in] traditional categories” (ACHF 2012b). This is an attempt by ACHF cultural brokers to keep participants involved with the traditional and discourage the more modern categories.
For participants in ACHF sanctioned events, the Stomping Grounds in Maggie Valley has become what Fontana Village once was for so many cloggers: a homeland. The Stomping Grounds was built in 1980 and operated by Kyle Edwards, whose mother and uncle were founding members of Sam Queen’s Soco Gap dance team. As demonstrated by Howard’s (2009) work, the institutionalisation of a clogging homeland within the ACHF has achieved an almost spiritual quality for many participants. “This pilgrimage is undertaken within a familiar group of teammates and families, outward to a far-off Clogging Mecca” (Howard 2009, p. 75). Maggie Valley is a village located in a small rural valley in Western North Carolina, thirty-one miles from Asheville, location of the first Mountain Dance and Folk festival in 1928. Due to its location in the heart of the mountains, easy access to an interstate freeway, and being the home to the late Sam Queen and his Soco Gap Dance Team, Maggie Valley was an ideal location to base a historically focused clogging organisation.

3.5 Phase Four: Clogging Comes to the Intermountain West (1969-present)

Clogging was introduced into the Intermountain West through several waves of importation. Prior to 1847, the population of the Intermountain West consisted primarily of multiple Native Americans tribes and small groups of colonial-era traders and hunters. Beginning in 1847, followers of The Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) departed from various locations in the fledgling United States and from Europe, and immigrated to the territorial valleys of the mountain-studded American west seeking freedom from religious persecution. Often called Mormons, the LDS were one of the first Caucasian settlers to populate the Intermountain West, extending as far north as Alberta, Canada and south into Mexico. Initially called ‘Deseret’, the territory was later split into the states of Utah, Idaho, Montana, Arizona and Nevada and was eventually officially incorporated into the United States of America.

During this period of migration, square, contra and round dancing, polkas, waltzes and various forms of imported foot percussive dancing were popular among the Latter-day Saint populations. Unlike many religious denominations of the era, the LDS community and its leaders viewed recreational dancing as a wholesome activity, and dance played an important and visible role in LDS social life (Holbrook 1976). As tastes and technologies changed, so did the dancing. Advancements in transportation
and communication (like the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad at Promontory Point in Utah in 1869) facilitated the movement of music and dance throughout the country and the world. As in many locations in the United States, the twentieth century brought to the Intermountain West a wide range of couple and ballroom dances, from the Charleston to the Foxtrot. In most areas, these ‘popular’ dances replaced older ones such as the quadrille and the Virginia Reel. This process enabled dance to continue as an important social pastime but inhibited the establishment of a dominant style of regional dance.

During the 1950s and 1960s, when Western Square Dance was beginning to experience a renaissance throughout the country, hoedown-style clogging arrived in the Intermountain West through various means. Festivals, workshops, conventions, and performances of square dancing and folk dancing were common in the more urban centres of the region. One of these important importations occurred at Brigham Young University (BYU), located in Provo, Utah. This private university is owned and operated by the LDS Church and draws predominantly LDS students from all over the world to its campus. In 1973, the recently formed BYU International Folk Dance Ensemble added the ‘Carolina Clog’ to their performance repertoire (Vickie Austin personal interview, 2000). Inspired by what they had seen at square dance conventions and exhibitions, director Mary Bee Jensen and her assistant, Don Allen, travelled to a clogging workshop in Fontana and brought back with them the hoedown and precision styles of clogging. American clogging has been a central feature and specialty in their programme ever since.

During the late 1970’s, several individuals who had been members of the BYU International Folk Dancers began teaching the hoedown and precision styles of clogging to youth groups throughout the Intermountain West. Of note, Charles West began teaching in Eastern Idaho, Mary Jex in Spanish Fork, Utah, Terry Tucker in Pleasant Grove, Utah, and most significantly, Dennis Cobia in Orem, Utah (see below). The influence of these dancers and teachers cannot be overstated. Dozens of dance schools, community groups, and associations, most of which still exist, grew out of their work. In nearly each case, the focus of their teaching was on primary and secondary school age children. Many of the instructors and directors that I spoke with attribute the success and presence of clogging today in the Intermountain West to these first teachers.
These teachers established connections to the growing clogging community in the Southeast by traveling there to learn at workshops and conventions, and by paying Appalachian teachers to come and teach at workshops in the Intermountain West (Cobia personal interview, 2000). For the time being, Intermountain West clogging adopted the Southeastern movement, music, and costuming aesthetics, including the clogging basics of Bill Nichols, dancing to pre-recorded country and old time music in group figure patterns, and wearing white shoes with Stomper taps and historicised ‘country’ costumes like those worn by the Soco Gap Cloggers and Kesterson’s Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers.

A Western Organisation: Clog America

In the same way that Bill Nichols is considered the ‘granddaddy of clogging’, Dennis Cobia26 could be called the ‘father of clogging’ in the Intermountain West. Cobia was first introduced to clogging in the early 1960s when he saw Kesterson’s Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers on a small black and white television from his home in Bakersfield, California. He was so moved by what he saw and felt that he began to mimic the movement he saw on the screen and taught himself to dance. Cobia attributed his passion and talent for clogging to his family heritage and upbringing:

I always wondered why I was so interested in it, as well as just gifted in clogging. I just could do it from the moment that I saw it. I guess what I attribute it to is the fact that I am a Southerner. I wasn’t born in the South, I was born in Idaho. But both my mom and dad are from the South: South Carolina and Kentucky. There are six or seven generations of Cobias in South Carolina.

(Dennis Cobia personal interview, 2000)

Later Cobia enrolled at BYU where he was recruited for Jensen’s International Folk Dancers performing ensemble after a demonstration of his self-taught clogging. During his years with the Folk Dancers, he travelled extensively and became a soloist in the team’s clogging presentations. After his marriage and graduation, Cobia began teaching at a nearby public elementary school. During an excursion to the Eastern United States

26 Dennis Cobia was born in Rexburg, Idaho in 1948. He later moved with his family to Bakersfield, California where he spent the majority of his formative years. After graduating from High School, Cobia served a two-year LDS Church mission to the Southern United States, after which he enrolled at Brigham Young University, where he studied recreational management. He continued with a Master’s Degree in Recreational Management and later obtained a second Master’s Degree in Education.
in 1969, Cobia happened upon a clogging competition in Gatlinburg, Tennessee directed by Bill Nichols, and offered himself as a volunteer. From that moment on, Cobia became increasingly involved with the official clogging activities and organisations in the Southeast and desired to import the tradition for the young people in Utah.

I started teaching the dancing in the West, teaching kids how to clog in the west in the ‘70s. In 1970, I formed the first clogging team of young kids west of the Mississippi. It was the first time that anybody had had any clogging west of the Mississippi. I taught nothing but traditional. I taught the traditional steps, all the traditional square dance moves, I taught all the traditional music, costuming, and everything that had to do with the traditions of the Appalachians.

(Dennis Cobia personal interview, 2000)

His aspiration with the youth he taught in Utah was to remain true to that tradition and ultimately link the clogging practices in the Intermountain West with those in the Southeast. He quickly realised that the youth he was working with were lacking a cultural connection. “They didn’t have the looseness or the rhythm of it. I taught them well, they just didn’t have it. I was dealing with kids that just weren’t brought up with it” (Dennis Cobia personal interview, 2000). Over time it became increasingly apparent that clogging in the Intermountain West was moving in a different direction from that of the Southeast.

Another important early broker of clogging in the Intermountain West was Bryan Steele. In the late 1970s, Bryan Steele and his wife Bonnie were enrolled in both ballroom dance and clogging classes while attending Weber State University in Ogden, Utah. After graduation, the Steeles decided that they wanted to start a clogging group of their own in Ogden, Weber County, Utah. As the name would suggest, the Steele Family Cloggers began with the members of their immediate family. Bryan Steele soon realised that his limited experience would only allow their group to progress up to a point, so he sought out the help of Dennis Cobia, who had been building a successful clogging community in Utah County, forty miles to the south.

Bryan came to me a year or so after they were messing around. He said, ‘If I’m going to do this I’m going to have to have your help’. So he and I formed a partnership at that time. I can’t remember the year we did it. And that’s when we decided to do all of the workshops and the clog-camps. We ran it together for the first four of five years, and we came up with all these great ideas of fun things to do.

(Dennis Cobia personal interview, 2000)
This was the beginning of the Clog America organisation, which later became America On Stage. According to the history of the organisation found on the AOS webpage, the organisation was begun as an agreement between the two men in “in a small, pungent, day care centre in Sunset, Utah on June 10, 1981”27. The result of that partnership was the formation of an organisational structure that would form the backbone of clogging in the Intermountain West. Steele was business-minded and savvy, Cobia was energetic and personable, and together they created Clog America to service the needs of cloggers in the Intermountain West, who were geographically beyond the influence of the other national organisations. Cobia focused on building excitement for this traditional dance form, and Steele concentrated on constructing a community of dancers and events for the thirteen dance studios that were managed under their direction. During the early years of their relationship and the organisation, both desires were fulfilled.

I partnered up with Bryan Steele, and the two of us developed dance teams in Ogden, Salt Lake, all along that corridor, and we all had those teams that we were involved in. And we formed an organisation that would unite them all into a conglomerate of performing groups as well as competition. And we would sit down and put rules out, we would have workshops, we would do training, we would do videotapes, we would do everything to keep everyone united and that was our business. Plus, I put my technique of teaching clogging, which is the very best way of teaching clogging, since any instructor that was teaching in Utah, I had taught.

(Dennis Cobia personal interview, 2000)

Together they dominated the flow of clogging information and events in the Intermountain West through the establishment of the first and major workshops, camps, and competitions. The success of Clog America and the growth of clogging in the Intermountain West during this period of time can be in part attributed to the energy of these two men. Furthermore, they capitalised on the conservative nature of the dance to appeal to the area’s dominantly LDS population. Clogging therefore appealed to those who favoured artistic expression and recreation void of overt sexuality and innuendo. This will be examined in more detail in later chapters.

One central aim of the partnership’s efforts was to build and fortify a community of dancers that would interact on social levels through the preservation and continuation of the Southern Appalachian dance practice. Initially guest instructors and judges from the Southeast were invited to the area as a way to conceptually connect to the larger

world of Southeastern clogging. Cobia, Steele, and others also travelled to Georgia and North Carolina to attend workshops and competitions, and returned with the latest ideas and techniques for their own teaching. Despite their initial desire to be a part of the mainstream, it gradually became evident to them that cloggers in the Intermountain West were simply different in styling and motivation, and if Clog America wished to support them they needed to reflect those differences or become obsolete in the community.

Change in the Flow of Information

The flow of dance ideas, themes, and techniques from the 1970s to the middle of the 1980s flowed from the southern Appalachian region outward to numerous locations, like the Intermountain West. As dancers and teachers in these distant areas became more confident and autonomous in their abilities, the need for currency and legitimacy from the ‘homeland’ was reduced. In places like Intermountain West, this was compounded by the development of regional styles and attitudes toward change. In the culturally conservative Southeast, new ideas were often viewed with suspicion and anxiety about how it would impact the preservation and continuance of the traditional form of clogging (as seen earlier in this chapter). Among the dancers in Utah, however, innovative material was enthusiastically seen as an enlargement of the movement vocabulary and an increase in the range of possibilities. The progressive attitude among dancers in the Intermountain West created an environment in which innovation was more highly valued and sought after, as compared to dancers in the Southeast. This resulted in an increasingly stark divide between the technical and artistic endeavours of dancers in both locations.

By 1984, the Steele Family Cloggers had become an influential and powerful group in the Intermountain West’s local competitions. In an effort to see how his dancers measured up on the national stage, Steele took his group to the largest and most respected clogging competition in the United States: the Hee Haw International Clogging Championship in Nashville, Tennessee. When it came to clogging competitions in the Southeast, “of course, the big enchilada, was Hee Haw, the Grand Ole Opry, that was the big one”, sponsored by the NCHC (Dennis Cobia personal interview, 2000). Despite being the unknown outsiders, they did surprisingly well their first year. They received high marks for their precise and energetic style, but were
considered too radical with their costume, movement, and music choices (Bryan Steele personal interview, 2000). Steele’s determination to be successful at the national level then motivated him to return the following year with an even more innovative and powerful presentation. In 1985, Steele’s resolve paid off for the team and made a profound impact on the clogging community nationally and locally. The Steele Family Cloggers were the ‘precision champions’ at the Hee Haw International Clogging Championship in Nashville, Tennessee, for five years in a row from 1985-1989. Their sustained success and visibility transformed precision clogging for the competitive clogging community nationwide with their complexity and precision, and brought recognition and respect to clogging in the Intermountain West.

I think Bryan did it because he was so motivated by competition. He was just overly motivated by competition. That’s why he went to Nashville and kicked everybody’s butt for six years in a row. He kicked my butt too. (Dennis Cobia personal interview, 2000)

Steele’s emphasis on competition and innovation contrasted with the traditionalist ideology of Cobia, causing contention between the two men. This was ultimately the reason why the partnership disintegrated in 1993. “Things were not right and I’m a traditionalist”, said Cobia “so I really had to step away” (Dennis Cobia personal interview, 2000). Steele’s efforts to push the dance form aesthetically and influence the national clogging community were met with national resistance as well.

Back East they were still traditional, and it was part of their heritage. I think he [Steele] stepped on a lot of toes, when he would go back East and try to dictate what needs to happen. There were a lot of hurt feelings for a long time. I think that the Eastern people have been really resentful of these Westerners.

(Vickie Austin personal interview, 2000)

For decades, competitive teams from the Intermountain West like the Steele Family Cloggers, Utah Express (of the Korner Kanyon Kickers), Buckles and Bows, Arizona Pride, and the Handy Hustlers travelled to competitions in the Southeast, where their innovative style was displayed and often rewarded. No longer were the dancers of the Intermountain West dependent upon the expertise or inspiration of dancers and teachers from the Southeast. Clogging instructors and dancers in Utah, Idaho, and Arizona were claiming aesthetic ownership over the decisions made about the dance and its aesthetic direction. Spalding (1995) spoke of this process regarding rural Appalachian clogging, but it applies as well to contemporary clogging in the Intermountain West:
Dancers and dance communities make choices in style and repertoire according to their distinct aesthetics and values. The results of these choices, in turn, further shape the attitudes of the dancers, either reinforcing or altering the structure and style of the dancing and its place in the life of the community.

(Spalding 1995, p. 28)

America on Stage

Due to differing operational philosophies, Bryan Steele and Dennis Cobia dissolved Clog America in 1998. Steele reorganised under the new name, America on Stage (AOS) and Cobia used the name Clog America for his traditionally oriented performing ensemble in Salt Lake County. Steele took on new partners and built his organisation around the principles of innovation and competition, catering to the needs and desires of the dancers and helping local dance studios grow. In this way he continued his emphasis on building a clogging community in the Intermountain West, but this time it was more competition oriented. His approach has been fruitful, as discussed in Chapter 6. Steele’s philosophy has also been instrumental in the manifestation of the final phase of significant changes, that of mass appropriation from other styles, which for years effectively distinguished cloggers in the Intermountain West from the majority of those in the rest of the country. Since America on Stage is central to this thesis, further discussion around it will be provided in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

3.6 Phase Five: Mass Appropriation (1984-present)

By the 1970s, clogging had reached what is now generally referred to as its ‘traditional’ state. I asked several celebrated clogging authorities from the Southeast to define ‘traditional’ clogging. Scotty Bilz of Atlanta, Georgia said, “traditional clogging involves the use of the drag slide movement on your base foot while dancing to music that utilizes traditional bluegrass instruments” (Scotty Bilz personal email correspondence, May 2015). Jeff Driggs, a well-known national clogging teacher from West Virginia and publisher of the Double Toe Times, describes ‘traditional’ clogging:

For me, traditional clogging is most defined by the Appalachian drag slide style with bent knees and that up and down motion in the upper body. I also consider the buck styles and flatfoot styles as traditional as well, but consider them ancillary to the most recognizable signature of clogging, the shuffle. I feel that Appalachian drag slide is the dominant form and what I would most consider “traditional” clogging.

(Jeff Driggs personal email correspondence, May 2015)
The drag-slide shuffle, stylised revivalist costuming with petticoats and cowboy themes, and double taps were firmly established as basic elements of clogging by the end of the 1970s.

Starting in 1984, major innovations were introduced on a national scale and, for many, accepted into their practice of clogging. Many rejected (and continue to reject) some or all of the appropriations, and some have rejoiced in the wealth of aesthetic choices available. The two most nationally recognised and accepted innovations are buck dancing and Canadian technique (see below). Other appropriations include arm work, cheerleading movement, hip-hop, Irish step dance, tap elements like the pullback, and untraditional costuming and theme choices (see below), all of which were accepted particularly well by the competitive clogging teams in the Intermountain West region. The mass appropriation of external styles into the recognised clogging technique and vocabulary throughout the country happened concurrently with the growth of clogging in the Intermountain West.

**Burton Edwards and Buck Style Footwork**

In the summer of 1982, during the first two years of the CLOG organisation and its workshops, founder JoAnn Gibbs and fellow dancer and teacher Tandy Barrett travelled to Maggie Valley, North Carolina, to attend a workshop at the ‘Stompin’ Ground’ (Tandy Barrett personal interview, October 2003). The workshop was not very big or well attended, but while there they were introduced to a version of the basic clogging footwork neither had seen before. It was not a new invention, but a regional style of clogging/buck dancing not currently found in the movement vocabulary of the growing national clogging community based on Nichols’ style. Gibbs mentioned, “while I was there I kept watching Burton [Kyle Edward’s son and eventual owner of the Stompin’ Ground] and I kept watching his dad and I kept thinking to myself that’s not the kind of clogging we do, they’re doing something different, but I couldn’t figure out what it was” (JoAnn Gibbs personal interview, 2003). Upon inquiring about the footwork, Edwards called it ‘buck dancing’. The new style essentially added an extra sound on the upbeat with a non-weight bearing strike of the heel before the switching of weight. This increased the complexity of sounds in the most common basic steps. The buck style could be applied to any existing clogging steps at the time containing a ‘rock step’ or ‘ball change’ (see Popwell’s definition of terms above), which most of them did. It was revolutionary in that it allowed dancers to increase the amount of
sounds created within the same movement structure. Burton Edwards was invited to teach at CLOG workshops and the new technique and style spread quickly among line dance instructors and dancers. The buck style of clogging has since become a widespread component of recreational and competitive American clogging nationwide. However, many dancers see the innovation as an unnecessary ‘modernisation’ of the footwork and prefer to continue to dance using the previous style of footwork.

**Judy Weymouth and Canadian Style Clogging (1985)**

In 1985, Judy Weymouth and a small number of her dance students from Stratford, Ontario, Canada, came to Gibb’s CLOG workshop at Fontana to learn how to clog. Weymouth was a practitioner and instructor of the Southern Ontario style of step dancing, which shall be referred to hereafter simply as Canadian step dancing or Canadian technique. She came to the Fontana workshop to expand her abilities and enable her to offer clogging classes at her dance school. Over the course of the three-day workshop, she was asked by the organisers to demonstrate her style of step dancing from Canada. According to Gibbs, “she did this wonderful stuff that just looked like ‘wow,’ you know, jaw just dropped and they were so neat, we turned down the volume on the music and we could hear her feet - it was just, wow, it was invigorating” (JoAnn Gibbs personal interview, 2003). Weymouth was then asked by the workshop staff to teach an impromptu workshop the following day and “everybody in the whole cotton-picking workshop showed up” (JoAnn Gibbs personal interview, 2003). Weymouth was subsequently invited to teach at a number of workshops including the National Clogging Convention, where she has been a regular feature ever since. As many of the attendees at the workshop and National Convention were teachers from various locations throughout the country, this style of movement quickly spread to become part of a new vernacular.

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28 Judy Weymouth was born in 1963 in Stratford, Ontario, Canada to Audrey and Gerald Nieberlein who were Diary Farmers. Judy’s love of fiddle music and dancing began at an early age. She began taking lessons at age 9 and “quickly became a successful competitor, winning many different titles, including Canadian Open Step Dance Champion three times (1979, 1982, and 1983). Success as a dancer opened many new doors, leaving Judy much in demand as a dance instructor. Enrollment in her studio grew, and for many years now, Judy has operated one of the largest and most successful dance schools in Canada.” (http://judydance.com/biography/ accessed 15/3/2016)

29 There are numerous styles of Canadian step dancing, and all of them are closer to European styles of step dance than clogging, due primarily to the Western European makeup of its ancestral forms and absence or lower occurrence of African and Native American influences.
Weymouth’s style of Canadian step dancing was different from the popular style of American clogging at that time, principally in the area of weight changes and knee flexion. It used a more mobile and active standing leg, with hops and weight changes occurring in more rapid frequency (up to four per beat) allowing for more possibilities of ornamentation and more versatile rhythmic phrasing. This was demonstrated by the fact that Canadian step dancing can be done to 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, and 6/8 time music at various speeds. Due to the rhythmic bounce created by the knees and changes of weight, ‘traditional’ American clogging is limited to a duple meter ranging between 100 to 180 beats per minute. When Weymouth demonstrated a more active and mobile weight-bearing leg, which facilitated a doubling of the quickness of the weight change, cloggers were introduced to a wealth of new possible outcomes in step-pattern construction. The richly complex patterns of movement and sound that had fascinated the cloggers at the Fontana workshop was due, in part, to a lower centre of gravity and a deeper, yet mobile, bend of the knees. This posture and orientation enabled dancers to change weight quickly from one foot to the other and remain on one foot longer for increased ornamentation with the gestural (non-weight bearing) foot. Up to this point, clogging had been built upon the constant and regular up-and-down movement of the entire body, stemming from the uninterrupted, downbeat-based extension and flexion of the knees. The Canadian technique introduced a more smooth and controlled approach to clogging, increasing the range of movement possibilities and extending the variety of music choices.

The posture associated with Weymouth’s Canadian technique also brought a change. The legs were active and continuously bent, but the torso was held erect (similar to the Irish and English style of step dancing posture). This was different from the slight forward bending of the waist and the continual straightening and bending of the knees that characterised clogging from the time of Sam Queen. The enhanced intricacy, uprightness, and athleticism of the Canadian style permitted those dancers who wished to replace the stooped torso, flatfooted, and relaxed characteristic of the traditional clogging styles with something more adaptable and less stereotypical.

Some dancers and teachers, particularly in leadership positions, had concerns about what the Canadian technique would do to the competitive interactions of the community. “It started to creep in, and there’s nothing you can do about it, if you’re going to teach it, you know they’re going to use it, so what do you do… well, you
adapt” (JoAnn Gibbs interview, 2003). The national organisations amended their competition policies to avoid incentivising or penalising dancers for the style of footwork being used (JoAnn Gibbs personal interview 2003). However, it quickly became evident that those groups that used the Canadian style of clogging had greater synchronisation, ornamentation, and presentation in their dancing and were therefore more successful in competition. Within two years, ‘the Canadian’ had become a foundational pattern and technique found in the standard movement vocabulary of the majority of competitive clogging teams throughout the country. Today, this technique is found almost exclusively among competitive clogging teams. There are competitive teams in various places in the country that have not, or choose not, to employ the technique in their dancing. I have never encountered a ‘hoedown’ or recreational style group that has used it. Not only is the movement considered ‘non-traditional’, but also the increased complexity of the movement requires considerable time to master the intricacy of the technique.

Cross Training

The incorporation of Buck and Canadian technique into the clogging movement vocabulary in the 1980s helped establish a new openness and eagerness among the clog dance community in the Intermountain West concerning the adaptation of movement ideas and elements from other styles of dance and performance. This trend predominantly characterises the Intermountain West community of clog dancers, which is primarily due to dancers’ cross training among various disciplines. A cross trained dancer, in this research, is a term used to identify a dancer who is engaged in learning and participating in two or more styles of dance or movement practices. Not only did the dancers clog, but also they were cheerleaders, hip-hop dancers, ballroom dancers, martial artists, musicians, athletes, and actors. These additional activities influenced the artistic motivations and creations of participants.

Arm Work

In 1987, teams in various places around the country began to experiment with the use of hand and arm gestures and placement to enhance the overall visual appearance of their performances. This was principally done to create a more presentational and uniform manifestation. Before that time, the arms would simply hang to the sides of the body and swing in various and natural ways in response to the actions of the lower
body. By the mid-1980s, to increase their synchronisation and sharpness, many competitive teams began training their dancers to place the back of their hands flat on their lower back with the fingers overlapping, and the elbows extended to the side. This brought a uniform look to the overall visual appearance of the performers, adding a synchronised, uniform aesthetic image, which has more or less persisted until the present. This concept is based on using dynamic lines and shapes of the whole body of individuals and spatial patterning of group dancers. Restricting the movement of the arms eliminated any unwanted movement that might distract from the actions of the feet, and stabilised the upper body for a more consistent and uniform projection. Most importantly, it was a way to replace the more traditional emphasis on the ‘individual’ performer, with the highly synchronised corps of dancers.

Woodside (1995) saw this pattern with competitive groups in the Southeast that had deliberately “departed further from traditional social dance, leaving behind all vestiges of old-time square dance figures and often blurring what had been well-defined gender roles” (Woodside 1995, p. 134). Today, the presence of arm work is found almost exclusively among competition teams. A number of competitive teams in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia have adopted this trend of using extensive amounts of arm work in their team performances, as have groups of dancers from Missouri, Southern California, Utah, Idaho, Arizona, Colorado and Nebraska. At the highest level of team and duet competition, particularly in the Intermountain West, the arms are very seldom allowed to move loosely and freely as they once did, except in the individual freestyle and a cappella competition events.

Cheer, Jazz and Ballroom

In the early 1990s, about a dozen dancers and teachers in California, Arizona, Idaho, and Utah began to experiment with the use of cheerleading, jazz, and ballroom dance movement motifs in their choreographed competition performances. Again, due to the cross training of dancers and choreographers in other styles of movement, new foreign elements began to be incorporated. The cheerleader arm work pioneered by Colleen Pearson of the Arizona Pride clogging team was augmented by the extensions and isolations of jazz dance introduced by Misti Petersen, the complex partnering patterns of ballroom dance from Paul Winkleman, and the acrobatic stunts and lifts of cheerleading pioneered by the Utah Express team (of which I was at one time a
member). In an interview with Bryan Steele in 2000, he expressed this influence and his attitude toward such innovation:

> Clogging now is half jazz, if you get out of the traditional categories. It didn’t used to be that way. If you looked at clogging ten years ago, it was kind of boring. My philosophy has always been, let the kids do what they want to do, and they always want to take it more toward what’s popular.

(Bryan Steele personal interview, 2000)

AOS has historically been highly receptive and supportive of innovations in clogging practices in the Intermountain West; reasons for this are analysed in Chapter 5.3 and 5.4.

**Tap and Irish Dance Influences**


This exposure to tap and its elements was not wasted on young dancers and their choreographers. One of the most valuable motifs appropriated from tap was the ‘pullback’ or ‘pickup’. This one movement technique added a whole new dimension to clogging; it allowed dancers to create an extra sound while switching weight or hopping. While its execution is challenging, the concept is simple: to make a sound with the toe tap as the weight is taken off the ground. It essentially placed an extra

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sound in a place where it had before seemed impossible. For a period of three years, approximately 1993 to 1996, the ability to do pullbacks separated the most advanced competitive dancers from everyone else. Today in the Intermountain West, pullbacks are commonly seen in intermediate and even beginning levels of competition at America on Stage (AOS), as the complexity and intricacy of pullbacks have continued to advance in the upper levels.

The introduction of tap dancing elements, much like that of the Canadian mentioned above, dramatically impacted the very foundation of clogging vocabulary, technique, and structure. The newly imported weight changes, body orientation, and ankle articulations increased the level of complexity possible for clogging, thus opening up new worlds of sound, sequencing, and music choice. As the techniques changed, so did the style of footwear used for the dance. The female ‘Mary Jane’ style of shoe, associated with a more traditional style, was abandoned in favour of all dancers wearing the gender-neutral ‘Oxford’ style shoe. Up until the early 2000s, the shoe most commonly used had a single sole from toe to heel with an inserted metal shank for stability. Around that time, dancers began to incorporate ‘toe work’ into the movement vocabulary, which were likely adapted from tap and Irish dancing performances found in popular culture. This included standing on the very tip of the shoe, necessitating increased flexibility of the centre of the shoe in order to point the foot enough to gain and maintain stability when en pointe. This motivated the most recent revolution in shoe design: the split-sole shoe (see Plate 7).

This shoe has a wooden or composite heel structure, common to all Oxford style shoes, a stiff leather half sole extending from the ball of the foot to the tip of the shoe, and a flexible leather portion in between. The split-sole shoe was a functional decision for dancers at the highest levels of competition. If they wished to have the capability to perfect and perform the new ‘toe work’ being introduced, then they needed to have a shoe that would facilitate such movement.

_Hip-Hop_

The most recent movement innovation has been the importation of certain elements of hip-hop dance. Some of these elements include recognisable arm (such as punching and slashing actions), leg (like a wide, bent leg stance), and head gestures (rocking and nodding the head), as well as abrupt spatial formation changes. It is important to note that some features of hip-hop dance have been intentionally omitted due to their sensual or stereotypical associations. An example would be the use of the pelvis, widely recognised as a primary component of hip-hop dance. Due to the conservative nature of the predominantly white and Christian clogging community in the Intermountain West (see Chapter 4), these actions are typically deemed inappropriate. Some choreographers periodically use such movements, but they remain unstandardised in the mainstream community. Such choices will be covered in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

_Costuming and Theme_

Throughout the 1990s, coinciding with the rapid appropriation of external techniques and the expansion of the clogging movement repertoire (discussed above), the methods of presentation of the movement also experienced a shift. Continuing the distanciation from the Appalachian clogging ‘traditions’ (including the use of bluegrass music, drag-slide clogging and historicised ‘country’ costumes such as short, full skirts and petticoats for girls), dancers in the Intermountain West increased their exploration of new and stylistically foreign themes as contexts for their performances (see below, and Chapter 5.3).

Initially, through the 1980s, these new ideas were gentle modifications of established traditional conventions. The Steele Family Cloggers were the most highly regarded competitive team in the Intermountain West in the latter half of the 1980s, and well known for their innovative inclinations. In 1984, the Steele Family Cloggers
presented what might be the first of such innovations. Their performance of ‘Stars and Stripes Forever’, which received wide community acclaim and the first place Nationals (called the Rocky Mountain Competition at the time) overall team trophy, exhibited an innovative theme, costuming choices, arm actions, and a non-traditional theme. The theme, as the name would suggest, was patriotic American. They danced to John Phillip Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes Forever” (1896), straying from the conventional country or bluegrass music. The costuming featured the female dancers in gleaming red pants and vests, and the males in similar blue outfits (see Plate 8). The bright and shimmering material was new, and the wearing of pants by female dancers was new, but the white fringe down the sides of the pants and jacket was not. The presence of the fringe, being perceived as a ‘western’ or ‘cowboy’ feature, allowed these costuming innovations to be more easily accepted. It was the first identifiable time when such thematic, musical, and costume departures had been made in the Intermountain West, and it set the stage for a flood of appropriated foreign elements (Steele 2000).

Within a few short years, it was common for a competitive choreography to include movement and thematic elements borrowed from music videos (for example, Michael Jackson’s Thriller), films (for example, Indiana Jones or Pirates of the Caribbean) or television programmes (for example Scooby-Doo - an animated children’s television programme from the 1980s). Today, elaborate costumes, partner stunts, and gymnastics mixed with movie themes, hip-hop, and other references to popular culture are de rigeur at AOS clogging events (see Chapter 5.3).
The Steele Family performance ushered in a new era of previously unconsidered options. If cross training and media exposure were vehicles through which foreign elements were appropriated into the clogging movement vocabulary, then competition was the fuel. As I argue in my MA thesis (Larsen 2001), competition was a central motivating factor to the ever-changing movement repertoire of competitive clogging in Utah between 1984 and 2000. In that research, I demonstrate how innovations made by one group in one year (1984) were copied and adopted as standard practice by groups the following year at the same competition (1985). I also show how the Clog America sanctioning body in the Intermountain West, which would eventually become America on Stage (AOS), provided a structure in which choreographers and dancers could take artistic risks in certain areas to innovate and push the boundaries.

*Clogging Champions of America (CCA)*

In the Southeast however, neither the NCHC/CLOG nor the ACHF openly encouraged such innovative behaviour in the 1990s (Tandy Barnett personal interview 2003). As the new appropriations began to sweep the country, a growing number of contemporary competitive teams in the Southeast moved to create an organisation that would embrace these advances. In 1996, at the 13th National CLOG Convention held in Nashville, Tennessee, a group of individuals who were dissatisfied with the direction of organised clogging and its supporting events in the Southeast decided to create a new organisation that would better serve their needs. Ryan Rickard, Chad Dove, Carl and Lynne Ogle began to discuss the creation of an organising and sanctioning body that could better cater to the young, competitive faction that felt increasingly marginalised by CLOG/NCHC and ACHF. In 1997, the Clogging Champions of America (CCA) was formed. According to Lynne Ogle, the co-founder and president of CCA, the founders sought to recreate a less political, restrictive atmosphere. “I wanted to see it get back to where it was when I first started, everybody being friends, and going places with each other” (Lynne Ogle personal interview, 2003). It was created to serve the growing contingent of contemporary competitive dancers in the Southeast as well as building a new, ‘friendlier’ community of dancers. It currently sponsors and sanctions twelve to fourteen competitions a year (including its own national championship) as well as camps and workshops. It is viewed as the most progressive of the three sanctioning bodies of the Southeast, and the one in which the majority of elite competitive teams from the Southeast participate. The only traditional category found at a CCA event is
the hoedown event. CCA has one or two competitions annually in the west, one in Arizona and then another which has been held in either California or Nevada. These have met with limited success due to their inability to draw from the large amount of dancers in the Intermountain West. Several times, CCA dance promoters and directors have tried to institute CCA competitions in Utah or Colorado, but they were not successful enough to be kept in operation.

*America On Stage Today: Greg Tucker*

In the Intermountain West, Bryan Steele created a thriving clogging organisation, America On Stage, which included a series of annual competitions culminating in Nationals at Lagoon. By the early 2000s the continued growth of AOS induced Steele to seek managerial assistance in the operations of the organisation. He recruited Greg Tucker to fill this position.

Greg Tucker was born in Provo, Utah in 1976. His father Terry Tucker, who had danced and toured with Mary Bee Jensen’s BYU International Folk Dancers, began teaching clogging in 1978 to his choir students at the High School in Pleasant Grove, Utah. His group, Cloggers West, hosted the very first clogging competition in the Intermountain West in 1982, appropriately named the Intermountain Clogging competition. Greg learned clogging at a very early age, and like his father went to Brigham Young University, danced with the BYU International Folk Dancers from 1998 to 2002, and graduated with a degree in Engineering. As a member of the BYU Folk Dancers, he met his wife Maria Topol, who was also a champion clogger from Utah. In 2002, the Tuckers decided to open up a clogging studio in Orem, Utah. They wanted their students to compete but they did not initially desire to be a part of Steele’s AOS circuit of competitions as Greg’s father Terry Tucker had fundamental disagreements with the role and operation of clogging competitions run by Bryan Steele. If the Tuckers wanted their teams to participate in competition, they needed to travel outside of Utah, which was neither convenient nor economical.

As their studio grew and gained notoriety, their absence was increasingly noticed at the local competitions. This prompted Bryan Steele to contact them to extend a hand of fellowship.
Bryan Steele called Maria and I and said that he wanted to take us out to lunch. When we got there he asked us why we didn’t like to attend any of his competitions. It was his way of reaching out to a studio. We only did NCHC events, but we had to travel to those. They were all in Arizona, or California, or Missouri, there weren’t any here. Maria had grown up that way and she was very hard core [in support of] NCHC, and we felt that America on Stage, only Bryan’s teams and Karen’s teams [Korner Kanyon] could win.

(Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a)

The Tuckers told Steele that they felt his judging criteria were unfair. Steel then asked the Tuckers if they would be interested in creating a new judging rubric for his competitions. Ten days later, the Tuckers called Steele back with a new judging formula and system. Impressed with what they had presented, Steele then asked the Tuckers if they would become part-time employees of AOS and help contribute further to the organisation and its events. They reached an agreement and the Tuckers began helping with the construction of a webpage and assisted with the labour associated with the competitive events and merchandise sales. By the end of their first year of involvement, the Tuckers were running their own competitive event sanctioned by AOS, at the Thanksgiving Point convention centre in Lehi, Utah.

This professional relationship continued until a new arrangement was needed. Steele and the Tuckers agreed to a gradual shifting of organisational control primarily to Greg Tucker, resulting in the eventual retirement from involvement by Steele. Four years into their ten-year plan, Steele decided to accelerate plans and made the change over immediately. Tucker became executive director and purchased the remaining shares of the company from Karen Carter, a minority partner. Meanwhile, Steele stayed on as advisor and mentor with the title of president, a title and role that he still currently holds. Throughout his involvement and eventual ownership of the America On Stage organisation, Greg Tucker and his wife Maria continued, and continue, to own and operate their own private, competitive clogging studio of nearly two hundred dancers.

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided historical context for clogging, first as a cultural expression in Appalachia, then as an export to the Intermountain West. Historically, Appalachian clogging in its numerous forms was the result of the mixture of European immigrant, Native American, and imported African slave dance elements in the Southern
Appalachian Mountain region of the United States. This chapter discussed the major events and figures in the development of clogging, focusing on the 20th century (and up to the present day) when it experienced five major developmental phases. These were: 1) early mountain dancing, with separate solo and group formation manifestations, 2) the transformation of form from solo dancing to precision, 3) clogging dissemination and standardisation, 4) the importation of clogging to the Intermountain West, and 5) mass appropriation of external motifs to the dance, readily accepted in the Intermountain West.

This chapter also presented the complex dance relationship between the Southeastern United States and the Intermountain West, and how that relationship has been transformed over time. Initially, clogging in the two regions was closely allied and similar in technique and intent. Gradually, the dancers in the Intermountain West broke from the stylistic traditions of Appalachia and created their own expressions of the dance, supported by their own national organisation. The next chapter examines the current socioeconomic and cultural composition of the Intermountain West clogging community and explores the interplay of social power and cultural brokerage among its participants.
Chapter 4

The Intermountain West

Clogging Community Participants

This chapter provides a socioeconomic and ethnographic analysis of the contemporary competitive clogging community in the Intermountain West. All members in this community interact on the pluralistic axis of cultural creation; this chapter examines some of those relationships and how they interface to shape the community. I identify five major entities of this community, including directors, studios, dancers, audience and the America On Stage organisation. The first section provides an account of the directors, which includes instructors and choreographers, who have been identified in this study as holding an essential position in the artistic decision making process. The second section contains information about the studio establishments, where the dancers learn from the instructors in a structured community environment. The third section will present information about the dancers who participate in clogging activities. The fourth section addresses the audience, comprised of a wide-ranging and diverse grouping of individuals who attend or support the organisation's events, including the adjudicators, those responsible for assigning value to the performed cultural texts at the competitions. The last section describes the basic demographics of America On Stage, whose motivations and actions will also be discussed in depth in Chapters 5 and 6.

A Dynamic Web of Subjective Relations

Within the America On Stage (AOS) community of competitive clogging, directors, teachers, dancers, spectators, organisers, and adjudicators are located in a dynamic web of subjective relations. Parents or guardians decide which studio to enrol their children or dependants and invest their money based on numerous factors, including the proficiency and ideology of studio owners and operators. Those directors and teachers choose which competitions to attend, and organisers decide when and where those events will happen. Choreographers and dancers create and arrange movement patterns that they feel will provide a competitive edge at the competition, and adjudicators assign value to those decisions. Together these parties create and define their own community through a dialectic interchange of decisions that constitute a projection of
self and community. Matthews-DeNatale (1995) described this as “a nonverbal statement about the way an individual dancer believes things ‘ought’ to be, about the correlation that should or should not exist among dance, lifestyle, and worldview” (p. 124).

