

Persistence and Change in the Black Forest Ethnic Dress Tradition

Black Forest
Ethnic Dress
Tradition

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Abstract *The ethnic dress of Germany's Black Forest, called Tracht, dates back to the 16th century. Although most people living within the Black Forest do not presently wear Trachten, some persistence in this tradition exists. This study explored the factors that have supported the persistence of the Trachten tradition, specifically related to the wearing and crafting of Trachten by women, in a contemporary society. A qualitative, ethnographic approach was adopted. Data were collected via observations and interviews in the Black Forest. Thematic analyses revealed that the maintenance of the Trachten tradition was linked to varied factors that revolved around the overarching themes of both persistence and change. Interpretations were supported by theory proposing that ethnic dress is not static, but rather, changes across space and time in ways that enable its persistence. The persistence of the Trachten tradition was linked to formalized practice, meaningful identities, and desires to preserve and promote local culture. Additionally, the persistence of the Trachten tradition was fostered by change in the tradition, including the conceptualization of Trachten as a "lived practice" and the negotiation of Trachten authenticity.*

Key words *Black Forest, ethnic dress, Germany, Trachten*

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Ethnic dress comprises garments and supplements to the body that, when worn, are capable of communicating cultural heritage (Eicher & Sumberg, 1995). The ethnic dress of German-speaking countries, known as *Tracht*, dates to the 16th century and traces its roots to the everyday dress of rural inhabitants. For women and girls, the basic components of *Trachten* (plural for *Tracht*) include a blouse, vest, skirt, apron, and hat (see Figure 1). The people of Germany's Black Forest have historically worn *Trachten* as part of their heritage to convey cultural meanings such as ethnic identity, gender, age, marital status, and religious affiliation, particularly within ceremonial contexts (Reinhardt, 1968; Schmitt, 1988; Werner-Künzig, 1981). Over time, the use of *Trachten* has become synonymous with local holidays, festivals, and religious ceremonies (Reinhardt, 1968; Werner-Künzig, 1981).



Figure 1.
Two unmarried women wearing contemporary Trachten ensembles that include Bollenhut hats. Image circa 2013. Photo by first author.

Although the majority of people living within the Black Forest do not presently participate in the Tracht tradition, a certain level of persistence in this tradition exists, which is at the root of this inquiry. In particular, this study explored the factors that have supported the persistence of the Trachten tradition, specifically related to the wearing and handcrafting of Trachten by women in contemporary society.

Literature Review

Black Forest Trachten History

Early Black Forest Trachten styles were influenced by French and Spanish fashions and were adopted by rural inhabitants. Gradually, local influences also became important and produced regional differences in appearance (Reinhardt, 1968). As the rate of fashion change accelerated by the end of the 15th century, rural inhabitants of the Black Forest could not afford to keep pace (Reinhardt, 1968; Tortora & Eubank, 2010). Owing to their economic circumstances and to their belief that prized possessions should be valued rather than easily discarded, rural inhabitants of the Black Forest came to treasure their Trachten and retained them in their wardrobes for long periods of time, passing them down through generations (Reinhardt, 1968). Consequently, until the early 19th century, Trachten did not change in style drastically

or quickly, gradually evolving into symbols of the culture from which they came (Pettigrew, 1937).

The industrial revolution and the unification of Germany shaped the Trachten tradition. Early 19th century industrialization and urbanization slowly gained momentum in the region that would become Germany (Giersh, Paque, & Schmieding, 1994). Therefore, it became commonplace for people to store Trachten in trunks and wardrobes and to bid farewell to this tradition, replacing it with more modern forms of dress (Reinhardt, 1968; Werner-Künzig, 1981).

After the unification of Germany in 1871, ideological shifts prompted a revival of the Trachten tradition. In an attempt to build feelings of national unity, the newly formed German government encouraged residents to engage in cultural traditions that reified their Germanic identities (Confino, 1993). The new government saw Trachten as meaningful symbols of “German-ness” and used them heavily in nation-building campaigns. Wearing Trachten became acceptable again and even fashionable among varied classes, including bourgeoisie (Confino, 1993). Trachten clubs, called *Trachtenvereine*, were established at the end of the 19th century, with the aim of promoting the Trachten tradition at cultural events (Schmitt, 1988).