While the AOS administration and elite competitors create and manipulate the energy and symbolic constructs of the community, there is a dialectic interchange between them and the members of their community, and a constant interplay between personal, studio and communal motivations. The organisation does not exert Mann’s (1986) concept of authoritative power, which dictates rules and enforces obedience. Instead, it applies diffused power to structurally stabilise and expand its base, which is described as being “spread in a more, spontaneous, unconscious, decentred way throughout a population, resulting in similar social practices that embody power relations but are not explicitly commanded” (Stewart 2000, p. 25). In conjunction with its goal of providing settings for interaction between dancers and groups and infusing energy into participation, AOS is a business; building the clogging community in the Intermountain West augments its participant base and therefore its financial well being. To build this base, it must sell its product and please its customers. As a wise steward, AOS listens and responds to its target audience.

As discussed in Chapter 2, cultural brokers like AOS organisers stabilise and expand their community by creating, distributing and projecting cultural symbols, and assigning value to performance of cultural texts at large-scale, adjudicated display events. In a pluralistic, competitive community attempting to integrate so many different constellations of identity, conflicts arise when efforts and initiatives of one party are placed in opposition to ideological or operational principles of another. Dissenting members might see some choices as an “outflanking of subordinate classes so that they consider resistance pointless” (Stewart 2000, p. 25). Chapters 5 and 6 will address such examples of conflicts that arise due to the intersection of these relationships of power.
4.1 The Studio Directors

Most of the choices made by participants in the competitive clogging community in the Intermountain West concerning the content and context of their interactions revolve around the ideology of the instructor, choreographer, teacher or manager (referred to here collectively as the ‘director’) of a given group, school, or ‘studio’ (defined herein as an assemblage of student dancers, or grouping of assemblages, under the direction and instruction of a director or directing corps).

Directors are the mediators and liaison between the organising body (AOS) and participant dancers. Many directors have themselves spent years as, or continue to be, participant dancers. They may orchestrate and/or create meaningful cultural texts in their choreographic efforts through which they interpret and display the system of collective representations. They institute a studio *habitus* through the coordination of rehearsal structure and schedules, classroom discipline, and performance options. They can also serve as role models for their dancers; the attitudes and behaviour of the students often, though not always, reflect those of their director.

They also determine their studio’s artistic and cultural identity markers in the areas of theme, music, costuming, footwear, and accessories, all of which are central to the performance of this community’s symbolic projections. These are the choices upon which the ‘system of collective representations’ is ‘textualised’ in movement by the ‘actors’ for the ‘audience’, who judges it against other symbolic constructions during the ‘mise-en-scene’. The participants in a competitive event, particularly the directors, expend a great deal of time and vigour developing their artistic product.

The director’s artistic choices seen in clogging performance in the Intermountain West favour contemporary currency. In a personal email, director Shauna Blake told me, “as far as themes, I usually ask the students what songs or characters are in style or popular then try to go from there or take an older song/style and give it a slight twist to make it work with the current style” (Shauna Blake personal email correspondence, 2015). Director Tara Osborne stated, “I select music that the dancers and I are interested in, and when it comes to themes I like to go for audience appeal” (Tara Osborne personal email correspondence, 2015). Choreographers pick themes and movement that are congruent with their values and salient to their experience and to that of their dancers.
Bill Nichols, known as the Granddaddy of clogging by many (see Chapter 3), said, “to keep kids interested you got to do whatever” (Bill Nichols, personal interview 2004). He was speaking mainly of his own philosophy of allowing the young people to make the dance into what they wanted and needed, rather than rigidly following a tradition simply for the sake of preservation. He noticed the need for new ideas in order to keep the community growing and involved. Organised clogging in the Intermountain West has continued that trend in the years since. Directors have both ideological and commercial motivation to “keep kids interested”.

One of the primary responsibilities of the director of a studio is making artistic choices for music, costuming, choreography and theme. The competitive structures instituted by America On Stage (discussed in Chapter 5) offer directors great creative latitude to motivate participation. They support and enable choreographers and dancers to openly incorporate foreign elements (such as tap, cheerleading and lifts) into their dances and place few restrictions on music, costume, or theme selection to allow directors creative liberty (see Chapter 5). Such choices are important projections used by choreographers to augment the overall appeal and effectiveness of the performance. A director’s selection of costumes, studio makeup and hair policies, marketing merchandise such as team tee shirts, bags and uniforms project cultural symbolism and can increase their visibility in the community.

One exception to this generalisation concerns movement aesthetics. In Chapter 5, I discuss the introduction of the All-Around Solo Programme, an event through which AOS has effectively standardised the community’s most ‘winning’ movement aesthetics. There are teams in the community who do not participate in this event nor adopt these aesthetics, just as there are teams in the community who do not participate in competitions at all. However, teams desiring competitive success and high visibility in the community must apply these aesthetics, particularly at the higher levels of competition (see Chapter 5).

Another example of director initiative in marketing and symbolising their studio of dancers is the selection of team-specific apparel and fashion, on and off the stage. Some directors choose to have all their dancers wear specific identity markers at the competition. On stage, a studio’s teams can be recognised through the wearing of similar apparel (standard studio costumes or tee shirts) or by wearing a prescribed
hairstyle or fashion accessory (bracelets, headbands, socks) signifying the team’s studio affiliation. For years, if a dancer wore shiny black pants, one knew that that dancer was a member of LaChere’s Fab Five studio. In 2014, all of K & C’s Fab Five studio dancers had their hair done in the exact same way. Their chosen aesthetic: two little buns of hair sticking up on the high back reaches of their head (see Plate 9 below). On stage the overall effect is one of recognition, which is an objective of this prestigious studio.

Plate 9: Photograph taken of two participants belonging to the K&C Fab Five studio wearing the studio-prescribed hairstyle. They were on different teams but all dancers at this studio wear their hair the same way for competitions. The photograph was taken with permission of the subjects and subjects’ parents. Copyright © the author, 2014.

Outside of the staged performances, meaning is also enacted during the off-stage intervals of the competitive event. When some studios attend an event like a regional or Nationals competition where hundreds or even thousands of other dancers will be in attendance, team uniforms make a statement of unity and generate publicity for their studios. Some directors dictate competition dress codes of studio-specific iconography, such as tee shirts or uniforms, which project a sense of belonging. The wearing of apparel indicating past achievements and success in competition, such as the All-
American Team or Hall of Fame jackets (see Chapter 6), portrays profound meaning for both the wearer and the observer. All of these markers, for both teams and individuals, are symbolically expressive and carry mutually understood meaning. This meaning might be interpreted as, “I dance with ‘group X’, because I am wearing my hair in this particular way”, or “I have been successful at this competition in the past, because of the jacket that I am wearing”. With the exception of the All-American jacket, most of these identity markers specifically express loyalty to the studio rather than to the AOS clogging community.

The use of the accessories mentioned above is a subtle use of power and statement of allegiance; the loyalty of a director or dancer at a competition is not particularly to the clogging community at large but to their individual studios attending the event or the event itself. Competition perpetuates an ‘us versus them’ dichotomy, intentionally or unintentionally directed toward other competitors and even adjudicators, and the use of accessories can be emblematic of that antagonism (see Chapter 6).

**Director Demographics in AOS**

Seventy-three studios participated in the AOS 2015 competitive season. Of these studios, six were directed by men, three were directed by a team of a man and a woman, and sixty-four were managed by female directors. This imbalance mirrors the gender averages of student participants (see Chapter 4.2). Two of the total number of participating directors have some Native American ancestry; the rest are Caucasian. Ages of directors range from nineteen years old to sixty-seven. Of the top ten competitive studios (those that consistently win top awards at AOS competitions and have the largest amount of participants), all directors are female (except for one male/female team) and range in age from twenty-five to forty years old. They are the same generation of dancers who have grown up and competed against one another in the AOS system (formerly Clog America), and now have studios of their own. Three of them are sisters (two additional sisters from the same family work for smaller studios).

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The Research Survey

Because of their influence over key decision-making circumstances relating to efforts of the organisation, the directors are an important group of informants for this ethnographic study. In an effort to better understand the experience and preferences of these decision makers, I distributed an online survey in June 2012 (see Appendix A) to as many active clogging directors in the Intermountain West as could be contacted and found willing to participate, whether they participated in AOS events or not. For purposes of honesty and sincerity, each director submitted the survey anonymously and will henceforth be referred to as ‘survey respondent’.

Of the seventy-one studios initially identified and contacted, fifty responded to the survey, representing at the time approximately 3,200 dancers from various locations and backgrounds in the Intermountain West. Twenty-three responses came from what I will label ‘small studios’ (under fifty students), fifteen from ‘medium sized studios’ (between fifty and ninety-nine students), and twelve from ‘large studios’ (with more than 100 students). Of those fifty studios, thirty-three of them were responsible for bringing just fewer than 2,000 dancers to the ‘Nationals’ competition in 2012.

Due to the anonymous nature of the online survey, detailed information about the exact location and identity of every survey respondent was neither possible nor necessary for this study. Nevertheless, studios from Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, Arizona, Montana, Oregon, Washington, California, and Alberta, Canada were represented in the sampling. Some of the studios represented performance or recreational groups that do not compete, and others are heavily involved with AOS competitions. As I will demonstrate at a later point in this chapter, the size and scope of the survey respondents appear to be fairly consistent with the overall make-up of the clogging community in the Intermountain West and provided an adequate sample group for this study.

Each director surveyed for this research was asked to briefly identify their experience and preferences in relation to the activities conducted within their school or studio. Respondents were not required to answer every question. Directors were asked to provide the number of years they had each danced, taught, judged, operated a studio, and organised events. Rather than trying to place a qualitative judgment on the level of experience of each director in each area, I decided that a satisfactory understanding
could be obtained by charting the average range of years of dancing experience each represented.

Table 1: The number of years spent dancing by surveyed directors.

The majority of the directors had been, or in some cases continue to be, active participants in the role of competitive dancer. As seen in the table above (Table 1), thirty-five informants marked that they had been dancing for over twenty-one years, ten had been dancing between ten and twenty years, and four had danced six years or less.

Table 2: The number of years spent teaching by the directors surveyed.
The table above (Table 2) shows the number of years that the surveyed director had been teaching. This could be any instruction for a studio that they personally own or for another studio owner. Here we see a wider separation than we find in the years dancing above. Note the representation from the less experienced instructors in the survey.

In the table below (Table 3), the results would suggest a degree of longevity for owning and operating a clogging studio, with a majority of them in operation for over ten years. Again, it shows representation from the newer owners of dance studios, but mostly reveals that a large number of the survey respondents have been actively engaged with the community for some time. This permanence provides the majority of surveyed directors with a familiarity with communal symbols and systems, along with a substantial investment in the operation of the community and organisation.

![Instructors Years Owning Studio](image)

Table 3: The number of years survey respondents have owned a dance studio.

Not all directors are presented with the opportunity to adjudicate. The majority of adjudicators are former dancers or directors who are no longer affiliated with a particular group or studio. However, some current directors, who attain a high level of expertise, and have none of their own dancers competing, are asked to adjudicate competitive events. Within the sample group of respondents, only fifteen had experience with adjudication (Table 4 below). More will be said at a later point about the selection process and criteria for adjudicators within AOS.
Table 4: The number of years that the survey respondents had experience adjudicating.

The last question in the introductory section asked directors to identify their years of association with the planning and production of dance events. These events are primarily competitions, but could include large-scale workshops or performances. Most of these would include those local sponsors and promoters of AOS regional events (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: The number of years surveyed instructors have been involved with event organization.

*Directors’ Ideology: ‘Tradition’ and Innovation*

At the studio level, artistic philosophy is typically demonstrated through the attitudes and behaviours that a director values. In order to access this information in the
online survey, respondents were asked to rank a series of ideas from least important to the most important relating to the principles they valued in their role. They were first asked about how important it was to understand the history of clogging as a director. Clearly, as seen on the right hand side of the table below, there is a feeling that understanding the origins of clogging has great value.

Table 6: The number of surveyed instructors with varying opinions about the importance of an understanding of the history of clogging as an instructor.

A similar sentiment was voiced in the question that followed, about the importance placed on efforts to maintain the tradition associated with clogging (Table 7 below). Here again, there is a clear preference for the maintenance of the tradition. However, there is an interesting trend in both of these charts, when compared to the next question.

Table 7: The number of instructors who feel it important to maintain the tradition of clogging.
The next question in the online survey asked the instructors to rate how important they felt it was for them to find new and creative ways of using clogging. Shown in the table below (Table 8), 49 of the 50 respondents placed themselves in the important or very important columns. The connection between this and the previous two questions of the survey has been fascinating and might seem at odds to a cultural outsider.

Table 8: Instructors surveyed about innovation.

My lengthy interactions with practitioners in both the Southeast and the Intermountain West had led me to hypothesise that the community at large viewed the concepts of innovation and tradition as being opposite ends of a singular spectrum. In the Southeast for example, I generally expect practitioners to identify with the traditional end of that spectrum, and those in the Intermountain West to value innovation more. The initial model would therefore anticipate the practitioners surveyed here to find value in new and creative ways to use clogging, and not care as much for understanding and maintaining the traditions associated with it. The survey data, however, did not support this theory. It indicated instead that participants in decision-making roles in the Intermountain West overwhelmingly seek innovation while professing to honour the tradition from whence it came.

The responses to the next online survey question gave further insight on the problematic topic of ‘tradition’. In Table 9 (below), survey respondents listed the styles of clogging with which they had familiarity and competence. On the left hand side of the table is a list of the group and footwork styles of American clogging, from those that are widely considered to be older styles toward the top, to the more
contemporary styles found at the bottom. Across the top are columns with varying levels of ability and exposure, with the least experience on the left, proceeding to expertise on the right hand column. The numbers represent the number of survey respondents who located themselves in that position in relation to the dance style and their experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Dance Styles and Footwork Styles</th>
<th>No experience</th>
<th>Heard of it only</th>
<th>Have done some</th>
<th>Moderate experience</th>
<th>Good Knowledge</th>
<th>Expertise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smooth Mountain</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Set</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or 8 Couple Hoedown</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatfooting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drag/Slide</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buck Style</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Tap</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: A breakdown of the instructors comments surveyed and the varying level of competence and experience in the group and footwork styles of American clogging.

In Table 7 most directors ranked the maintaining of ‘tradition’ to be somewhat to very important, and Table 9 reveals that many directors in the Intermountain West had never even heard of some of the earlier manifestations of clogging like smooth mountain or running set. This raises the question of how can they teach or maintain tradition when they do not know what the traditional movements are?

The data in the tables above (Tables 6 through 9) and the absence of the older styles of clogging at AOS competitions reveals a unique application of the term ‘tradition’. The conclusion I have drawn from these responses and other interactions is that the majority of directors in the Intermountain West do not regard ‘tradition’ (of technique and social function) in the same way as those in the Southeast; the concept and definition of ‘tradition’ is unique to each region. I do not wish to infer that either region is monolithic or uniform in its thinking, but there are some common trends in each region that I have observed both through substantial personal experience, during fieldwork and through my informants’ responses to this and other enquiries.

Due to its location in the historic homeland and the many ways the dance is practised in the region, clogging practitioners in the Southeastern United States

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32 There is no official ranking or recognised level of traditionality for these dance styles, so I listed them according to my own experience and knowledge of their historical development.
generally consider ‘traditional practices’ to be closely related to the historical expressions and their related movement features in this region (as mentioned in Chapter 3), like ‘flatfooting’ and ‘hoedowning’. Evidence of this is the marked presence of more ‘traditional’ dance categories found in the Southeastern competition organisations, compared to the marked lack of such in AOS. The numerous social contexts in which the dance is practised in the Appalachian region (recreational as well as competitive contexts, discussed in Chapter 5) are another aspect of how clogging ‘tradition’ is viewed differently from Southeast to West (discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6).

Those practitioners in the Intermountain West, with little knowledge and experience of the historical and social aspects of clogging in the Southeastern United States, would understandably view the definition of ‘traditional practices’ as a concept that describes a gradual evolving expression composed from a combination of existing and new movement and thematic ideas. During an interview with AOS chief executive officer Greg Tucker, he compared these contradictory definitions of tradition to an early moment in the history of clogging. “Well, early on when dancers started calling it ‘clogging’, the ‘flatfooters’ didn’t like it” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). Because of this difference in classification, Tucker went on to explain, “I think the west tends to evolve more than the east” (Greg Tucker personal Interview, 2012a). This reveals a concept of the clogging tradition aligning with Nahachewsky’s (2006) concept of ‘vival’ dance which honours past practices of the dance while freely creating entirely new expressions of the dance authentic to their own experience and identity.

In regard to such “transaction of meanings”, Cohen (1985) indicates, “interpretation implies a substantial degree of what, faute de mieux, we must call ‘subjectivity’” (Cohen 1985, p. 17).

In other words, different people oriented to the same phenomenon are likely to differ from each other in certain respects in their interpretation of it. They may not be aware of this difference, especially if the phenomenon is a common impediment to their successful interaction. Indeed, often the contrary is the case. People can find common currency in behaviour whilst still tailoring it subjectively (and interpretively) to their own needs.

These interpretations are not random. They tend to be made within the terms characteristic of a given society, and influenced by its language, ecology, its traditions of belief and ideology, and so forth. But neither are they immutable. They are, rather,
responsive to the circumstances of interaction, both among individuals, and between the society as a whole and those across its boundaries.

(Cohen 1985, p. 17)

When asked about the tradition of clogging in the online survey, the respondents in the Intermountain West were not conceiving of the term in the same way practitioners ‘across its boundaries’ in the Southeastern United States were.33

The next series of questions in the survey were based on the respondents’ teaching philosophy. They were first asked about their desire to instruct their dancers in precise and refined technical execution of group and individual clogging. This question was aimed at understanding whether the director’s desired outcome related to performance and/or competitive practices, or towards more recreational ends. With the range of sizes, locations, and pursuits of groups, I anticipated a variety of responses to this question. However, ‘very important’ was by far the most common answer. Thirty-seven out of fifty respondents placed themselves in this column, with twelve in the ‘important’ column and again only one in the ‘somewhat important’ column. This suggests that no matter whether the group was based on recreational, performance, or competitive clogging, the overall technical execution was central to their efforts.

![Perfecting the technical execution of group/individual clogging](image)

Table 10: Instructors surveyed about the importance of technical execution

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33 It would be fascinating, but somewhat outside the scope of this study, to conduct a comparative analyse of the differing conceptual models of tradition between participants in the Southeast and Intermountain West.
The commercial aspect of studio growth is an extremely important consideration for these studio directors and their businesses in the Intermountain West. My research found that as success at competition increases, a group’s visibility in the community is augmented, thus increasing membership. Consequently, as enrolment increases, so does the financial profitability of the studio. Put simply, directors can make more money if their dancers succeed at competition. Those highly projectable symbols of achievement (banners, trophies, certificates, titles) can attract new customers interested in a successful programme. Other factors, such as director personality and ideology, studio location, and the presence of competing activities in the region absolutely factor in a studio’s growth, but high visibility within the community can motivate parents to enrol their dancers in those competitively successful studios.

Directors are responsible for the financial solvency of their studio, and for marketing it to the community. The fifth question on my online survey asked how important it was to attract new dancers to their group or studio. Again, ‘very important’ was the most common reply. This question dealt with understanding how the role of recruitment was conceptualised within their everyday practice, and how artistic choices (music, theme, and costume selection, for example) were informed or influenced by the desire to project cultural symbol sets (explained and examined in Chapters 5 and 6) attractive to possible students and parents (see Table 11).

Table 11: Instructors surveyed about the importance of attracting new dancers.
The sixth and seventh questions addressed the more qualitative outcomes of their work, and as I expected, they resulted in near unanimous agreement. The sixth question asked if it was important to teach young dancers about hard work and dedication through clogging skills acquisition (see Table 12 below). The seventh asked about the importance of helping students gain increased confidence through performing and competing (see Table 13 below). In both cases the ‘very important’ column was forty-two and forty-three out of fifty responses, respectively, with eight and six respondents in the ‘important’ column. The only difference between the two groups was that in the seventh question, one respondent marked that it was “not important” to teach confidence through performing and competing. It seems less like a trend and more of an anomaly or isolated situation where one instructor was not convinced with that aspect of teaching, performing or competing.

Table 12: Surveyed instructors responding about their teaching goals and philosophy.

Table 13: Surveyed instructors responding about their teaching goals and philosophy.
129

The final question in this section, which received much more variety in response, sought to ascertain the importance placed on competition, and not just involvement in competition; but winning at competition. Not one director located her/himself in the ‘never thought about it’ column. Obviously, when participating in a competitive practice, winning is at least a consideration. Seven directors claimed that winning is ‘not important’, twenty-four placed winning as ‘somewhat important’, ten said winning was ‘important’, and nine maintained that winning was ‘very important’. Drawing on Turino’s (2008) and Noyes’ (2003) notions of the pluralistic nature of communities, this result is consistent with what I had expected to find: a handful of very competitive-driven studios, some uninterested in competition, and a large number in the middle of the spectrum. Not everyone approves of competitions as the primary context of clogging (see Chapter 5), or even participates in them. At least five studios that responded to the survey do not affiliate themselves with AOS or participate in their events. These teams are relatively socially isolated from the greater Intermountain West clogging community, and consist of between ten and fifty dancers. In this particular geographical region, those who don’t compete are often peripheralised, as competitions are the dominant form of communal interaction (see Chapter 5).

There are few other outlets for the performance of clogging. Other possible contexts include state fairs, seasonal shopping centre performances, and national or regional holiday celebrations and parades. These venues may allow cloggers to perform in a non-adjudicatory environment. But compared to the possible social interaction and exposure to other dancers and teams at clogging competitions, these other contexts are of minor importance.

Table 14: Instructors surveyed about the importance of winning to their teaching philosophy

![Graph showing the distribution of responses to the importance of winning in competitions.](image)
After examining the data in depth, I came to the conclusion that this orientation toward, or away from, competition is not directly related to the size or location of the studio, but simply on the management style and emphasis of the director. According to data collected from the survey, thirteen of the groups are highly competitive and travel great distances to attend competitive events, usually held over weekends. This includes groups from the states of California, Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, Oregon and Washington. One survey respondent from Moses Lake, WA is approximately 400 miles away from the nearest clogging competition in Boise, Idaho, and 700 miles from the Nationals competition at Lagoon. These experiences necessitate a significant investment on behalf of the participants, which is often an important determinant of membership and prohibitive for those in lower economic strata.

Ten of the fifty surveyed dance studios compete at four or more competitions per year. Due to the expense of travel, preparation, and registration fees, these groups tend to be from populous, urban communities in Northern Utah. Unlike the groups from more rural areas, these teams generally feature a greater number of participants in middle or upper class conditions and closer proximity to events and competitions. It is my observation and finding that competitiveness is essential to the survival of dance studios in more populated locations in order to attract and keep students, where there are many other recreational options for those students to choose from.

Clogging groups in the Intermountain West are not required to compete at America On Stage events or affiliate themselves exclusively with one organisation. None of the national clogging organisations require directors or dancers to register and remain exclusive in their participation to one organising or sanctioning body. Some groups choose to concentrate on performance, some compete on rare occasions, some choose to participate exclusively with one organisation, and others prefer a variety of competitive options. Thirteen survey respondents acknowledged competing with either CCA (six groups) or NCHC (seven groups) events at least once during the previous two years. None had competed with the ACHF (possibly due to its smaller size, distant location, and emphasis on more traditional styles of clogging). For some groups living on the periphery of the Intermountain West, the location of particular NCHC or CCA events could be more convenient for them.
The primary factors influencing groups in the Intermountain West to participate in these other competitions appeared to be the desire to travel and receive wider exposure. One instructor “wanted to go on a trip as well as experience a different competition”; others had “desired to travel and felt that it would be a good opportunity” (survey respondent, 2012). One of these teachers found it very clarifying.

Honestly wanted to support another event because I needed to know if my studio was being judged unfairly in the AOS circuit. I met some really great instructor/directors and was encouraged by what I found. It was just an opportunity to be in another fish bowl and see if the scenery was the same, or different. It gave me perspective on what I wanted for my dancers as an artist, a teacher, a director and champion of the sport.

(Survey respondent, 2012)

One veteran group of dancers was “getting tired of competing at the same AOS competitions and needed to change something in order to keep them interested” (survey respondent, 2012). Another director found that the award structures of the other competitive organisations motivated them to push themselves; they were accustomed “to winning a 1st place for every dance they competed at AOS” (survey respondent, 2012). (I break down the AOS awards system in Chapter 6). Finally, one director related their preference to avoid the political nature of competing in the AOS system.

There is more satisfaction. Not as much political stuff. They [other organisations] make everyone feel important from registration, throughout the competition to personal calls afterwards. We only do America on Stage because they dominate every where [in the Intermountain West] and if you want to be part of clogging you have to or you get black balled [or discriminated against] :( its a sad thing!

(Survey respondent, 2012)

While competition participation is optional, studios that don’t compete in the AOS circuit may feel marginalised. I know this from personal experience and through years of association with dance groups throughout the region with varying levels of AOS affiliation. Due to the dominance of AOS events in the Intermountain West, where no other organisation holds a competition within 400 miles of Salt Lake City, groups and individuals have little choice if they wish to compete. As in all organisations, social politics often play a role and in competitive situations where hierarchisation is an active factor, adjudication is at least partially subjective to the tastes and experiences of the arbiters. Thus, should a group from the geographical periphery perform with a style or aesthetic that does not appeal to the judges, they will not find success despite their competence. The competitors may then interpret the lack of competitive success to a
lack of conformity to established modes of ‘conventional’ behaviour. These conflicts of ideology will be addressed further in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.2 The Clogging Studio in the Intermountain West

Dance studios are commercial enterprises. They require space, a danceable floor (preferably sprung or floating wood), sound equipment, liability insurance, utilities, maintenance, administration, marketing, teaching staff, and music rights. Starting and running a clogging studio represents a considerable financial investment, and necessitates a continual income flow to maintain its operations. They have a product to sell, as well as customers to please.

The dancers competing at events run by America On Stage are typically members of private dance schools or studios. Some dancers may choose to remain unaffiliated and participate in the solo categories, but those would be rare since a large part of participation in AOS is focused on group interaction and competitive events. There are no rules regulating the affiliation of dancers geographically or otherwise with a particular studio or teacher, or changes thereto. Unlike those mentioned in Chapter 3, clogging clubs within the public school system are not found in the Intermountain West.

Figure 15: The relative size of the studios represented in the survey.
To differentiate the studios for this study, I have categorised them as small (with fewer than fifty dancers) of which twenty-three directors of studios responded to the survey; medium sized (between fifty and ninety-nine students), of which there were fifteen survey respondents; and large studios, with over 100 students, with twelve survey respondents. Figure 15 above breaks down the distribution of small, medium, and large studios participating in the survey. It is interesting to note that the majority of the dancers are represented in the smallest number of studios (large studios) shown in the second figure below (Figure 16).

![Figure 16: The amount of students contained within the differing sizes of studio.](image)

Each studio is distinguished by a self-selected name to differentiate it from other groups of dancers. From the time that clogging was exported from the Southern Appalachians in the 1960s, it was common to choose a name based on geographical identifiers or words relating to trains, which were often associated with speed, percussive sounds and frontier lands. These names typically conjured up traditional images of rural settings and practices. The ‘Bailey Mountain Cloggers’, ‘Rocky Mountain Express’, the ‘Western Slope Stompers’ or the ‘Utah Express’ are examples of these types of names for groups, all of which are still in use today. Beginning in the 1990s, as the style of dance shifted to a more contemporary and modern aesthetic, the names of groups in the Intermountain West changed to suit. Today, we have teams like ‘High Definition’, ‘Rhythm-N-Motion’, and ‘Xtreme Power Elite’, which have less to do with clogging, and more to do with perception and cultural image projection.

Depending on the size of the group (amount of students) and the dance space (location), divisions are typically made between groups of dancers. This division is
generally drawn along lines of ability level: the advanced-level dancers together, the
beginning-level dancers together, and so forth. However, sometimes the division could
be made in regard to the age or number of dancers. The amount of teams per studio
varies greatly from one to the next. Some studios choose to have a fewer number of
larger teams. A large team has ten or more dancers. Small teams have three to six
dancers. The larger teams are more economical for the studio as they take in greater
income for nearly the same amount of resources expended. Sometimes the size of a
team is dictated by the space, time, or location of the rehearsals. Otherwise they could
be limited by the amount of dancers in a particular skill level or age division.

These ‘teams’, within a studio, are typically given names or labels to distinguish
them from other teams within the studio. It is not uncommon to find names like
‘lightning’, ‘elite’, ‘stompers’, ‘all-stars’, ‘divas’ etc… In a few cases, the name of the
team will correspond in some way with the name of the school or studio. For instance,
from the state of Idaho, which is referred to as the ‘Gem State’, the Gem Cloggers have
chosen to name each of their teams after precious stones. Their team names include the
‘Sapphires’, ‘Emeralds’, and the ‘Diamonds’, with the latter team being their most
proficient and highest ranking team. This trend is not widespread, as most groups
choose more generic terms for their teams. Often, they simply name the team after the
ability level or category in which it will compete, like the ‘Powerful Precision Young
Adult Girls’. This is a group of young ladies, in their late teens, which dance with a
studio called ‘Powerful Precision’.

Typically, teams like those mentioned above rehearse from one to four hours per
week, from September to May. Training sessions are typically held during the school
year and are extracurricular. Team rehearsals are usually held in the afternoon or
evening during the week, or on Saturdays. Dances are usually between one and a half to
three minutes long and are danced to pre-recorded music of the director’s choice.
Beginning and intermediate teams compete two to three dances per year on average;
advanced teams will generally add one to three new dances to their repertoire each
year, with new members required to learn both the new and old repertoire. The typical
repertoire of most Championship (Champ) and Professional (‘Pro’) level competitive
teams ranges from two to seven group choreographies. This is in addition to any solos
or duets the dancers may have also prepared. I spoke with one dancer with LaChere’s
Fab Five Studio who performed sixteen times in one day at the Nationals competition
in 2013. For dancers at this level, getting that much stage exposure is desirable for many reasons. Having a larger repertoire allows teams to perform and compete more at performances and competition, and the AOS awards system (analysed in Chapter 6) rewards dancers and studios for numerous entries.

Teams that experience large amounts of turnover in a given year generally start with entirely new repertoire and hope to add two to three dances in time for competition. The majority of studios teach dances gradually to their teams, reviewing older material while adding on to their new piece each week. Some teams (two to my knowledge) have workshops at the beginning of the season where all of the choreography is taught quickly to the students, allowing the instructors more time during the season to clean technique and refine the presentation.

Inter-team politics exist, especially where resources (good dancers with financial backing) are limited. In general, directors are all rather friendly with each other, at least on the surface. But they are protective of their cultural capital. During the 1980s there were numerous workshops and camps throughout the Intermountain West where ideas, techniques, and choreography were shared. Today, because of the importance placed on competition, directors choose to keep such ideas and work within their own studio. Competitive victories carry cultural and commercial value, and are publicised on websites and exhibited in trophy cases and on banners hanging in the studio. Studios do not willingly share students. Talent and high enrolment numbers are top commodities. There are no rules or laws on the transferring of students from one studio to another. It is based upon each director’s ideology or agreements between studio directors. When one of my own studio students surpassed her peers and could no longer be challenged in a group setting, I willingly referred her to a studio in a larger city where she could continue to develop her ability. However, when another of my students moved to a large urban centre and desired to dance with both a performance-based team at one studio and a competitive clogging team at another studio, he was refused by the competitive team (Michelle Stone personal email correspondence, 2014). For that team, split allegiance was not allowed. Such policies, again, vary from studio to studio and from director to director.
Dancers are both brokers and commodities in this web of cultural power players. Students are commodities for the directors; they provide them with an income, and their talent and technique mastery help the studio gain competitive status. Cultural currency is valuable for a studio, and contemporary youth are often more culturally aware than their parents or even their directors. Students express ideas and preferences that in many ways set, or at least mark, current trends, and wise directors observe and learn from them as well as teach them. The student seeks to please the director, but the directors must also seek to satisfy their dancers, and their dancers’ parents or guardians. Dissatisfaction leads to defection, and defection is undesirable both culturally (to the morale of the group) and economically.

Parents’ roles in the community of cloggers are extensions of their dancing children’s needs: they oversee their interests and consult them about their abilities, propensities and tastes. They support them with transportation to rehearsals and competitions, by paying tuition and costume fees, and by perhaps helping to instil good practice habits. Parents’ motivation is usually the satisfaction and success of their child, and if their child’s needs are not being met in a studio, they work with the director to fix the problem or have the option of removing their support and participation from that studio.

In towns or cities where more than one clogging studio exits, the selection of a studio by a parent for their child is a symbol of ideological preference. If a parent values competition and travel, they would select a highly competitive studio. If a parent seeks a recreational outlet for a child’s physical exercise needs, or if finances are limited, they may prefer a less competitive, more recreational studio. As a parent, I definitely take into consideration the aesthetics of a programme before enrolling my children in its activities; how the directors teach and treat their students, the movement they select, and their choice of music and costuming all inform my decisions. Many parents that I’ve talked to are equally selective. One dance parent chose her studio because “the environment at the studio was professional and encouraging and not

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34 I use the terms ‘dancer’ or ‘children’ and ‘parent’ in this chapter to generalise the guardian and dependant relationship. I do not wish to suggest that all such relationships are natural born parent and children situations within this community.
overbearing or harsh. The teachers weren’t mean to the dancers” (Jody Andreasen personal email correspondence, 2014). Another parent chose their studio because they knew and trusted the directors and their behavioural standards and choreographic sophistication (Emi Flamm personal email correspondence, 2014). Costuming and modesty is an issue for many parents; “I chose clogging as an activity because we lived in Colorado when my daughter was young and the only appropriate dance was clogging” (Janan Grange personal email correspondence, 2014). The other styles of dance did not reflect the standards of movement and costumes that she was looking for (this will be addressed in the section on religion below). Whether in dance, sports, or other interests, most parents are interested in finding programmes that reflect their worldview and meet the needs of their children. When those programmes are found, parents are willing to give the time, energy and financial funding to provide their children with the opportunity to participate.

Dancers usually make friends within their studio, where so much sustained social interaction and acknowledgement of shared interests occurs during rehearsals or at competitions. One such dancer stated, “I think I love being part of a team the most. It is fun and exciting to grow and sometimes fail as a team. But, no matter what, I just enjoy the adrenaline and energy that is felt there” (Natalie Williams personal email correspondence, 2014). One dance parent explained “even though there are two studios closer to our home than the one we attend, we were drawn to it because of the dancers that are there. My daughter really connected to them. They are some of her best friends” (Janan Grange personal email correspondence, 2014). Dancers spend a lot of time with each other at rehearsals and competitions. However, competitiveness can pressure even dancers in the same studio to compete against each other, both for personal glory and to keep from holding the team back in competition. This can lead to inner-studio politics and considerable social instability, where the best feelings are not always engendered towards fellow participants of the dance.

I have found, as Hall (1999) found with the Irish step dance community, that participants at the highest levels, simply love to compete. It can even be one of their defining characteristics. “I love working hard for something I want to do well. I love the adrenaline rush I get on stage and the feeling of satisfaction when I go off. There is no better feeling” (Ashlyn Cottle personal email correspondence, 2014). At the 2013 Idaho State Championships, I witnessed one of the top Junior Pro freestylers, an 11
year-old prodigy, needing to run offstage moments before competing her freestyle; the pressure, excitement of the day, and fatigue forced her to vomit. However, she was back on stage within minutes and won the top award in that category. Competition can be emotionally and physically exhausting, but it can also be a primary motivation to participate. Similar to Hall (1995), I have discovered that dancers themselves fuel the drive to compete. Many of the highly competitive dancers I interviewed affirmed this theory; champion dancer Natalie Williams told me, “it [competition] gave me a drive to do my best and always improve. I think that if I didn’t compete, I wouldn’t be where I am today. The worst part was when the competition was over!” (Natalie Williams personal email correspondence, 2014). While not all dancers in the community feel this way; one dancer, who wished to remain anonymous, told me, “once I hit a certain level, I did not enjoy competitions. We noticed the same people won every year. I didn’t like competing at AOS, but I liked performing for the audience and judges” ([name withheld] personal email correspondence, 2014). This may have been due to adjudicators repeatedly rewarding particular clogging styles of competitors. Despite the reason, experiencing success as a competitor has a great influence on the longevity of clog dancers involvement.

Race

From the outsiders prospective, the dancers involved with competitive clogging in the Intermountain West appears rather homogenous. From the survey sample, ninety-five per cent of the participants were Caucasian (white), three per cent were Hispanic, one per cent was African-American, just under one per cent were Asian, and just over one per cent was some other type of ethnic minority (see Figure 17 below).

Figure 17: The racial makeup of the clogging community surveyed.
The 2010 United States national census data reveals generally similar ratios in the two states where the majority of participants live: Utah and Idaho. Table 17 (below) shows the racial demographics of these two states. There are fewer minorities in the clogging community than there are in the states’ overall population, but it must be kept in mind that the stereotypical association of clogging is rural and Caucasian in nature. One director, who had no minority participants, said it was not until the question was asked via the online survey about the demographics within their programme that they had thought about it. “The survey made me realize that I see typically one race in clogging - Caucasian. It makes me wonder why other races are not involved as much, or why there is a predominant number of Caucasian individuals involved in clogging” (survey respondent, 2012). Another director, again with no minority participation, mentioned that they “welcome every shape, age, colour, etc. to our group!” (survey respondent, 2012). Other than those two comments and the numbers associated with their enrolment statistics, there was no mention of ethnicity, race, or background of dancers.

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</tbody>
</table>


On the national clogging scale, based on my experience and observation, minorities do not make up a substantial part of the participant base. I would argue that this could stem from racial segregation and social perceptions characterising the Southeast throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite the fact that many of the great ‘clog’ dancers in the first half of the 20th century (notably Sam Queen and Bill Nichols) learned in part from African-American teachers, relatively few people of African-American descent participate in clogging. In her study of Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Spalding (1993) identified a racial bias in the work of Bascom Lamar Lunsford who, despite having “collected music and dance from African-Americans in his area, he never presented them at his Asheville Dance and Folk Festival, further promoting a monocultural image of old time music and dance which has prevailed from 1928 to the
present” (Spalding 1993, p. 339). In the Intermountain West, where slavery had not occurred and racism/segregation was never legally instituted (unlike the Southeast), racial tensions are much less prevalent. There are no researched or documented reasons why African Americans are not more involved in clogging, at least in the West. However, a satirical and colourful portion of an essay by David Foster Wallace (1998) in his collection *A Supposed Funny Thing I’ll Never Do Again* provides some interesting cultural insight into Midwestern American clogging in the 1990s. Wallace characterises clogging as “Scotch-Irish in origin and the dance of choice in Appalachia” which at one time would “involve actual clogs” but “has now miscegenated with square dancing and honky-tonk boogie to become a kind of intricately synchronized, absolutely kick-ass country tap dance” (Wallace 1998, p. 123). It is also interesting to note his observations on identity and racial context, as noted by a non-participant of the dance event:

> There are no black people in the Twilight Ballroom. The looks on the younger ag-kids’ [youth working in agricultural] faces have this awakened astonished aspect, like they didn’t realize their own race could dance like this. Three married couples from Rantoul, wearing full Western bodysuits the color of raw coal, weave and incredible filigree of high-speed tap around Aretha’s “R-E-S-P-E-C-T,” and there’s not a hint of racial irony in the room; the song has been made these people’s own, emphatically. This ‘90s version of clogging does have something sort of pugnaciously white about it, a kind of performative nose-thumbing at Jackson and Hammer. There’s an atmosphere in the room – not racist, but aggressively white. It’s hard to describe. The atmosphere’s the same at a lot of rural Midwest public events. It’s not like if a black person came in he’d be ill-treated; it’s more like it would just never occur to a black person to come in here. (Wallace 1998, p. 125)

Wallace’s article provides a fascinating picture of the socio-cultural modalities within a rural mid-western clogging community. Though his witty portrayal of the event does not completely align with my own experience, I find interesting connections in the similar representations of identity and motivations he describes.

**Gender**

As demonstrated in the figure below (Figure 18), over ninety-two per cent of the dancers in the online survey group of participants are female. Some groups are successful in attracting males to dance and some currently have no male cloggers dancing with them. When asked about this, studio directors struck on some common chords. All of the comments centred on the idea that “clogging is considered dancing,
which is associated by many people in the [broader] community as a female activity” (survey respondent, 2012). The directors unanimously agreed that it is a “direct reflection of our culture”, where “boys have huge amounts of pressure on them to be ‘men’, and men do not dance - they play sports like basketball, baseball, soccer, hockey and so on” (survey respondent, 2012). In addition to those stereotypes, sports like “soccer, pop Warner [youth league] football and baseball are HIGHLY time consuming”, making it less likely for boys to give dance a try (survey respondent, 2012). Finally, one director put some share of the blame on choreographers and instructors who “lack the ability to choreograph in a way that compliments the boys and makes them feel macho through the moves and costumes. You will not have boy cloggers if you try to make them dance like the girls on their teams” (survey respondent, 2012). This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Figure 18: The gender distribution among groups surveyed.

Age

Another important attribute of dancers in this clogging community is that most of them are under the age of eighteen. Shown in Figure 19 below, more than ninety-one per cent of the dancers within the studios surveyed were younger than eighteen years of age. When asked about the reason for this situation, most teachers explained that dancers today associate their participation in competitive clogging with their years in primary and secondary school. Once that schooling is over and they start out in search of a job
or continue schooling at the university level, they move on and stop dancing. There are some who develop such a love for the form and competition that it becomes an important part of who they are and they continue it as a lifelong activity. Often, these dancers go on to be teachers or choreographers, many of whom also continue to compete. Much more will be said about this in relation to the AOS awards structure in Chapter 6.

Figure 19: Ratio of dancers over and under the age of eighteen within the survey sample.

Economic Class

The relative income level of the families that participate in clogging is an issue that was initially important to ascertain. Some hobbies and sports are more popular with individuals of certain income levels, often due to associated cost. Competitive clogging appears to be a rather mainstream, middle income activity. The surveyed directors were asked to estimate the relative number of dancers that came from lower, middle, and upper income circumstances. The goal was not to determine a specific number of individuals; rather it was to look for general patterns among dancers. Shown in the figure below, directors estimated that approximately twenty per cent of their dancers came from lower income situations, fifty-seven per cent from middle, and twenty-three per cent from upper income settings.
Certainly with competitive clogging, as with other extra-curricular endeavours, there is a cost associated with participation. The cost for a competitive dancer would be much more than for those participating socially or recreationally. The cost of tuition, costumes, event registration fees, and travel would certainly exclude many in the lower levels of the economy. Great diversity might exist within one geographic area or within a particular studio or team. Some studios have teams that travel more than others, thereby excluding those without sufficient financial resources. Some studios choose to travel and/or compete based on the current economic situation of their clients.

**Ability Levels**

According to the surveyed directors, the majority of dancers are found in the lower three ability levels. Shown in the chart below (Table 16), each of the first three ability levels have roughly twenty per cent of the total population each, with decreasing amounts in the top three (The origins and composition of the ability levels in AOS is explained in Chapter 6). This is not surprising. Advancement requires considerable investments of time, talent, energy, and finances; those who lack sufficient motivation
or find interests elsewhere usually only get so far before moving on. Those found in the highest level, the professional level of competition, generally tend to be the motivated and dedicated individuals who have pursued the activity more than as a simple hobby or pastime, but as a sport or vocation (explored in Chapter 6).

Table 16: Distribution of dancers in associated ability levels among groups surveyed

While much of the attention at competitive events is focused on the elite levels of the competitive practice, the lower levels provide the actual economic base for the efforts of directors and organisers, even when considering that most Championship (called ‘Champ’) and Professional (commonly referred to as ‘Pro’) dancers enter multiple events.

The reason for the dramatically lower numbers of participants in the upper levels of competition is multifaceted, and will be addressed at various points in Chapters 5 and 6. This is in part due to the award structure in the Professional level (examined in Chapter 6) that rewards fewer dancers and a high attrition rate due to the time required to gain a high level of skill.

Religion

The generally conservative and religious nature of the communities in the Intermountain West has greatly influenced the development of clogging in the region. Again, these regions were largely settled and founded by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (also known as the Mormons, or LDS) in the mid-nineteenth century, and despite the growing secularisation and globalisation of
contemporary culture, the religion still thrives in the area. The LDS church advocates
the arts and patrons music and dance; the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is world-famous,
and large church celebrations usually feature its youth engaged in music and dance. Its
foundational writings state, “praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing”
(Doctrine and Covenants 136:28). Its standards are high; in a pamphlet handed out to
all church youth, church officials suggest that, “music can enrich your life. It can edify
and inspire you and help you draw closer to Heavenly Father. Music has a profound
effect on your mind, spirit, and behaviour… Do not listen to music that uses vulgar or
offensive language or promotes evil practices.” The LDS church sets standards to
which many in the community adhere, or of which they are aware.

A large percentage of the directors, teachers and administrators that I spoke with or
surveyed recognised the important role that the religious, family-oriented culture of the
area has contributed to the lasting success of clogging. Without solicitation, many of
the instructors provided information on the general religious composition of their
groups. “I believe that 100% of our students are LDS”, “most all of my dancers are of
my same Faith!!!”, “My studio is literally 50% LDS and 50% Catholic”, and “I have a
variety of dancers from several different religions” (multiple survey respondents,
2012). “Yes. A lot of people associate clogging with Mormons. I have a good
percentage of my dancers that are LDS” (survey respondent, 2012).

Some of the directors acknowledged, as was introduced earlier in this chapter, that
clogging “has spread quite significantly throughout the mainly LDS population in Utah
and Southeastern Idaho” (survey respondent, 2012). This same opinion is also found
further from the traditional centre of the LDS community, in Washington State. “I have
many LDS students in Washington because they want their kids to dance, but with
more conservative choreography etc. Also, they know what it is, more because of their
family ties to Utah” (survey respondent, 2012). The large number of participants in
Utah, whose capital of Salt Lake City is also the international LDS church
headquarters, has had an influence on relatives and friends in other locations.

35 As a state, Utah (a state in the heart of the Intermountain West) is 62.2 per cent LDS from
2009 to 2012. From http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home/3/53909710-200/population-lds-county-
36 From the LDS website accessed on August 20, 2014. https://www.lds.org/youth/for-the-
strength-of-youth/music-and-dancing?lang=eng
When asked about the impact that the generally conservative nature of the region has had on their work, there were a wide range of responses. Seven directors said no, they did not see a correlation, and five had either never thought of it before or had not experienced anything that would point to a connection. However, twenty-six directors, most of whom are likely LDS, pointed to a strong association between the success and presence of clogging within the Intermountain West and the conservative and religious beliefs.

Some directors agreed that an emphasis on the family is an important component to the success of clogging, calling it “family friendly” (multiple survey respondent, 2012). Mormon families are characteristically large; one 2008 survey by the Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life claimed that Mormons have the largest average family size in the United States.37 One Director commented that since these “families tend to do a lot of activities together, when the older children dance and like it, the younger ones follow. Larger families fuel clogging a lot” (survey respondent, 2012). “It is not a surprise that it would be attractive to the culture”, wrote another director “the Mormon culture is created with the family as a central part and theme” (survey respondent, 2012). This environment is recognised by the respondents’ repeated uses of terms like “conservative” (appearing nine times), “modest”, meaning less revealing or sexually suggestive in costuming and movement, and “wholesome” (both occurring eight times) to describe the appeal of the dance to the community.

One informant suggests “Many parents choose clogging for their kids over other forms of dance because it is less suggestive” (survey respondent, 2012). The typical clogging movement vocabulary is performed in a standing position with the torso erect, pelvis and spine stabilised, while the arms and legs execute percussive and gestural actions. It is therefore generally void of suggestive or provocative movement elements.38 It is the opinion of many directors that this characteristic is what draws people to clogging. “It is generally speaking a conservative style of dance, as compared to hip-hop, jazz, and even ballet” (survey respondent, 2012). “They just want good wholesome, clean dance and movements” (survey respondent, 2012). “My [dancer’s]...

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38 Some choreographers have attempted to put such elements into their performance, from both comical and serious intent, but it is rare and uncommon.
parents want modest dance” and clogging “moves are less provocative than other forms of dance…and that is what they are looking for” (multiple survey respondents, 2012). “I chose clogging because they keep their costumes modest and do not require the dancer to wear anything too revealing. The movement is more modest too – much less booty-shaking than in other dance styles around” (Emi Flamm personal email correspondence, 2014).

In contrast to other genres of competitive dance in the United States, another fundamental difference exists in the general type of clothing worn for the activity. For many conservative studios, finding appropriate costumes is a monumental task. Cloggers generally like to be more covered than other dancers, due to both conservative notions of modesty and to the energetic nature of the dance itself; “nobody likes to see girls bouncing and jiggling all over the place!” (Tandy Barrett personal interview 2003). Often times they will resort to having the costumes custom made because, “the dance world is a little more risqué, [most dance] costumes are just designed that way. When you buy costumes from a dance wear catalogue, they’re all designed the exact same way, and they’re very tight” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a).

When asked for an official statement on how the organisation sees groups that choose to wear more revealing costuming, Tucker provided some valuable insight that many of the directors surveyed may have failed to recognise.

We don’t have any problem with dancers wearing what they want. Would we be against wearing it? Well, not because of our religion only, cloggers don’t dance in those kinds of costumes. Who’d want to see cloggers in revealing clothing? There’s already a lot of bouncing. It’s not a lyrical movement. So, clogging goes along very well with the religious standards of this area.

(Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a)

Clogging is an energetic, ‘bouncy’ dance form; therefore, excessive skin exposure and extremely tight costumes are not particularly attractive or functional. According to one director, “Modesty is our first concern. Then colour and studio variety” (Tara Osborne personal email correspondence, May 2015). Another director said:

I consider three things when I costume (in this order): 1. Modesty. Shoulders, back, chest and midriff must be covered, with at least a 5 inch inseam in pant length. 2. Cost. Costumes must be cheaper than $60 each. 3. Match. Does the costume work with the theme we want to portray?

(Quoted correspondence, Robbie Walker personal email, May 2015)
Walker’s standards are typical of most clogging teams in the Intermountain West. “Several (or all) of the parents of students I teach really appreciate the high standards of dress, music, and choreography that seems to come with clogging” (survey respondent, 2012). Many of the survey comments on this topic were focused on contrasting clogging and its virtues with other styles of dance. According to one director,

I teach many forms of dance and it seems that the local LDS community overall frowns on hip-hop or a sassy jazz but are all for the purity that clogging offers. Clogging doesn't usually have girls dancing in booty shorts or leotards and tights like the other dance forms do... so it seems to stay a little cleaner.

(Survey respondent, 2012)

Many parents concur. One dance parent commented, “we chose clogging because cloggers wear modest clothes and make modest moves (versus other types of suggestive dance moves)” (Julie Staley personal email correspondence, 2014). However, not all clogging groups in the Intermountain West wear modest costumes and use wholesome music. When asked about the pros and cons of competitive experience, long time dance parent and LDS church member Jaylene Nix replied,

Competition encourages my kids to be prepared, do their best, help others, feel the "team" spirit, work towards a goal, and feel the sense of accomplishment... On the downside, while we watch the competition, some of the other team’s music is too loud, and is not "good" wholesome music... and some of the other teams' costumes are inappropriate and immodest.

(Jaylene Nix personal email correspondence, 2014)

For directors who understand this situation, and are able to work within it, the relationship is fruitful. One director understood her role in providing this service to the community. “That's the community I live in. It works for us. Families are looking for wholesome forms of dance, modest costumes and good music. We are able to accommodate all of these needs” (survey respondent, 2012). “Yes, good wholesome dancing, modest costumes and moves, good uplifting music, and experience to travel. These all compliment the conservative Christian roots of the intermountain West” (survey respondent, 2012). The survey, thus, revealed that conservative costuming choices are a reflection of the community and its shared values.

As a director, I am acutely aware of the standards expected by the parents of my dancers; I hold them myself as a member of the LDS faith. All song lyrics I use are scrutinised for profanity or suggestive content. Costumes I select cover the shoulders,
chest, back and midsections of all dancers, and are not abnormally tight. Our dances limit sexual innuendo and suggestive movement; we focus on step complexity instead. I am also a father, and my wife and I encourage our children to clog as a wholesome form of recreation and physical exercise.

From an organisational perspective, this same conservative nature may have also hindered its growth and marketability.

Yet, while I think clogging’s wholesomeness helps it, I also think it hurts it. Because I think that the more mainstream it is, the more kids want to be a part of it. There are many more mainstream youth who gravitate toward jazz, hip hop and lyrical because it has cooler clothing than clogging that is much more wholesome. So in that way I think clogging kind of struggles outside of a more religious place.

(Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a)

The Southeast and the Intermountain West share a religious sensibility. One director recalls the cloggers that she has “met from the original clogging-country in the Southeast part of the country who seem equally ‘conservative and religious’ with strong Christian backgrounds” (survey respondent, 2012). Howard (2009) has written about the strong influence of the Christian community among competitive cloggers in the Southeast United States (see Chapter 2). The influence and association of religious practices with clogging communities in the Intermountain West differs slightly from those in the Southeast. “The difference in the Intermountain West is that we don't clog on Sundays, and try to avoid holding classes on nights that youth are involved in church activities” (survey respondent, 2012). There are greater differences, however, dealing mostly with cultural versus competitive aspects of the dance in both areas, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 6, but both, I argue share conservative and religious background social constructs.

In some cases, the conservative orientation of the organisation and its members has turned some cloggers away, especially those outside the geographical and cultural centre of the dance and religious practices. One director complained that her “dancers are not Mormon (LDS) and it makes them uncomfortable. Most of them won't miss a Friday of school to compete and don't understand why it's not on Sunday” (survey respondent, 2012). Not understanding this condition can have consequences:

At our studio, the religious tie is extremely important to the existence of our club. I am not religious, nor are any of our other instructors. The previous owner of our club was. The year before she left, we had over 200 students, with an additional thirty
competitive dancers. We have since decreased in numbers, down to an all time low last year of thirty students, with an additional twenty competitive dancers. This year we have an old instructor returning who is religious, and our registration numbers for the upcoming 2012-2013 season are already increasing. I am a firm believer that the religion plays a big part in keeping clogging alive, at least in our community.

(Survey respondent, 2012)

The overall conservative and religious nature of the clogging communities in the Intermountain West (particularly in the regions of Northern Utah and Southern Idaho) has been an important factor in the perpetuation and popularity of the dance. It is not my goal here to determine the impact of such values on the clogging communities in question. However, I suggest that the religious influence has had a lasting impact on the artistic choices of clogging choreographers, directors, and dancers in the Intermountain West.

4.4 The Audience

According to Alexander’s (2004) theory of cultural pragmatics, the audience and the ‘actors’ or dancers, interact symbiotically. The audience is not simply a passive observer in the social drama of the competition. A dancer’s goal is to project energy, skill and style as the audience reflects energy and acceptance (or lack thereof) back to the dancer. The outcome of a performance that connects both parties successfully or ‘fuses’ is what Alexander (2004) refers to as ‘cathexis’.

Identifying a specific audience for general clogging performances would be difficult, particularly since there are multiple venues in which clogging is presented and performed today. Since this study is focused primarily on the competitive activities of the community, I will attempt to describe a typical audience found at such events.

Clogging competitions sanctioned by AOS are held at multiple locations and settings throughout the Intermountain West. Some are held in concert halls, others in the auditorium or gymnasium of secondary schools or Universities. Others, like the Nationals competition, are held at outdoor pavilions or parks. Within the confines of a theatre or auditorium, be it private or public, the event is rather contained. Those who see the event enter with the express intent to attend. Apart from the accidental attendee,
there are roughly four groups of people who attend clogging competitions: the dancers, their supporters, the event staff, and the adjudicators.

The Dancers

Dancers have a very real interest, particularly at the top levels, to carefully watch other dancers and teams. This could be a way to scrutinise the competition, to learn new ideas and material, or simply gauge the possible outcome of the contest. “I love seeing others perform and gaining new insights from their dances. I also was able to take steps from the competitions and incorporate them into my own steps” (Natalie Williams personal email correspondence 2014). There are no rules at AOS competitions against dancers observing or even video recording other competitors. I am quite certain that many competitors use such recordings to borrow or copy movement and thematic material for future use in competition. It is common to see dancers in the top levels using step patterns or techniques used by other dancers in previous competitions. An example of this is the recent use of a particular execution of a ‘toe stand’ among the elite male competitors in the freestyle event at Nationals. Over the last six years, top male dancers (and females to a lesser degree and with alternative execution) have been copying the new and innovative techniques of standing and dancing on the tip of the toe from the previous years winners. Michael Steele introduced one such technique in 2010 that involved a brief sequence of running on the tips of the toes, which was then used by most of the top male soloists the following year in subtly different patterns. The presence of fellow competitors in the audience is a part of the awareness dancers, choreographers, and directors mentally foreground as they create and perform competition material.

Spectators and Audience

The largest percentage of audience participants is the family and friends who come to support the dancers performing. Relatives, neighbours, grandparents, and studio alumni are all welcome at AOS events, attendance at which is typically free. In the years prior to 2011, AOS charged a fee (typically between three and five dollars) for spectators to enter the competition venue. In an effort to encourage more attendance and exposure of clogging in the area, AOS added a two to three dollar charge to each registration fee and allowed free entrance to everyone beginning in the 2011-2012 season. In addition to saving audience members money, the organisation was also able to reduce the
amount of employees needed at each event to sell tickets and enforce the attendance policies. According to the organisation, and from my own observations, there has been no significant change in the amount of supporters attending each event, but it was seen as a success by AOS director Greg Tucker who mentioned that the gesture was appreciated by audience members and the volunteer competition staff who had a reduced workload (Greg Tucker personal interview 2012b).

There is a wide range of interaction and involvement by these spectator audience members. Some are extremely active and engaged, holding up signs, cheering, and wearing team-oriented clothing. Others are not openly engaged in what is happening. The atmosphere is informal, as participants constantly enter and exit the auditoriums in search of costume pieces, teammates or competition results. Family members and friends often run about with their dancers, helping them with hair, makeup and costume changes.

However casual the atmosphere may be, this part of the audience at competitions matters, and they watch proceedings closely. In fact, I would say in many cases, this is the most important group at the event for the owners and operators of a studio business. These spectators are the parents, who pay for the monthly tuition, the costuming, the competition fees, and the traveling. If parents are unhappy with what happens on stage, they might speak with their participation and their money. With all of the above-mentioned expenses, competitive clogging can be a costly endeavour. Keeping this part of the audience happy is among the top priorities of the dance studio leadership, and in like manner, the organisation leadership. Prospective students and parents may be in the audience as well, so Greg Tucker and the AOS organisation do their best to make the event run as smoothly and successfully as possible.

*Event Staff*

The third portion of the audience is the event staff. This includes the competition and organisational leadership, and the technical staff that oversees lighting, sound, and staging needs.

Tucker (personal email correspondence, 2014) explained to me how competitions are organised. As director of AOS, he selects a date and location for an event, choosing sites and times that fit in well with the competitive calendar. He makes arrangements
for facilities, sound, contracts, dates, liability insurance, music licensing, security costs, deposits, facility inspection and planning, administration meetings, registrations, scheduling, programme creation, and all other administrative aspects of a large event. Then he asks a director or two in the area to become the event’s promoter, which means they become the face of the event. They are responsible to recruit other directors to come and to bring dancers in their studios to compete. They also help with staffing (primarily recruiting parents and friends to volunteer at information tables and stage management) and providing adjudicators. Tucker and the local promoter work out a percentage the promoter makes based upon how many participants attend the competition, and how successful they were with costs. Each promoter is exempt from paying competition fees for themselves and their immediate family throughout the competition season, and is officially recognised as an official promoter in AOS marketing - rules booklets, AOS events, and online publicity. As long as promoters do their part well, their profit grows as the event does. Both the AOS and the promoter benefit: the promoter profits and gains status in the clogging community and AOS solidifies the successful competition event in its network and an increase of revenue as well.

Occasionally directors approach Tucker about hosting a competitive clogging event in their area, or seek to sanction a competitive clogging event within the AOS circuit. Tucker accommodates them when possible, working out mutually beneficial agreements according to the proportion of the workload each party undertakes.

The promoter is required to find staff to help her/him run these competitive clogging events. Depending on the size of the competition, this can be anywhere from twenty to sixty people. They are mostly friends and family of the dancers (or the dancers themselves) and work on a voluntary basis. They are involved in everything from handing out programmes to stocking the adjudicator’s room with warm meals. They are a critical and necessary component for the effective functioning of the event.

Adjudicators

Adjudicators are employed by the organisation to perform an essential task for the event; they assign relative value to the performances of participants. In the AOS system, adjudicators are some of the few staff members who are paid. They are selected from experienced cloggers (usually past or present directors) in the area who do not
have dancers participating in that particular competition. Unlike ACHF, CLOG/NCHC, and CCA, America On Stage has no official system or mechanism in place to train or certify adjudicators (or instructors). Instead, the organisation has placed a large amount of information on its webpage that prospective, less experienced adjudicators are asked to review before arriving at the competitive clogging event. The information on the website contains suggestions about conduct at the event, category rules, scoring sheet guidelines, and feedback suggestions. There are no suggestions in the online material about particular technical, artistic, or stylistic choices that should be valued or denounced. Adjudicators are simply asked to provide as much honest and consistent feedback as possible (having twice as many positive comments is suggested) within the short amount of time provided.

In order to access a diversity of opinion, I interviewed by email six AOS adjudicators of various backgrounds and in multiple locations geographically. They were all veteran cloggers with varying amounts of experience adjudicating. Three had danced for over twenty years before being asked to adjudicate, and the other three had between twelve and seventeen years of dancing experience. Four of the adjudicators had participated more than ten events, one had adjudicated six events, and the other had contributed to four. Every one of them acknowledged that their involvement as an adjudicator was in part due to their lack of affiliation with a team at the time they were employed. This was always a requirement when I adjudicated clogging competitions as well. The appearance of unbiased fairness appears to be an important quality when AOS is forming a pool of adjudicating candidates.

The adjudicators are responsible for assigning value to performances. Though they are hired to be unbiased and independent, they remain subject to the organisation for payment of services rendered and the possibility for future employment. In an effort to access why, other than monetary compensation, these individuals were interested in participating at AOS events, I asked them about what they found to be the most rewarding aspect of adjudication. Most of the adjudicators mentioned that their involvement allowed them to be involved in clogging and watch the creativity on

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39 For Nationals, AOS relies on high-achieving former dancers who do not have their own clogging teams, clogging instructors from Brigham Young University (who do not have competitive teams), and sometimes adjudicators or national teachers from organisations who are familiar enough with the local aesthetic to adjudicate its events (like Scotty Bilz and Blake Bartlett).
display without the more consuming commitment of teaching or directing. Two adjudicators spoke about giving back in the community they love.

I love simply being involved in the operation of such events that give these dancers the opportunity to perform, compete and progress. Other people gave their time to judge so I could be an improving dancer and it's rewarding to be able to be involved in providing that opportunity for the dancers today.

(Brian Wells personal email correspondence, 2013).

Another adjudicator had a similar sentiment with a more cynical tone. “I try to do a really good job of judging, something I wasn’t always convinced this happened when I was being judged” (Nicole Ihler personal email correspondence, 2013). Unfortunately, this is a common critique of AOS. Some detractors blame the lack of training for adjudicators, and some blame inter-studio politics. One dance mother noted, “I don’t like the politics of competitions in the higher levels; the need to have a ‘name’ and be on the right teams in order to break into winning at the highest levels. I don’t always feel that the judging is fair or that they train judges to be objective” ([name withheld] personal email correspondence, 2014). In a competitive environment where subjectivity is an element of the adjudication rubric, such complaints are inevitable.

4.5 America On Stage

America On Stage has existed as an entity since 1998, when it was renamed and restructured by Bryan Steele after the dissolution of his partnership with Dennis Cobia and Clog America (see Chapter 3). It is now an S corporation, which means that it elects to pass corporate income, losses, deductions, and credits through to its stockholders to avoid double taxation on the corporate income.40 Greg Tucker is the owner, president, and only stockholder of America On Stage (Greg Tucker personal interview 2015). There is no board of directors. He is the primary arbiter of all AOS policies, and oversees each of its fifteen annual competitions personally, with the aid of the hosting clogging studios and directors. Greg consults with his wife Maria Tucker41,

41 Maria Topol Tucker is herself a highly successful competitive clogger. Maria began clogging at age eight in the Cloggers USA Organization and has toured and competed around the U.S., winning numerous individual and duet national titles. Greg and Maria Tucker began competing together when they got married in 1998. They are 7-time National Duet Champions, and hold
who officially owns and runs their private clogging studio, Rocky Mountain Express. With her input, Greg decides whom to hire to create the All Around Solos and what structural changes AOS periodically needs to make to remain effective, efficient, and responsive to its community. Greg handles marketing and registration for all the competitions, designs and maintains the company website, and attends each of the fifteen competitions to help set them up, take them down, and ensure the smooth processing of hundreds of clogging entries (team dances, duets, a cappella events, solo freestyles, and the All Around Solos). On average, about 600 to 800 dancers attend each competition and approximately 8,500 dancers attend one or more of the three weekends of Nationals at Lagoon, Utah.

For the purposes of this study, when I refer to the AOS organisation, there are two tiers of meaning implied. The first tier of the AOS organisation consists of Greg Tucker, and indirectly his wife Maria. The second tier of membership includes those who have worked as independent contractors for the organisation as consultants, All-Around Solo choreographers, and/or competition hosts. This includes what I consider to be the inner circle of the AOS Elite: those who are highly invested in AOS competition structure and hierarchy, are advocates of its movement aesthetics and are choreographers of influence. All are studio owners. This tier currently includes Bethany Hulse (hired by Tucker to be a major choreographer of and primary director for the All Around Solo programme), Lindsay Greenwood, the five Whitear sisters (see Chapter 3.6) and those asked to be members of the All-Around Solo Committee to create the instruct on behalf of the organisation, which implies massive involvement and investment in AOS structures and events. Membership in this second tier of social power is somewhat fluid, depending on average annual involvement in and success at AOS competitions. They are not official employees of AOS, but they uphold and sustain the structures of the organisation.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter identified the five major components of the Intermountain West clogging community: teachers, studios, students, audience (including event staff and
adjudicators), and America On Stage. Each of these elements function as cultural brokers to some degree within the community. This chapter summarises characteristics of each and how they function in relationship to the others. Directors are discussed in terms of experience, artistic choice, and ideology. Students are described in terms of race, age, economic class, ability, and theological background, and audience is discussed in terms of composition and motivation. As the central focus of the community, AOS acts to bring participants together in interactive social performance as well as to promote clogging to the wider population. It is also a business that seeks to provide income and compensation for its employees and reinvestment into future initiatives and events.

This chapter also described the predominance of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) in the Intermountain West, and its role in the choices of studio directors and dancers. It forms an important symbolic background structure for the performance of the dance in the region; the religiously conservative values of the area attract many participants to clogging for its relatively wholesome attributes.
Chapter 5

Production and Distribution of Cultural Symbols

In this thesis, I argue that cultural brokers serve important functions in the conscious creation of community. They produce, distribute, and assign value to symbolic material, and negotiate and redefine cultural boundaries in response to external and internal stimuli. They create, stabilise, and perpetuate the community and defend it from external challenges.

This chapter deals primarily with the first of these functions: the production and distribution of significant sociocultural symbols and structures. As Cohen (1985) writes, “the reality and efficacy of the community’s boundary – and, therefore, of the community itself – depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment” (p. 15). The sections below explore the means through which America On Stage, a powerful cultural broker, seeks to foster and stabilise community membership through the creation of and engagement with salient cultural symbols and ritualistic practices. Specifically, AOS 1) organises competitions for social enactment of community; 2) creates a homeland (with attendant connotations of tradition, shared history and pilgrimage); 3) designs attractive iconography projecting communal values of currency and achievement; 4) structures its competition events of social enactment, aligning with community values and perceived needs; and 5) generates and disseminates patterns of movement as standards of the most valued aesthetic. These actions, discussed below, are deliberate efforts by AOS to disseminate a particular practice of clogging and grow community membership (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a).

5.1 Clogging Competitions: Loci of Cultural Enactment

Thomas (2001), Turner (1969) and Turino (2008) each discuss the importance of creating meaning through social interaction. To this end, America on Stage provides a context for this social interaction and cultural reification: the clogging competition.

While significant community participation does take place within private clogging studios across the region in the form of team rehearsals and activities (see Chapter 4.2), the most prominent context for community-wide social enactment and cultural performance in the Intermountain West is the clogging competition. The competition is
the *mise en scene*, the ultimate catalyst where all the elements of Alexander’s (2004) theory of cultural pragmatics converge: background representations, texts, actors, audience, means of symbolic production, and social power. It is a site of ‘social drama’ (Turner 1974), a ‘display event’ (Abrahams 2003) where ‘the very concept of identity implicitly comes under question” (Abrahams 2003, p. 214). The influence of the competition is in part due to the space that is established for the event by the organisation. Kapchan (2003) discusses how certain cultural situations involving location and its appropriation becomes “particularly charged with political import as a polyphonic symbol of identity and power” (p. 132). As the main AOS vehicle for socialisation and commercial and ideological justification, the clogging competition is the community’s supreme ‘display event’. It is the primary focus for the majority of the community’s efforts and activities and a central marker of both individual and collective identity.

Noyes (2003) points out that though large-scale display events draw members of the community together through common interest for social interaction and participation, such ‘festival’ events are also “the loci of political, economic and cultural conflict” (Noyes 2003, p. 12). For participants, the definition of self and community is constantly enacted in the competition display event, particularly in times of conflict and as boundaries are challenged. Despite the primacy of the unifying identity marker as clog dancers, subsets of collectivity and ideology often frantically negotiate for recognition and superiority within the greater communal context, with varying degrees of satisfaction. With competition as a fundamental feature of its interactive communal identity, natural stratification of ability, or what Alexander refers to as ‘the inequality of texts’ (Alexander 2004), and social hierchisation are inevitable. An AOS event involves disappointment and frustration as well as validation and celebration.

*The History of America On Stage Competitions*

In 1982, Dennis Cobia and Bryan Steele organised the first annual Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition at the Lagoon Amusement Park in Farmington, Utah. This

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42 Noyes (2003) articulates this idea through the description of her experience at Italian Market days in Philadelphia in 1988, a festival “declared by all to be a celebration of unity” (p. 8) which was in fact characterised by internally combustible racial and socioeconomic factionalism.
event, later renamed ‘Western Nationals’ then simply ‘Nationals’, eventually grew to be the largest and most prominent clogging competition in the Western United States.

Cobia and Steele selected Lagoon, Farmington, Utah, as the venue for their competition. This site selection proved advantageous due to three principal factors: its location in relation to the community, the timing of the event, and the amenities available at the park.

Lagoon is situated in the geographical centre of the Intermountain West (see Figure 21 below). Its location in Farmington, Utah is twenty minutes north of Utah’s capital city, Salt Lake City. The state of Utah was and is home to a large number of clogging teams, including the teams of Steele and Cobia, and is within a one-day drive for dancers in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, California, Oregon and Washington. The park’s location is immediately adjacent to two of the major interstate highways (Interstate 15 and Interstate 80), and minutes away from a major international airport. Lagoon is easily accessible to the mobile clogging enthusiast.

In the early 1980s, the Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition was held on a Saturday during one of the first two weeks of May. Cobia and Steele designed it to be the earliest competition of the short competitive season (June, July, and August) and
the first community event after the long winter months of rehearsal, anticipation and preparation, where groups saw the new material of rival groups for the first time.\textsuperscript{43} It set the tone for the coming season and established the hierarchy of studios with the status of the season’s first victories. The timing of the competition was critical because it was held in the springtime when, with the departure of winter, participants were interested in travelling and being outdoors. And since public school was still in session in early May, dancers and their families were not yet occupied with summer trips, camps, or holidays.

The Lagoon amusement park was well known by residents throughout the Intermountain West and an ideal location for an event like this. Since the clogging community in the Intermountain West was predominantly between the ages of six and nineteen years old, the amusement park attractions held a wide appeal with its roller coasters, carnival games, and deep-fried, sugar-coated food. One former dancer remembered, “the best part was getting on stage, everyone’s shoes go quiet, and all you can hear is the roller coasters in the background and the smell of fried foods. We dance to our fullest capacity and exit the stage, knowing we nailed it. That is the best part” (Ashlyn Cottle personal email correspondence, 2014). Holding the competition at the amusement park also meant that no matter what the results were of the competitions, dancers would still return home with pleasant memories associated with the distractions of the park rides and entertainments.

Besides the popularity of the park and its attractions, Lagoon was initially chosen as the site for the clogging competition for another important reason. From 1982 to 1985, the competition was held in a far corner of the park known as ‘Pioneer Village’. It was composed of old western storefronts, rides, and games roughly based on early settler life on the western frontier in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At one end of the old-town street was a stage built for performances and re-enactments. A sound system and chairs were brought in by competition organisers to complete the setting for the event. Based on my personal experience, in the early 1980s, this was an ideal location for an event like a clogging competition. Clogging, at this time, was stereotypically

\textsuperscript{43} Currently, the Nationals competition is still held during the first three weekends of May, but it is the culmination of the competitive season instead of the opening event. The competition season now runs from February to May.
rural and ‘country’, and a setting that included such visual iconography reflecting these ideals was perfectly suited.

As the number of participants grew, tastes and preferences changed towards a more contemporary dance expression (including using popular, non-bluegrass music, incorporating elements of hip hop and cheerleading, and non-traditional costume choices like trousers for women; see Chapter 3.6). The location of the competition within the park also changed to fit the changing aesthetic and size of the community. The events, outgrowing the charming but small Pioneer Village stage, were moved to a more spacious, accessible part of the park with no identifiable theme or character. This new location featured large, open-sided pavilions containing picnic tables and concessions. In 1986, there were just two pavilions (Canyon and Meadow) with wooden stages built along one side of each. Two more stages were added in later years, meaning that during Nationals, performances now took place on four different stages.

The move to the new section of the park provided two immediate and lasting benefits. First, the amount of space used for stages and audience seating nearly quadrupled, which allowed for immense growth and event offerings. The existence of numerous stages allowed the competition to expand the number of dancers competing at the same time and thus accommodate more activity, along with increased seating for audience members. Secondly, it provided a more thematically neutral space allowing participants to use whatever themes they wished to project.44

The first year of the Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition, in 1982, there were approximately fourteen teams in attendance, with a total of about 150 dancers competing. Five years later, in 1987, there were approximately thirty teams, and about 500 dancers competing.45 By this time, the event had firmly established itself as the place to see the best cloggers from the Western United States compete. Not long afterward, Clog America became America On Stage (see Chapter 3.5) and the Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition became known as Nationals.

44 See Chapter 5.3 below, for more information on parameters regarding thematic choice.
45 The amount of clogging participants at Nationals continued to grow through 2006, when there were 2,570 participants. Shortly after the worldwide economic downturn in 2008, there was a sharp drop in participation with a total of 1,783 dancers in 2009. Since 2010, the numbers have been gradually increasing.
As the number of participants grew, AOS introduced two additional events at Lagoon on consecutive weekends. The first event of the three is now called Open Nationals, which is both an independent competition and a qualifying event for those wishing to compete at Nationals and have not yet won a first place during the season (the qualifying process is explained below). The second weekend is Nationals, and the third weekend is called Open Dance Nationals. Open Dance Nationals is a competition for jazz, ballet, hip hop, and lyrical dance without qualification requirements. The Lagoon competition structure is enormous, particularly when the entirety of three consecutive weekend events is taken into account. The AOS organisation markets the combination of Open Nationals (which has a slightly smaller number of participants), Clogging Nationals, and Open Dance Nationals, as “The WORLDS LARGEST Clogging and Dance Competition”\(^{46}\). At the Nationals competitions in 2015, there were over 9,000 individual dancers over the course of the three weekends (Greg Tucker interview, 2015). With that many participants, and judging from my own experience at other major competitions across the United States, it would easily be the largest I have ever seen.

The entire America On Stage competitive clogging structure currently centres around the Nationals event, or simply ‘Lagoon’ to which it is referred by the community, with other competitions throughout the year acting as qualifying events. Today the competitive clogging season begins in November for solos and duets, and February for teams, regional competitions, all administered and sponsored by AOS, take place in various locations throughout the Intermountain West. Some occur in the more remote hubs of Idaho, Wyoming, Arizona, and Southern Utah. In order to participate at the Nationals competition at Lagoon, which now takes place at the end of the season, dancers must receive a first place award sometime during that same season in order to qualify (see Chapter 6.2 for competition awards structure). However, in order to be more inclusive, yet still be able to claim a competition of champions, AOS has built a number of exceptions in to the competition rules. If a dancer in a team places first in a solo or duet event, then the team qualifies for Nationals. If a team places first in their category, then the members of that team are qualified to compete in their solos and duets at Nationals. Furthermore, the first place award does not need to be specific to an America On Stage event. Any first place award in any competitive framework can

qualify a team and/or individual for Nationals. Additionally, all Professional-level (highest competitive level) dancers are automatically qualified for any event at the year-end competition. In these ways the organisation can claim that the National Championship is both selective and inclusive at the same time.

Behaviour at the Nationals competition has become ritualised and predictable, providing participants with both familiarity (they know what to expect when they get there) and excitement (anticipation for the events of the day). For the average dancer involved in individual and team events, the events unfold in the following pattern: Friday is the day that Advanced, Championship, and Professional levels (the top three of six ability levels) compete in solo and duet events. The amusement park rides are closed, as the park is only open to the public on Saturdays until public school is out at the beginning of June. Dancers and directors arrive early (08:00) to stake out territory for costume storage and quick changes, picnic blankets and food, practice areas, and so forth.

The solo and duet events run from 10:00 until about 16:00 on two separate stages. In between events, dancers are typically running from one stage to another, to and from the changing facilities, and stopping at concessions and merchandise vendors, which are available on both Friday and Saturday. During the hour after a particular event, awards notifications are posted online, as well as a large external wall of the Meadow Pavilion. Once posted, overall level and division awards are announced at the stage, dancers can check in at the awards table to obtain their trophies, ribbons, and pins (see Chapter 6.2). From 16:00 until 21:00 or later, on the indoor stage (Davis Pavilion), the high-stakes Dance-Off takes place, where division, and level winners from the individual and duet categories square off against each other for the highly coveted All-American and MVP awards, to be awarded at the Showcase Spectacular ceremony on Saturday night. After a long day of competing, these elite level dancers return to their homes or hotels to rest up for the team events on the following day.