Through the first half of the 20th century, the Trachten tradition again declined. After World War II, however, club membership began to increase (Reinhardt, 1968). During this time, Germans sought to create new identities not connected to the Nazi regime; participating in the Trachten tradition became a way to express acceptable and nostalgic cultural identities (Boa & Palfreyman, 2000). Although club membership levels never reached those of the late 19th century, the Trachten tradition was very much in evidence in the late 20th century (Reinhardt, 1968). The tradition still persists today, with more than 13,000 active Trachtenvereine members throughout the Black Forest (Bund Heimat und Volksleben, n.d.).

Black Forest Trachten as Forms of Ethnic Dress

Trachten historically embodied regional variations with respect to color, style, embroidery pattern, and accessory use (Reinhardt, 1968; Werner-Künzig, 1981). These variations served to nonverbally communicate social and cultural information about wearers such as identity, gender, and marital status. In this vein, color was used to signify wearers’ religious affiliations, with Protestants wearing dark blue, dark green, and dark purple, and Catholics donning bright reds and yellows (Pettigrew, 1937). Color also symbolized marital status. In some villages, unmarried women wore a red *Bollenhut*, a white straw hat embellished with large red pom poms; married women wore black pom poms (Pettigrew, 1937). Similarly, style variations conveyed information about wearers. For example, an adolescent or young adult female may own two styles of Trachten. A basic form of Trachten, with a simple bodice and Bollenhut, was worn for everyday and communicated regional and religious affiliation. A more elaborate form, with ornate embellishments and a distinctive beaded headpiece, was reserved for one’s religious confirmation and wedding ceremony, signifying key life passages (Pettigrew, 1937).

Black Forest Trachten as Textile Handcrafts

Insomuch as they were individually-produced using hand-techniques (e.g., embroidery, knitting, beadwork, straw-weaving, hand-sewing) that were in keeping with historical cultural practices (Johnson & Wilson, 2005), Trachten historically represented a form of textile handcraft. Great care was taken to preserve the authenticity of the Trachten tradition as products of textile handcraft (Reinhardt, 1968). Trachten were expensive and not easily acquired; they were not mass-produced or sold commercially. Rather, local tailors, seamstresses, or the wearers, themselves, constructed the garments, embroidered the patterns, wove the straw hats, crafted the Bollenhut pom poms, and added decorative embellishments (Reichmann, 1996; Reinhardt, 1968). For these reasons, Trachten were highly valued, were protected by the individuals who used them, and were frequently handed down through families (Reinhardt, 1968).

Interpretive inquiries have highlighted the meaningful role that textile handcraft production plays in the lives of handcrafters. Johnson and Wilson (2005) discovered that, through handcrafting, contemporary female handcrafters not only produced meaningful objects, but also constructed identities within their social worlds and strengthened connections to their family's handcrafting lineage. Schofield-Tomschin's and Littrell's (2001) study on handcrafting guilds yielded similar findings, with the processes of self-actualization and identity construction tied to handcraft production. Participants viewed their products as symbols of their abilities and felt that their skills and products reflected their appreciation for traditions and cultural heritage.

Ethnic Folk Dress as Expression of Cultural Identity

Historically, ethnic folk dress has been associated with the Romantic Movement, yet the proliferation and significance of folk dress as symbols of local or regional identity can be traced the early 1900s (Eriksen, 2004). More recently, the formation of the European Union and resulting convergence of cultures have created concerns about losing national (or regional) identities and a desire to connect to one's roots (Arts & Halman, 2005/2006; Smith, 2001). Similarly, modernization and globalization may prompt resistance toward cultural convergence, creating a persistence of traditional values reflective of cultural heritage (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). This persistence can be observed in the revival of Norwegian ethnic dress, called the *bunad*, in Norway in the late 20th century (Eriksen, 2004). As an expression of local identity, the bunad is unique for each town. Worn primarily by women, the bunad can only be produced locally. During the 1970s very few women wore or owned bunads, but by 2002, it was estimated that nearly 60% of women owned them. Eriksen (2004) posited that one possible reason for this revival is a desire among Norwegian women to connect with their cultural heritage, such that the bunad has become a "traditionalist symbol of modern Norwegianness" (p. 26).