Saturday’s proceedings feature the bulk of the competitive events for all ages and ability levels. Dancers and directors again arrive early to claim precious space for their groups and individuals to meet and rehearse. With the amusement park open, hundreds of dancers and general public alike pass through the ticket kiosks in the morning hours. Dancers carry shoes and costumes through the busy park rides and activities to the far
northeast corner of the park where the competitions pavilions are found. The sound of
dance music playing and the clattering of tap shoes demarcate the location of the
competition to those that approach the crowded corner of the park. On Saturday, all
four pavilions are operating at capacity with one event and category after another from
09:00 to 16:00 with little or no down time in between. Many dancers (those at the
higher levels, or from studios that enter multiple events) have events spread throughout
the day, however, a large number of them purchase ride passes and find time to enjoy
the rides in between events both in an out of costume. Like Friday, the vendors and
award tables are busy hubs of activity, and the space between the pavilions and
changing rooms mirrors the bustle of urban city streets.

By 16:00, the chaos has died down and most of the lower age and ability-level
dancers have finished their day, collected their trophies, ribbons, and pins and have left
the competition area to return home or to enjoy the park for the rest of the day (the park
is open until 22:00). At the same time, dancers in the higher ability levels (Advanced,
Championship, and Professional) are preparing for the Showcase Spectacular (see
Chapter 6.3), which begins at 17:00. By this time, the indoor pavilion has been
transformed with special lighting and staging effects to ceremoniously present the
overall competition and year-end awards.

The location of the competition within the Lagoon amusement park is both an
attraction as well as a distraction for participants. Apart from the dancers at the highest
level, who typically dance throughout the Saturday events, most dancers leave the
central pavilion area after they have performed to enjoy the park attractions and rides
with friends or family. Facilitated by the organisation’s efforts to precisely schedule the
events of the competition, dancers with fewer competitive commitments can arrange
periods of entertainment in the park around their performances. This is enjoyable for
the young participants, but it does little to enact or reinforce sustained social interaction
or community building within the larger AOS clogging community. Most dancers are
not even present for the periodic division and category award presentations throughout
the day. In my own experience as a director I have noticed that my students rarely give
their best performances at Nationals because they are often too distracted by the
amusement park's rides, game arcades, and fair food vendors. From my experiences
traveling to competitive events in other organisations, I have found that at an event like
the ACHF championships in Maggie Valley, North Carolina, watching the dancing is
central to the participant experience. At the CCA Showdown in Knoxville, Tennessee, dancing is also the focus and I feel that there is more shared sense of belonging, of being part of something bigger than the self. The Nationals competition at Lagoon is a large-scale display event, highly anticipated by participants, and thousands of people attend. However, often the amusement park itself, while playing a part in the motivation for dancers to attend the event, seems to also distract them from participation and interaction with the larger community of dancers. This becomes a factor in my analysis of AOS community building efficacy in Chapter 6.

Directors of clogging studios are provided with financial motivation to take their teams to AOS events. The competitions do not pay cash awards, like some other competitions around the country, but in the early 2000s, when America On Stage was still under the direction of Bryan Steele, the organisation instituted ‘studio grants’ in an effort to encourage and reward competition participation by the studio directors:

As directors we work so hard to get our teams ready and assist them at competition. Now we reward you financially as well. Qualifying directors receive up to 10% of their registration returned to you as a Studio Grant for use at the director’s discretion. We hope to thank you for all your support and assist you in helping your studio to grow!

(Directors packet from the 2012 Nationals competition)

‘Use at the director’s discretion’ actually translates to a monetary amount, like a gift certificate, which can be used towards future competition fees for AOS events, thereby rewarding directors for attending a competition and encouraging them to attend more in the future. Directors collect competition registration fees from their students and then receive a discount on that registration total from AOS. In this way the organisation rewards directors and studios directly. As noted online, the registration of participants must be done via the Internet to receive the full 10%, as mailed registration is just a 5% studio grant.47 This effort helps to ensure that the registration process is streamlined through the online databases and limits the amount of time organisers spend in data entry for the registration process.

Apart from being a spacious and exciting locale for an event like a dance competition, the Lagoon Amusement Park has become a powerful and profitable partner in the operation of the organisation. Dancers and directors are allowed to enter

47 http://www.americaonstage.org/OnlineRegistration/Forms/OnlineRegistrationMaster.htm accessed October, 2013

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the park without charge, but all spectators pay a fee, currently $12 per person, and
another $7 per car for parking.48 Anyone who wishes to ride the rides must purchase a
ride pass, discounted for the competition but still substantial (currently discounted to
$34.95, normally $49.95).49 Both spectators and dancers at the venue typically purchase
ride passes, food and souvenirs from park vendors. This benefits the park, which
experiences an immediate increase in ticket and food sales during the off-peak spring
season. The organisation uses the park at minimal cost, limiting overhead expenditures,
and the amusement park is able to fill the rides and concession stands. Therefore, the
competition held at this time of year is of mutual benefit to both the amusement park
and AOS.

*Lagoon as a Homeland*

During its thirty-year history, Nationals at Lagoon and the competition’s accompanying
activities and features have taken on a ritual-like status within the community.
Certainly, having an event at an amusement park is an automatic draw for many, but for
teen-aged dancers (like I was myself), there is additionally something attractive and
energising about the event that is reaffirmed with repeated participation. From personal
experience and observation, I don’t think it necessarily reaches the intensity of Turner’s
concept of *communitas*, a transforming sense of kinship profoundly experienced in
large-scale, simultaneous social events (Turner 1969). It is, however, a highly
anticipated event, the final ritual ceremony of competitive hierarchisation of the
community, the culmination of the year’s efforts both in rehearsal and on stage.

As Maggie Valley, North Carolina is a homeland and birthplace of organised group
clogging in Appalachia (see Chapter 3), Lagoon has become inseparably associated
with the symbolic rituals and behaviours of the clogging community in the
Intermountain West. It is the new geographical and cultural locus, the homeland, the
site of pilgrimage and ritualised practice. It differs, however, from Howard’s (2009)
experience with community, homeland, and ritual pilgrimage among clogging groups
in the ACHF organisation in a key way. Howard discussed the competitive
phenomenon in the Maggie Valley ACHF Nationals competition, where existed a

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48 found at: http://www.americaonstage.org/Competitions/Lagoon/AmerOnStage_Cpns.pdf
accessed May 23, 2015
49 found at: https://www.lagoonpark.com/buy-tickets/?promotion_code=onstage15&
promotion_is_in_card_id= accessed May 23, 2015
“sense of unity and belonging to something larger than one’s self” (Howard 2009, p.47). Due to its ideological and geographical location in the mountains of North Carolina, the ritual pilgrimage to the Stompin’ Grounds venue in Maggie Valley represented a distinct connection to the past and the Southeastern ‘tradition’ of the dance. The dance floor at the Stompin’ Grounds is the constant centre of attention. A large wooden structure, the Stompin’ Grounds has the feeling of a barn, reflecting an important symbolic connection to clogging’s rural Southeastern roots. When not dancing, participants are still always aware of what is happening on that one big stage, and are encouraged by the lack of other recreational distractions in the very small town, and by the compactness of the venue when fully filled, to interact socially with each other and keep the focus on the dancing. Participants' pilgrimage there is to dance, to be part of this large historic event in the heartland, and birthplace, of the dance they love.

Without such a connection to the distant past, AOS has gradually instituted a relationship to events in the relatively recent past. It focuses on its own history as a competition and the winners that had achieved victory there over the years. This is visually demonstrated by the banners that hang from sides of the pavilions that display the names of those who have received significant awards dating back to the early 2000s (see Chapter 6.3 and Plate 16). The AOS website also features lists of past winners. It is a different kind of belonging from that of the other organisations. It is a belonging to an idea of achievement and excellence rather than a long shared history or heritage.

_A Lack of Shared History_

I suggest that the distanciation from the ‘traditional’ heritage of clogging between the Intermountain West and the Southeastern United States is not just a simple side effect of the geographic distance, but a deliberate (not spiteful) effort on the part of AOS cultural brokers to redefine the practice in its new location in the West. From both my personal experience and my interviews with informants, I suggest that a sense of deep, long-term cultural history (real or imagined) of clogging has almost no presence within AOS (see Chapter 4.1). Unlike the findings of studies on the transmission of Appalachian clogging (Carlin 1995, Woodside 1995, and Matthews-DeNatale 1995), historical reference is not particularly imparted to students in the Intermountain West clogging studio system. The young dancers are not taught nor do they intrinsically sustain the notion that they are “upholding some ancient art and carrying it forward in
the face of terrible odds” (Carlin 1995, p. 234). In 1985, Frank Hall claimed, “nearly all cloggers have a sense that there is a history, heritage, or tradition of the dancing” (Hall 1985, p. 202). They may have had such a sense thirty years ago, but today most AOS dancers do not want an ‘ancient art’; they want an art that they find personally enjoyable, relevant to their experience and competitively fulfilling (see Chapter 4). Throughout my fieldwork in the Intermountain West, I found this underlying apathy toward Appalachian social and historical customs to be widespread.

In her study on the Hoorah cloggers in Virginia, Thomas (2001) examines the conceptualisation of tradition among the members of the clogging community, emphasising the vital role of history and memory in the production of social meaning and the maintenance of its practical tradition. Contemporary competitive clogging in the Intermountain West has few nostalgic cultural associations with the past, or with the Southeast. Since its participants do not apparently desire cultural alliance with Appalachia, the historical inventory of AOS consists of its own brief history and rituals of competition. Dancers inherit movement techniques, patterns of practice, and the competitive element of the dance, but little in regard to either a nostalgic past or an historically significant social function.

Some cultural identifiers are more potent than others (Mann 1986). Competitive clogging does not encourage a nationalistic fervour like that of Irish step dance, which came to embody politically and emotionally charged statements of Irishness to counter Anglo-Protestant colonialism (Foley 2013). Of his experience at Maggie Valley, Howard (2009) speaks of an acknowledged tie to a cherished past, a deeply sensed religious communing, evidences of “lived Christianity through the bodily veneration of neighbours” and experiences of “open Protestant worship” (Howard 2009, p. 75). These are the kinds of social processes that affect individuals on a profound level and inspire “the most zealous adherence” (Mann 1986, p. 22). The religiously centred social meaning experienced in AOS events is not expressed in the same way as the dancers in Maggie Valley. Shared meaning found in modes of behaviour and dress (Chapter 4.3) are fundamentally binding but are not expressed interactively as celebration or worship. The bond that is institutionally administered and socially reinforced is that of competition. It is the primary means of interaction within the community and the principal objective of the organisations efforts.
5.2 The Creation of Cultural Symbols: Iconography of America On Stage

Cohesion within this or any community is largely dependant upon its members’ acceptance of and attachment to the shared system of symbols. In particular, a community’s name or title is a crucial symbol of its values and may be open to interpretation. It is often the first and main symbol projected to the outside world, and needs to be as expressive and demonstrative as possible. It is a primary demarcation of community boundary, which according to Cohen (1985) “represents the mask presented by the community to the outside world; it is the community’s public face” (p.74). Kwame Anthony Appiah insightfully suggests, “what I appear to be is fundamentally how I appear to others and only derivatively how I appear to myself” (in Frith 1996, p. 125). Thus the projection of self to others is critical in understanding how the community understands itself. This thesis posits that organisation administrators, studio owners, and their young dancers are all highly concerned with the projection of ‘public face’.

When Bryan Steele and Dennis Cobia dissolved their partnership in Clog America, Steele created a new organisation that he believed would reflect the changing needs of cloggers in the Intermountain West as well as provide a platform for the further expansion of clogging (see Chapter 3.5). According to Steele, the name ‘America On Stage’ was selected for this new organisation for two primary reasons. First, it was a take-off of the popularity of America Online (or AOL - one of the major internet conglomerates of the early 1990s), connoting a connection to technology and pop culture that would attract a younger, technologically savvy audience. Second, unlike ACHF (America’s Clogging Hall of Fame), CLOG/NCHC (National Clogging Organisation/National Clogging and Hoedown Council), and CCA (Clogging Champions of America), the name was not clogging-centric, leaving open the possibility of extending the organisation beyond clogging and into other dance genres (Bryan Steele personal interview, 2000). According to the AOS website50, all but one of the annual AOS competitions had events for jazz, hip hop and lyrical dance as well as clogging. America On Stage was meant to be inclusionary of other dance forms from the outset.

After a name selection, one of the next tasks of a new business is to create a logo,

an image depicting its values and evoking the imagery most associated with success in that business. In 1978, when Sheila Popwell compiled the first newsletter of the Clogging Leaders of Georgia (CLOG) called The Flop Eared Mule (after a popular traditional dance tune), she hand-drew various images (see Figure 22 below) that went on the front cover of every newsletter until 1990 when it was replaced by a standardised version (see Figure 23 below). This imagery suggested the rural country life; it was not mass-produced, glossy, or sophisticated. It fit the stereotypical associations of Appalachian clogging in the late 1970s: Southern, local, rural, personal.

Figure 22: The hand drawn image of ‘Clabberfoot: the Contrary Critter of Clogging’ by Sheila Popwell on the front cover of the Flop Eared Mule newsletter of the Clogging Leaders of Georgia in September 1978.

Figure 23: The standardised image of the Flop Eared Mule used on the CLOG newsletter as of 10 Sept 2014. Accessed from http://www.clog.org/clogtoday/index.html
A comparison between these logos and the one designed and projected by America On Stage by Bryan Steele and Ben Borchert\textsuperscript{51} in 1993 (Figure 24 below) reveals significant cultural difference.

![Figure 24: Two versions of the AOS logo used on marketing brochures and on the webpage from 1993 to present. Found at www.americaonstage.org accessed 30 Aug 2014.](image)

The AOS logo utilises a red, white and blue colour scheme, reflecting the three colours of the flag of the United States. It is a digitally created logo, clean and urban, suggestive of technology and modernity. In an effort to widen the scope and reach of the organisation, the prominent use of the word ‘America’ suggests that membership can include a broad audience throughout North America, rather than limiting it to a smaller, specific state or region. Slashing diagonal lines in red denote energy and movement, and stars have long been associated in North America with success on stage or in sports\textsuperscript{52}. Multi-layered and recognisable, it is an effective emblem of the specific cultural constructs AOS desires to project: excitement, energy, currency, and distinction.

Versions of the logo are found on all AOS merchandise, including mailings, flyers, posters, t-shirts, trophies, and medals. The All-American jacket (seen in Plate 10 below) prominently features the logo, and is a powerful symbol in itself. Dancers who are selected for the All-American Team (discussed in Chapter 6) are awarded these jackets, and wear them throughout the year, even when the weather might seemingly render a jacket unnecessary. With the AOS logo and each year the dancer makes the

\textsuperscript{51} Ben Borchert was the husband of one of the elite dancers from the Ultimate NRG clogging studio: Amanda Borchert. AOS approached her early on to participate in the organisation's efforts, and she agreed. She suggested to Bryan that her husband Ben, a graphic designer, could help him design a new logo and Bryan agreed (Steele personal interview 2011).

\textsuperscript{52} Take, for example, the stars used in the logo of the National Football League, from their website www.nfl.com accessed on 12 December 2015; the term ‘movie star’; and the star in the logo of www.broadway.com accessed on 12 December 2015.
All-American Team embroidered on the back (as shown in Plate 10 below), the jacket becomes an iconic symbol of elite competitive status in the community. It is fascinating to note that the text on the jacket does not mention clogging specifically. The words ‘National Dance Championships’ and ‘All-American’ are both displayed prominently. This allows the organisation and the dancers to display their achievement without immediate association with unwanted stereotypes of clogging and clog dancing (addressed below).

Plate 10: Dancers from LaChere’s Fab Five wearing their All-American jackets between events at a competition. Photo © Caroleen Kelly. Taken at the Autumnfest competition at Rose Wagner Centre in SLC, UT, in November 2013. Photograph is used with permission of its owner.

*Cultural Symbol Dissemination*

The AOS logo features prominently on the AOS website, which with emails has become the primary means of communication and distribution of information for the organisation. The dissemination of information is a vital aspect of social power and cultural brokerage, since communication spreads communal awareness both internally and externally. Communication is key to the development and representation of the symbolic social constructs (Feintuch 1981, Spalding 1995, Young 1976). Young identifies the spread of codified languages, literacy, printed media, travel systems like railroads and highways, radio and television as the mechanisms behind the spread of
communal and nationalistic awareness and interaction in communities throughout the world (Young 1976). Sheila Popwell (1980) was a founding co-director of one of the first national clogging organisations; due to her affiliation with the organisation and authorship of its designated technical manuals and newsletter, her terminology and motifs were the most commonly adopted and utilised for years (See Chapter 3.4). Control of cultural dissemination significantly impacts the process of building community.

This section will analyse the distribution mechanisms employed by AOS in its efforts to represent, inform and grow its membership. As mentioned above, the AOS website and emails are its main means of communication, but it also employs mass mailings of annual schedules and invitations to directors in areas near specific competitions.

Figure 25: Screenshot of the America On Stage webpage at http://www.americaonstage.org/ accessed 10 Sept 2014.

The webpage (shown in Figure 25 above), designed by Greg Tucker, follows the general red white and blue colour scheme as the logo, with every design and layout element accentuating competition and awards possibilities. There are eleven references to competition and/or Nationals on the home page, and a highlighted section under the title numbers the days, hours and minutes until the next Nationals at Lagoon. Links
lead to current team and individual rankings, which documents past victories with pictures and an ongoing roll of Hall of Famers and Studios/Dancers of the Year (see Chapter 6). The assignment of value and significance to winning is omnipresent; the AOS motto, “where the magic of a win takes centre stage”, underlines again the overwhelming emphasis placed on competition. The organisation exhibits its social savvy and technological prowess by enabling Facebook and Twitter links, the live streaming of competition results, and online registration and schedules for all competitions. There is not a noticeable reference to ‘traditional’ clogging history or heritage anywhere on the website.

There is a distinct anonymity to the webpage. There is no reference made anywhere within its pages to the AOS organisers or its history. The webpage directs the focus of participants to the competitive activities of the organisation. This also provides a level of anonymity for the key organisational decision makers, who incidentally continue to compete in clogging events with their students.

Finally, it is interesting to note that as of 2016, there is only one non-competitive event in the AOS calendar, the BYU Cougar Clogging Classic, a three-day workshop of classes and recreational activities. Due to its recreational focus, few competitive dancers from the Intermountain West have participated in the workshop in recent years. Characteristically, information for the camp can only be found at an obscure link at the bottom of the page after the listings of all the competitions, which signifies its relative insignificance within the competitive community. Similarly, the Autumnfest competition for individual events includes a workshop and retreat for directors and instructors. Having attended and taught at Autumnfest many times myself, I can attest that the workshop, held at the Rose Wagner Theatre in Salt Lake City, is focused on preparing less experienced instructors for competition, promotion of the All-Around Solo Programme, and the competition associated with the event. The focus of AOS administrative energies is on competition. Recreational opportunities are few in this clogging community.

*Rebranding the Dance: Power Tap*

In the late 1980s, when clogging in the Intermountain West was drastically and rapidly transforming, a divide became noticeable between older and newer styles of clogging. This divide coalesced into a debate concerning the name of the dance itself in the AOS
community. Despite its contemporary appearance and context, competitive clogging on a national level in the 1990s was yoked to the connotation of rural Southern Appalachian and ‘western’ stereotypes. To a non-clogger, the term ‘clogging’ typically suggests either dancing in wooden shoes or traditional American square and round dancing. This imagery fails to appeal to the ideological concerns of many of the AOS constituents. Many cloggers and organisers in the Intermountain West did not feel as though the term ‘clogging’ adequately expressed their worldview or symbolised their experience in the AOS community (numerous survey responses, 2012).

For this reason, in 2001, Bryan Steele proposed the bold step of changing the name of contemporary competitive clogging to ‘Power Tap,’ a much more aggressive, fresh, urban-sounding term. His intent was not necessarily to diminish the history or tradition of clogging as a dance form but rather to initiate a new marketing scheme that would help the dance appeal to a wider contemporary audience (Bryan Steele personal interview, 2012). He produced an extensive unveiling of the new term at every AOS clogging event in 2001, explaining the rationale behind the change and encouraging its application for the Advanced through Professional categories of competition. This initiative was met with varying levels of reception. There were some who saw its potential to provide increased exposure to, and acceptance of clogging in more urban areas. Conversely, there were others who felt the new name was an effort to neglect the rich tradition of clogging in favour of progress and change. This difference of opinion is still under constant debate in the Intermountain West clogging community.

The directors surveyed for this research were asked if they liked and used the term Power Tap. Twelve instructors were positive and supportive of the term, thirty disliked or chose not to use it, and six located themselves somewhere in the middle. Of the twelve who responded positively, some simply wrote “YES!!!!!!!!!!!!”, “I like it, yes”, “yes, I think it sounds better sometimes”, and “I love it and yes that is all we use” (survey respondents, 2012). “Just hearing ‘Power Tap’ makes me want to dance” (survey respondent, 2012). This enthusiasm is concentrated around the idea that a new term for the dance could dispel incorrect stereotypes about the dance form. Many of the instructors wished to distance themselves from the more traditional practice of clogging because of such implications. “Power Tap is completely different than Clogging so I’m more than fine with using the term Power Tap.” “I like it, it shows how a new form of clogging has evolved and become more modern versus the traditional clogging”
(survey respondents, 2012). This, in my opinion, illustrates the desire of these directors to distance themselves from what they consider to be unattractive social symbolism like “the big petticoat skirts and old Double Step Rock Step stuff”, or to disprove the Appalachian stereotype that “some people still relate clogging to the wooden shoes” (survey respondents, 2012). This perspective is summarised in the following statement from the survey:

Clogging has changed so much in the past decade, that what was clogging in the ‘80s is hardly recognizable as clogging today. Many don't want to be referred to as an "old clogger in a square dance dress" since that is not representative of clogging now at all. The term power tap was created simply as a way to show the non-clogging world that clogging has evolved to a new style of dance similar to how some tappers refer to themselves as "hoofers" instead of "tap dancers" so as to differentiate themselves from being classified as "Classic Tap Dancers".

(Survey respondent, 2012)

Six respondents to the survey took middle ground in the debate, with opinions like “I don't use the name, but I can understand why others would” or “It makes sense, but I don't use it” (survey respondents, 2012). Some of the directors in this grey area try to use both names according to context, as in “I use 'power tap' when talking to a new client about the dance styles we teach” (survey respondents, 2012). The use of the term “as a marketing tool only” is congruent with the intent behind the change. One instructor, for maximum effect, uses both names together. “At my studio we call it Powertap clogging” (survey respondent, 2012). Another teacher uses the term reluctantly, because “clogging doesn't really explain what it has become and yet I like holding onto the roots of where it came from” (survey respondent, 2012).

Thirty of the directors were against the use of the new name. A large percentage of the thirty responses in this group were short and adamant, with phrases like “I don’t like it!”, “That name is ridiculous”, or “I hate the name. It bastardizes both clogging and tap dancing” (survey respondents, 2012), showing a determined and firmly established position. A number of instructors felt there was confusion surrounding the term and stayed away from it. “Around here”, one director remarked, “people think it's Irish dancing” (survey respondent, 2012).

Some directors argued, “clogging evolves, like other dance forms, but it doesn't need to change its name” (survey respondent, 2012). Still others recognised some value in a name change, but reasoned against its use:
While there is definitely an influence of tap in the upper levels (Champ and Pro), I feel that in order to create a new name for itself, there needs to be something that separates it from clogging as a dance style. Cloggers have adapted Canadian step dance, Irish step dance, African step dance, and infused cheerleading moves, tumbling, stunt work, hip hop and even some ballet. But that doesn’t give reason to rename the style of dance because clogging tends to absorb everything once again due to the tradition of "free style" and freedom in artistic impression. The "drag-slide" move is what singles out clogging as a truly original American dance art form. Not merely imported but originated here in the US along with the joyful music it was created to keep time for. Do I identify if it is a tap move adaption/adoption? Yes! Do I call it power tap? NO! Do I also identify Irish, Canadian, hip hop, and other dance moves that are incorporated into my artistic impression of choreography and music? Yes.

(Survey respondent, 2012)

Those who are against the use of the term ‘Power Tap’ are typically those who generally dislike what clogging has become or, like the example above, feel that contemporary competitive clogging is simply the latest manifestation of a historically changing and adapting dance form.

From analysing the responses of directors, the change of name of contemporary competitive clogging generated great emotion. It motivated the AOS community to re-evaluate its identity and take stock of its ‘cultural capital’ to assist in constructing a means of projecting its sense of identity. Those who embraced the use of Power Tap typically desire to separate themselves from the stereotypes that persist about clogging and its rural, Appalachian roots and present themselves as performers of a contemporary and athletic form of percussive dance. Using the term ‘tap’ signified the nature of the dance as percussive and linked AOS with the resurgence that tap dancing experienced in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Dancers like Savion Glover and Jason Samuel Smith had reintroduced tap to urban audiences and popular consciousness through productions like ‘Bring in da Funk, Bring in da Noise’, ‘Tap Dogs’, ‘Stomp’, and films like ‘Happy Feet.’

Greg Tucker, the director and owner of America On Stage had a slightly different take on the topic. He acknowledged a separation between terminologically different ways of moving within the ability levels. Due to what he called the “evolution” of clogging, “most of what’s done in the championship level and the professional level isn’t really clogging any more, or what we would call clogging” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). For example, the drag slide, such a dominant characteristic in traditional clogging, was rarely seen in the 2014 Advanced through Pro categories,
which predominately featured techniques introduced to clogging post-1985 (Canadian
combinations, tap’s pull-back, and toe stands). Tucker claimed, “once you get to
Champ and Pro it’s power tap the whole time” (Greg Tucker personal interview,
2012a).

When approached by those who dislike the name, he simply asserts, “early on when
dancers started calling it ‘clogging’, the ‘flatfooters’ didn’t like it” (Greg Tucker
personal interview, 2012). According to Susan Phillips, CLOG co-president, the
majority of participants in the Southeast were “shocked and somewhat offended by” the
change in name suggested by Steele (Susan Phillips personal interview, 2003). It was
met with a lot of resistance because many saw no need to change the name, even in
promotional settings. CLOG was as interested as AOS in “trying to get rid of that
baggage” and “bringing people in who have a stigma about clogging” (Susan Phillips
personal interview, 2003). She acknowledged clogging’s issues with image but noted
that the new name chosen by Bryan Steele was not met with enthusiasm by the
members of her organisation and dance community in Georgia (Susan Phillips personal
interview, 2003). Phillips believed that it was the wrong name, promoted the wrong
way, by the wrong person; therefore communities and individuals around the country
summarily rejected it.

The desire to redefine the contemporary expression of clogging was not isolated to
the groups in the Intermountain West. Innovation-oriented groups and individuals
throughout the country have been dealing with the ever-increasing dichotomous
relationship between the contemporary and the traditional practices of clogging. In the
summer of 2003, a dance contest reality show called Dance Fever presented various
genres of dance to a cable audience on the ABC Family Channel. Two of the top four
groups competing for the $100,000 prize were clogging groups. It was the first time
that competitive clogging had been given a national broadcast stage. One of the groups
was an all-woman's team from Atlanta, called the ‘Southern Belles’, and the other was
an all-men's group from Kentucky called ‘All That’. They were two of the top
competitive clogging teams in the Southeast. During an on camera interview with the
dancers between segments, one of the young women from the Southern Belles said,
"we want to show America that clog dancing is contemporary, it's up-beat, and you can
have fun, and anyone can do it." (Dance Fever 2003) Then, as the camera pans away,
another one of the women chimes in emphatically, "and not in a barn."

When it was the men's turn to be interviewed, one of the young men called clogging "a very traditional dance form, but, just like anything else, it has to change." The debate about image was felt across the country, and these young people from the South were clearly seeking to change the stereotype of a dance form, but they did not use a new name for it. Referencing this event, Phillips said, “if ‘All That’ had gone out and said that they did Power Tap, then people would have been banging down doors to do power tap” (Susan Phillips personal interview, 2003). Instead, enrolment at many clogging studios surged due to the increase in national recognition.

Since 2003, there have been numerous other appearances by clogging teams and individuals on shows like So You Think You Can Dance, America’s Got Talent, and interestingly enough, America’s Best Dance Crew (a team Hip Hop dance)

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53 Dance Fever on ABC Family Network, Season 1, Episode 6, originally aired August 24, 2003.
54 Dance Fever on ABC Family Network, Season 1, Episode 6, originally aired August 24, 2003.
55 Within the Intermountain West and the AOS organisation, one group has gained almost as much national recognition as the Southern Belles and All That. This team, called the Fab Five (the word Fab being short for fabulous), consists of five Whitear sisters who grew up clogging; each of them now owns or teaches at a separate dance studio in various parts of the Intermountain West. The oldest sister, LaChere, owns a large and successful studio in Southeastern Idaho. The next oldest, Shaundalee, co-directs a dance studio in South-Central Idaho. Cambria and Ayrion, co-own and operate a studio in northern Utah, and Veva owns a dance studio in Arizona. In 2007, they arranged to reunite to create a short dance they could compete for fun. They all dance remarkably alike and found instant success in competition. In 2009, they auditioned for the US television programme “America’s Got Talent” and made it onto the show, then to the top-ten finale of the programme. The five talented and attractive young wives and mothers eventually lost, but cemented themselves as superstars within the AOS clogging community and created a successful brand. Upon return to their respective studios, they capitalised on their recent exposure and success by renaming each of their studios; LaChere’s Fab Five studio, Veva’s Fab Five Studio, K & C’s Fab Five studio, and the Fab Feet Cloggers. Despite often being the only team in the twenty-six and older age division, they continue to find success in their competitive pursuits. They have won the overall award for the team categories a number of times and are consistently in the top three to five teams at every competition. Their accrual of cultural capital and skilful commercialisation of their brand secured their position in the AOS elite; they have been instrumental every year in choreographing for the All-Around Solo programme (see below).
56 Brandon Norris, a clog dancer from Alabama appeared in the third episode, of the third season of the Fox series So You Think You Can Dance in 2007. His mixture of Hip Hop dance and clogging was well received by the judges and moved through to the following round, but was not ultimately picked as a final participant for the competition. He did later return to perform for the season finale as a guest.
57 In 2006 and 2012, the all-male “All That” clogging team made it to the semi-finals each time in the popular television program America’s Got Talent.
competition. In each case, the participating groups have confirmed their association with the term clogging in an effort to dispel the existing perceptions and stereotypes about their artistic practice. Rather than portraying a new or alternative identity, they have simply distanced their projected symbolic image from the rural and historical context, which they considered undesirable and inexpressive of their identity. Clogging teachers all over the country profited from the increased media attention and are “excited to see that clogging is getting more recognition on TV shows like America's Got Talent to help spread and show just how amazing clogging is!” (survey respondent, 2012).

Rather than resulting from a weakening of the boundary, the effort to re-name clogging originated from a desire to create a completely new boundary, a new realm within the community that would embrace the dancers’ and directors' ideology. It was not generally accepted, nor was it entirely repudiated. Rather, it gave teachers, dancers and sponsors a choice in how they represented themselves and their activities by selecting the term used to define their actions. Both terms are still currently in use in the AOS community; AOS uses the term ‘clogging’ for Novice through Advanced skill levels, and ‘power tap’ for Champ and Pro.

In my own work as a studio director, adjudicator, choreographer, and instructor of clogging, I prefer to use the name clogging. In my experience, there is great confusion on the part of community outsiders when the term ‘power tap’ is used. Considering the subtle but significant differences between clogging and tap dancing and my associations with clog dancers and teachers outside the Intermountain West, I am more comfortable using the conventional term.

5.3 Open Borders: Adjusting Competition Structure

Turino (2008) advocates that the disposition and practices (or *habitus*) of community is ever evolving in response to external and internal stimulus in the environment (Turino

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58 In 2009, Dynamic Edition, a clogging team from Alabama (led by Brandon Norris mentioned above), entered and was given a spot to participate in the third season of the MTV series America’s Best Dance Crew. It was unique for a clogging team to enter such a competition, but their creative use of Hip Hop and Clogging together proved similar enough to other groups in the competition to allow them to compete.
2008, p.120). Table 17 below demonstrates how the America On Stage organisation has structurally adapted to the changing tastes and needs of dancers in the Intermountain West from 1984 through 2012. AOS encourages participation and reduces the threat of external competition by other organisations in the region by frequently adjusting its boundaries and structures to anticipate and satisfy the needs of its participant base.

Table 17: A breakdown of the competition structure found at the America On Stage organisation at four key points in its history. To compare with other organisations, see Appendix F.

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As a community based on competition, and as success at these competitions is a prime motivator for event participation, AOS increased the number and kinds of categories dancers could enter (see Table 17). As competition enrolment grew and the number of dancers in each age category grew too numerous to award as many dancers...
as they wished, they further divided the age categories to include just two or three years to each category, adding a tots category to satisfy the ambitious parents of three year olds and an adult category (over twenty-six years of age) to accommodate the handful of individuals who continued competing after most of their peers moved on. As male participants became rare and female participants cross-trained with other dance forms, AOS took out the gender requirements for duets and added more show and exhibition routines. The ‘all-guys category’ was created to encourage male participation, but rarely has entries (explained below).

As foreign elements (from tap, hip hop, cheerleading, and so on) continued to be added to the increasing vocabulary of the form (see Chapter 3), more skill levels were added to accommodate those who mastered and added to the new techniques. In the 1980s, Advanced was the highest technical skill level. When dancers began expanding the movement vocabulary beyond what was common at the Advanced Level, Championship (often referred to as simply ‘Champ’) was created. The Professional level (or ‘Pro’) came along in 2000 as the boundaries of the movement were pushed even further.

Currently, in the lower levels of competition (Novice through Advanced), competition parameters are intentionally very fluid to attract as many kinds of teachers and dancers as possible. In those levels there are three competition categories in which teams can enter: Open, Open Line, and Exhibition. In fact, the official rulebook (see Appendix B) uses the same exact definition for the Open and Exhibition categories, and only a slight difference with Open Line in that no props or body contact was allowed. When asked about the purpose behind having such similarities between categories, Tucker indicated that “in the lower levels, we have open and exhibition, and open line, which is really open one, open two, and open three: there’s no rules” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012). Essentially this arrangement provides three separate categories within which any dance might be performed. This permits directors to register multiple dances from one team in separate categories to maximise the potential for winning in each category. As previously mentioned, such vagueness in rules allows flexibility and freedom to compete without overwhelming artistic or technical constraints and encouraging participation.
The Champ and Pro levels have their own sets of rules and their own challenges. In these levels, there are numerous team dance categories: Small, Open, Line, Standing Line, Traditional Line, Precision, Show, A Cappella, A Cappella Production, and All Guys. These are each unique categories with specific content requirements. Most directors and choreographers at this level are sufficiently knowledgeable to function within the parameters set by AOS for these events, and most of the dancers at this level are motivated to learn as many dances as they can. The delineations allow teams to compete in many different categories; some teams carry this to the extreme and enter as many events as possible. Motivations for this are discussed in Chapter 6, which focuses on the rewards structure of certain AOS events where multiple entries are rewarded status in the competitive hierarchy.

The Show Category: Clogging Pirates and Superheroes

The Show category in the Intermountain West competitions was created in the early 1980s, as many participants began to depart from the ‘traditional’, rural, Southern aesthetics imported from Appalachia to create choreographies more salient to their personal experience. The Show category allowed the performance of dances to highly themed music, of any genre, sometimes with accompanying actions, props or storyline. The term ‘theme’ as used in this context implies a dance that is oriented towards an established exterior message or referent. Themes in clogging are realised through music selection, costuming, stunts, props, and/or the appropriation of movement or action motifs from other dance genres or stylised gesture.

The choreographies in this category often involve motion picture and pop culture themes, subjects relevant to the experience of the dancers or choreographers. Themes have included contexts from ethnic communities (Bollywood, Irish step, even Hungarian Gypsy), Broadway/musical theatre (Phantom of the Opera, Singing in the Rain, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang), and film (Batman, Alice in Wonderland, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Frozen). Strongly themed dances can be based on culturally familiar or popular television programmes (such as Once Upon a Time and Doctor Who), or current events (like the FIFA World Cup in 2014). When Disney’s motion picture Pirates of the Caribbean was released in 2003, multiple groups created pirate-

59 The rules for each of these events can be found in the America On Stage Competition Rules Booklet found in Appendix B.

184
related dances for their Show routines for years afterwards. The 1994 Riverdance phenomenon inspired so many Show choreographies that an unofficial but popular sub-genre of clogging/Irish step dance fusion, known in some circles as ‘Afro-Celt’, came into being. 2015 Nationals Show numbers included a Stomp tribute accessorised with brooms, garbage cans and buckets; “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” from *Mary Poppins* complete with period costumes; a synchronised swimming parody; and a tribute to all things Lollipop danced with large plastic sweets a metre high. Judges are requested to “look for items in the dance that relate to the theme. If there is no theme, you may penalize them. This should not be a line dance with just a prop or just stunts”.60 The teams that win this category are generally those whose innovative use of costume, prop, or theme, sets them apart from the rest of the competitors.

For example, in Plates 11 and 12, below, the dancers are wearing adaptations of well known pop culture motifs: ‘Oompa Loompa’ costumes from the 1971 film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, and an Indian sari-type costume for a Bollywood-themed performance.

Plates 11 and 12: On the left, the In-Step Cloggers perform a “Willy Wonka” themed dance with dancers dressed as ‘Oompa Loompas’ at the Pocatello, Idaho competition in March, 2012. On the Right, High Impact Cloggers Junior Team performs a Bollywood themed dance in the Show category, with stylised costume and hair added to complete the theme. Saturday May 11th, 2013. Photographs © of the author.

Over the last twenty years, the use of more traditional, country western themes has gradually fallen out of popularity among groups that compete in America On Stage competitions. When those ‘traditional’ themes are chosen, the elements accompanying the movement tend to be of more current origin, rather than strictly re-creating the past through the performance. Contemporary country/pop songs by Taylor Swift and Shania

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Twain are more frequently used than those by classic blue-grass artists Earl Scruggs and Johnny Gimble. If girls wear dresses, the traditional styles are ‘modernised’ in colour, shape, and style to reflect their personal aesthetic taste. The selection of a theme, and its ancillary components, says a great deal about how the choreographer, instructor, and to a lesser extent, the students, wish to be regarded by their peers, adjudicators, and themselves. It essentially “establishes an external boundary for cultural pragmatics that parallels the internal boundary established by a performance’s background representations” (Alexander 2004, p. 532). It also demonstrates the level of knowledge and adherence to current trends and styles.

Currency is a commodity, especially in the Show category. The familiarity of certain themes allows the choreographer to portray meaning or some kind of connection to the referent within the action, music, costume, or accessories of the dance. The referential use of dance movement is a cultural extension linking the performers to the popularity and excitement surrounding these external objects, events, or ideas. To the outside world they project currency, while allowing dancers to internally negotiate new interrelatedness within their personal identity axis of interest.

In my experience, more than any other event, the Show category has pushed the acceptable clogging boundaries and facilitated the incorporation of new ideas and choreographic elements. I distinctly remember when cheerleading and ballroom dancing elements were introduced in the early 1990s, and dominated the Show category. This was the result of the cross training of their choreographers, Lisa Timothy and Misty Peterson, in Jazz, Cheerleading and Ballroom Dance. Because of the acceptance of such a wide variety of other styles of dance in the Show category, it became necessary to make specific requirements for the inclusion of clogging steps for that event. Due to the increasing use of foreign dance styles and elements, in the late 1990s AOS determined that each Show routine needed to use clogging steps at least fifty per cent of the time.

In the Intermountain West, except for this requirement of fifty per cent clogging steps, there are no particularly defined parametres delineating where the boundaries are

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61 At the age of 18, I chose to participate with one such innovative studio because of their innovative use of lifts and stunts in their choreography.
drawn between clogging and the other dance forms that are freely appropriated. In my experience, the recognisable elements of clogging in this region are as follows:

1) A clog dance is performed in shoes (of any colour or style) with metal double taps attached to the heel and toe.

2) A clog dance will feature some percentage of percussive footwork, and generally be between 90 seconds and three minutes long.

3) In the Intermountain West, the conservative nature of the community generally discourages certain types of behaviour. These include immodest costuming, explicit lyrics, advocacy of violence or illegal activity, or sexually suggestive movement. I distinctly remember one team from the periphery of the community, which competed a particularly provocative number that had some vulgar lyrics and revealing costuming. They did not score well in their category and were not received well by those in attendance. Performances by this group in subsequent years demonstrated an increased level of conformity to these standards.

Other Structural Changes in the Practice of Clogging

Along with creating new age groups, new difficulty levels, and the Show category, AOS has encouraged the transformation of several ‘traditional’ practices and events from their former, Appalachian expressions through deliberate choices of the organisation. I will demonstrate below how AOS constructs of recreational clogging, the freestyle event and gender roles have shaped the clogging community in the Intermountain West.

First, and perhaps the biggest break with the Appalachian practice of clogging, is that, except for one minor workshop, there are no participatory or recreational AOS social events or contexts for participants in this community of dancers. AOS does not host picnics or ice cream socials or barn dances or open dance parties where participants can socialise or dance without adjudication. Ritual and tradition in the AOS system are embodied in the competition, and all aspects of cultural modes of participation and practice for dancers (rehearsal, home practice, studio-specific social events if any) focus on this accepted symbolic manifestation of cultural interaction.

62 The annual Cougar Clogging Classic workshop at Brigham Young University
This is an essential concept to understand in order to appreciate the cultural and ritual changes made in AOS events, and an important aspect of my analysis in Chapter 6.

Another important characteristic of clogging in the Intermountain West is that few in the community feel the need to connect with the dance’s historical Appalachian roots. In fact, many of the structural decisions of AOS reflect the desire to transform the practice of clogging to project cultural symbolism more salient to an AOS participant’s identity. These two characteristics, competition and transformation, are fundamental to the AOS ideology and methodology, and to understand the communal structures and boundaries they establish and re-establish in response to internal and external stimuli.

An essential part of the AOS effort to background the distant past (traditional Southern clogging heritage and stereotypes) and foreground the recent past has been accomplished through the gentle reinvention of the ‘traditional’ clogging structures and symbols initially inherited by the Intermountain West.

The Freestyle Event

The name ‘freestyle’ is a carryover from freestyle clogging in Appalachia, where dancers performed steps and patterns in an improvisational manner. As mentioned in Chapter 3, improvisational skill in clogging was, and continues to be an important attribute for clog dancers in the Southeastern United States in social, and then later in competitive contexts. Originally, dancers in this competitive category were required to improvise the steps they did on stage and were penalised if sequences were repeated. When clogging was brought to the Intermountain West, the freestyle event was initially structured at competitions in the same way as its Southern counterparts. Groups of dancers (divided by gender, age and skill) were lined up on the stage. When the music started, the dancers began to dance in place for about thirty seconds. Next, the emcee would call for a ‘circle up’, where the furthest dancer on stage right would lead the line in a circular formation around the floor in front of the judges. Once the dancers were back in their position in the original line, each competitor would be called out of the line by the emcee (either calling the dancers number, name, or saying ‘next dancer’) to

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63 Music at Intermountain West clogging competitions has always been pre-recorded (Steele personal interview 2012). Even in the South now, live music is usually only used for recreational events, and even then only sometimes, depending on the situation.
'rise and shine’, or dance by themselves, one at a time, for approximately thirty seconds. After each of the dancers performed, the competitors were given the cue to ‘go for it’, where everyone would rush to the front of the stage to provide the judges with one last look before making their decisions.

This is still the same format found in all of the competitions of the three Southeastern sanctioning bodies today. The structure currently used at AOS competitions is similar, except for the use of the ‘circle up’, which has been replaced by an additional ‘go for it’ at the beginning. This change was made in the early 1990s because it was more economical to replace a ‘circle up’ that could last up to two minutes, with a ‘go for it’ lasting around thirty seconds (Bryan Steele personal interview 2012).

Another, more significant change in the event in its AOS context is that the requirement for improvisation has been completely dropped. In the Southeast, ‘freestyle’ clogging is a participatory (as opposed to performative) event in many communities. During my 2003 visit to a community dance event in tiny Marshall, North Carolina, I watched people get up and improvisationally clog to the live bluegrass music being played on fiddles, banjo and bass guitar. And then I joined them. Being able to replicate the traditional styles, I was able to fit in as a local and I was immediately accepted. In similar settings in Appalachia, music, dance and tradition blend in important social manifestations of both individual expression and communal cohesion. Improvisational dance in the Southeast is a participatory ritual, an admired ability, and a respected aspect of collective experience.

In the Intermountain West, which lacks similar historical or social participation contexts for keeping the tradition of improvisation alive, and within a highly competitive setting, pre-choreographed routines are now widely used to reduce the possibility of error and ensure the best performance. Pre-choreographed freestyles, which are now simply repeated three times during the event, are still an expression of personal choice and individuality; the dancer is free to choreograph their freestyle unaided, hire a choreographer, change a sequence, or alter a step as they see fit at any time. However, the art of improvisation is no longer required or even emphasised in these competitive events. Very few Intermountain West dancers have retained the ability to improvise clogging steps, which is such a hallmark of Appalachian clogging.
This signifies another way in which AOS has transformed the dance practice from a participatory to a performative context to suit its competition-based focus.

**Gender**

Another area in which clogging in the Intermountain West has been effectively altered from Appalachian tradition is in the area of gender roles. Manifestations and representations of gender in this community could be an entire dissertation itself, and though it is not my primary focus, gender does play an important role in this community. In studying America On Stage over the past ten years, I’ve been fascinated with the general blurring of previously well-defined gender roles. Group clogging was created in the days of the Soco Gap and Blue Ridge Mountain Dancers with clearly defined gender relations and roles. Certainly not with every performance, but most choreographies in the AOS system that I have witnessed and studied in conjunction with this research seem to portray gender-neutral themes and styles. The majority of the movement techniques and patterns used today lack previously articulate male and/or female traits, and incline towards a feminine comportment due to the profusion of female dancers, directors and choreographers.

An illustration of this phenomenon in competition is found in the Standing Line category (see Plate 13 below). Teams dance in unison and in one formation the entire time, and the emphasis is placed on exact precision of all movement performed. In the rulebook, the event calls for a dance “choreographed for one, danced by many”, in any costume to any music. Perfect synchronisation is critical. From the outset, dancers must stay in the same formation, and move as a group, without allowing the formation to change in the slightest. The ideal choreography should utilise the movement of the group from side to side, forward and back, and diagonally in various ways to enhance the challenge of staying together. Furthermore, the inclusion of precisely synchronised arm, head and body movement among all the dancers adds to the effect. Each dancer is required to move exactly the same. Therefore inherent gender differentiation must be avoided. I suggest that because of a predominance of female choreographers and directors, the prevalent aesthetic choices typically made involve traditionally feminine qualities, resulting in a discernible feminine style. More research is necessary to

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determine whether this is a significant reason for the lack of male participation in the competitive form of clogging.

Plate 13: A Championship level team performs on the Canyon stage at the Nationals competition at Lagoon, Saturday, May 10th, 2014. Notice the glossy black pants and fitted tops on both male and female dancers, allowing judges to focus on leg and arm movement. Photograph © of the author.

Furthermore, the costuming, even with mixed gender teams, is required to be uniform. Even with an effort toward neutrality, it generally leans toward a feminine appearance because of category-specific design elements. The costumes are typically long sleeve, regularly with a differing colour or a stripe down the arm to highlight the movement patterns of the arms. The same is often true with the pants. Often times these costumes are tight fitting and made of fabric that moves easily, yet has visually attractive qualities. Overall, the costuming is intended to create a visual unity to the group and accent the movement of the arms and legs, but often the look flatters the females while defying social conventions of dress standards for the males.

In 1984, it was rare to find a female clogger wearing pants. Today, skirts are the exception, usually found in the few ‘traditional’ events or character-related performance themes. The vast majority of females that compete, particularly at the highest level of competitive clogging, do so in form-fitting pants or ‘leggings’ (stretchable, tightly fitted pants), which allow more definitive lines and shapes to be visible and emphasised. These pants are typically accompanied by a fitted, shimmering top, and are found in both the group and individual events (see Plate 13 above). This
general style of clogging costume, according to one instructor, “appeals more to an audience’s eye with long pants, because bare legs are distracting, and long sleeves show off unified arm work” (survey respondent, 2012).

*The All-Guys Event*

Around 1989, AOS introduced a new event to encourage participation of men in the practice of clogging: the All-Guys event. There are two purposes, I believe, in the separation of all-male teams into their own category. For one, male and female cloggers dance differently from each other. In general, in the most advanced levels, females dance up on the ball of the foot with high knee action, a firm, upright torso and elbows held in tight. The male style is characterised by a slightly lower stance in the knees, more relaxed torso and arm work. The male footwork also tends to be more relaxed and expansive than that of the females. Clearly, these characteristics are taught and reinforced through social interaction in rehearsal and competition. Nevertheless, because of these differences, it would be difficult for judges to make decisions about which style to value more. A male judge might value the male style more than a female judge, for example.

Another, important reason relates to the discrepancy of male participants relative to the amount of females. Depending on the team and the year, girls outnumber boys anywhere from eight to one to twelve to one. Likely because of their rarity and usefulness in partner related performances, the community values male participants. Their minority status grants them easier access to awards and advancement within the system, often because of the equal number of awards in both gender categories. The inclusion of the All-Guys category is part of this effort to attract and keep male participants (Greg Tucker personal email correspondence 2013).

Many instructors and choreographers try to keep the male dancers interested and involved. Sometimes exceptions are made to allow them to wear more comfortable and masculine clothing. For the individual events, males typically wear black dress pants, a button-up shirt and a colourful tie. Male dancers (like those seen in Plate 14) rarely wear tight fitting pants, even when dancing on stage with other females wearing them or necessitated by thematic intent. This is due primarily to the conservative nature of the majority of participants and the stereotypical association of wearing tight fitting clothing with feminine attributes
Plate 14: Male competitors in the All-Around Solo category at the Professional level, May 2013. Notice the men wearing trousers and a button up shirt. The girls behind them wear costumes characteristic of female attire for the individual events as well. The photo belongs to the author.

The only rule for the All-Guys category is that all the competitors be male, and that the dance is entered in the appropriate age group and ability level. Thus any type of movement, costuming, formation work and theme are allowed. It is a specifically designed platform for expression of male artistic choices. Perhaps it is due to the relatively small amount of male dancers on the older, professional-level teams, but at the 2012, 2013 and 2015 Nationals there were no performances in the Pro All-Guys category at the competition. There were four entries in the Championship level each of the years; for these dances, some Pro-level dancers danced on teams with available male dancers in the Champ or even Advanced categories to get enough participants for an entry. As visible in Table 16 from Chapter 4, the size of the community is the smallest at the highest levels of competition. Because the overall amount of dancers is less, there would consequently be a smaller minority of male dancers at that level. Despite the low number, I doubt AOS would discontinue the All-Guys category in its competitions in order to continue encouraging male participation.

Remarkably, no other national organisation offers an All-Guys category, though I know that all-male groups (like Kentucky’s All That) compete in general group categories. Perhaps masculinity is more inherently maintained in the more ‘traditional’ clogging style. I believe the trend towards a general AOS dance aesthetic, demonstrated in the next section on the creation of the All Around Solo and feminine in its overall leanings, necessitated a venue where men could still dance while adhering to broader, culturally accepted expressions of gender.
AOS transformed clogging in the Intermountain West by remaking the overall image of clogging. It consciously distanced itself from the imported Appalachian traditional aesthetic and projected culturally current iconography. It expanded the appeal of its competitions by altering competition structures to accommodate modes of different artistic expression, and adjusted age and difficulty levels to create more ‘winners’. The introduction of events like the Show and All-Guys categories expanded opportunities for dancers’ personal expression. Its modes of information dissemination included sophisticated digital communication via its website and emails. The next major transformation of the practice of clogging by AOS began in 2005, with the institutionalisation of a standardised dance aesthetic embodied in the All-Around Solo programme, discussed in the next section.

5.4 Community Expansion and Aesthetic Control: The All-Around Solo Programme

Community Power Structures: Preservation and Expansion

According to Wolf (1990), “all cultures, however conceived, carve out significance and try to stabilise it against possible alternatives” (p. 593). The upholding of community-specific symbolic constructions against that which is foreign or challenging is central to an understanding of communal power structures. Cultural brokers like AOS protect their commercial and ideological territory by stabilising their communities against encroachments from external, or internal, sources.

This dialectical process was highly visible in the institutionalisation of Irish step dance. According to Foley (2013), the challenge presented by imperialist English culture brought about widespread cultural awakening and reaffirmation in Ireland in the early half of the twentieth century. The governing body over step dance within the Gaelic League, An Coimisiún, the oldest of the Irish dance organisations, became a hegemonic power structure in two primary ways (Foley 2013, p. 146). One, it granted itself the power to dictate who could be officially involved in sanctioned competitive Irish dance events. According to Foley,

An Coimisiún declared itself to be the authority and controlling body of Irish competitive step dancing and decided who was and was not eligible to teach it within
the structures of the organization. Registered dance teachers were validated by the organization to teach and to adjudicate Irish dancing. Annual registration fees were required by teachers and adjudicators.

(Foley 2013, p. 144)

Two, An Coimisiún established authoritative power within the Irish competitive dance community through the establishment of rules relating to dances, dancers, teachers, adjudicators, competitions, music and costume and through the production and prescription of three booklets of Irish Figure Dances.

Aspiring and registered step dance teachers within the organization learned and taught from these prescribed booklets, which were, and still remain, the dancing teacher’s ‘text books’. Through these booklets, a canon of dances were preserved and disseminated throughout schools in Ireland and the diaspora. Teachers and step dancers alike came to share this common cognitive and corporeal knowledge which contributed to the construction of the nation as community.

(Foley 2013, p. 145)

This community building was an important and deliberate part of the efforts of An Coimisiún to preserve, structure and govern the art form. Its goal was to promote an Irish cultural nationalism through the dancing body. Also, through the processes of centralisation, homogenisation and institutionalisation of Irish step dancing as a practice, An Coimisiún successfully created a context and a system through which Irishness could be embodied and presented, stabilising the community against cultural or political others (Foley 2013).

While both AOS and An Coimisiún are significant cultural brokers in their fields, the motivations and methods of AOS differ slightly from those of its Irish counterpart. As neither the first nor the only national clogging organisation, AOS does not have the right to declare itself ‘to be the authority and controlling body’ of American clogging. And rather than ‘cultural nationalism’, it simply desires to promote competitive clogging. It does not charge annual registration fees, nor does it require teacher training and registration (though it does provide optional training for those who would like to be considered as adjudicators). Its goal is rather to provide enough contexts for the practice of clogging to keep the dancers motivated, “help clogging grow” (Greg Tucker
personal interview 2012a) in the region, and reduce the threat of competing organisations in the area\textsuperscript{65}.

In the last ten years, however, AOS has followed the example of An Coimisiún by standardising and disseminating cultural texts in the form of pre-choreographed solos any clogger can learn and compete, creating ‘common cognitive and corporeal knowledge’ to energise its participants and solidify its base. This is the All-Around Solo programme.

\textit{The All-Around Solo Programme: The Concept}

With the creation of the All-Around Solo programme in 2005, the organisation radically expanded the scope of its cultural brokerage in producing institutionalised aesthetics, and introducing a major new event to increase participation.

In 2000, Bryan Steele, the founder of America On Stage, discussed with me the challenge of continually motivating dancers.

\begin{quote}
The toughest thing is that clogging has plateaued in terms of its growth, until somebody makes the effort to take it to the next level. And so as a result, you see the same people over and over again. You’re not competing with a lot of new teams all the time. I think that has made it more common. And in order to stay motivated you can’t remain common year after year.
\end{quote}

(Bryan Steele personal interview, 2000)

Steele noted that usually, something happened in the community to give it new life and energy. As Foucault (1984) suggests, those in power control the flow of energy in the community. Steele was very interested in heightening communal energy flow. To this end, and to be the one to “take it to the next level”, Steele began to look for new ways to modify the composition and dynamic of the clogging competition.

In the summer of 2004, Steele was inspired while attending an Irish Dance competition in Salt Lake City, Utah, as a vendor of dancing supplies. At that event, he saw multiple dancers competing with the same exact sequences of movement. From these observations, he deduced the purpose of such instruction was to maintain consistency in teaching and technique from one dancer to the next, within the same

\textsuperscript{65} And it has been successful in doing so; there are no clogging competitions in Utah or Idaho that are not sponsored by AOS. I know of one studio that tried to host its own competition in Colorado outside AOS jurisdiction but the endeavor failed due to lack of interest.
school or locality. It also allowed adjudicators to look for more detailed technical ability rather than step choice, when selecting a winner. He wondered if it were possible to create a similar event in a clogging competition, where everyone would compete with the same movement pattern and be judged on execution alone. In this way, those dancers who did not come from a well-known studio or have access to a gifted choreographer could still compete and be successful. He could add another event to his competitions to interest dancers, and construct a new competitive element in the AOS community.

During the 2004-2005 competition season, Steele began to discuss the idea with a group of influential teachers from the northern Utah area, selected by Steele. These teachers were Bethany Hulse, Jennifer Powers, Maria Tucker, Lisa Timothy, Misty Peterson, LaChere Vawdrey, Ashley Nielson, Amanda Bortchard, and Ayrion Adams. It was a risky proposition on Steele’s part to bring these teachers together. Up to this point in time, most of them had been ardent competitors against each other, and furthermore not all of them were active participants in America On Stage events. Bethany Hulse commented, “it was really awkward at first because we really didn’t know each other very well; some of us had danced together or had come from similar backgrounds, but most of us were just old competitors, we were against each other and that was it” (Bethany Hulse personal interview, 2012).

The first meeting, according the Hulse, was held at Steele’s home in South Jordan, a suburb of Salt Lake City, Utah on a Friday evening in mid-July and lasted approximately two hours. Steele’s idea was proposed and discussed at great length. According to Hulse and others, the concept was generally accepted as a positive direction for competitive clogging, and from there the group began to make plans to move forward. It was decided that the select group would create a series of solo dances that would be learned and performed in competition. It was suggested that they all work individually to prepare ideas and plans, which would then be discussed and negotiated at a future meeting of the group. They met again in August to plan out the ability levels for the solos (the result of which is found in Appendix F), determine how many types of solos would be done, and make assignments for the upcoming competitive season. This collaborative, yet patient approach paid off in more ways than the initial goal of simply coming up with a structure and material to put into the event. “I feel like it really changed the dynamics of our relationships” Hulse said, “this was the first time
we spent time together outside of competition” (Bethany Hulse personal interview, 2012).

**All-Around Solo Structure**

At these meetings, it was decided that there would be six separate ability levels (Novice through Professional) following the established America On Stage structure, and each level would have five separate solos. The five solos were created to cater to the strengths of various groups of dancers, allowing for variables in artistic and technical philosophies. This technique is formalised in the All-Around Solo rubric created by AOS committee, as well as in the videoed choreography itself. Table 18 below gives the original descriptions of the emphasis for each solo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Emphasis or focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>Arm, Head and Hand motions with steps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Show</td>
<td>Energy, Showmanship, Jazz, and Hip Hop set to a themed piece of music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Bi-footed clogging with Clean and Clear Sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percussion</td>
<td>Rhythm and Sounds using beats and syncopated steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>The hardest steps of the specific level and moving into the easy steps for the next level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: The descriptions of the five All-Around Solos decided by the AOS committee

Tucker observed, “some directors are heavy artistic, some are very heavy into arms and military style, some are pretty good at sounds but they’re not good at any of the other two” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). In this way AOS could assign value to different cultural symbol sets; it would be possible to reward “those who can smile really well, but they just can’t get their arms right, or maybe they can do great arms but can’t make great sounds, or on the flip side, maybe they have great sounds and great arms, but they just don’t smile very well” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). According to Tucker, the goal was to not only welcome the strengths of various dancers, but also to provide a technique programme to increase overall skills in the community (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a).

The committee decided that each solo would be choreographed by one of the members of the committee with particular strength in the emphasis area, recorded and

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published on DVDs, and sold to studio directors. Each Solo would be thirty-two beats, or eight bars, in length, and contain appropriate level and style material, as seen in Table 19 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Distinction</th>
<th>Advancement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>Toe steps, heel steps, chugs, basic clogging steps, double steps.</td>
<td>Competed less than 12 months and danced less than 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Double steps, singles Steps in combination. Suggested: No Double Doubles in Beg.</td>
<td>Competed less than 2 years and won 1st in Novice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Buck Steps, Canadian Steps Double Doubles Pull/slapbacks</td>
<td>Competed more than 2 years and won 1st in Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Any techniques</td>
<td>Won 1st in Intermediate twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Championship*</td>
<td>Any techniques</td>
<td>Competed 3+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional*</td>
<td>Any techniques</td>
<td>Won 1st in Champ twice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19. Information taken from the 2011-2012 rules handbook published by America On Stage on its webpage. (As noted on the webpage) “Champ and Pro are STRICTLY VOLUNTARY! You can stay in Adv. as long as you desire and can move back and forth between the Adv, Champ, & Pro levels within an event or from one event to another. We HIGHLY recommend you compete Pro only AFTER becoming a member of the All-American team for a number of years”67.

The musical accompaniment for the solos varied for each of the five events. The Traditional Solo was done to a country song; the others were chosen from many genres of music ranging from techno to hip hop to musical theatre. The Solo committee members and Greg Tucker selected each of the five songs from pre-recorded tracks found in numerous genres in relation to the overall theme and style. Once the music was selected, it was edited into a length of thirty-two beats (eight bars), which was then looped and connected by a four bar interlude (explained below). The master CD track for competition for each solo had the sequence of music looped multiple times, lasting up to thirty minutes to accommodate long lines of competitors. The speed for each of the solos remained consistent between each of the ability levels of the competition.

In the context of the competitive event itself, dancers were arranged in lines on the stage, vertically to the audience (number of lines explained below). The front dancers in each line performed the sequence for the judges, then moved out of the way during

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the eight-beat (2-bar) interlude to allow the next dancers in the lines enough time to move forward and take their places. The same eight-bar phrase then restarted for the next competitor. The committee also decided that the movement chosen for the solo should be based on the dancer remaining in one central location and should avoid moving around the floor, merely as a functional decision.

*Adjudication*

At the lower ability levels (Novice, Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced), four dancers competed at the same time for two judges, and in the upper levels (Championship and Pro), only two dancers competed at the same time for four judges (see Figures 26 and 27 below).

Figures 26 and 27: All-Around Solos in the Novice through Advanced levels (shown left) are competed with four dancers on stage at the same time being watched by two judges.68 All-Around Solos in the Championship and Professional levels (shown right) are competed with two dancers on stage at the same time being watched by four judges.

In an effort to motivate dancers and provide direction for adjudicators, the committee published three principal criteria for the judging of the All-Around Solos.

- **Knowledge:** “Dancers should compete the solos exactly as it is taught including all steps, angles, arms, timing, and sound. Mistakes deemed big enough are scored as a 2nd or 3rd place”.
- **Dance Ability:** “Energy, high legs, endurance, smooth transitions, and all dance abilities are judged”.

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• Showmanship: “Smiling, eye contact, look of confidence, and all showmanship abilities are judged”.  

The correct execution of the Solo within these criteria was justification for a first place award. Any deficiencies in these areas resulted in a second or third place award (see Chapter 6.2 for awards structure). If the dancer conformed exactly to the prescribed movement technique, sequence, and performance, it was relatively easy to be successful.

With the launch of the Solos in the 2005-2006 competitive season, AOS realised the need to enlist “enough people on the outside who were older, bigger names who could be a part of it to kind of give it validity” (Bethany Hulse, personal interview, April 2012). They recognised that “the only way it would really succeed is if the big studios all bought in instantly” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). The original committee included existing cultural brokers to consciously construct and disseminate these cultural texts.

Of the nine initial studio directors involved with the planning process:

Six of them went and taught it. Three of them never really did anything with it, other than just write them. We found out in that first year that if the teacher was sold on it and taught it to their kids, the kids would do it. They just follow and do what the teacher tells them. If the teacher says, as some of the others did, here’s the solos I want you to learn them, but they didn’t do them in class and it wasn’t required, that they wouldn’t do it. Of those [initial] nine studios, six directors continue to flourish. Of the other three, two of them dropped off and don’t do solos any more, one of them has come back and is just great guns, and one still helps but her kids don’t do them very often.

(Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a)

It was decided that the members of the Solo committee themselves were not allowed to compete. However, the dancers in these directors studios could, and when several other ‘winning’ instructors – and valuable cultural brokers - like Sierra Dawes, Jessica Lawrence, Kandice Anderson, and Cambria Gibson learned, taught and competed the Solos, Tucker stated, “it made them [the Solos] instantly legitimate!” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). For Tucker, the legitimacy of the All-Around Solo Programme refers to the power of the event to attract participants. By having established and respected dancers from the community participate and contribute, the

significance of the programme was instantly substantiated for a large portion of
members.

Tucker also made the decision to charge one flat registration fee, whether the
dancer was competing in one or five Solos, to encourage greater participation in the
expanded programme. For the same price as a single freestyle or duet registration fee,
dancers are able to be on stage five times. Tucker explained how this effort has had
multiple effects:

We tried to pitch it especially to those cloggers who are a little more cost oriented. That
one fee meant that you could do all of them. We actually worried if it would hurt us
financially. That much stage time, five solos and one fee. It probably does hurt us, but
the benefit of it is far out weighing the monetary issue. We found that kids that do
individuals, whatever it is, always are better. They tend to focus more, they’re just
better, even a better team dancer. That became a very big push to sell it our second
year. “We can make your kids better individual dancers.” So, those six studios again
went great guns and our second year was enormous.

(Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a)

The Dissemination of the Solos as Symbolic Texts

Through the flow of power from the AOS elite to directors in the region and to their
students, the Solos have become an established aspect of the AOS competitive
community. According to the initial vision of the committee, each Solo choreographer
sets the standard of ideal performance and execution through the instruction and
demonstration of each Solo on the DVD. The DVDs are offered for purchase ($139 in
2015 for the set of all six levels)\(^70\) to the studio directors and instructors. Teachers
watch the instructional DVDs numerous times to learn and practice the sequences. This
visual and kinaesthetic repetition effectively transmits specific imagery delineating the
ideal execution, as well as verbal instructions and cues found in the filmed instruction.

AOS encourages instructors and studio owners to teach the All-Around Solos to
their students in whatever way best suits their goals and strengths. The most widely
used option (introduced in the third season, 2007-2008) is for the instructor to purchase
the full curriculum of three DVDs as a reference. After that initial purchase, the
students from that studio are allowed to purchase a DVD of the Solos at their level
either from the instructor or from AOS for $20. In this way, the instructor can choose to

\(^{70}\) Found at http://www.americaonstage.org/OnlineRegistration/Forms/payment1Solo.asp,
accessed 25 May 2015
teach Solos within the classroom setting, or ask students to review or learn the solos on their own, or any combination of the two. This provides flexibility for the instructors to present the material in any way they choose, and an extra source of revenue for AOS with the students’ purchases of their level of Solos. AOS also makes the DVDs available to interested dancers even if their director or instructor does not wish to learn or teach them, by selling the DVDs to the students directly from their website for an additional charge, currently $15.71

The current committee is careful to not require one method of instruction or use over the other, in order to avoid alienation of any potential clientele, but offers some suggestions for maximum efficiency.

While there is no one way, it is suggested to use the All-Around Solos in class like you would teach another dance to your students. Teach them all the solos and each week go through them. This gives each person five choreographed numbers to compete along with all their team dances and any individual or duets. By teaching the All-Around Solos, each individual will be able to compete many times at competition.72

Of the fifty directors that responded to my survey, twenty-two instructors choose to teach them in class to their students, fifteen hold special workshops where the Solos are taught, fourteen choose to let students learn them on their own if they wish, nine offer them through private instruction, and six require them as homework for their students. Some instructors use multiple methods of dissemination of the material. It is clear that they are widely used throughout the Intermountain West clogging community.

The technological method of delivery introduced a new dynamic in the transmission of movement techniques and patterns or what Alexander (2004) would call ‘cultural texts’, in the Intermountain West. When individuals learn dance techniques and patterns via DVD, it is no longer a socially interactive setting, but a personal interface with technology. In this way it reduces social interaction within the clogging community. And depending on the learning style and experience level of the individual student, this instruction may vary in terms of learning time and effectiveness.

71 Found at http://www.americaonstage.org/OnlineRegistration/Forms/payment1Solo.asp accessed 10 March 2016
Currency of Material: “Keeping it Fresh”

One of the goals of the original Solo committee was to provide dancers and directors with the most current and innovative dance material. Particularly at the highest levels of competition, the Solos are planned, prepared, and marketed as the pre-eminently current material in the community representing social and financial investment of the organisation. One way to accomplish this is to rotate Solos regularly. Challenge Solos of every level are new every year; the other four solos are replaced every other year. One survey respondent likes this notion, stating, “it keeps clogging fresh; it gives instructors ideas and inspiration” (survey respondent, 2012).

Furthermore, committee assignments to choreograph Solos are made on a rotational basis, and no set pattern is discernible. Different choreographers create each level and style of the Solos each year, with the goal of keeping all the steps and patterns from looking alike.

The organisation is intentional in its use of multiple choreographers. Tucker asserts, “the more people that were involved, the more would teach it” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). For this reason, the instructors of the largest studios are often selected to be on that year’s committee, though Tucker tries to include at least one guest choreographer from outside the Intermountain West region per year. However, to my knowledge there are no groups or individuals outside AOS that uses them.

AOS encourages teachers to use the material and even entire solo sequences in their own choreographies. “The choreography is here so that you could use it” Tucker explained, “so, go ahead and put all four steps in a dance, by all means do it” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). Still, some directors are hesitant for various reasons (discussed below). When asked if he understood why some directors are against using the Solo sequences in team choreography, Tucker replied:

Actually no because they get good choreography, it helps them to learn their solos, and it makes the teachers’ lives easier! Parents have no clue, judges aren’t necessarily aware of it. I see this as a big benefit, I love it. I do it, I teach my kids and we do two counts of eight of a solo here and there. And since the kids already know the solos and are familiar with the steps, we get more choreography done faster.

(Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a)

It is true that adjudicators are not necessarily aware when the steps and patterns of the Solos are used in other events. Adjudicators are typically not currently teaching and
directing groups, so they do not know or recognize the Solo sequences. For this reason, when judging the All-Around Solo events at competition, the adjudicators are not always able to fully assess the correct execution of each Solo dancer. With no provided training or certification (see Chapter 4.4), adjudicators are left to simply look for inconsistencies between Solo competitors to determine ranking.

According to Hulse, the success of the programme is based on the benefits of the Solos to everyone involved.

Parents are getting their money’s worth. They pay one fee and their kids can dance five Solos. And they get more confident because they don’t have to dance by themselves. So not only has the Solo programme grown exponentially but the number of freestylers and a cappella dancers have gone up since the year that we started. Because kids are more confident, they are more ready to be on stage. It’s pretty cool.

(Bethany Hulse personal interview, 2012)

According to Hulse, who directs a large and successful studio in Orem, Utah, the Solo programme infused energy and engagement into other areas of the competition, particularly the other solo events: freestyle and a cappella. While the data below from Greg Tucker (Table 20) does not necessarily reveal huge growth, the freestyle event has experienced an incremental increase in participation as the All-Around Solos have become more popular.73 This achieves one of the AOS stated goals: to ‘grow’ clogging participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Dancers</th>
<th>Number of Freestyles</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Number of All-Around Solo Entries</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2570</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2331</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2032</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1783</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1728</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: The total number of dancers participating in the Nationals competition at Lagoon from 2006-2012, including the numbers and percentages of dancers participating in the Freestyle and All-Around solo events at the same competition. (Greg Tucker personal email correspondence, April 2013)

73 I was unable to gather accurate data on the a cappella solo, so that information was left out of the table.
Of the fifty directors surveyed, sixteen had made the choice not to use the Solos in their curriculum. Seven instructors used them rarely, nine moderately, and eighteen used them fully within their programme. When asked how the dancers felt about the Solos, nine instructors felt that their students ‘love’ the All-Around Solos, twenty responded that their students had mixed opinions about them, five mentioned that their students were ‘indifferent’ toward them, and four said that their students ‘dislike’ them (see below). From my experience, the attitude toward the All-Around Solos by directors and dancers is commonly associated to the degree to which the Solo style conforms to the individual’s aesthetic taste and preference. For many, the Solos are too modern, stiff and rigid, lacking a focus on the footwork and personal interpretation. For others, they are complex and challenging fusions of precise whole body movement with clogging footwork in fun and fashionable ways.

Despite the generally successful internal application of the Solo programme, efforts to persuade teams outside of the Intermountain West to learn and compete the Solos have been unproductive up to this point. The only comparable structures in other large clogging organisations is CLOG’s recognition of official ‘national dances’, or particularly popular dances repeatedly taught by well-known instructors in enough workshops that their performance becomes a reifying cultural phenomenon74. These dances are not difficult and are accessible to all; the CLOG website includes links to PDF documents of the cue sheets (step breakdowns) for each dance. These are danced in recreational contexts only, much the same way popular line dances like “the Electric Slide” and “Cotton Eyed Joe” are performed at social functions, and not competed. One can dance JoAnn Gibbs’ choreography to Terry Gibb’s song “Rocky Top” at a clogging workshop like the Nickel City Clogging Festival in New York75, or at the Florida Clogging Festival in Kissimmee, Florida. Again, this reveals the different focus of the AOS community from other clogging communities in the country, and its foundation of competitive rather than participatory clogging practices.

74 The full list of these dances can be found on the CLOG website, http://www.clog.org/national_dance_list/index.html accessed 12 March 2016
5.5 Outcomes of the All-Around Solo Programme

According to Steele, Tucker, Hulse and others, the Solos were created to add an energising new element to the competition, to motivate dancers to technical excellence and to provide instructors with high-quality teaching material to make their dancers ‘better’ (a term which will be discussed at length below) and successful at AOS competitions, where ‘wins’ are the ultimate cultural capital (see Chapter 5.2, above). Other outcomes of the All-Around Solo programme, both foreseen and unintentional, include the following: 1) community expansion, 2) skill level standardisation, 3) institutionalisation of a particular aesthetic, 4) competitive homogeneity, and 5) partial dissention within the community. These outcomes are discussed below.

Community Expansion

The Solos introduced a novel element to the practice of clogging, accomplishing Steele’s goal of “taking it to the next level” and energising many in the competitive community by providing them with a new element to master. Some directors offer extra, income-generating workshops to teach the Solos, and require all competitive dancers to attend. Many use them in class and in private lessons, providing the teacher with additional material and income. With five solos to compete, dancers get more stage time at competitions. AOS generates increased revenue; the Solos accounted for 15% of total competition revenues at the 2015 Nationals, and an average of 22% at the other competitions (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2015). If growth is signified by an increased number of competition entries and registration fees for AOS, the All-Around Solo programme has most certainly helped the community expand in participation.

Skill Level Standardisation

Standardisation may not have been the officially expressed intent of the first All-Around Solo committee or AOS, but its effects are undeniable. By watching the five Solos for each skill level, directors can visually and kinaesthetically perceive appropriate movement for each level. Numerous directors mentioned this as one of the primary benefits of the Solo programme. “I have used it as a level measuring stick” and “this is the first time I could rank my dancers’ levels based on an outside source” (survey respondents, 2012). This has proved useful for some instructors who have over-involved parents questioning a student’s placement. “I tell them they can prove their
level by learning and performing the Solos”, one instructor continued, “and it works every time” (survey respondent, 2012). Instead of relying on guesswork and varying interpretations to define level standards, the solos represent authorised and standardised patterns produced by the organisation that define and demonstrate appropriate movement aesthetics and techniques for each level.

Institutionalisation of Aesthetics: Dancing ‘Better’

Through the process of controlled transmission of cultural symbols, AOS creates for itself a valuable tool for use in the politics of cultural and social control. Through the All-Around Solo programme, a certain movement aesthetic is institutionalised and designated as the community’s official standard of excellence.

In my interviews, my informants referred to the solos making ‘better dancers’ frequently. On the America on Stage website, it claims that through the All-Around Solo Programme “we can all improve on individual aspects, and make us better ‘all-around’ dancers”.76 Twenty-two of the fifty directors surveyed felt that the All-Around Solos had made their dancers ‘better’. While enumerating the benefits of the Solo programme in his own teaching, Tucker mentioned, “it has made all of our dancers better. I wish they had existed when I was younger. I would be a much better dancer” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). Bethany Hulse similarly claimed, “studios who do solos get better. Their dancers technically get better, because they’re focusing on specific things” (Bethany Hulse personal interview, 2012). I encountered this phrase all throughout my research, and contend that the perception of ‘better’ clogging is a by-product of institutional conditioning and marketing.

In his work on music and identity, Frith (1996) explained, “musical tastes are, inevitably, an effect of social conditioning and commercial manipulation” (Frith 1996, p.120). I set out to define ‘better’ clogging through analysis of the movement represented in the All-Around Solos. After hours of reviewing numerous years’ worth of Solos, I eventually defined the term ‘better’ in this context as indicative of the hierarchal placement of value on particular stylistic choices of the AOS elite.

What does this ‘better’ clogging look like? The Solos emphasise choreography for the whole body, not just for the feet. This differs from clogging elsewhere in the country where the arms, head and torso generally move naturally and freely in response to the action of the feet or flow of formations. For the Solos, movement for every part of the body is choreographed at all times, from head and hand positions and knee angles, to the use of every possible part of the foot. The entire body projects tension and exertion. The Solos are characterised by the use of intricate footwork patterns that include extraordinarily high lifted knee action throughout, solid and contracted torso and abdominal muscles, complex arm actions and shaping, and choreographic components adapted from hip hop and popular culture. The emphasis on extreme accuracy teaches the dancers precision, strong technique, and how to use their whole bodies just like the choreographers on the DVDs, the cultural brokers of the AOS organisation.

The organisation’s goal to spread ‘winning’ material throughout the community has enabled more instructors and dancers to enter higher levels of competition previously denied them due to lack of know-how (Tara Osborne personal email correspondence 2013). It represents a democratisation of knowledge within the competitive community. Those who use the Solos have access to greater mobility and success within the AOS system. All they have to do is learn the steps and corresponding technique and use them in their choreographies. Conversely, those who do not conform to this institutionalised aesthetic of the practice cannot access competitive success and mobility.

While many community participants benefit from the production of the Solos, others have been frustrated or disappointed. Sometimes the Solos attributes (sharp angles, very high knees, consistent and complex arm use, extreme precision) do not completely align with the philosophies and preferences of individual instructors or dancers. One survey respondent pointed out, “the All Around Solos are not guy friendly. The boys I teach feel ridiculous doing most of the arms and dance moves in the solos” (survey respondent, 2012). “I have noticed that clogging is going more towards hands and show. I miss the more traditional clogging where it was all about the footwork” (survey respondent, 2012). Another respondent stated, “I have seen it change so much since I started, I don't like how the focus has moved to so much arm movement and not to your feet. It's weird” (survey respondent, 2012). According to one of the instructors surveyed, the emphasis on innovation has not only effectively
changed the way clogging is performed, but how it physically limits its participants in the higher skill levels:

With the addition of toe stands, the clogging world has eliminated a lot of fine dancers. I’m not saying they shouldn't be performed but there are devastating injuries that can happen and we are not training properly for that. Clogging can be learned at any age but the upper level is for a limited few. And making that the standard for a win will eventually show a decline in the sport, I feel. There are many body types out there and clogging started out as something everyone could do. As the dance form evolves, the style is getting narrowed and limited to a specific body type and will eventually weed out opportunities for others who weren't blessed with track star legs. There will always be someone doing a drag slide somewhere but you won't see it in Utah in another 10 years.