Thus, identities socially locate individuals and reflect who they are and their group memberships; culture brings meaning to identity. Culture is constructed and reconstructed from both historical and contemporary practices, resulting in numerous ways that individuals can communicate identities. Engaging in practices that represent the cultural history and heritage of the ethnic group (whether through revivals or

reconstruction of historical culture) allows for the preservation of cultural heritage and strengthens connections to ethnic and national identities (Arts & Halman, 2005/2006). Traditional ethnic dress, representative of a group's heritage, has been associated with maintaining ethnic identity (Forney & Rabolt, 1986).

Justification and Purpose

To date, the bulk of research examining Black Forest Trachten has focused on history and development, cataloguing the numerous regional styles and describing construction methods and materials used. Little work, however, has examined Trachten as a form of ethnic dress situated within in a present-day socio-cultural context. As such, the present inquiry sought to understand the Black Forest ethnic dress tradition by considering what factors have fostered the endurance of women's Trachten traditions in a contemporary society. Of particular interest was how these factors related to handcraft traditions as well as to lived practices for Trachten wearers. As an exploratory study, this work took as its focus women's experiences of the Trachten tradition because women have historically been and continue to be the primary crafters of both women's and men's Trachten¹⁾ (Ursula Sleeve, personal communication, January 28, 2015).

Method

A qualitative approach, using ethnographic methods for data collection and constant comparison processes²⁾ for data analysis, was adopted for this work. This research reflects three months of fieldwork in the Black Forest that included observations, formal and informal interviews, the retrieval of archival information, and participation in reflexive journaling.

During fieldwork, the primary researcher (an American who spoke conversational German and who was assisted by a German-speaking interpreter) lived in a large, centrally-located town and conducted extensive observations. She visited communities where locals wore Trachten, attended Trachten-related events (e.g. festivals and processions), and visited museums that displayed Trachten. She also visited private homes to witness Trachten handcrafting and analyze garments, viewed demonstrations on how to wear Trachten, and reviewed Trachten archival information.

Interactions with locals provided opportunities to recruit participants for formal and informal interviews. Formal (in-depth, semi-structured) interviews, lasting one to four and a half hours in duration, were conducted (and audio-recorded) with 10 individuals ranging in age from 42 to 68 years. Eight of

1) Today, as in the past, male tailors may craft men's Trachten. These tailors do not, however, produce women's Trachten (Ursula Sleeve, personal communication, January 28, 2015).

2) Constant comparison processes are a component of the grounded theory approach, which emphasizes systematic data analysis processes that allow researchers to develop explanatory theories that meet criteria of "theory-observation compatibility," precision, and rigor (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 31).

these individuals were adult female Trachten wearers, six of whom also were Trachten handcrafters. Two of these individuals were local Trachten experts—a female manager employed by the Bund Heimat und Volksleben (BHV), an organization that promotes and preserves Black Forest traditions, and a male museum curator³). Formal interviews were conducted in private residences, public social settings (e.g., festivals), and museums. Interview questions focused upon participants' experiences with, meanings of, and views on the cultural tradition of wearing Trachten; experiences with, meanings of, and views on Trachten handcrafting (if applicable); and reasons for maintaining Trachten traditions.

Numerous informal interviews were conducted with female Trachten wearers, handcrafters, experts (e.g., museum curators, Trachten club leaders), and antique shop owners. These encounters took place at Trachten events, in museums, and in shopping districts throughout the Black Forest region. Notes were taken during and/or after informal interviews.

Data from formal interviews were transcribed in German and were then translated into English by the interpreter. Interviews, field notes/journal entries, photographs, and other data were analyzed using the constant comparison process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). "Open coding" was used to identify key concepts within the data, which were then grouped under higher order, more abstract categories. Next, a coding guide based upon these categories was applied to the data until saturation was achieved. In the final stages of analysis, "axial" and "selective" coding were used to reveal higher order connections in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Identifying these connections enabled the researchers to develop their interpretive themes and arguments. Relevant theory was adopted to inform the work as the analysis and thematic "storyline" unfolded.

To ensure the dependability and trustworthiness of the analyses, the researchers met throughout the coding process to develop themes and to discuss interpretations until reciprocal understanding was achieved. Additionally, two audit coders checked the application of the coding guide to the data. After disagreements were negotiated, interrater reliability was 93.5%. Interrater reliability was calculated by dividing the total number of agreements by the total number of coding decisions made. Finally, member checks were conducted with several participants; feedback on interpretations of the data was solicited via email.