(Survey Respondent, 2012)

Competitive Homogeneity

A principal feature of clogging, from its earliest recognised history as a recreational practice, had been the notion of personal and regional stylistic variation and interpretation (Seeger 1987). Prior to 1950, there were few codified names or officially recognised methods of performance of step patterns or styles. Since then there has been an increase in the standardisation of the movement, primarily due to the popularisation of the style outside its original context and the changing modes of transmission and enactment (see Chapter 3).

The nationwide proliferation of clogging competitions has accelerated processes of transformation. As innovation occurs within the competitive context, winners are copied and a narrowing of style occurs (Foley 1988, Hall 2008). The sequences for the Solos are created and approved by the AOS elite, and represent their values rather than those of the Intermountain West community as a whole. The step patterns look the same so the Solos look the same, and the dances that use the steps from the solos resemble each other. And those routines incorporating the Solo aesthetics and steps consistently win. This results in competitive homogeneity. 77

The movement techniques and patterns found in the All-Around solos are typical of but a narrow range of the numerous styles, interpretations, and uses of clogging

77 Paradoxically, a related enrichment of the movement vocabulary and technique typically follows. This refers to the “deepening” of style that Ni Bhriain (2010) notes in her work on competitive Irish step dancing. It is not contrary to the concept of narrowing, but rather an accompaniment.
nationally. Despite the organisation’s claim of hiring a wide variety of instructors from various locations, the collective style, look, and technique of the Solos have actually become quite similar. Since the All-Around Solo choreographers are like-minded elite competitive participants from the central locus of clogging in suburban Utah, the resulting choreographies reflect their stylistic homogeneity. Of the 150 Solos choreographed as of 2014, 133 of them were choreographed by a core of seven directors. The remaining nineteen Solos were created by nine others, three of which were AOS participants and six of which were imported national teachers. In spite of the goal to diversify the movement, most of the Solos are choreographed by those heavily trained and invested in the AOS system.

Competitive homogeneity can be viewed as a positive trend for those interested in discerning the best technical dancers, since the dancers can be adjudicated solely on the execution of movement sequences. The All-Around Solos provide, for the first time, a vehicle for the side-by-side comparison of dancers from different studios performing the same steps. One parent told me, “when my kids did the All-Around Solos, I especially think they benefitted from seeing how their moves/skills compared to others' around them, performing the exact same steps” (Julie Staley personal email correspondence, 2014). They are also viewed as a mechanism of sharing among the community, allowing everyone equal access to new and innovative movement technique and vocabulary, or “winning material” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). Directors previously inexperienced in Pro-level footwork patterns can learn and apply the Pro level Solo steps and techniques in their choreography, raising their own technical abilities and those of their students. Many of my respondents were grateful for the parity provided them through the institution of the Solos.

Some, however, decried the loss of regional and individual stylistic diversity. In the 1980s and 1990s, clog dancing in the Intermountain region exhibited wide regional differences, even within the close proximity of dancers in north central Utah. As a teenage clogger in the AOS competition circuit, I could determine a dancer’s studio, choreographer, or city by the stylistic or cultural symbols they projected. If a group of dancers in the 1980s were omitting the first sound of the double-toe, it meant they danced in Orem, Utah with Dennis Cobia. A group in the late 1980s using ballroom dance elements in their performance would likely be the Korner Kanyon Kickers or Buckles and Bows, both from Draper, Utah. In the early 1990s, a group dancing with
high knee lifts throughout their dance would likely be from the Ogden, Utah area. At the same period of time, a group using Jazz dance spins and leaps would most likely have choreographed by Misty Peterson from Sandy, Utah.

When the All-Around Solos debuted, the ease of using the provided steps and the instant validation that their use received at competitions resulted in a substantial loss of studio-regional differentiation. Some directors didn’t mind this. One survey respondent enthusiastically stated, “they let us use all the steps in our own dances, which means I have all this material I can use – my life just got easier!” Other directors made comments like “I hate them [the All-Around Solos], they take away from freestyle and make all studios and cloggers look the same and who is to say those teachers’ styles are the only way?” In reference to the dominant style found in the Solos one director said, “They need to be different, not all exactly the same” (survey respondents, 2012).

One director saw the Solos as “a good way for dancers to sharpen up steps- I see that.... but it's sooooo boring for the audience. It all seems very cookie cutter now. I'm actually a little over [disenchantment with] clogging for that reason” (survey respondent, 2012). “After watching thirty minutes of rows of dancers doing the exact same dance over and over again, the event feels impersonal and mass-produced” (survey respondent, 2012). One director lamented about “the art that clogging used to offer” before they were “all doing the same steps. Where's the art in that?” (multiple survey respondents, 2012). Some felt that there is a loss of “ownership” as well as “the joy”, or “freedom of expression through dance”, and “sharing without worrying about winning” that traditionally was central to the mountain dance aesthetic (multiple survey respondents, 2012). Another respondent pointed out that the solo programme “makes some of the job easy in that directors don't need to be creative or come up with their own material, and then those that do are not rewarded” (survey respondent, 2012). This can lead to “a lack of motivation to create because the ‘winning’ style is chosen by those who are spotlighted in DVD” at the expense of other, formerly valid stylistic choices.

One informant explained it this way:

It's just not as fun anymore... it seems like dances are repeated year after year after year and it's not even fun for me to sit and watch anymore because to me the art is gone. There are a few instructors that manage to infuse their own flavour and style into their clogging and those are the ones I enjoy. The others look like they made a machine that
manufactured identical cloggers and it's just creepy. Just my opinion I mean sure
they're sharp! But it's like you could get a different song and costume and you've got
the same routine again. UGH...

(Survey respondent, 2012)

The standardisation of clogging in the Intermountain West has resulted in its further
distanciation from its individual, rural, recreational Appalachian traditions. Through its
technology-based instruction, the personal and social interaction characteristic of the
dance practice in the Southeast has been diminished. Technical abilities have increased
remarkably, but individuality and spontaneity seem devalued. Even the dissemination
of the Solo sequences from a central organising body is contrary to the organic formats
in which the dance was initially cultivated. The Solo programme shifts the locus of
power in the community from independent, skilled innovators functioning within the
spheres of their own studios, to an institutionalised body of proven innovators working
together via AOS to create distributable standards of movement for the community as a
whole.

Dissention in the Community

As described in Chapter 3, conflict between tradition and innovation is not new to
participants of clogging communities. “Folk dance, as well as folklore in general, must
continually change in order to keep up with the needs of people who engage in it. We
are constantly figuring out which new cultural options we will embrace or reject”
(Matthews-DeNatale 1995). Through the history of American clogging, the emergence
of an increasingly standardised or transformed practice of the form, particularly in its
competitive context, has usually been accompanied by a criticism by ‘traditionalists’
(see for example the essays in Spalding and Woodside’s Communities in Motion,
1995). Since the days of Sam Queen and the Soco Gap Cloggers in Maggie Valley,
North Carolina, the direction of innovation and determination of style has been
influenced by a handful of brokers who shape and transform clogging practices.
Change is inevitable, and dancers are continually confronted with the decision to either
adopt the changes or find another path. Those who feel that a style other than their own
is being endorsed generally dislike the increased innovation or standardisation and
adjust their involvement.

When starting this research, I initially drew from my own experience as a
participant in this community to formulate my hypotheses. Through hundreds of
interviews with participants in the Intermountain West and nationally, and through extensive travels and participation in dance communities across the country, my perspective has been informed and broadened to incorporate numerous communal definitions of clogging. Once I undertook this study, I did my best, in spite of whatever participant biases I had, to explore these issues through numerous perspectives. In my 2012 survey, I especially encouraged participants to freely express their perceptions of the AOS organisation, both positive and negative, presenting the survey a neutral and confidential. Respondent directors were not required to indicate any information that might identify them or their students. Because of this anonymity, I became the sounding board for the generous airing of both grievances against and support for AOS policies and initiatives.

As evidenced by the comments from surveyed informants in the preceding sections, opinion on many AOS socio-cultural and political choices has not been uniform. This is understandable; the process of boundary negotiation within a pluralistic society renders dissention inevitable. Competitions are the core display events of this community, and competitions, after all, are “loci of political, economic, and cultural conflict” (Noyes 2003, p. 12) wherein identity and community self-perception are continually evaluated and redefined.

The All Around Solos in particular have aroused opposition among those with different perceptions of clogging. Some directors dislike the “dictation of style” (survey respondent, 2012) inherent in the Solos format. Several instructors surveyed mention that they felt the Solos are forcing them to dance in a different style than what they had done historically or preferred to do, in order to be successful in competition. One of the survey respondents mentioned that they felt “there has been an ousting of sorts with anyone who doesn't conform or stand for everything AOS puts out as the monopoly on 'good clogging’” (survey respondent). Trew (2000) suggests,

Part of a community’s sense of its own peripherality is fuelled by its perceived inability to affect the course of its own destiny. Characteristically, resentment is felt toward the political centre; manifested as feelings of powerlessness, of being misunderstood and underrepresented, ignored, exploited and patronised.

(Trew 2000, p. 21)

My research findings suggest that the majority of clogging groups and individuals nationwide, and particularly those AOS participants outside the AOS core in north
central Utah, prefer a less intricate style of footwork based on the historical ‘drag/slide’ style with little or no prescribed arm actions and fewer foreign stylistic adaptations. If they desire success in competition while adhering to these aesthetics, these directors and dancers have few opportunities in the Intermountain West region, besides competing solely in the lower levels (Novice, Beginning, and Intermediate) at AOS events. They are effectively marginalised in a community where the competition is the primary means of community participation and interaction (see also Foley 1988; 2012).

One of the conclusions I reached through this research is that there are very few options for cloggers in the Intermountain West who don’t wish to participate in AOS structures. If a studio does not wish to subscribe to the AOS cultural environment, their options are limited to self-arranged performances (end-of-year or holiday concerts, shopping mall exhibitions, state and county fairs, and so on) and tours to destinations like Disneyland and Branson, both hundreds of miles away from the Intermountain West. The closest non-AOS competitions are in Reno, Nevada and Phoenix, Arizona, also hundreds of miles away from Lagoon, the heart of the AOS homeland. Dancers alienated or disillusioned with intra-AOS politics, aesthetic choices, or awards results have little or no recourse besides submitting to communal dictates, or non-participation in AOS events. No other organisations are active in the area, and recreational clogging venues may exist in the Intermountain West, but I am not aware of them (see Chapter 6).

5.6 Chapter Summary

The AOS organisation both reflects and influences the basic desires and values of its community. Through the creation and distribution of cultural symbols and texts, it has sought to establish and maintain a position of economic and collective power and promote the practice of clogging in the Intermountain West, stabilising and broadening its participant base.

With these ends in mind, AOS assumed control of the community’s means of symbolic representation. This included sponsoring large-scale display events as the primary means of communal interaction and socialisation, and creating a homeland at the Lagoon amusement park. Performance ritual and pilgrimage were institutionalised.
Appealing to the technologically savvy rising generation of dancers, AOS created a logo and an interactive website projecting sleek, modern, competition-focused iconography. As part of its marketing efforts, AOS sought to rebrand the higher skill levels of clogging with the new name of ‘power tap’ to distance the practice from undesirable stereotypes and broaden its appeal.

Structurally, AOS created and adapted competition events, age divisions, and skill levels to motivate dancers’ participation in the community. The Show category expanded clogging parameters to include anything choreographers could imagine, as long as fifty per cent of the steps were some kind of percussive footwork. Improvisation was lost in the freestyle event, traditional gender and social roles were muted, and historic ties to Appalachian culture were minimised. By redesigning the clogging practice, the organisation essentially created a new public face projecting currency and salience both internally to its youthful clientele and externally to potential participants.

The 2005 AOS creation of the All-Around Solos also added a new, visible component to the competition ritual, and to the structure of studio practice as well. The All-Around Solo programme effectively placed current and AOS valued movement material in the hands of any dancer or instructor that purchased the DVDs. Through that distribution, chosen patterns and techniques were established as quasi-official behaviour and disseminated widely among the community. Through them, directors could determine level suitability of steps and access valued technique to facilitate the achievement of competitive success. Dancers gained more stage time, challenging routines to learn, and an event that developed confidence, technique and precision. And AOS benefited in increased revenues through DVD sales and competition entries, renewed energy and interest flowing through the community, and augmented control over the community’s means of symbolic representation.

The Solos reflected the aesthetic of the elite of the community, with the added element of competition establishing a meritocratic and hierarchical setting in which success was defined by conformity to and adoption of the idealised cultural capital produced by the central power. The All-Around Solo Programme centralised the locus of power in the community in the AOS elite; the movement choices found in the solos represented a narrowly defined set of technical and aesthetic options. Competitive
homogeneity created parity among competitors and produced dancers of technical brilliance but forced regional diversity to the margins of the practice. The All-Around Solo Committee’s initial goal of inclusivity and technical achievement was attained to a degree, but also resulted in a narrowing of style and the alienation of those who did not conform to the current trend.
Chapter 6
Assignment of Symbolic Value

I have claimed that America On Stage is an interest-based community of dancers bound by cultural symbols formed and maintained for and within a competitive context. In Chapter 2, I discussed aspects and processes of community building and the role of cultural brokers within such systems. Chapter 3 presented the ‘system of collective representations’ and the historical construction of the community. Chapter 4 examined the various cultural brokers in this community and the forms around which their influence and interaction take. Chapter 5 analysed the organisation’s creation and distribution of cultural symbols and texts to the Intermountain West clogging community. This chapter discusses how value is assigned to those symbols, and the effect of AOS community-building initiatives on the Intermountain West clogging community at large.

6.1 The Business of Clogging

As a commercial entity, America on Stage strives to increase participation in its events by making them as flexible and motivating as possible. AOS founder, Bryan Steele, was a dance community member who recognised both the potential of the dance as an expressive and flexible performance genre, and the auspicious nature of the market for a successful business venture. AOS grew from being the producer of a single event in a loosely unified clogging community in the Intermountain West region, to a proactive organising body sponsoring numerous events, with a major network of invested cultural brokers (dancers, teachers and organisers) shaping the aesthetics and social hierarchy within a dance community of thousands of participants.

The organisation’s revenue is primarily contingent upon the registration fees paid by participants for each event in which they compete at the various AOS events throughout the year. Participants are the organisation’s commodity, providing AOS with the income necessary for maintenance and growth. Therefore, AOS has a vested interest in the financial and competitive success and growth of its participating studios.
Frequently, studios that are competitively successful at AOS events experience growth in enrolment and participation of satisfied clients, which then creates more participants in AOS events. This viewpoint was evident throughout my 2000 interview with AOS founder, Bryan Steele, who related to me repeatedly that the organisation was “interested in helping studios grow” and that “winning motivates participation” (Bryan Steele personal interview, 2000).

With this guiding philosophy, AOS has set out to influence the clogging community in the Intermountain West, largely through the production of large-scale display events and the distribution of culturally significant symbols, described in Chapter 5. It influences and often creates what Cohen (2003) calls the “cluster of symbolic and ideological map references” which constitutes the community’s social orientation (Cohen 2003, p.57). Social conditioning and commercial manipulation of identity are cultural brokerage tools used in the expansion of AOS interests.

AOS understands the financial as well as the ideological needs of its community’s fiscal and culturally conservative demographics. Their business model is admirable from a financial viewpoint. When establishing a competition in a new area, AOS contacts a local clogging team and asks them to sponsor the event, to be the local ‘face’ while AOS organises the logistics of venue, registration, sound, contracts, liability insurance, music licensing, security costs, layout, programme creation and printing, and so on. The sponsoring director is responsible for recruiting other dancers to attend the event, bring their own teams, and provide volunteers (usually studio parents and the dancers themselves) to staff the event. The sponsor and Greg Tucker (the AOS chief executive officer) negotiate a mutually acceptable contract to share the profits of the event, depending on the overall value of the services provided by the sponsor versus the contributions of AOS (Greg Tucker personal email correspondence, 2014).

AOS charges less for their events than do other dance competitions in the region, which is attractive to its constituency. In the 2014-2015 competitive season, the Aspire jazz/hip-hop/lyrical competition circuit fees charged $47 to $50 per dancer per duet or trio, and $22 per dancer for group routines. These prices are typical of the general dance market nationwide. The same year, AOS charged $22 per dancer per duet or trio.

78 Located at https://aspiredancepro.com/fees/ accessed on 20 Aug 2014
and $13 per dancer per group routine.\(^7\) The recruitment of the volunteers is a key element, which allows the organisation to be financially solvent without charging the higher fees of other dance competitions in the region (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2015). Clogging routines are also usually shorter than jazz or lyrical routines, averaging about two minutes long, which allows more teams to perform on stage in a shorter amount of time.

As an event producer, the America On Stage organisation wields primary social power over the presentation of (the \textit{mise-en-scene}) and the authority over the adjudication of performances. It is problematic to navigate social hierarchisation from a commercial perspective; the nature of competition assigns winners and losers. Foucault calls this the “art of punishment” (Foucault 1977, p. 181; see also Foley 2013), and results in Alexander’s “unequal legitimacy of texts” (Alexander 2004, p. 532). Assigning ‘winners’ means creating ‘losers’ at the same time, and it can demoralise or negatively impact the ‘customer’ of the business. Again, the social power flows both ways. But in this competition-driven community, hierarchisation is a necessary outcome. AOS tries to balance this dichotomy by rewarding participation, as well as exceptional skill, at its events.

The effort to include the largest number of competitors possible and afford them the greatest chance to be successful is based on the guiding philosophy of America on Stage’s founder Bryan Steele:

\begin{quote}
I’m not interested in finding out who the best team is, I couldn’t care less, because there are so many good ones. So, in order to do that, you have to have a lot of winners, because winning builds confidence. So we started to create lots and lots of divisions, all the levels occurred, multiple awards, all based on this idea of creating confidence in people and helping, so that people leave happy. There is only one thing that matters in a competition in general, either you win or you lose. You can go to the most disorganised competition and win and it was the best competition of the year. You can go to the most organised and lose and it was the worst of the year. It’s a funny thing.

(Bryan Steele personal interview, 2000)
\end{quote}

According to Steele’s philosophy, increasing the number of winners would also increase the participation within the organisation, and in return, the studios. Greg Tucker, Steele’s successor, believes that the size and success of the America on Stage events are a direct result Steele’s philosophy and is committed to continuing it.

\(^7\) http://www.americaonstage.org/OnlineRegistration/Forms/OnlineRegistrationMaster.htm accessed on 20 Aug 2014
Bryan’s goal, and I hope that I follow it, is not to find out who’s the best. It is to make as many people as possible, winners. If the dancers feel successful they will come back and keep competing.

(Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012)

6.2 Competition Structures: More Levels, More Winners

The motto of AOS is “where the magic of a WIN takes centre stage!”

AOS attempts to create ‘winners,’ and keep their competitive structures as motivating as possible, by constantly adjusting their competitions’ skill level differentiation, age divisions, award philosophy, awards iconography, and awards categories.

Skill Level Differentiation

The first structure implemented by the organisation to motivate dancers was that of skill level differentiation. The AOS approach to skill level differs greatly from the other clogging organisations. ACHF has only one skill level in which dancers compete, which means that younger or less experienced dancers will likely have less success at a competition. CCA and CLOG/NCHC both have two levels, Amateur/Masters and Amateur/Challenge respectively, providing some differentiation. AOS currently has six levels at which dancers can compete against other teams and individuals of the same skill level. This has been one of America on Stage’s selling points since the 1980s, when they began to offer three skill levels: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced. By the mid-1990s, it had expanded to include a Novice category for the newest dancers, and the Championship (or ‘Champ’) and Professional (“Pro”) levels. These skill level changes are a reflection of both the desire to increase the proportion of ‘winners’ in the community, and the magnitude of the technical innovations appropriated to clogging (buck, pullbacks, toe stands, and other dance elements) during this thirty-year time span in the Intermountain West (see Chapter 3). As the technical level of dancers continued to grow and deepen, further stratification was deemed necessary in order to create parity among the competitors and allow more dancers at nearly any level the chance to be successful (Bryan Steele personal interview, 2012).

80 From the AOS website http://www.americaonstage.org/ accessed in 12 March 2015
This promotes a certain perceived ‘fairness’, which is critical to the success of the event from the participants’ perspective. The studios and the organisation both benefit if the participants feel that they are treated fairly and only have to compete with other teams of roughly their same ability level. Periodic dissatisfaction with results is always an issue in the subjective adjudication of an art form, but multiple skill level options helps create increased parity between competing teams to help limit that dissatisfaction.

Age Divisions

In conjunction with this effort to create more winners, Steele introduced an age division breakdown based on the relative size of the community rather than on any known similarities found in age groupings. As the community had grown in size, so had the number of age divisions at the annual Lagoon competition (shown in Table 21 below). In 1984, there were three age divisions, which steadily grew to eight by the year 2000. As the number of dancers increased each year, Steele saw it was necessary to separate the dancers into more manageable groupings.

<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary (-11)</td>
<td>Elementary (-10)</td>
<td>Pee Wee (2-6)</td>
<td>Pee Wee (2-6)</td>
<td>4 &amp; Under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior (12-14)</td>
<td>Junior (11-13)</td>
<td>Mini (7-8)</td>
<td>Mini (7-8)</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior (15+)</td>
<td>Senior (14-25)</td>
<td>Elementary (9-11)</td>
<td>Elementary (9-10)</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult (26+)</td>
<td>Junior (12-14)</td>
<td>Preteen (11-12)</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senior (15-25)</td>
<td>Junior (13-14)</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult (26+)</td>
<td>Senior (15-17)</td>
<td>13-14</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Young Adult (18-25)</td>
<td>15-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult (26+)</td>
<td>17-18</td>
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<td>19-21</td>
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<td>22-25</td>
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<td></td>
<td>26-29</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30 &amp; over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Changes in the breakdown of age divisions at various stages of the annual competition held at Lagoon by both Clog America and America On Stage. ‘Pee-wee’ is an idiosyncratic American term connoting very young participants.

From 2012 through 2015, there were twelve published age divisions, and no longer are the divisions named due to the increased number. These divisions can change from year to year and competition to competition depending on the ages of the contestants who enrol in the event. The change further increased the chances of groups and individuals to be competitively successful. In the table above, it is possible to identify the largest concentrations of dancers by locating the narrowest age divisions.
Award Philosophy: Ranking Versus Placement

In the mid-1990s, AOS dramatically changed its competition award structure from a ‘placement’ model to that of a ‘ranking’ one. The *placement* model, in this case, rewards the highest scoring dancer in the category and division with a first place, the second highest score with a second place, and so on. The *ranking* model (also referred to as ‘multiple awards’) judges each dancer in the category and division against a predetermined standard and then ranks them according to their relationship to that standard. It is possible in a ranking model to have multiple first place, second place, and third place awards in the same category and division. The adoption of the ranking model was central to the Bryan Steele’s philosophy on motivating dancers. If more dancers can win a ‘first place’, more dancers (and their parents) go home happy and want to continue participating.

This policy also allows more dancers to be involved in America On Stage’s premiere competition event; the Nationals competition at Lagoon is open to any dancer or team that has won a first place at any competitive activity that year in any category or event (regardless of it being an AOS event or not). This could mean that a team could compete at any clogging, dance, or talent contest and qualify for Nationals.

Not long after the implementation of the ranking awards model, Steele recognised that at the higher levels of competition dancers began losing motivation. He noticed that “at the higher levels when you water down the awards you also water down the level of motivation” (Bryan Steele Interview, 2000). Steele was also convinced that when dancers are motivated they innovate. Likewise, when motivation is taken away or made less impactful at the higher levels, innovation ceases to be important among participants. In 1997, Steele worked to remedy the situation by creating the Professional (or ‘Pro’) level that would employ a placement awards structure. Once dancers reached this highest level of competition, they would then be competing for only one first place, second place, or third place in each category and age division. Tucker acknowledged the need for the placement model at the highest level but stated outright that the “pro level kills more dancers, or makes them stop dancing, because you instantly make a loser out of a winner, there’s only one award, there’s just one first place” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). However, the results of the 2012
directors survey contained in Table 22, below, show almost unanimous support of the placement system at the Pro Level.

This awarding scheme is generally well received by the community. As seen below in Tables 22 and 23, the majority of the team directors and instructors generally support the current awards structure, though with some considerable dissent in the lower levels due to the perception that the ranking system deters motivation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directors/instructors thoughts about the Ranking awards system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love it, more dancers leave as winners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It works fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not really care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike it because it takes away motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dislike it because it make students think they’re better than they are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: The number of directors and instructors responding to question nineteen in the director’s survey (found in Appendix A) regarding their impression of the ranking awards system used by AOS from the Novice through Championship levels of competition. Some directors may have chosen to not answer this question for a number of reasons including a lack of knowledge of these systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directors/instructors thoughts about the Pro-level placement awards system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I love it, it makes a clear winner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It motivates students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes it more exciting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not really care either way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It takes the fun out of the competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are demoralized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: The number of directors and instructors responding to question twenty in the survey (found in Appendix A) regarding their impression of the placement awards system used by AOS Pro level of competition. Some directors may have chosen to not answer this question for a number of reasons including a lack of knowledge of these systems.

The surveyed judges also provided similar responses to questions about the awards structure. When asked if they preferred the ranking or placement awarding scheme, most of them agreed that the ranking system was best for the lower levels of competition, and were mostly pleased about the placement system in the Pro level. Some would prefer to see the placement system in the three top levels of competition (Advanced, Champ, and Pro). One judge was completely against the idea of ranking, stating, “I really can’t stand multiple first places unless it is maybe for very young kids” ([name withheld] personal email correspondence, 2012). Another judge argued, “maybe it is the business side of me but I actually like the idea of encouraging the lower levels with a lot of awards. Let kids who are working hard and participating be rewarded and encouraged to continue” ([name withheld] personal email
correspondence, 2012). Overall, it appears that the community has accepted and embraced the current structure of awards in AOS. It provides the lower levels and younger participants the competitive success that helps keep them active and involved, and the top-level competitors can vie for hierarchal placement where the highest awards are limited.

In 2010, in an effort to increase motivation in the Champ and Pro levels, Tucker also opted to create ‘double awards’. The concept, appropriated from regional jazz dance competitions, creates an additional award layered upon the existing systems. A score of 29.2 or higher out of 30 receives a first place in the ranking system, and a 29.5 or higher earns a High Gold award in addition to the first place award. According to Tucker, it marks true exceptionality and “a higher achievement” than just a first place ranking (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012a). In the Pro level each division has but one first place winner, but numerous competitors despite their placement can be awarded a High Gold award in recognition of their high score. A Pro dancer may receive a second or third place in their category, yet still receive a High Gold award for accomplishment in an extremely competitive division. In this way a ‘ranking’ structure is accompanying the ‘placement’ structure in the Pro level, to increase the potential for widespread success and satisfaction.

The institution of the All-Around Solos in the Pro level proved to be problematic for the organisation. With a large number of competitors, all performing the same sequence, and little or no distinction in execution, it would be difficult to pick only one winner. Consequently, the organisation decided to use the ranking system of scoring for all All-Around Solo events at the competition even in the Pro level.

Awards Iconography: Visual Symbols of Success

An important aspect of the AOS competitive culture is the distribution of symbolic accessories (or award emblems) to participants at each event. To signify that mere participation is an achievement, every dancer at a competition receives a medallion on a looped ribbon, meant to be worn around the neck. Each competition has a separate and unique medallion. Dancers are also awarded ribbons for every performance they compete with their teams, and the colour of the ribbon denotes a first (blue), second (red) or third (yellow) place ranking. Further, if dancers compete in individual or duet events like Freestyle, Duets, or All-Around Solos, they are awarded a small pin that
corresponds to and indicates their resulting ranking (first, second or third place) in that event. The pins are then to be attached to the ribbon for the corresponding competition. The medals and pins project symbolic statements of achievement, and dancers both in and out of costume wear their medals with varying amounts of pins on the ribbon throughout the day of the event.

Plate 15: Image of medals, pins and ribbons for team, duet and individual performances at AOS competitions. Photograph © of the author.

Trophies are another important element of AOS competition iconography. Each studio that enters an event receives a participation trophy indicating the name of the competitive event and the year (see Plate 14 above). Other trophies, for both team and individual events, are awarded for specific achievements at the competition; top scoring team in a division, top scoring freestyle, top duet, etc. At the beginning of each competition, a profusion of gleaming, golden trophies line a table at the back, or to the side, of each stage. This imagery visually enhances the awareness of potential competitive success and heightens anticipation. Competitive clogging studios usually display these trophies conspicuously on their premises to signify their participation in competition ideology, attest to the success of their program, and motivate dancers to equal or greater competitive achievement.
6.3 Overall and Nationals Awards

There are also a number of awards offered only in conjunction with the Nationals competition or that culminate with the awards ceremony, the Showcase Spectacular, held at the end of the Nationals competition at Lagoon. These awards are The All-American Team, Triple Crown, Hall of Fame, MVP, Ring of Glory, Director of the Year, and Superstar awards.

The All-American Team

In the early years of Clog America (precursor to America On Stage), the All Rocky Mountain Team was an elite group selected by competition adjudicators annually from participants in the solo Freestyle event, at what was then the largest competition of the year, the Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition. To be chosen for the All Rocky Mountain Team was the highest personal honour an individual dancer could receive in the year’s competition season, to which I can attest as I was a competitor at this time and experienced it first-hand. Part of its importance was linked to the pomp and circumstance associated with this honour. After the distribution of all other awards, those who had taken a first place in their own individual categories or were especially chosen because of a high score competed once more to determine who would be chosen for the All Rocky Mountain Team.

Once the judges had made their decision on the members of the team, the true spectacle began. While the theme song from the 1976 film Rocky played loudly in the background (incidentally, not a traditional tune), the announcer called the members of the team up one at a time from the audience. Each name read was followed by biographical information about that individual. Dancers received their All Rocky Mountain Team jackets, with their name embroidered (or to be embroidered) on the front. It was an honour to be chosen for the team and conceptually represented being among the elite solo cloggers in the Western United States. Participation at the Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition was the only way to be selected for this significant distinction.

In the late 1990s, as the competition transformed from the Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition of Clog America to the Western Nationals of America On Stage, the All Rocky Mountain Team likewise transformed into the All-American Team. The
change from a regional All-Star team to an All-American one reflects the transformation of the formerly regional competition into its current perceived ‘National’ status, despite the fact that it still attracts almost exclusively Intermountain West teams. The term ‘Nationals’ was a deliberate choice by AOS cultural brokers to enhance the perception of the organisation’s legitimacy and prestige. To claim membership in the All-American team of a ‘national’ competition would therefore project even greater achievement.

With the growth of the AOS community, the All-American Team’s membership has grown as well. Since 1986, there has been a nearly constant increase in the number of dancers granted membership to the team, seen in the table below. The first team, in 1986, was made up of sixteen of the top male and female freestylers at the competition (Table 24). In 1991, it increased to forty-four dancers, with the distinction of a Junior and Senior All Rocky Mountain team. In 1993, the number had more than doubled to ninety-three members, and by 2000, there were 134 members (see Table 24).

Table 24: The number of dancers taken as part of the All-American selections at the National’s competition from 1986 until present. Information in this table can be found at: http://www.americaonstage.org/Competitions/Lagoon/NW/westernnationalsateam.htm accessed December, 2012. This table only takes into consideration Senior All Americans.

According to Tucker, the number of team members mirrors the growth or contraction of the community in general. As the total number of dancers and competition entrants went up, the number of All-American team members also grew proportionally. Tucker claims that the number of All-Americans is roughly ten per cent of the total number of dancers at the competition. With just under 1,900 dancers participating in the 2012 Nationals competition, 165 is close to that percentage, unless
one includes the additional 129 recipients of the Junior All-American Team created that year, which brings the total up to 284 Junior/Senior All-Americans in 2012.

In 2015, there were ‘only’ 157 All-Americans, but the additional 237 Junior All-Americans brought the total number of Junior and Senior All-Americans to 394 for that year\(^8^1\). When combined, it appears that the total number of All-American award winners usually exceeds the stated ten per cent of participants. Again, having more winners equates to having more satisfied customers.

From its inception, membership in the All-American team has been symbolically powerful and an important driving force in the aspirations of competitors. An important part of this symbolism is the team jacket pictured in Plate 10 in Chapter 5. Members of the All-American team receive commemorative jackets with their name embroidered on the front. At competitions and performances throughout the year (even when the weather does not call for one) the jackets are worn as an indication of status. As the dancers continue to compete and are selected for the team subsequent times, those years are indicated the back of the jacket. The jackets have become a very real, prestigious display of symbolic status within the community.

**Triple Crown**

Created in 1988 as a means to stimulate rivalry and motivate competition participation among studio teams, the Triple Crown has become an event for the top clogging teams at the Nationals clogging competition. Teams that choose to participate enter one team dance, one duet, and one freestyle dancer to compete for the Triple Crown, and pay an additional registration fee. There are actually two Triple Crown winners: one Junior winner (ages six to fourteen), and one Senior winner (ages fifteen and over). Years ago this event was extremely popular among the top teams. In the immediate years that followed its debut in 1988, the Triple Crown was an important award and teams were very much interested in it as a community status symbol. Dozens of teams would enter both the Junior and Senior divisions (Bryan Steele personal interview, 2012).

Since that time, its popularity has declined dramatically, primarily due to the proliferation of other team, duet, and individual events in which dancers and groups can

participate. At the 2012 National’s competition, only one team entered in the Junior age division, and five competed in the Senior division: two senior teams (ages fifteen to seventeen), but that year AOS introduced a new age division, Young Adult (ages eighteen to twenty-five), in which three teams participated. In 2015, two teams entered the Junior age division (now ages twelve to fourteen), and two teams entered in the Senior age division (ages fifteen through nineteen). However, in Young Adult (now ages twenty through twenty-nine) four teams entered. NRG Young Adult Girlz won the crown, but all four teams received ‘high gold’ awards (explained below). This particular increase in statistics reveals the perceived need for the next three national awards: the Hall of Fame, MVP and the Ring of Glory.

Hall of Fame

As the community and All-American team grew in size, the organisation recognised the need to keep top dancers motivated and interested in seeking additional years of membership in the All-American team. The Hall of Fame was created in 1995 to provide such an incentive. Once a dancer has been chosen for the All-American team a total of ten times, they are inducted into the Hall of Fame (no physical building or ‘Hall’ actually exists). Induction consists of the special presentation of the winner at the Showcase Spectacular at the end of Nationals, and the receipt of a leather Hall of Fame jacket. The jacket is emblazoned with a prominent American flag and the large letters USA on the left sleeve. This jacket displays no text or iconography related to AOS or clogging. Their name is also added to a banner of previous winners on display at the Nationals event (shown below in Plate 16) and posted on a dedicated page on its website.

MVP (Most Valuable Player)

In 1998, again to keep the top dancers motivated, AOS introduced the MVP award recognising the top soloist and duet in each of the Pro-level individual and duet event categories. The names of those who have won the MVP award are added to large banners hanging on the West side of the main thoroughfare running between the four large pavilions at the National’s competition (shown below in Plate 16). A name can appear numerous times (often in immediate succession) on each or several banners. The

recurrence of these names is an indication of how dominant certain individuals have been in their competitive pursuits in AOS. This is likely the reason for the creation of the ‘Rookie MVP’ award in 2006, which recognises one new female and one new male dancer each year to the MVP ranks. In this way, despite the domination of certain individual dancers for extended lengths of time, new participants can still be increasingly recognised.

Plate 16: Hall of Fame and MVP banners hanging along the East facing side of the Davis Pavilion where the Awards Spectacular takes place. The image belongs to the author. May 2013.

*Ring of Glory*

The Ring of Glory, an awarded golden ring, was added in 2010 as an additional achievement beyond the Hall of Fame recognition. To qualify, the dancer “must have 20 years All-American of which ten years must include All-Star Freestyle”\(^83\). To further incentivise dancers at the top level, the organisation included “any MVP’s won after entering the hall of fame as one extra year towards the ring”\(^84\). At present, there are only seven dancers who have achieved that level\(^85\). This award particularly


\(^{85}\) [http://www.americaonstage.org/Competitions/Lagoon/NW/westernnationalshof.htm](http://www.americaonstage.org/Competitions/Lagoon/NW/westernnationalshof.htm)
motivates a small number of older dancers, including many studio directors and choreographers, who still compete with their teams.

**SUPERStar Awards**

The SUPERStar award was started in the 2012 season as way to reward overall participation at AOS throughout the competitive season (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2013). At each AOS event, points are awarded each time a dancer or team competes at an event; twenty-five points for a first place ranking, fifteen for second, five for third. The SUPERStar award is given to the individual dancers and teams that accumulate the largest amount of points during the competitive year (November through May). In the solo events, the dancer alone accumulates those points toward their year-end total. For the team events, the team is awarded the points based on the size of the team and the award. For example, if a team of ten dancers wins a first place ranking, they win 250 points, or fifty if they win a third place. Tucker admits that it rewards large teams and those that attend more events, but that is the purpose of the award: to reward and stimulate those who are more heavily involved in the organisation.

Figure 28: A screenshot of the webpage where AOS posts the constantly updated SUPERStar and Directors of the Year rankings. The two columns on the left had side of the page are the final results of the 2012 season awards for the Dance competitions. The two large columns on the right are the updated rankings for the 2012-2013 clogging season, for individual and duet awards, as of December, 29 2012, found at http://www.americaonstage.org/. On the far right, at the bottom of the page are the rankings for the directors of the year in clogging.
The accumulating rankings are tallied throughout the year and posted on the organisations webpage (see Figure 28 above). Avid dancers can follow their names up and down the list as the competition season progresses. There is no distinction between ages or ability levels in the posted rankings. For instance, in the column in the centre of the page shown below are found dancers of all ages: Mallori Vawdrey was ten years old, and Kandice Anderson was in her late twenties. The latter is an instructor and the former is student.

If a dancer competes and wins first place in each of the All-Around Solos, they receive 125 points at one event. This increases motivation to learn and compete the All-Around solos. Some high level dancers compete in the All-Around Solos in both Championship and Professional levels, and there is no rule against such behaviour. For example, in Figure 28 above, Mallori Vawdrey accumulated 240 points from one competition held in November 2012. In order to achieve such a number she would have had to compete in no less than ten individual events, and each level only has a possibility of seven (five All-Around Solos, Freestyle, and A Cappella). Some of her events must have been in the Championship level.

The system seems to be working well; Vawdrey was the overall winner of the 2014 award, with 995 points. The winner of the 2015 award, Heather Vaughn, scored 3,105 points in the SUPERStar competition. This takes into consideration a change in the structure that year to award double points to the second competition attended, triple points to the third, and so on. This is another example of the numerous ways that AOS adjusts its award structure to incentivise participation in multiple AOS categories and events.

The SUPERStar award for teams follows the same pattern; the largest teams who compete the most dances at the most competitions, and dance well, receive the award. In 2012, two of the top three SUPERStar Professional-level teams came from the same studio. Rocky Mountain Premier came in first place with 10,990 points and Rocky Mountain Sensations came in third with 5,065 points: both come from the Rocky Mountain Express studio in Orem, Utah (Figure 28 above). The second place team, with 6,250 points was Extreme Rhythm, which is also located in Orem, Utah. The success of these teams is not surprising. The directors of the Rocky Mountain Express studio are Greg Tucker and his wife Maria: Greg also runs the America On Stage...
organisation. The director of the Extreme Rhythm is Bethany Hulse, who is the director of the All-Around Solo programme for the organisation. Their instrumental role in the organisation leads to widespread involvement in numerous competitions per year, and to the ability of their students to master the aesthetic movement practices sponsored by their directors, the AOS elite. This connection, coupled with the numerous categories in which each team participated, facilitated the accumulation of points and the eventual victory. Every year these teams feature prominently on the list of winners, along with the Fab Five teams (four different studios directed by the five Whitear sisters, most of whom regularly choreograph the All-Around Solos) and recently, teams from two or three newer studios (such as In Step Clogging and Foothill Cloggers) who have deeply invested in the All-Around Solo programme and AOS events and who therefore are currently achieving success in the competitive circuit.