Emergent Themes

Although the aim of this inquiry was to explore the factors that have enabled the endurance of the Black Forest Trachten tradition, analyses revealed that the maintenance of Trachten as an ethnic dress tradition could be linked to factors that revolved around the overarching theme of not only persistence, but the theme of change. In this way, findings resembled closely two theoretical perspectives that address the capacity of ethnic dress to connect individuals and groups to meaningful heritages. First, the findings

3) Although male, this individual was included in the sample because, as the curator of a large, public collection of historic Trachten, he could provide insights about women's Trachten traditions as related to production and wearing.

mirror Eicher's (1995/1999) theoretical proposition that ethnic dress is not static, as its common association with the concept of "tradition" may imply. Rather, Eicher presents several case histories to argue that ethnic dress changes across time and space in both form and detail in ways that enable its persistence. Eicher's propositions about tradition and change bring to mind Hobsbawm's and Ranger's (1983) conceptualization of "invented tradition," or the notion that tradition is constructed as unchanging in a context of change.

Second, the work of Keyes (1995), although not an analysis of dress, per se, illuminates the present work by positing how ethnic and national communities are constructed with a compelling genealogy in a cultural form (i.e., dress), but also must be backed by the authority of tradition. Keyes defines the authority of tradition as "the voices of the past" embedded in the present through "customary practices that seem timeless" (p. 137). Thus, Keyes's arguments provide a context for analyzing the "voices of the past" that underpin the persistence of Trachten traditions as a cultural form and practice that endure in contemporary society.

As we discuss below, the persistence of customary practices surrounding the Trachten tradition was linked to formalized practice, meaningful identities, and desires to preserve and promote local culture. Additionally, the persistence of the Trachten tradition was fostered by change in the tradition, including the conceptualization of Trachten as a "lived practice" and the negotiation of Trachten authenticity. Pseudonyms are used to refer to participants.

Persistence of the Black Forest Trachten Tradition in Contemporary Society

Persistence and formalized practice. Analyses highlighted the role of the BHV in the persistence of the Trachten tradition. The BHV was established in the 1950s (Reinhardt, 1968), yet its function in upholding Trachten traditions had not been documented prior to this inquiry. Ingrid, a Trachten expert and wearer working at the BHV, revealed that the BHV acts as an umbrella for the Black Forest Trachtenvereine and has published formalized guidelines for Trachten wearers and handcrafters. These guidelines, which are available on the BHV website, provide "rules" regulating the proper construction and utilization of Trachten.

For instance, the guidelines offer prescriptions and proscriptions (Eicher, Evenson, & Lutz, 2008) relative to how the different parts of the Trachten ensemble should be constructed, fit the body, coordinate with each other, and be worn:

The skirt should not be too tight, width about 3 meters, laid in folds, pleated, drawn or in bell-cut. It should be at least calf-length, traditionally even longer.

(BHV Trachtenleitlinien, 2013, para. 21)

The guidelines also present parameters for proper comportment when wearing Trachten:

...One should refrain from [chewing gum] and smoking in a Tracht while at performances,

concerts and parades.

(BHV Trachtenleitlinien, 2013, para. 46)

In addition to providing and overseeing the guidelines, the BHV furnishes experts to assist with the approval of designs and materials appropriate for Trachten crafting.

Participants often referred to the BHV guidelines and their importance in preserving Trachten traditions, reflecting that this document is well-recognized among Trachten wearers and handcrafters. Several chronicled a previously undocumented account of the guideline's history, noting that, shortly after the inception of the BHV, the guidelines were established to formalize a collective decision made by the Trachtenvereine in 1900 to "freeze" the styles of Trachten to that time period (see Figure 2) such that subsequent changes to this form of dress were prohibited:

The Tracht has stayed the same since...1900. It remains in the traditional, handed-down form. The Trachten club would have to decide such a thing, if it were to come to a new change... [Trachten] stays the same in the old tradition. It is unalterable. The same as around 1900—otherwise it is a break with the style.

(Anke, Trachten wearer)

Thus, in the spirit of Keyes (1995), who argued that ethnic communities use cultural forms grounded in tradition to connect with their ancestral roots, the formalized guidelines of the BHV serve as "voices of the past" (p. 137), with the aim of preserving the Trachten tradition. It is through these constant reminders of the past that the tradition persists. In this manner, the BHV guidelines and experts create formalized practices within Black Forest Trachten traditions.

Persistence and meaningful identities. Consistent with prior literature, participants spoke of the ways that Trachten are used to construct and communicate fundamental social and cultural identities, such as gender, age, marital status, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, and community membership ties (cf. Pettigrew, 1937; Reinhardt, 1968):

[Tracht] show where one comes from, if one is single or married, and that we are Protestant.

(Anke, Trachten wearer)



Figure 2. Unmarried woman wearing Tracht with Bollenhut hat, Gutach. Image circa 1900. Photograph from the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Photochrom Collection, LC-DIG-ppmsca-00289.

Findings confirmed that Trachten continue to be shared across wearers or generations and shed new light on how, when such sharing takes place in contemporary society, the garments may reflect the new identities claimed by the wearer. For instance, as a bride, one participant adopted her husband's religion and his mother's Tracht (which symbolically conveyed his family's religion). Similarly, in another instance, a participant recounted how internationally-adopted children were dressed in Trachten that reflected the German heritage of their new family, and, thus, were "invested" with their new family identity (cf. Stone, 1962). Conversely, in other situations, handed-down Trachten may be adapted to reflect the identities of the new wearer, such as when the recipient of a Trachten ensemble intended for a married woman was gifted to a single woman. Here, the color of the pom poms on the Bollenhut was changed from black to red to reflect the new wearer's marital status.

More deeply, findings revealed that, in the context of a contemporary society, participants used Trachten to embody and express meaningful cultural identities such as connections to their heritage, family values, and their home, which they articulated using the German concept of *Heimat*:

Tracht and Heimat can be analogous...the Tracht form that I wear is correct for a certain area, I show with it where I come from or live, my Heimat. For me, Heimat is therefore, where I live, where my family is, where my friends are; where I feel comfortable and I am understood...I believe every person needs a Heimat...

(Ingrid, Trachten expert and wearer)

The literal translation of Heimat is “home,” “homeland,” or “local place” (Blickle, 2002); Confino (1993) characterized Heimat as a feeling of “German-ness” (p. 50) when one encounters things that symbolize nostalgia, values, visions for the future, and ethnic and cultural heritage. Across history, the concept of Heimat has been used to evoke feelings of national pride (e.g., during Germany’s unification in 1871) and to marginalize non-Aryan peoples before and during World War II. In the post-war era, Germans have adopted Heimat as a reminder of simpler times and a means of re-establishing their cultural identity (Boa & Palfreyman, 2000). Thus, for Germans, Heimat has been (and continues to be) associated with both positive and negative connotations.

Participants regarded the expression of Heimat through their Trachten as a way to construct meaningful cultural identities as well to connect to the past and to the future:

I wear the Tracht with pride; it shows where I am from and where my roots are. This insight should also be of importance for future generations. These values will...become increasingly valuable in the fast-paced and technological world.

(Ingrid, Trachten expert and wearer)

Echoed in Ingrid’s narrative is the sense that she—like other participants—took great pride and delight in wearing her Trachten and regarded the act as an important means by which to express her cultural identity (i.e., her Heimat) and to preserve her cultural heritage, thereby ensuring the continuation of the Trachten tradition.

For Annette, too, a Trachten handcrafter, there were strong connections between Trachten and Heimat as well as the sense that these connections represented a meaningful embodiment of her identity and created a foundation for the preservation of the Trachten tradition, itself:

Here in my Heimat, I feel safe and secure. Through the traditions, which are cultivated in Heimat...the preservation of the Tracht, the feeling of belonging together, is strengthened. Human beings were not born to be alone; here in the Heimat, we can support each other and perceive what is very valuable. More than anything, the Trachten contribute to that sense that we stay connected to our ancestors...Heimat is still very valuable in the culture of today, it makes our lives worthwhile.