**Director of the Year**

The awards discussed up to this point have been focused on the student participants, but there are equally motivating awards for directors and teachers besides the studio grants mentioned in Chapter 5. Each competition year, the top ten directors with the most entries and the most wins for their studio (including both individual and team events) are awarded the Director of the Year award. It is the SUPERStar award for studio directors. The studios with the greatest accumulation of points after Nationals win the award. Like the studio grants, this was initiated to motivate directors to enter their teams in as many events and competitions as possible.

**The Showcase Spectacular**

This galactic array of awards climaxes on the Saturday evening of the Nationals competition at Lagoon, the last night of the last day of the year’s competitive season, in a ritualistic awards ceremony called the Showcase Spectacular. The relatively bland Davis Pavilion stage is transformed with specialty lighting and props into an impressive spectacle (see Plate 17 below). The stage is covered in brightly coloured and shimmering ribbons and columns that create a festive and celebratory atmosphere. At this ceremony the certificates, trophies, jackets, and other awards are distributed, the All-American Team is announced, and the top Professional level dancers compete one last time for the MVP awards.
Between 800 and 1,000 dances, spectators, adjudicators and organisers, representing the core elite of the community, attend each year’s Showcase. The dress code is casual, but the seating arrangement within the pavilion is hierarchical and highly indicative of the organisation’s socio-economic politics. The pavilion contains rows of picnic tables with attached benches oriented perpendicularly to the stage. The picnic tables located closest to the stage have signs reserving them for certain dance studios and their supporters. These are the largest and most successful studios participating in the Professional categories, including Rocky Mountain Express (Provo, Utah), Extreme Rhythm (Provo, Utah), and the Fab Five teams (Utah and Idaho). Anyone not in these powerful studios must find a place to sit or stand somewhere toward the back or sides of the hall.

The Awards Spectacular focuses particularly on dancers and teams in the Professional level, and it occurs approximately two hours after the last competitive events. Unless they are there to support a sibling or friend, dancers from the lower levels are not typically inclined to attend. “No, I never stayed for the Showcase Spectacular. It was too late and night and we were either riding rides with our studio friends or back swimming at the hotel with our families” (Courtney Kelly personal email correspondence, 2014). Other evidence supporting this claim is when lower level
awards, such as the Junior All-American team and SUPERStar awards, are announced, usually very few of the dancers are on hand to collect them. ‘Minor’ studios (with fewer Pro level dancers, overall entries, or studio wins) usually do not linger for the ceremony either. This is primarily a ritual for those highly invested in the AOS community.

6.4 Results of the AOS Awards System

The purpose of the awards mentioned above is to create interest in and motivation for full participation in AOS competitive activities. AOS is a business and follows the practice of marketing and selling its product – competition – to its community base through attractive and technologically sophisticated iconography, lenient rules structures and a complex arrangement of awards systems. I have noticed three specific outcomes of this multifaceted awards system: the recontextualisation of clogging as a sport, increased participation in the AOS events overall, and the continued participation of a select group of more mature Professional level dancers.

Clogging as Sport

The efforts of AOS to centre interactions of the clogging community in the Intermountain West on competition have effectively created a market-driven, sport-like approach to the practice over its original social and recreational contexts. Accentuating this highly competitive atmosphere is AOS’ overwhelming use of American sports-based terminology; the terms MVP (Most Valuable Player), Hall of Fame, Triple Crown (a series of three well-known horse races), All-American, and Super Star are all sports terms appropriated by AOS to motivate participation. Moreover, the very use of the term ‘team’ to signify the group of dancers on stage connotes a sports-related competitive identity. Non-competitive, performance-based dance groups in the Intermountain West tend to use terms like ‘ensemble’, ‘company’ or ‘group’ to label their organisations.

The driving force behind actions and choices in the AOS community is based more on the concept of dance as sport than dance as cultural heritage or even art. And as Bayles and Orland (1993) suggest, competition naturally “centres not on making work, but on collecting the symbols of acceptance and approval of that work” (p. 71). This
focus is certainly the case for many choreographers in the AOS system who create choreographies not merely as artistic expressions but tools to attain the ultimate goal of collecting the visible, potent ‘symbols of acceptance and approval’: trophies, jackets, titles and banners. Again, this does not describe every director in the Intermountain West Region, but most of the directors of highly competitive studios ‘choreograph for competition’ when selecting theme, costume, event and movement (Robbie Walker, Shannon Edwards, Greg Tucker personal interviews, 2014), removing the practice even further from its vernacular, participatory Appalachian roots.

*Increased Participation in AOS Events*

With the exception of a significant drop in the 2007-2008 competitive year following a widespread world economic downturn, there has been continually increasing and sustained participation in AOS events (see Table 26 in Chapter 5). Due to AOS award initiatives like the SUPERStar Award, a dancer who may have been formerly satisfied doing a duet and freestyle in the Pro category will now compete both, as well as all five All-Around Solos, in the Champ category as well, to earn more SUPERStar points. A beginner wanting to advance to the Intermediate level may buy the Intermediate All-Around Solos from their director and learn them on their own. A dancer who may have wanted to move on to other interests after a few years on the All-American team may decide to compete more years to achieve Hall of Fame Status. Participation means power to AOS and is an indication of the stabilisation of its consumer base.

Secondly, the AOS award structure entices individual dancers at the highest level of skill to stay involved for longer periods of time. In the first two decades of the organisation, participants in age divisions over twenty years of age were rare (Bryan Steele personal interview 2000). Today, the twenty-six and older age category is still relatively small, but participation has been gradually and steadily increasing.

Twenty years ago, after competing in the Senior category which was then ages thirteen to seventeen, you were done. Nowadays, the average Senior team age has gone up to ages fifteen through nineteen, and the age of the Young adult categories is twenty through twenty-nine. Actually it’s older. The age categories have shifted up to accommodate these dominating women. The current

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86 This contrasts to Judy Weymouth’s Canadian step dance contest community, which disallows future participation by dancers who have already won an event three times.
This elite core of individuals continue to be active in the community to achieve the long-term goals associated with the AOS awards structure, which makes it socially acceptable and even admirable to still compete beyond the teenage years. The majority of dancers still do not continue to dance past the age of eighteen or nineteen. This is primarily due to other life pursuits (college, career, and family being chief among them) becoming more important in their lives than participation in clogging. This is an important characteristic of this community that demonstrates a somewhat superficial attachment to clogging as a youthful pastime instead of as a long-term recreational activity. For those that do continue to compete, they are typically dancers who are heavily invested in the organisation.

Unlike ten or twenty years ago, many directors and instructors continue dancing with the teams they teach. This constrains turnover in the winning elite. In the past, such as when I competed, the best dancers would win top honours for two or three years during their peak, then graduate from high school, move away to college or jobs, and make way for the next generation of ambitious young dancers. I never won the freestyle event until Randy Vawdrey went away to school, and David Spangenthal never won while I competed. This is changing. At Nationals at Lagoon in 2012, at least two mothers competed with and against their own daughters in the Professional level individual and duet events. Many of the more mature elite dancers not only run their own studios now, but also actively compete. Bethany Hulse, Maria and Greg Tucker, and the Whitear family’s Fab Five sisters all still dance with their teams and in individual and duet events. 20 years ago, this was not the case.

Due to the placement awards structure and the prestigious overall awards given at the Pro level, the space on the awards stand is limited. It may frustrate those striving to achieve that elevation of success with such well-established competitors to overcome. As one dance mother put it, “it was frustrating watching a 11-12 year old compete against her own dance studio instructor that was 20+ years older than her” (name
withheld personal email correspondence, 2014). The AOS awards system challenges and motivates these dominating women and men to remain actively engaged in competition participation.

6.5 A Community Based on Competition

America On Stage attempts to build a community of motivated competitors, and it succeeds. It consciously constructs its symbolic community, creating and projecting symbols of competition and cultural currency, and creates large-scale display events as the primary context for social interaction, which Foucault calls the “setting in order” (1977, p. 181). Its competitions are well organised and well attended. Competition rules and awards structures encourage innovation and stimulate achievement. AOS attempts to anticipate and fill the needs of its target markets, including the young, ambitious, technologically and culturally aware Intermountain West dancers, the dancers’ parents who provide financial backing, and the expansion- and prestige-seeking studio director. The organisation is a financial success, and the clogging community in the Intermountain West has grown to become a veritable phenomenon within the nationwide clogging community. Its conscious choice to focus on competition delivers positive and negative aspects in the context of building a community of dancers.

Positive Aspects of a Competitive Community: “Something to Strive For”

Positive aspects of competition include, but are not limited to, increased motivation, energising ritual experience, and reifying social interaction. Due to the element of adjudication, competitions can focus and inspire dancers to great exertion. Dancers work hard throughout the year to learn and refine choreographed routines, and the successful performance of those routines is immensely gratifying, leading to what Alexander (2004) calls cathepsis, a dancer’s self-affirmation after the successfully ‘fused’ performance. One dancer described it this way: “there’s such a rush of adrenaline when you get onstage – I think it makes you dance harder. And when you know you’ve done a good job and the audience is roaring… it’s such a high!” (Natalie Nix personal email correspondence, 2014). “Competitions gave my son a goal and something to strive for, a reason to practice hard and try his best” (Heidi Overson personal email correspondence, 2014).
I absolutely think that the process of preparing for a competition is important. It is important to learn the skills of cleaning and perfecting the dances. When you are working towards this at a competition, it drives the students to work harder towards the goal. No matter the outcome of the score, the process is important.

(Michelle Stone personal email correspondence, 2014)

One parent appreciated the fact that her daughters experienced performing in pressure situations as they gained valuable life experience; “it has helped their physical as well as cognitive developments and brought great confidence and joy to their lives”

(Rebecca Elliott personal email correspondence, October 2014).

Many dancers and their families truly enjoy the excitement, spectacle and ritual of an AOS competition. “We love watching the various choreography and latest trends danced in competition!” (Rebecca Elliott personal email, October 2015) “As a parent it is so cool to see my son on stage doing what he loves more than anything. It makes him so happy to compete and share the dance with an audience! (Jody Andreasen personal email correspondence, 2014). “The best part of competing was the way the team, teacher and my own family all came together to help show off the skills learned that year” (Courtney Kelly personal email correspondence, 2014). “Nationals is the climax of our spring! Our whole family goes down to watch the dancers and ride the rides” (Jaylene Nix personal email correspondence, 2015).

Dancers and teams can grow in strength and maturity when obligations to their team supersede personal or physical challenges. I know dancers who have danced while passing kidney stones, mourning the loss of a loved one, or struggling with physical or emotional adversity. Teammates and coaches can be powerful sources of support and encouragement during conspicuous moments of emotional or physical stress. Sometimes membership in this community even transcends the competitive emphasis in times of tragedy or disaster. In 2012, a young dancer with LaChere’s Fab Five Clogging Studio in Pocatello, Idaho, was diagnosed with cancer. The entire studio, dancers and supports alike, wore orange ribbons at the Idaho State Championships and Nationals at Lagoon that year. Orange ribbons were also handed out at both competitions to anyone wishing to show support for the struggling dancer, and though the response was not overwhelming, it was still remarkable. Several unrelated teams, parents and even dancers on stage wore the ribbons signalling their sympathy. It demonstrated a moment when the health of a dancer transcended the importance of the inter-studio rivalries and competitiveness for many participants.
Community reification at these events is most common between members of the same studio. “I like watching my child perform and see how those dancers come together as a team to do their best during the performance” (Emi Flamm personal email correspondence, 2014). “My kids feel needed on their team” (Julie Staley personal email correspondence, 2014). “We like the teamwork and friendships it builds to go to competitions with their team” (Jody Andreasen personal email correspondence, 2014). Through competition, one mother related, “my daughter really connected with her clogging friends. They are some of her best friends” (Janan Grange personal email correspondence, 2014). Dancers’ loyalty and affinity may not necessarily extend to AOS itself, but attending AOS events enhances the bonds that unify dancers within the studio or team.

Disadvantages of Competition

Through the process of conducting this research I have identified three primary community-building limitations of the AOS system. These include: 1) the limited definition of AOS shared history and tradition as discussed in Chapter 5, 2) the divisive nature of competition itself, and 3) the lack of recreational contexts providing unadjudicated, sustained social interaction between dancers from different studios.

Limited Definitions of AOS History and Tradition

As discussed in Chapter 2, many communities rely on shared history and ritualised practice as primary factors of interrelatedness and connectivity. History and tradition are valuable elements of cultural capital in communities such as Irish step dance (Foley 2013, Hall 1985), English clog dance (Moore 2007), 20th century Appalachian mountain dancing (Feintuch 1981, Matthews 1983), and in Howard’s (2009) ACHF clogging community at Maggie Valley’s Stompin’ Grounds, to name a few.

As discussed in Chapter 5, both history and tradition assume atypical roles in the AOS community, which has taken deliberate steps to distance itself from ‘traditional’ practices of clogging. If history is “an artful assembly of materials from the past, designed for usefulness in the future” (Glassie 1995, p. 395), AOS consciously designs its history to celebrate, not its historical ties to the Appalachian values of a hundred years ago, but its culture of innovation and its own past and present ‘winners’. This validates its choices in the creation and marketing of cultural symbols and texts and its
use of social hierarchisation. Some of the community’s most visible social constructs (like the AOS website, banners at Nationals, and the awards structures) and official AOS traditions (competition structures and events, the pilgrimage to Nationals at Lagoon, the Showcase Spectacular) commemorate the community’s past and present elite achievers, rather than the history and practice of clogging as a whole. AOS redefines and essentialises community history to suit its ideology (Schlesinger 1992, Turino 2008).

This consciously pragmatic approach satisfies AOS’s proclaimed purposes, which is to spread clogging and help dance studios grow (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012). According to Steele’s and Tucker’s philosophy, studios grow by successfully marketing the practice of clogging to the Intermountain West community, creating ‘winners’ at competitions, and by keeping the dance form relevant and appealing to its youthful participants.

What is relevant and appealing to these participants? In this community, currency, technical ability and creativity are highly valued aspects of the adjudicated performance of clogging. Dance is a potent cultural signifier (Foley 2013); in its AOS manifestation it reflects the cultural currency, pluralistic identities, and multiple interests of the Intermountain West’s clogging community members. AOS accepts elements of popular culture that reflect its members’ identity and life experience. Instead of considering the introduction of new ideas from external sources as destabilising encroachments (Ben-Amos 1984), AOS embraces and rewards the clever and creative incorporation of popular culture into clogging performance, as long as at least fifty per cent of the choreography involves percussive footwork, communal codes of modesty and decency are respected (see Chapter 4), and the movement approximates the institutionally established aesthetic typified by performances like the All-Around Solos. The internal stimuli received by the organisation from its market inspire its boundary negotiation to appropriate mass, rather than past, culture.

I believe the constricted definition of ‘history’ and ‘tradition’ used by AOS limits their potency as instruments of “social cohesion”, though they do enact political purpose (Schlesinger 1992, pp. 46-7). AOS concentrates its efforts on only one aspect of the practice of clogging - competition - relegating others (such as recreating, social
interaction, and sharing), which may have specific value or functionality to some community members, to the background. I discuss this further in the next two sections.

The Inequality of Texts: the Nature of Competition

The second drawback of a community based on competition is the divisive nature of competition itself. The nature of competition requires the designation of winners and losers, and an inherent “inequality of texts” (Alexander 2004). Even with the ‘democratisation’ of valued aesthetic movement through the All-Around Solos, community members at a competition are compared, differentiated, excluded or included, validated or peripheralised. As Foucault states, “rank in itself serves as reward or punishment” (Foucault 1977, p. 181; see also Foley 2013, p. 189). In this community, participation in or the appreciation of the act of clogging unifies members. However, the competitive contexts of the dance practice results in the assignment of value to cultural performance and texts, social stratification, and the devaluation of some otherwise valid manifestations of the dance (see Chapter 5).

Many scholars argue against the inclusion of competition in cultural enactment. In his book entitled No Contest: the Case against Competition, Alfie Kohn (1992) claims that competition is “the common denominator of American life”, and that all aspects of modern, global existence are construed by its terms (Kohn 1992, p. 1). According to Kohn, competition in a social setting is promoted on four central myths, listed in order of popularity which he attempts to disprove: 1) “that competition is an unavoidable fact of life”, 2) “that competition motivates us to do our best”, 3) ”that contests provide the best, if not the only, way to have a good time”, and 4) ”that competition builds character, that it is good for self-confidence” (Kohn 1992, p. 8). Kohn (1992) makes the argument for the dissolution of competitive events in favour or more cooperative ones, as all cultural expressions are valuable. In reference to two competing actions, products, or performances, he states, “it is the significance invested in these differences and not the differences themselves that constitutes competition” (Kohn 1992, p. 43). Therefore, success in competition assigns associative value - Bourdieu’s (1977) ‘cultural capital’, to the winner at the expense of other, still valuable, expressions. Many of Kohn’s arguments contradict much of the feedback I received from parents of competitive clog dancers, but his theories are nevertheless thought provoking.
In Chapter 2, I discussed the difference between participatory and presentational dance. Competitions are almost exclusively constructed of presentational dance performance. Turino (2008) portrays participatory performance generally as a more effective method of intimately connecting people than presentational performance, if cohesion creation is the goal. Likewise, Kapchan (2003) discourses effectively on the difference between ‘performance as a gift’ versus ‘performance as a commodity’, and how differing contexts for performance create different social relations. She demonstrated this principle through describing the performance of a folk play in two different contexts. The first was for a local audience who was unable to financially compensate the actors, but who gathered with them after the performance “to share food in an atmosphere of mutual goodwill, creating a spontaneous community of performance that reposed on shared values” (p. 134). The second performance was for an audience of paying tourists. After this performance there was very little interaction between audience and performer. According to Kapchan, although the dancers were “far better compensated for their labor, [they] were highly dissatisfied with the nature of the short-term commodity exchange, which led to no enduring bonds of reciprocal obligation or sociability” (2003, p 134). When dancing is performed as a gift, and when the audience becomes “co-participants” in the cultural exchange, the experience tends to be more satisfying than when cultural performance is enacted as a mere commodity.

According to Bayles and Orland (1993), a healthy artistic environment is one where artists are not in competition with one another (p. 71). “Unfortunately” they add, “healthy artistic environments are about as common as unicorns” (Bayles and Orland 1993, p. 71). Large display events like competitions bring energy to a community – which can be channelled in multiple ways. Emotions run high, as do expectations. All of those socio-spatial webs of power converge intensely in a single event. Subjective scoring may be questioned. Dancers may be seen in tears after a poor performance, low ranking or costume malfunction. Some become physically ill with the pressure (see Hall 1999). Competition can bring out the best in dancers, as evidenced by the quotes from enthusiastic proponents earlier in this chapter. But it can also arouse

87 There is an exception to this assertion. Periodically at a competition, the emcee will announce a break in the dancing so the judges can get food and walk around a little. Often in AOS competitions, the host will elect to play a popular dance song like “the Cha Cha Slide” or “Cotton Eyed Joe”, the social dances for which are commonly known among Intermountain West clogging participants. The host invites participants of any kind to go to the stage and dance the steps, creating the only participatory dance experience at an AOS event.
competitiveness, jealousy and distrust. More than a mere performance, a competition involves energy, drama, and potential disaster or triumph.

As found in most competitive communities involving subjective adjudication, there are often elements of drama and political subterfuge, particularly among the most advanced levels where culture capital stakes are high. There are rarely open outbursts or loud public antagonistic encounters between directors or dancers at AOS competitions; most are quite friendly with each other, at least superficially. However, from my experience and that of many of my informants, behind-the-scenes negotiations of position, timing, and scoring do exist. While it may or may not be true, some directors are convinced that results are historically manipulated. For example, they have seen event line-ups completely rearranged so a director could ensure that their team’s performance times would show them off to greatest effect. Also, some have witnessed teams from different studios openly mock or derisively challenge each other backstage. These behaviours are not regular occurrences, but they do happen.

Instead of building “bonds of inclusive and mutually reassuring engagement” (Turino 2008, p. 27), a competition tends to generate pressure to critique all aspects of clogging performance, including everything from makeup application and music editing techniques to costume trends. From a personal perspective, I have found myself watching performances at a competition with my dancers, and mentally comparing and assessing my artistic or movement choices with other studios. I believe that this is an automatic reaction of human behaviour in such an environment; inter-studio relationships are often tenuously tinged with protection of the ego from potential threats. Dancers, directors, and even parents constantly compare as the process of adjudication is enacted. Even the wearing of studio paraphernalia at these events draws obvious visual boundaries marking participants’ allegiance.

In Chapter 2, I referenced Michael Mann’s (1986) assertion that “an ideological movement that increases the mutual trust and collective morale of a group may enhance their collective powers and be rewarded with more zealous adherence” (Mann 1986, p.

88 An example of this behavior is when a director will intentionally have dancers arrive late to the stage due to changing costumes. This way they can ensure dancing later in the event. From my experience as an adjudicator, judges typically do not award the highest points to those that dance early in the category. This allows the judge to move higher or lower throughout the event category. This understanding persuades directors to put their teams toward the end of the category then they have the most potential for a high, or even perfect, score.
22). I argue, however, that in a community constantly comparing and ranking its participants, a community’s “mutual trust” and “collective” morale may actually suffer as community members are placed in competition against each other. When highest honours are limited, each opposing individual, team or studio can be perceived as a potential threat to one’s own success. According to one clogger, “Once I was waiting in line for the big Dance Off at Nationals and a girl dancing on stage before me fell. The girl in line in front of me murmured, ‘yes! One less person I have to worry about’” (Courtney Kelly personal email correspondence, 2015). Competition can actually create social boundaries between participants instead of uniting them in a mutually satisfactory experience. Another participant stated, “We never really talked to dancers from other studios at competitions. I loved being with my studio friends, but we’d be too busy practicing or changing costumes to get to know dancers from other studios, except by sight. Plus they were our competition, so we didn’t necessarily like each other as a general rule” (Ashlyn Cottle personal email correspondence, 2014).

In the AOS system, neither the ‘history’ and ‘tradition’ it promotes, nor the divisive nature of competition itself, encourages sustained social interaction and ‘mutually reassuring engagement’ between members of different studios, even though they may share considerable *habitus* and interests. This leads to the third limitation of AOS community building efforts: the lack of alternate participatory contexts of clogging.

**Sustained Social Interaction and Recreational Expressions**

Thomas (2001) employs Wenger’s three principles of community formation in her analysis of a participatory clogging community in Virginia. The first, and most basic of these, is “sustained interpersonal relationships” (Thomas 2001, p. 173). Turino (2008) agrees that strong communities feature coordinated sessions of socialisation while Noyes (2003) suggests that social interaction and communication are common characteristics of a community as they build and sustain unifying relationships (Noyes 2003, p. 33). Noyes further explains that “communities are not just reified representations, and ideological claims are not convincing without experiential confirmation” (Noyes 2003, p. 28). Frith (1996) and Turner (1979) also affirm that identity, either individual or cultural, results from the creation of ritualised patterns of relationships.
In my experience, and from my extensive research, cloggers in the Intermountain West do not usually experience deep and ‘sustained’ social interaction with other teams against which they compete. As has been shown, interaction in the Intermountain West clogging community revolves around competitions. Other officially sanctioned AOS social opportunities are limited to the one workshop described in Chapter 5. Unadjudicated, recreational opportunities for clogging participation are extremely limited in the region.

Dancers in the AOS system dancers can, and often do, build profound and enduring relationships with members of their own teams and studios. Many directors actively cultivate social interaction and bonding within their own membership. As one director states, “Strengthening culture has actually become increasingly important at our studio” (Robbie Walker personal email correspondence, 2015). Studio-specific social opportunities described by my informants include holiday-themed parties (Halloween, Christmas, Valentine’s Day), student appreciation day, birthday recognitions, elaborate end-of-year studio concerts, and class parties. Many studios take students on ‘tours’ to destinations like Branson, Missouri and Disneyland (California or Florida) where they can both perform and socialise recreationally with each other. With rare exceptions (like a professional percussive footwork show sponsored jointly by some of the Utah County clogging studios, and two groups from the same area whose elite teams toured New York City together), these social opportunities are experienced between members of the same studio.

In the not so distant history of clogging in the Intermountain West, competition was not the only setting of interaction. During the 1980s, a number of camps and workshops were sponsored by Clog America (later AOS) during the summer months (after the end-of-year Lagoon competition) to motivate dancers and spread movement ideas. Bryan Steele and Dennis Cobia imported expert instructors, mostly from the Southeast, to teach. I informally inquired with a handful of studio owners and organisers as to why these workshops only lasted into the early 1990s and not beyond. Bethany Hulse, director of the Extreme Rhythm Cloggers as well as the AOS All-Around Solo Programme, suggested that it could have been due to the decreased involvement of key “energetic” individuals like Cobia and eventually Steele (Bethany Hulse personal interview, 2012). A studio owner from Southern Idaho informed me that she thought it was because dancers became so competitive that the desire to share was overshadowed
by the desire to win and be unique. Others I spoke with related that they had never considered the change to be unnatural. I shared with them my theory that this change was due to an increased focus on competition and the growing desire among dancers in the Intermountain West at the time to move in their own direction instead of following the trends of the Southeast. After sharing this theory with those I interviewed, I heard comments like, “I think you’re right” (informal interview with studio owner), and “Oh, yeah, totally” (Shannon Edwards personal interview, 2012). Even while supporting the value of participatory dance in community reification, Turino (2008) adds, “participatory performance does not fit well with the broader cultural values of the capitalist-cosmopolitan formation, where competition and hierarchy are prominent and profit making is often a primary goal” (Turino 2008, pp. 35-36). I believe this is precisely what we are seeing within the AOS community.

In comparison, recreational events are a significant presence in the other three national organisation’s social structures. They sponsor everything from weekend workshops and camps to clogging cruises, as well as competitions. At a workshop, classes are offered for all ability levels and dancers select the classes they wish to attend. While participants at AOS events are usually under the age of twenty, participants at the recreational workshops in other parts of the country have a much greater age range, with adults and even elderly participants joining with younger dancers. The CLOG National convention, which I’ve attended and taught at numerous times, convenes over Thanksgiving weekend (the fourth weekend in November) at varying locations across the country. The fact that dancers of all ages (I would guess the average age of participants to be in their 50s) prioritise clogging community events over any other family or social obligations on one of the biggest holidays of the year to eat, dance and socialise with each other at a hotel is emblematic of the deeper power that the recreational practice of the dance has to bond a community.

While undertaking my research, I wondered if any cloggers from the Intermountain West participated in these conventions after moving on from the AOS competitive circuit. I contacted Susan Phillips, who is the CLOG executive director, for statistics on participation in the CLOG National Convention, its biggest event, by cloggers from Utah, Idaho and Colorado. She replied that in 2014, when the convention was accessibly located in the western United States, they had one participant from Utah and one from Idaho out of about 550 participants. She says that every time the Convention
is “out west”, attendance from Intermountain West cloggers is usually one per cent or less of the total attendees (Susan Phillips personal email correspondence, 2016). This demonstrates the relative isolation of dancers in the Intermountain West within the larger national clogging community.

Two experiences related to me from different sources demonstrate the potential differences between recreational and competitive community events. The first was from JoAnn Gibbs, founder of the Clogging Leaders of Georgia, the National Clogging Organisation, and the National Clogging Convention, who described her experience with recreational clogging at one of the early workshops held at Fontana Village, North Carolina in the early 1980s:

In the years that we did Possum Holler before Bill [Nichols] left we had so many people we had to dance them outside on the sidewalk, that’s how bad it got. We had to set up a picnic table for the instructors to teach on, to get them up high enough, people didn’t seem to mind, they didn’t care, they were having a good time. Late at night after we’d been dancing all day, we’d go back to the cabin and dance some more, then we’d have people come by and we’d dance with them, it was just wild and crazy and it was the best of all times. It was what clogging to me was really all about. We were sharing steps, we were sharing ideas, we were sharing our love of what we did to the point that nothing could distract us, and nothing could discourage us.

(JoAnn Gibbs personal interview, 2003)

The second comes from the mother of a young female dancer who was a member of a highly competitive team at the heart of the AOS community in Utah County:

The thing that I really disliked was the big formal night when they awarded the awards [the Showcase Spectacular]. The same kids went up every time and would act like they were better than everyone else. I didn't feel it was a good place to build self-esteem for all the other dancers. I think you could definitely find a way to still reward the hard work of the best dancers but not make the other dancers go away feeling bad about themselves… Another reason it wasn't beneficial for my student was because she wants to see everyone do well and succeed. That's just the personality she has. She just LOVED clogging but not all the back scene things. She didn't like dancers trying to beat other dancers just for a jacket. She felt that getting that JACKET was important until she saw several people in tears over not getting one. After that, it just wasn't a priority for her. She was more into how she could contribute to making the team better.

([Name withheld] personal email correspondence, 2014)

I do not intend to imply that competitive dance communities cannot experience deep feelings of social cohesion. If “acting in common makes community” (Noyes 2003, p. 29), participants in the AOS system create community by the common act of competitive clogging and attending AOS events. Team bonding at clogging events,
even competitive ones, can be considerable. Quotes from parents and dancers in preceding sections validate this. Having participated in the AOS competitions myself, as a particularly successful competitor, I still remember the intense satisfaction of winning events with my clogging team and being selected for the All-American Team. The argument I make here, based on my experience and research, is that the socially enacted bonds formed by competitive participation in AOS events may not be as durable and lasting as those formed in other communities providing interactive contexts for social enactment and “inclusive and mutually reassuring engagement” (Turino 2008, p. 27). When I graduated from high school at age eighteen, I ended my association with the AOS (then Clog America) competitive circuit and went off to college to pursue my education and other interests. I did not even consider prolonging participation in the community as an option; in my experience, most dancers still don’t. Communal reification in this competitive environment, for me, was powerful but ephemeral. One of my former students equated competitive glory to a ‘sugar high’, sweet and powerful but fleeting. If perhaps AOS included social or recreational outlets in its official structures, it could extend continued community participation past the teenage years and foster more resilient, unifying relationships (Noyes 2003).89

In basing its communal interactions in only one context, competitions, AOS may be inhibiting its appeal to possible participants. Considering Mann’s (1986), Noyes’ (2003) and Turino’s (2008) concept of the pluralistic nature of the collective, community members may benefit from an array of contexts for the performance of clogging from which to choose. Individual dancers have distinctive needs; they may resonate with different styles and contexts of clogging. Older dancers incapable of physically challenging competitive technique may appreciate workshops offering a variety of skill levels. Some of the non-competitive studios in the area may appreciate an unadjudicated, festival-type performance context. In this sense, AOS does not address the plurality within its own membership by offering only one primary context for cultural performance and interaction.

89 This opinion is supported by celebrated national teacher Jeff Driggs (who resides in Appalachia, in the state of West Virginia), who told me in a personal interview in April 2015 that Bryan Steele had flown him out to the Intermountain West in the early 1990s to study America On Stage and recommend improvements or ways to market the community. Driggs said that his biggest critique had been the lack of AOS recreational/nonadjudicated activities. Steele thanked him generously for his advice, but implemented none of his recommendations.
One could very well argue that recreation and socialisation are not perhaps the goal of America On Stage, which is after all a commercial entity. If workshops and the recreational activities of the other national organisations prove less profitable than their competitions, why would AOS sponsor them? There is no tradition of multigenerational clog dancing in the Intermountain West, so why force one? In AOS culture, clogging has become another ‘sport’ practised by youth seeking exercise, skill development and achievement. Perhaps a historically, emotionally, and tradition-bound community is not required to “grow studios and spread clogging” in the Intermountain West (Greg Tucker personal Interview, 2013)? Or perhaps it is an aspect of potential activity currently untapped by the organisation?

6.6 Chapter Summary

The stated goal of AOS is to help studios grow and to spread clogging; the assignation of value to its cultural structures becomes a motivating force for students and studios to participate in its community events. Guided by the philosophy that increasing ‘winners’ bolsters confidence and further event participation, AOS creates numerous winners through using a ranking rather than a placement system, designing new events, creating new age divisions and ability levels of competition, and setting up a motivational awards systems, particularly among the advanced levels of dancers. The administrative choices of the organisation, in response to the attitudes and identities of its interest-based community of participants, have effectively transformed clogging into the competitive, market-driven, highly technical and innovative form of dancing found at its events today.

The sport-like context created by the dominant AOS focus on competition has both benefits and limitations in the process of community building. Positive aspects of competition include increased motivation, energised ritual experience, and reified social interaction between members of the same studio or team. Limitations of this choice include an insignificance of shared history and tradition, the divisive effects of community members competing against each other in the processes of social hierarchisation, and the lack of recreational outlets providing sustained, unadjudicated social interaction and unconditionally reassuring communal reification. Its foundation on competition motivates a core of competitively ambitious members in AOS, but
peripheralises or excludes those preferring other contexts or manifestations of the dance.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the principal background, findings and implications of this research. It accumulates the findings included herein into a succinct summary of the issues that characterise the competitive clog dance community in the Intermountain West, offers concluding observations on their consequences, and provides direction for future research on this community and related topics.

American clogging was born out of multiple cultural, musical and dance backgrounds in a conservative and moderately isolated mountain region of the Southeastern United States. Throughout the 20th century, clogging was spread nationwide, transformed, redefined and reinterpreted through a series of events and efforts by individuals and organisations alike, motivated by various interests including recreation, dissemination, expansion, innovation, and preservation. Today, clogging is found throughout the country as a diverse dance practice in its technical execution, multiple organisational structures and social functions.

This study, one of the few academic analyses of the socio-cultural aspects of contemporary competitive clogging, briefly summarises the history of group clogging from its rural beginnings in the Southeastern Appalachian Mountains to one of its many contemporary manifestations, that of competitive clogging in the Intermountain West. During its journey from a rural, personal, local expression to a national practice, clogging experienced processes of standardisation, institutionalisation, transformation, appropriation and competition. These processes were influenced by cultural brokers, individuals and organisations that variously exerted social power in shaping the history, traditions, technique and the participatory and performative contexts of the dance.

This objective of this study was to examine the America On Stage (AOS) organisation as a cultural broker by investigating its efforts to build and maintain a community of interactive clog dancers in the Intermountain West, two thousand miles away from clogging’s Appalachian homeland. This research was grounded in the ethnochoreological and phenomenological hermeneutic approaches to cultural studies. It made use of a framework found in Alexander’s (2004) theory of cultural pragmatics, which enabled me to dissect the complex system of communal interactions and cultural
performance into six valuable subsets. These were: 1) the systems of collective representations, 2) the actors, 3) the audience and observers, 4) the means of symbolic production, 5) *mise-en-scène*, and 6) social power (Alexander 2004). My decades of experience and intimate knowledge of the dance practice was augmented by extensive fieldwork excursions, observations, and interactions. I believe these tools and methods assisted me in successfully achieving the objectives of this study.

The principal findings of this study are grounded in the understanding that AOS is a competition-sanctioning organisation with stated motivations of spreading clogging and strengthening dance studios in the Intermountain West. In order to achieve success in these aims, AOS undertakes deliberate activities and initiatives to promote, stabilise, and energise perceptions of community and membership among participants.

7.1 AOS Methods and Success

The methods AOS uses to construct a community of participants include: 1) the creation and distribution of symbolic representations of identity, 2) the sponsorship of the means of production and *mise en scène* for pragmatic performance (competition), 3) the dissemination of culturally significant aesthetics, and 4) the assignment of value to symbolic representations delivered therein (adjudication).

*Creation of Symbolic Representations*

In its creation of symbolic communal representations, such as its logo, website, merchandise, and competitive events, AOS succeeds in shaping community by redefining the aesthetic and technical ‘practice’ of clogging in a way that resonates with its young, cross-trained, suburban, non-Southern participants. AOS capitalises on its geographical and ideological distanciation from ‘traditional’ and ‘rural’ Southeastern clogging by embracing and projecting cultural symbols highlighting its currency with contemporary global culture. The organisation broadens clogging’s appeal to new, more urban, environments through using terms like ‘power tap’, and iconography that is modern, technologically sophisticated, and sleek. Additionally, AOS has established a new ‘homeland’ at the Lagoon Amusement Park and created ritualised events of considerable spectacle and commercial profitability.

AOS has expanded its sphere of influence by broadening the scope of acceptable practices within the dance medium. Dancers, teachers and choreographers were, and
continue to be, liberated and encouraged to select music, costuming and themes salient to their experience and aesthetic preference. Elements from other dance styles are freely appropriated and conventionalised within loosely recognised parameters. The intentionally vague nature of its rules structure removes obstacles to participation by any clogging group who may want to be involved. Despite all its appropriations and transformations, clogging is still recognisable within its community, though more traditional practitioners may claim otherwise (see Chapter 5).

Competitions, the Ultimate Display Event

As the geographical and ideological centre of the clogging dance community in this region, AOS promotes clogging competitions as the primary context for communal interaction. One of the principal goals of this research was to examine the webs of social power within the community, and how they are created, controlled, and expanded. The research found that in the competitive clogging community of the Intermountain West, within the sanctioned confines of America On Stage, social power is primarily derived from competitive success. Sustained competitive success allows groups and individuals entrée into what I refer to as ‘the AOS elite’, which are widely regarded as the standard-bearers and acknowledged innovators of symbolic value and future trends for the community as a whole.

Another finding of this research was that a dancer’s loyalty to the practice of clogging, ritualised in team-based practice and energised by competitive motivations, could be substantial at the studio level. Strong feelings of social comradeship and achievement among team members can be generated through participation in AOS. As the primary focus of highly competitive dance teams, AOS events have a powerful influence on personal and collective motivation and camaraderie.

Dissemination of Culturally Significant Aesthetics

This thesis has argued that the AOS organisation has been successful in institutionalising movement and controlling the dissemination of culturally significant aesthetics. I have illustrated that the All-Around Solos, created by AOS, are symbolic of the ideology and practice of the organisation in building its competitive community. AOS is the only national clogging organisation to essentially institutionalise technique and execution aesthetics in the form of pre-choreographed dances (All-Around Solos),
learned in studios or individually and then performed and adjudicated in the competitive setting.

The All-Around Solos are a regulated cultural performance encoded with established and recognisable institutional meaning. A committee comprised of select, top-tier studio teachers/directors in the Intermountain West choreographs and films the solos, then distributes them via DVD to the community for a fee through the organisation. Their specified goal is competitive inclusivity: “everyone has access to this winning material” (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2012). For those at the ideological core of the community, which generally corresponds to the geographical centre as well, this represents a democratisation of knowledge. My research findings indicate that many directors approve of the All-Around Solos; teachers are provided with pre-choreographed, institutionally valued movement to incorporate into their repertoire, and the Solos help visually define skill level stratification. Many parents are pleased; their dancers are able to perform five times on stage for the price of one, if they learn all five solos within their skill level. Many dancers are also pleased, having one more event in which to compete, as well as a reduced fear of dancing alone on stage and having to choreograph the movement themselves as in the other individual events. Furthermore, the organisation profits; this new event accounted for 15% of its overall entries in the 2014 Nationals at Lagoon and 22% of annual competition revenue the same year (Greg Tucker personal interview, 2015).