(Annette, Trachten tailor)

Thus, for Trachten wearers and handcrafters in the Black Forest today, Heimat was intimately linked not only to the practice of wearing and crafting Trachten, but also to the very persistence of the Trachten tradition. In particular, because Trachten afforded participants the capacity to express meaningful identities that connected them to their heritage, the Trachten tradition was regarded as valuable and as significant to future generations (i.e., as worthy of preservation). In this way, Trachten, like the Norwegian bunad, have become traditional symbols of modern German-ness, and in particular, a way to socially locate individuals’ group membership as part of the Black Forest (cf. Arts & Halman, 2005/2006; Ericksen, 2004).

Persistence and desires to preserve and promote local culture. Given that Trachten represent meaningful cultural identities for participants, it therefore follows that the preservation and promotion of Trachten are important. Thus, when asked what it means to wear Trachten in a contemporary society, several participants alluded to the importance of maintaining the tradition:

To respect the tradition, to continually show the culture and the tradition. We don't want it to die out.

(Claudia, Trachten club member and wearer)

We believe that we have to hold on to the traditions because there would be something missing for us otherwise.

(Annette, Trachten tailor)

Efforts to safeguard the Trachten tradition were evidenced throughout data collection. That local tradition obliges one to wear Trachten for life passages, such as confirmations, weddings, and funerals, sustains the tradition by virtue of formalizing Trachten use as a systematic practice.

Further, throughout the Black Forest, Trachtenvereine members have promoted Trachten in varied ways. For instance, Trachtenvereine members play an active role in making certain that useable Trachten are available for families in the region, dispersing Trachten to individuals in need and funding Tracht ensembles for those who cannot afford them (cf. Reinhardt, 1968):

I am a member of the Trachten club...and every year we dress all of those being confirmed in Trachten. We collect old Trachten from the valley, which are no longer needed by the families, [and] we manage and care for them.

(Annette, Trachten tailor)

[After an approval process, Trachtenvereine] can submit receipts [to the state] and receive [Trachten] subsidies [to fund the costs of Trachten production]...The Trachtenvereine normally add some funding as well.

(Ingrid, Trachten expert and wearer)

Club members also maintain the Trachten tradition by participating in Trachten events such as festivals, processions, and exhibitions. At one such event, 20 clubs were observed wearing their Trachten and processing through town making music, dancing, and holding banners displaying their region name. After the parade, Claudia explained why she still wears her Tracht today:

Because of the Trachten club; in order to foster and take care of the Trachten. We attempt to keep the culture and the club alive.

(Claudia, Trachten club member and wearer)

During Trachten events, handcrafters were observed displaying and sharing information about their crafts as they related to Trachten production. When asked why they felt it was important to use traditional handcrafting methods when constructing Trachten, participants explained:

[To] keep the custom alive and keep it authentic. (Birgit, Trachten handcrafter)
So that it is kept alive. It is cultural wealth. (Bärbel, Trachten handcrafter)

Additionally, Frieda, a Trachten tailor, shared that she had collected decorative hand-sewing samples so as to document and preserve the knowledge of Trachten production for future Trachten crafters.

Findings revealed that participants not belonging to Trachtenvereine also were dedicated to preserving and promoting the Trachten tradition. Vintage Trachten were displayed decoratively in participants' homes as well as in tourist destinations (e.g., bed and breakfasts) and were regarded as important familial and cultural symbols that reinforced personal identities for cultural insiders and that communicated cultural pride and values to outsiders. Thus, taken together, these findings suggest that even in an era of modernization and globalization, efforts are made to safeguard and promote the Trachten tradition, providing support for Ingelhart's and Baker's (2000) proposition that such cultural conditions may prompt endeavors to maintain cultural traditions.

Change in the Black Forest Trachten Tradition in Contemporary Society

Throughout their interviews, participants repeatedly referenced the notion that Trachten had not changed since their stylistic form was "frozen" in 1900 and should not change moving forward:

...The Tracht has stayed the same for 100 years...It should look like an original piece from 100 years ago.

(Annette, Trachten tailor)

Although the BHV guidelines provide a formalized template for the production and wearing of Trachten, a close analysis revealed that the guidelines, themselves, included allowances for change, particularly relative to production. Further, participant interviews and observations showed that the "lived practice" of wearing Trachten often was not in precise conformance with the guidelines, suggesting that some liberties were taken. As we discuss, these allowances for change in Trachten production and wearing effectively enabled the persistence of the Trachten tradition, which calls to mind Eicher's (1995/1999) proposition that change in ethnic dress facilitates its very perseverance.