Assigning Value and Rewarding Participation

I have argued in the thesis that AOS further succeeds in community building by creating motivational structures to ensure and reward participation in its events. These efforts include the creation of new levels (like Champ and Pro), categories (Show and the All-Around Solo), awards (MVP), and recognitions (Hall of Fame) to invigorate and challenge dancers, and its generous and pliable process of value assignment encourages participation. Studio grants financially reward directors for their studios’ event attendance. Competition, therefore, proves a benefit for the commercial prospects of both the studios and the organisation. The attraction of competitively successful teams draws ambitious students and parents, and their financial backing. As the clogging community in the Intermountain West expands and becomes committed to
participation, AOS is rewarded with greater financial standing and increased social power.

Every community deals with political navigation. Since its participants are also its customers, AOS has made efforts to minimise the negative aspects of a competitive culture (such as adjudicative subjectivity and political posturing) by adopting a ‘ranking’ awards system that rewards individual achievement in the lower levels of competition, while keeping a comparison-based ‘placement’ system, which hierarchises one group or individual above another, to motivate and incentivise those in the higher levels. Through these organisational choices, AOS has, to a great degree, stabilised and expanded its membership base, energised its participants, and protected itself from external competition. This is made easy, as it remains the only clogging organisation with any presence in the region.

7.2 Limitations of the AOS Community Building Choices

As a cultural broker, AOS succeeds in creating an expansive, cohesive community in some ways, but its policies are limited in other significant ways. My research found limitations of the AOS community building strategies which include the following: 1) disagreement over dictation of style 2) the hierarchisation inherent in competitive structures 3) limited, sustained social interaction and ‘mutually affirming engagement’, and 4) the absence of recreational options that enable enduring participation and community reification.

Problematised Aesthetics: the All-Around Solos

The findings of this research suggest that the AOS goal of ‘inclusivity’ is not fully actualised; in fact, the institutionalisation of the All-Around Solo Programme has resulted in an increasingly polarised community. The All-Around Solos provide competitively valuable movement patterns, which anyone can access to augment success at AOS events. However, those same movement sequences represent an approved and institutionalised modality that largely excludes diversity.

Those who do not dance the ‘winning material’, or at least in its style (high knees, choreographed arm and head action, and so forth), are not awarded status within the
AOS community, though their artistic vision may be equally valuable within other national clogging contexts. Results of the institutionalising process of these dances include a further narrowing of style within competitive clogging practice, an accompanying loss of regional stylistic differentiation, and the adjudicatory alienation of those dancers who do not conform to these established aesthetics.

**Competition and Hierarchisation**

It has been documented throughout this study (Chapters 5 and 6) that creating ‘competitive success’ and ‘winners’ encompasses most of the efforts and initiatives of AOS, which promotes its events with the phrase ‘where the magic of a win takes centre stage’ (Chapter 5.2). Competition is central to the philosophy of AOS, through which it attempts to encourage participation and community growth.

Though competition may be a motivating factor for many clog dancers in the Intermountain West region, it may also be divisive and exclusionary. At the end of the competition, there are winners and losers, and hierarchised social standings further alienate those who do not conform. Those groups and individuals at the ideological core of the competitive community regard the organisation’s efforts as an enrichment of the movement vocabulary, function, and aesthetic. Those on the ideological periphery, which generally corresponds to its geographical relationship as well, see a loss of diversity in movement options and of acceptance within the increasingly institutionalised operations of the organisation. In this way, AOS limits its ability to create maximum social cohesion within its community.

**Limited, Sustained Social Interaction**

Alexander (2004) states that ritual effectiveness energises the participants and attaches them to each other (Alexander 2004). The policies and initiatives of AOS, while responsive to and reflective of the ideologies of a large number of its participants, do not particularly engender loyalty to the organisation, or to ‘attach’ dancers from rival studios to each other or to the wider AOS community. This research highlights that considerable comradeship may be felt within the private dance studio, where dancers spend substantial time (and money) instilling the dance practice in their bodies and building socially enacted bonds of membership. At the AOS competitions, teachers, dancers and supporters all travel to the competition site and simultaneously experience
the dramatic social pageantry involved in the event. However, my findings suggest that the socially enacted bond of community and belonging to a larger association created by participation in these competitive events is not particularly durable. Although stratospheric heights of technical virtuosity are reached, I surmise that the competitive experience of cultural performance within the AOS organisation provides limited, mutually bonding engagement.

Furthermore, I would argue that Lagoon as a homeland for AOS competitions is problematic in creating community cohesion; it is a destination in itself, replete with amusements and diversions. Competitors engage in their events, and then disperse with friends or family to mingle with the other crowds of amusement park attendees to enjoy the rides, games and food of the park. The nature of its sprawling geography does not necessarily encourage or inspire dancers to fraternise with those from other studios, or even with those from the same group or team.

Consequently, cloggers in the AOS community typically bond with other members of their studio, but not with the extended community or with AOS at large. This is likely one of the primary reasons why most dancers quit dancing altogether when they graduate from high school and move to a new location for work or higher education. Without the support structure of the dance studio and team, their attachment to the dance form and AOS is interrupted and reduced. Due to a relatively long history of this trend, it seems to have become established that competitive clogging is ordinarily associated with youthful participants. In some instances, a small number of dancers have continued to compete into their adulthood. However, such extended participation has been confined to individuals closely connected to well established studios and teams.

**Absence of Recreational Events**

This study suggests that a dance community based on competition (as opposed, for example, to nationalism, recreation, or tradition) may prosper commercially but may find it challenging to inspire unity and retain long-term community membership. Because of its sponsorship of solely competitive events, AOS does not foster characteristics that might promote enduring communal affiliations and unhierarchised, socially bonding manifestations. These findings support previous studies by scholars such as Feintuch (1981), Matthews (1983), Foley (1988, 2011, 2013), Thomas (2001),
Moore (2007), and Howard (2009) that argue that dance, as a recreational practice and as an expression of culture, shared history, tradition and social cohesion can create an intense community building experience. Therefore, a community like the one that participates in AOS events, based almost exclusively on competition, is limited in its ability to produce a sustained and deeply bonded affiliation. This thesis further concludes that the AOS clogging community in the Intermountain West might benefit economically and ideologically from institutionalised, non-competitive, recreational outlets for generational interface and sustained social interaction.

The seating arrangements at the annual Nationals Showcase Spectacular are symbolic of this finding (see Chapter 6). Everyone is welcome to attend the Showcase Spectacular; admittance is free and tickets are not required. The show is a spectacle of competition-oriented visual and aural motifs; the tuxedo-clad host, theatrical lighting and music, the spectacularised rituals of awards presentation, and the glittering array of trophies waiting to be presented. But seating at the best tables is assigned; the top ‘winning’ studios have reserved tables up front. Everyone else finds space as they can on the periphery. While awarding those who fully invest and participate in its structures, the spectacle for the rest of the community can appear inequitable. This will often inspire those on the periphery to either seek conformity and acceptance or departure from the community.

As an ethnochoreological study, this research supplements the growing foundation of knowledge about culturally based dance forms that are competitive, institutionally managed and progressively focused. It adds an important contemporary component to the scholarly work on American clogging as well as one that focuses on a practice outside the cultural homeland of the form, considerably augmenting the established historical understanding of American clogging. Moreover, this research is one of the first scholarly examinations of its competitive manifestations in the western United States.

Like most academic inquiry, this research presents many more questions to be asked and answers to be sought. More research could be done in the area of gender, race and class roles within this community. The relationship between the movement and participation among dancers in diverse locations in the United States is another important aspect for further study. Additional work in with this community could
include ethnographic film work centring on the ‘lived experience’ of competitive
clogging, which would highlight the physical manifestation of the form much clearer
than is possible in written analysis. A study of community and identity at the studio, or
cohort, level would yield fascinating knowledge that would accompany this work and
its findings. Clogging offers years of academic inquiry and exploration in the future for
others and myself.

This study set out to examine how the America On Stage organisation in the
Intermountain West created, maintained, and cultivated a sense of community among
its participants. My findings contribute to a deeper understanding of this unique
American clogging community and the cultural processes that shape its collective
identity. As an ethnochoreolgist, this study has brought me valuable insight into the
processes of standardisation, institutionalisation, boundary negotiation, cultural
brokerage, and the construction of community. As an insider, community member,
practising clogger, and studio director, this study has had a profound impact on my
understanding of my own position within these processes and how I, and my fellow
dancers alike, influence the past, present, and future of the dance.
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Appendix A – Director Surveys

Contacting informants
My initial contact with survey informants was either a personal verbal invitation or one solicited via email. This survey was created and sent out three weeks after the Nationals competition to allow time for individuals to finish up their related work but to still have the information and opinions fresh in mind. The following is the email invitation sent to those whom I did not personally ask:

Dear _____________,

My name is Gary Larsen and I have been involved with clogging in the Intermountain West for many years as a dancer, teacher, choreographer, adjudicator, and director. I am currently trying to gather some information for my PhD research on clogging from teachers all over the Western United States about their experience and opinion. I had initially wanted to speak with you personally about this, but with a demanding schedule, this email appeared to be the next best thing. Would you be willing to take 20 or so minutes in the next week to hop online and take a survey? This survey will go through several questions about your personal experience and preferences, as well as covering some of the more mundane demographic information about your students.

If there is information or opinions that you wish not to divulge, you are free to skip any question at anytime. Your responses are completely anonymous and confidential. I greatly value your opinion and feel that your voice is an important one in this research.

Thank you again for being willing to take some time out of your schedule to take this survey. If you’re not able to click on the link below, then just copy and paste it into your browser window and it should work.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3RKCH6S

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns?

Thanks,
Gary
garyjlarsen@yahoo.com
208-351-9360 cell
Approximately one week later, a follow up email was sent to the same individuals:

Dear _____,

I’m not sure if you received my initial email, but I wanted to follow up and make sure you had the chance to take the survey that I am using to collect some important information for my research on clogging in the Western United States. If you prefer to not take the survey, that is fine. But I wanted to make sure that everyone that was interested in taking it had the chance. If you have already completed the survey, feel free to discard this email. If you have not yet taken it, I would like to encourage you to do so.

The data collected from this survey will help me to better understand the make-up and dynamic of the dancers and teachers of clogging in the Western United States and to identify important trends. Your responses will be anonymous and confidential and will only be used for reference data within my research.

Here is the link to the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3RKCH6S

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,
Gary Larsen
garyjlarsen@yahoo.com

Survey questions to clogging instructors, choreographers, and directors

The online survey was designed to be easy to read and quickly understood. Most questions were found on a separate page allowing quick command of what was being asked. The first page was an introduction to the survey and an explanation of their rights in divulging this information. The final page provided a space for them to add any further comment, questions, or feedback to me.

Thank you for being willing to take this survey! Your involvement with this survey and the accompanying research is purely voluntary. You may choose to skip or ignore any question that you do not understand or care not to comment on. Unless you otherwise identify yourself, your answers will be kept confidential and anonymous. They will assist in assessing the current state of clogging in the Intermountain West. If at any point, for any reason, you choose not to participate, to amend your statements, or wish your answer “off the record”, your wish will be granted with no further questions asked. Your
answering of any of the following questions indicates your understanding of this relationship and your willingness to participate.

-Gary J. Larsen

1. How many years have you been involved with clogging in each of the following areas:
   _____ Dancer
   _____ Instructor/teacher
   _____ Choreographer
   _____ Team Director
   _____ Studio Owner
   _____ Judge
   _____ Competition/even organiser

2. Check all of the following styles of clogging that you have had experience in:
   [ ] 4/8-couple Hoedown
   [ ] Running Sets
   [ ] Smooth-style Mountain dance
   [ ] Precision (partner-based)
   [ ] Buck-dancing or Flat-footing
   [ ] Drag-slide clogging
   [ ] Canadian-style
   [ ] Power Tap

3. Which of the clogging styles above are dominant in your area and/or used in your teaching? Does that style reflect the teachers, or the students preferred style?

4. What is your feeling about using the term “Power Tap” to identify the most contemporary style of clogging?

5. RATE the following ideas, by circling a number between 1 and 5 (5 being the most important, and 1 being the least), in direct relation to your personal/team philosophy.
   - Understanding the History of clogging: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
   - Maintaining the traditions of clogging: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
   - Finding new and creative ways of using clogging: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
   - Perfecting technical execution: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
   - Attracting new dancers to your group/studio: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
   - Helping young people learn dedication and hard work through skill acquisition: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
   - Helping students gain increased confidence through performance/competition: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
   - Winning in competition: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
6. **RANK** the following terms (1-5) in order of importance (1 being the most important, and 5 being the least) for you and your dancers.

- [ ] Competition
- [ ] Performance
- [ ] Exercise
- [ ] Recreation
- [ ] Artistic Expression

7. **Circle** the approximate number of events your group participates in annually?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competitions</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>7-9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camps / workshops</th>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>7-9</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performances / recitals</th>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>7-9</th>
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<tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organised tours</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>5-6</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

8. **Circle** the appropriate percentage range of the cloggers under your director or instruction that participated in the following America On Stage events during the 2011/2012 season?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freestyle</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Capella solo</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Least 1 All-around solo</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All 5 all-around solos</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th>Traditional duet</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
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<th>51-75%</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Show duet</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
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<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short duet</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Capella duet</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Show</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
<th>51-75%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Line</th>
<th>0-25%</th>
<th>26-50%</th>
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### Team Analysis

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Team</th>
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<th>51-75%</th>
<th>76-100%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Precision</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Exhibition</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team A Capella</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Do you require your dancers to learn one or all of the All-Around Solos?  

__________

10. Do you teach them in your classes?  

_________

Do you assign them as homework?  

_________

11. Do you use material from the All-Around Solos in other choreography?  

__________

12. What role has the All-Around Solo programme played with your dancers?  

13. What role, if any, has the All-Around Solo programme played with clogging in general?  

14. Please **RATE** the following characteristics in relation to what defines a “good” clogger and what you strive to teach and instil in the dancers?  (1 = least important, 5 = most important)

- Drag/slide footwork.............. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Canadian footwork................ 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Power Tap footwork................ 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Group synchronisation............ 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Full body coordination........... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Precise arm, head and hand actions.. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Lifted - Dancing on the balls of the feet..... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Grounded - Dancing loud and strong...... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- The ability to improvise........... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- The ability to choreograph........ 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Standing out as a soloist........... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Blending into a group............ 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Endurance.......................... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Strength.................................. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Technically precise of footwork..... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Showmanship and performance...... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
- Versatility of dancers........... 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

15. Please estimate, as closely as possible, the number of your dancers who fit in the following categories during the 2011/2012 competitive season.
16. What is the biggest challenge to the success of clogging in your area?

17. What are some assets that help you to promote and spread clogging in your area?

18. How is clogging in the Intermountain West different that elsewhere in the country? Why do you think there is such a difference?

19. If you attend America on Stage competitions, what are your thoughts about having a ranking awards structure (having multiple first place awards) for the Novice through Champ events?

20. Do you feel that you are adequately and appropriately judged at competitions? Why?

21. Is there anything within the America On Stage competition or education programmes that you would like to see different?

22. If you are willing to be contacted further regarding your experience dancing and teaching clogging, provide your name, email and/or phone number below (it is not required and you may choose to remain anonymous).

Feel free to contact me about this survey or the research to which this will contribute by emailing me at garyjlarsen@yahoo.com or calling 208-351-9360.
Survey for Adjudicators

Since there is a fewer number of adjudicators interviewed as part of this research, I felt it best to contact them individually and conduct the survey in a personal or email format, rather than in an anonymous online format. This was done primarily to facilitate the access of additional information, further inquiry, or to investigate deeper layers of meaning.

Questions for Adjudicators:

1. How long did you dance before you were asked to judge?
2. Were you asked to judge because you were not associated with a team at the time?
3. About how many events you have judged?
4. Did you receive any training by the organisation before you judged?
5. What was the most difficult part of judging an AOS competition?
6. What has been the most rewarding part of judging an AOS competition?
7. Is there anything that you like or dislike about the Score sheets?
8. Is there anything that you like or dislike about competitions or judging in general?
9. Rank the following elements in their order of importance for you as a judge:
   - Mistake Free
   - Loudness of Sounds
   - Clarity of Sounds
   - Complexity of footwork
   - Unison
   - Use of arms, head, and body along with footwork
   - Originality of movement
10. Do you prefer the ranking (where everyone receives a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd) or placement (only one 1st place etc… in each event) method of awards?
11. In A cappella, do you favor dynamic or varying speed and loudness or do you favor the more stable speed and sound quality?
12. Do you like the way things are going in clogging?
13. Is there anything else that you can think of that would help me better understand the reality of an AOS judge?
Appendix B – America On Stage Promotional Material and Competition rules.
Appendix C – AOS Adjudication and Scoring Sheets

CLOGGING TEAM & DUET SCORE SHEET

CIRCLE (O) MEANS NEEDS IMPROVEMENT
PLUS (+) MEANS SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE
PERFECT SCORE = 10

Contestant # ______
Judge # / Initials ______

TECHNICAL ABILITY----------------------------- OVERALL T.A. SCORE

DIFFICULTY
___ Skill Level of Dancers
___ Skill Demands of Steps & Sounds
___ #/Variety of Skills
___ Exceptional Difficulty

EXECUTION
___ Precise Movements
___ Head/Hand Coordination
___ Clarity of Steps/Sounds
___ Dancing Together
___ Out of Step/Mistakes
___ Off Beat

FORMATIONS
___ Squaring Formations
___ Spacing
___ Lines
___ Stage Position
___ Columns

PERFORMANCE
___ Projection
___ Endurance
___ Eye Contact

Score

4.0 Perfect
4.9 1st Place
4.8 2nd Place
4.7 3rd Place
4.6 4th Place
4.5 5th Place

COMMUNICATIONS:

ARTISTIC PRESENTATION-------------------------- OVERALL A.P. SCORE

CHOREOGRAPHY
___ Creativity
___ Difficulty
___ Variety
___ Movement
___ Stunts/Lifts
___ Step Work

CHOREOGRAPHY
___ Formation Work
___ Symmetry
___ Transition
___ Stage Use
___ Beginning
___ Ending

APPEARANCE
___ Costume
___ Appearance
___ Professionalism

SHOWMANSHIP
___ Smiling
___ Projection
___ Eye Contact

MUSIC
___ Music Interpretation
___ Music Selection
___ Music Speed

PERFORMANCE
___ Power
___ Energy Level

Score

5.0 Perfect
4.9 1st Place
4.8 2nd Place
4.7 3rd Place
4.6 4th Place
4.5 5th Place

COMMUNICTIONS:

Overtime (-.2)
Rules Violations (see penalty sheet)
TOTAL PENALTIES

TOTAL SCORE
Penalties
OVERALL SCORE

Novice through Champ Team and Duet Judging Sheet. Found at:
http://www.americaonstage.org/Judges/CLOG TEAMS no pro NEW 2008 score circle.pdf
# PRO CLOG TEAM & DUET SCORE SHEET

**Category Specifics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precision</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Traditional Line</th>
<th>Show</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couple work</td>
<td>Straight Lines</td>
<td>Traditional Steps/Heads</td>
<td>Development of Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle work</td>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Move as a unit</td>
<td>Jumps/Flips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progressions</td>
<td>Out of step</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Open, Small, All Guys Teams | Duets | Overall Impression | Ability to Work as a Unit | Couple Interaction | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.4 |

## Technical Merit & Execution

### Synchronization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Progressions</th>
<th>Sharpness</th>
<th>Out of step</th>
<th>Mistake Counter</th>
<th>1.1</th>
<th>1.2</th>
<th>1.3</th>
<th>1.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acrobats</td>
<td>Heads</td>
<td>Timing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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### Spacing & Formations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Columns</th>
<th>Stage Position (center, off center)</th>
<th>1.1</th>
<th>1.2</th>
<th>1.3</th>
<th>1.4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spacing</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Artistic Impression

#### Choreography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Head</th>
<th>Hand</th>
<th>Music Selection</th>
<th>Music Speed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movement/Use of Floor</td>
<td>Hand Movements</td>
<td>Variety of Formations</td>
<td>Too slow, too fast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>Steps/Rhythms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Showmanship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Energy</th>
<th>Audience Appeal</th>
<th>Counting Out Loud</th>
<th>Chewing gum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smiles</td>
<td>Costume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Contact</td>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Power, Sound & Step Work

#### Clarity & Volume

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear</th>
<th>Double Doubles</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Endurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong Sounds</td>
<td>On Beat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Step Work

| Unique sounds | Steps too Easy for Level | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.4 |
| Unique Footwork | Steps too Difficult for Level |     |     |     |     |
| Variety       |                           |     |     |     |     |

## Totals

- Subtotal
- Subtract Penalties
- TOTAL SCORE

Comments: ________________________________________________________________

Appendix D – Map of Lagoon Amusement Park

Larger Map of Lagoon amusement park as of May 2012.
Appendix E: Survey Consent

• FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
  RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
  INFORMATION SHEET

American Clogging in the Western US.

Dear Participant,

I am currently conducting research on contemporary competitive clogging in the Western United States. I am seeking to understand how the perception of ‘tradition’ has informed and influenced the ideas and practices of individuals involved with clogging in this area and in particular with the America on Stage organization. This research does not seek to support or argue for a particular viewpoint or agenda; it will simply explore and present the method by which participants in this organization approach their artistic work.

It is my hope that you would agree to be interviewed as part of this study. This interview would last between one and two hours and will take place at a time and location that is convenient for you. It is also my hope that you would allow me to record our interview. Of course, any audio or video recording that takes place in conjunction with our interview will be used for examination purposes of this research only and will be kept confidential. This research will be presented as part of a written academic thesis for PhD studies at the University of Limerick, Ireland and the final document will be stored at that location. Your participation in this research will not only add to the completion of that document but to the overall understanding of the cultural processes at work in communities and dance forms like yours.

It is not anticipated that there will be any risk to your participation in this study. However, due to the nature of this ethnochoreographic research, informants are generally named. Your involvement with this research will be completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the process without giving a reason, at any time, or choose to be represented anonymously. If, at any point, you wish to change or omit any part your testimony, for any reason whatsoever, that request will also be granted.

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Gary J. Larsen

Contact information:
If you have any questions or concerns about this research you can contact me at 11147822@studentmail.ul.ie or (208) 351-9360. If you wish you may contact my PhD supervisor Dr. Catherin Foley at Catherine.e.foley@ul.ie or Tel. 0035-061-202922. You may wish to contact the chair of the UL ethics committee c/o Anne O’Dwyer, ULREG, Graduate School, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland – email: anne.odwyer@ul.ie or Tel. 035-061-202672

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Consent Section:
I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to take part in research for the project entitled “American Clogging in the Western US”.

- I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate.
- The nature of my participation has been explained to me and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.
- I am also aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (video/audio) and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can request that the recording equipment be switched off. I am entitled to copies of all recordings made and am fully informed as to what will happen to these recordings once the study is completed.
- I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study.
- I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason.
- I am entitled to full confidentiality in terms of my participation and personal details. I agree to waive this right to confidentiality: Yes  No (Please circle)

______________________________         __________________________
Signature of participant                                               Date
## Appendix F: Competition Structures in all Orgs.

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Table 2: A diagram of the differences and similarities between the four organising and sanctioning bodies for clogging in the United States for the 2012 competitive season. The * in the ACHF column indicates those events that are not officially sanctioned by the organisation, but present at various competitions.
Appendix G: Glossary of Terms

A Cappella category – a category of Championship and Professional team performance in AOS competitions where adjudicators will turn away the stage and judge the performance on the execution and composition of the sounds made by the dancers. These vary in length from one to three minutes, and there is no requirement or expectation for matching costumes. Interestingly, the dancing used in this category tends to resemble tap dancing much more than clogging in technical execution and choreography.

A Cappella Duet – a category of Championship and Professional duet performance in AOS competitions where adjudicators will turn away from the stage and judge the performance on the execution and composition of the sounds made by the dancers. These vary in length from one to two minutes, and there is no requirement or expectation for matching costumes.

A Cappella Production – a category of Championship and Professional team performance in AOS competitions where two adjudicators will turn away the stage and judge the performance on the execution and composition of the sounds made by the dancers and three adjudicators will face the dancers and judge the performance on its artistic, thematic and performance qualities. These vary in length from one to three minutes, and there is a requirement or expectation for costuming to match and be appropriate for the performance.

A Cappella Solo - a category of Championship and Professional solo performance in AOS competitions where adjudicators will turn away from the stage and judge the performance on the execution and composition of the sounds made by the dancer. Each dancer is given 30-40 seconds to perform and there is no costume requirement.

Advanced level – a skill level that follows the Intermediate level and precedes the Championship level. Dancers at this ability level have typically been competing for three years and have achieved a first place ranking twice in the intermediate level. At this level dancers have mastered the Canadian style and have begun to incorporate elements of the tap style of clogging into their technique.

Age Divisions – the way AOS divides group, duet and solo performances by age to increase parity in competitive events and provide increased opportunity for dancers to be successful. This was also a result of increasing numbers of dancers in certain age ranges.

All-Guys – a category of Championship and Professional team performance in AOS competitions where all dancers performing must be male. Any music, theme and costume are allowed. These performances typically range from two to three minutes in length and generally project a masculine theme. This category was created in part to encourage male participants in AOS.

All-American Team – a select group of dancers chosen annually from solo and duet performances at the Nationals competition at Lagoon. These dancers have their names added to a published (online) list of recipients and are given a jacket with their name embroidered on the front (along with each year they receive the award). The number of recipients has grown steadily since its inception (as the All-Rocky Mountain Team in 1986) has grown dramatically, including the separation of Junior and Senior teams (separating older and younger dancers) and the recent creation of
the Junior All-American team to include a larger number of younger dancers. A further addition of the Rookie All-American team was added in 2012 to recognise dancers with their first time on the All-American team.

**All-Around Solo** – is a competitive event in AOS sanctioned competitions only. AOS creates and disseminates a DVD with five pre-choreographed sequences and patterns in lengths of 32-beats in six different levels of skill for each AOS competition season. The solos are competed individually, on stage in groups of two (in the case of the Championship and Professional levels) or four (with the lower levels of skill). Dancers can compete in all five categories of their age and skill level for the price of one registration fee.

**All-Rocky Mountain Team** – a select group of solo freestylers at the Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition (later called Western Nationals or Nationals). Begun at the 1986 competition held at Lagoon, it has continued under the name All-American Team and has been expanded to include duet and All-Around Solo winners as well.

**All-Star** – a distinction made for those dancers who are selected to compete for the MVP (Most Valuable Player) award at the Saturday evening Showcase Spectacular at the annual AOS Nationals competition.

**America On Stage (AOS)** – originally called Clog America. AOS is a clogging and dance competition-sanctioning organisation that directs and manages events in the Intermountain West region of the United States. It oversees the creation and dissemination of the All-Around Solo Programme, the establishment of rules and awards at its numerous competitive events, and markets information about its events through online and printed media.

**America’s Clogging Hall of Fame (ACHF)** – begun by Dan and Sandy Angel in 1981 to provide a means of recognising successful and influential clog dancers. Today ACHF is a competition sanctioning organisation that operates its own national championship and, of course, a Hall of Fame. ACHF is operated out of Maggie Valley, and uses the famous Stompin’ Ground as its home for the largest competitions of its year.

**Autumnfest** – a workshop for directors and instructors, where they can receive training and instruction from AOS, held at the end of October or early November in downtown Salt Lake City, Utah. There is also a solo and duet competition held in conjunction with the workshop. It is the earliest competitive event of the season, which runs from November to May.

**Beginning level** - a skill level that follows the Novice level and precedes the Advanced level. This is typically a dancer who has competed less that two years and has one a first place ranking in the Novice category. At this level dancers use what is referred to as the ‘basic’ clogging movement vocabulary.

**Bell Taps** – a style of metal tap attached to the bottom of a clogging shoe, on the heel and toe, and worn by a clogger in performance. The Bell Tap was invented by Dale Isaacson to decrease the potential for floor damage caused by the popular Buck Taps, and to make a more subtle sound.

**Buck style** – an early style of solo, improvisational, foot percussive dance in the Southern Appalachian Mountain region. It later became a way to refer to the addition of toe and heel strikes during the up beat of a weight change, which was introduced into the mainstream clogging vocabulary by Burton Edwards, who had learned the style from his father Kyle who had danced with group clogging pioneer
Sam Queen. Today, the buck style of clogging is found in the Intermediate level of skill for competitive dancers.

**Buck Taps** – a style of metal tap attached to the bottom of a clogging shoe, on the heel and the toe. Created by Walt Stevens in the late 1970s for cloggers to differentiate themselves from tap dancers. The tap was constructed with two plates of metal riveted together and attached to the shoe. The effect was a strong and loud sound that cloggers widely adopted.

**Canadian style** – a style of clogging imported and adapted from Ontario style Canadian Step Dancing. An impromptu performance of Canadian Step Dancing at a clogging workshop at Fontana Village Resort in the fall of 1985 by Judy Weymouth her two of her dancers generated a desire to learn the Canadian technique in many of the cloggers in attendance. From there, the technique was gradually incorporated into the movement vocabulary of competitive cloggers primarily.

**Circle up** – a term used at the beginning of the freestyle solo category event prior to 1996 that cued cloggers to dance in a counter clockwise direction around the floor to provide the adjudicators an initial look at them and their dancing. The practice was discontinued in AOS in order to move the event along more quickly and efficiently. The practice is still in use by the other sanctioning organisations.

**Championship (Champ) level** – a skill level unique to AOS that follows the Advanced level and precedes the Professional level. Dancers at this ability level have typically been competing for more than three years had have been awarded a first place ranking at least two times in the Advanced level. In this level, dancers use most of the cutting edge movement vocabulary in use and are adjudicated with the AOS placement awards system. The Champ level is strictly voluntary. The organisation suggests that a dancer can stay at the Advanced level as long as they desire and can move back and forth between the Advanced, Champ and Pro levels.

**Clog America** – the first competition sanctioning and event organising body in the Intermountain West. Clog America was a collaboration between Dennis Cobia and Bryan Steele begun in 1981, culminating with the Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition at Lagoon in the spring of 1982. Initially, the organisation offered competitions and workshops throughout northern Utah and focused its attention on the building of local dance studios throughout the region. In 1998, Clog America was dissolved as Cobia and Steele discontinued their partnership. Steele reorganised under the name America On Stage (AOS) and dedicated the organisations efforts on competitive events.

**CLOG (or National Clogging Organisation)** – originally the Clogging Leaders of Georgia, started by Joann Gibbs, Joyce England, and a handful of other dance instructors in 1978 because of a perceived lack of support from the National Clogging and Hoedown Council (NCHC). As membership grew and its influence spread, CLOG became a national organisation and changed its official name to the National Clogging Organisation, but kept the catchy acronym. CLOG was responsible for the creation and maintenance of the National Clogging Convention, which began in 1984 and continues annually in November. CLOG sanctions and operates its own series of workshops as well as a national championship event. CLOG is one of the four main clogging competition-sanctioning bodies in the United States.

**Clogging Champions of America (CCA)** – started by Lynne Ogle and Ryan Rickard in 1997 in response to a perceived lack of support given to high level competitive
dancers by the two Southeastern governing bodies at the time (ACFH and CLOG). CCA is the most progressive of the Southeastern organisations and caters to the more competitive-minded participants in the Southeastern United States. CCA is one of the four main clogging competition-sanctioning bodies in the United States.

**Crossed Trained Dancer** – A dancer who is engaged in learning and participating in two or more styles of dance or movement practices.

**Director of the Year award** – an award given to the directors who have the most combined points from participation throughout the competitive season. Dancers receive points when they win an award at AOS competitions. 25 for a 1st place, 15 for a 2nd place, and 5 for a 3rd place award. The number of dancers performing multiplies the amount of points won. So, if a dance team with 10 members wins a first place, the director receives 250 points. Professional level winners receive 35 for a 1st, 25 for a 2nd, and 15 for a 3rd. Point totals are tallied throughout the season and posted online. The ten highest point totals are awarded the director of the year award.

**Double Awards** – see High Gold.

**Drag slide style** – the distinctive sliding (or shuffling) of the feet forward and back on the floor initiated from the knee as the rhythmic down-beat accompaniment to the articulated gesture foot accents. This is the foundation of the ‘basic’ style of clogging as it was codified and disseminated from Bill Nichols through the NCHC and CLOG organisations between 1978 and 1984.

**Duet** – a clogging exhibition featuring only two dancers of the same or opposite gender. No age, level or affiliation restrictions exist in competition rules.

**Exhibition category** – a team clogging category where any music, costuming, and theme are allowed. Small hand held prop and stunts are allowed where necessary, and any type of formations and interaction are permitted. Maximum time limit of three minutes.

**Exhibition Duet** – a duet category in AOS competitions where two dancers compete in any music, costuming, and theme. No props are allowed and minor stunts and gymnastics are allowed. Maximum time limit of 90 seconds.

**Flatfoot or Flatfooting** – an early style of solo, improvised foot percussive dance found in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. The style is distinguished by the grounded and downward orientation of the movement and posture. A strong knee bend and a sliding of the feet across the floor sets this style apart from both Buck style and Jigging style, which are executed higher on the ball of the foot with more of a lifted feel to the overall movement. Most experts, including myself, agree that flatfooting is closely tied to the African and Native American dance styles around which it was formalised. This style lives on today in the Drag slide style of ‘basic’ clogging.

**Freestyle Clogging** – See Hoedown

**Freestyle Solo** – a solo category in AOS competitions where one dancer of either gender competes their own steps to provided music with others of similar gender, age and ability level. Each dancer is provided with between 24-40 beats of music to perform alone for the adjudicators.
Hall of Fame – an AOS award for a dancer who have achieved All-American honours at least ten times as a competitor, with at least five of those years as a freestyle All-American award winner.

High Gold – in the Championship and Professional categories of AOS clogging competitions, a dance can both be placed or ranked with a first, second or third place award and receive an additional distinction of a ‘High Gold’ award based on earning a score of 98% or higher.

Hoedown (4 or 8 couple) – a dance that combines the footwork of clogging and buckdancing with the partner and group figures of the square dance. This was formalised as a style of dance by Sam Queen and the Soco Gap Dancers from the Maggie Valley area of Western North Carolina in the 1920s. Adherents also refer it to as ‘freestyle’ clogging, particularly in contrast to the more modern ‘precision’ form of group clogging.

Intermediate level – a skill level that follows the intermediate level and precedes the Championship level. A dancer at this level has typically competed more than two years and has won a first place award in the Beginning level. This level is characterised by Buck and Canadian style footwork.

Lagoon – an amusement park located in the town of Farmington, in North central Utah.

Line category – a competition category where dancers are oriented in lines and shapes on the floor. No couple dancing or body contact between dancers is allowed. No gymnastics or props allowed.

MVP award – is an individual or duet event ‘national championship’ designation. The highest scoring Professional level solo and duet performances from the AOS Nationals competition are invited to compete again at the Saturday evening Showcase Spectacular to vie for the MVP award. These are awarded for Freestyle, Duet, Short Duet, A Cappella Duet, All-Around Solo, and A Cappella Solo events.

National Clogging and Hoedown Council (NCHC) – the original council that was put together by Bill Nichols and Garland Steele to manage the interactions between various styles of clogging in the 1970s.

National Clogging Organisation – see CLOG

National Convention – an annual workshop hosted by CLOG, held in various locations across the country over the Thanksgiving holiday break (third weekend of November).

National Instructor – a workshop oriented instructor that travels around the country to instruct in the recreational style of clogging.

Nationals – the culminating competition in the AOS competitive season, held at Lagoon Amusement Park.

Novice level – a skill level follows the intermediate level and precedes the Championship level.

Open category - a competition dance category where dancers can dance to any music, with any formations, to any theme, and wearing any type of costume. This is meant to provide maximum flexibility to the director and dancers.

Open Line category – a competition dance category where dancers can dance to any music, with line-style formations, to any theme, and wearing any type of costume. This is meant to provide maximum flexibility to the director and dancers.
Placement Awards structure – an awarding initiative that awards only one first place, one second place, one third place, and so on for a competitive dance category. In AOS, this is only in place in the Professional level events.

Power Tap – a term coined by Bryan Steele to market and differentiate the newer style of competitive clogging, which draws heavily from tap dance.

Precision category – a competition category where teams must use traditional couple dance patterns with circle figures and couple interaction. An emphasis is placed on timing and precision of feet and figures. Music and costuming must have a traditional feel and look.

Precision Clogging – based on the innovative style of James Kesterson in the 1960s, where dancers coordinated footwork patterns for performance.

Rocky Mountain Clogging Competition – the original clogging competition held at Lagoon starting in 1982 started by the collaborative efforts of Bryan Steele and Dennis Cobia.

Professional (Pro) level – a skill level follows the intermediate level and precedes the Championship level. A dancer in the Pro level is using the most current techniques and styles of clogging and is competing at the highest level possible. AOS suggests that a dancer compete in the Pro category only after becoming a member of the All-American team for a number of years.

Ranking Awards structure – an awarding initiative that awards multiple first place, second place, third place awards in a given category and division at AOS competitions. The purpose of this was to provide more opportunities for dancers to be successful.

Rise and Shine – a term used to signify that a solo dancer may proceed to the centre of the floor and perform a freestyle solo.

Ring of Glory – a distinction given to a dancer who has been selected to the All-American team at least 20 times, 10 of which must be for All-American Freestyle.

Running Set – a country dance originating in Kentucky where couples would briskly walk or run through a series of patterns and figures featuring each couple in turn. In the 1940s and 50s, a style of clogging footwork was incorporated into the Running Set formation execution, which has been preserved until today with performing groups in the Southern Appalachian region.

Smooth Mountain – a traditional dance that uses 4 or 8 couple figures, but is done with a gliding footwork, instead of clogging.

Show category – a category where the team dance must have a theme. Costumes and music must reflect the selected theme. Emphasis is on showmanship, choreography, and creativity. Must use at least 50% clogging in footwork choices.

Showcase Spectacular – the culminating ‘dance off’ and awards ceremony at the AOS Nationals competition at Lagoon, on Saturday evening.

Short Duet – a duet between two dancers of mixed or same-gender. The format is similar to a freestyle when a line of dancers will all perform at the same time, then one couple will be called forward for 40 seconds of dancing. Then one last ‘go for it’ is called and all the dancers finish dancing together.

Small Team – a team of 3-6 dancers.
Standing Line category – a team dance that is choreographed for one but danced by many. No formation changes are allowed and dancers must keep precise distance from one another. Emphasis on precision of all movement.

Show Duet – a duet category where the mixed or same gender couple dance must have a theme. Costumes and music must reflect the selected theme. Emphasis is on showmanship, choreography, and creativity. Must use at least 50% clogging in footwork choices. Maximum of 90 seconds in length.

SUPERStar Award – an award given to the dancers and teams who have accumulated the most points throughout the competitive season. The awards are given at the Showcase Spectacular. Dancers and teams receive points by participating in and being successful in AOS sanctioned competitions.

Studio Grants – monetary awards for directors to apply to future registrations given for registering large amounts of student online.

Traditional Line category - a team dance that is choreographed for one but danced by many. All steps must be drag slide clogging. No Canadian or Bucky style steps allowed. No formation changes are allowed and dancers must keep precise distance from one another. Emphasis on precision of all movement, energy, and performance.

Traditional Duet - a duet category where the mixed or same gender couple dance must have a theme that is traditional in nature. Costumes and music must reflect a traditional look. Maximum of 90 seconds in length.

Triple Crown – an event at AOS Nationals competition where a team may enter one team dance, one duet, and one freestyle participant. The junior and senior team with the top overall scores win the Triple Crown awards.

Western Nationals – the name given to the Nationals competition between 1992 and 2000. At this time there was an effort to draw teams from other regions of the United States.

Western Square Dance (WSD) – a style of vernacular square dancing codified in the 1950s and spread nationwide. It is still a popular style of dance found in many locations throughout the country.