Handcrafters: Lived practice and the negotiation of authenticity. Authenticity was important to Trachten handcrafters. Definitions of authenticity vary among disciplines, but often include reference to the past. Holtorf (2013) reminds us that when studying material objects, perceptual clues indicative of the past can be used to establish and evaluate authenticity. However, Theodossopoulos (2013) proposes

that, even within a given cultural context, there may be co-existing, yet differing, understandings of what authenticity means and how it is evaluated. This notion that authenticity is not a singular idea, but is produced through negotiation, was borne out within our data, specifically relative to Trachten production (e.g., methods, materials, and form).

Negotiating authenticity of methods. Handcrafters regarded the issue of authenticity in Trachten construction in varying ways. Some crafters were very committed to using “traditional” methods, which they conceptualized as those methods that had been used in the past. For instance, Gisela handknit angora stockings for women and girls using locally-sourced yarn and measurements individualized to each wearer. Gisela’s methods have not changed in over 100 years, and she, herself, has been crafting stockings using these methods for nearly 50 years. “Tradition” motivated Gisela to engage in Trachten production, and she hoped that her methods would not change in the future, reflecting her sense that authenticity in Trachten was tightly bound with the past.

This steadfast commitment to using traditional methods, however, was not consistently observed across all handcrafting trades or even among all crafters in the same trade. Indeed, even the BHV guidelines allow for some departures from traditional Trachten construction methods:

Sewing should, wherever possible, be by hand; in some cases good machine sewing may also be utilized.

(BHV Trachtleitlinien, 2013, para. 17)

As Frieda’s comment below reveals, not all Trachten handcrafters embraced departures from past methods, perceiving newer methods as somewhat “inauthentic”:

The sewing machine...a great deal of [the Trachten ensemble] can only be sewn by hand, because then it is authentic...I prefer to do it by hand, because it looks more real.

(Frieda, Trachten tailor)

The accounts of other handcrafters revealed rather complicated, perhaps ambivalent, attitudes toward the use of more modern Trachten production methods. Annette, a Trachten tailor, proclaimed commitment to the ideology of traditional handcrafting methods, but incorporated contemporary, time-saving methods, so long as the finished product appeared “authentic”:

The point is to keep everything as original as possible...I am very proud, that I can still produce the Tracht and it is also important to me, that I still sew everything by hand...I bought a [pleating] machine, which I found in a market in Morocco. It can make tiny pleats and it looks exactly as if it were done by hand. It’s a gathering and pleating machine...[The Tracht] has to appear original to anyone who sees it.

(Annette, Trachten tailor)

Thus, for some participants, the key criteria used to establish authenticity were grounded in the past, and for others, they were based upon the “impression of” an historical appearance (cf. Goffman, 1959). In this way, Trachten handcrafters both establish and perceive authenticity through a process of negotiation between the traditions of the past and changes made out of necessity or convenience. It is in these careful negotiations of authenticity, between traditional and modern methods, where the contemporary hand crafter can find the value (i.e., time saving measures) in producing Trachten components that the Trachten tradition persists.

Negotiating authenticity of materials. The guidelines governing the materials used to make Trachten also allowed for some modification to historical practices. Here again, the parameters for change—which typically involved the substitution of contemporary fabrics or embellishments in place of traditional ones—were based upon the provision of maintaining an “authentic appearance”:

Old materials may be substituted with new, if they are similar in character to the old materials [and] wherever possible, not of synthetic material...buttons, laces, braids, and ribbons should be chosen...in relation to the community, and wherever possible, not out of synthetic material.

(BHV Trachtleitlinien, 2013, para. 14 & 16)

However, traditional materials were not always available or were inconvenient to use, so substitutions had to be made, even when traditional materials may have been preferred:

...I use different materials because the old ones are hard to find...When there are no glass pearls, plastic pearls are used. The old materials are better. The new synthetic materials are heavier, and they pull [the coiled wire] downwards.

(Bärbel, Trachten hand crafter)

When contemporary materials are used to replace traditional ones, a process of negotiation with the past ensues. Of importance here is that the substitutions embody the tradition in its original form:

The Tracht has stayed the same for 100 years...If we need to take new material...I pay attention that it deviates as little as possible from the original.

(Annette, Trachten tailor)

Thus, the flexibility of the guidelines, along with the handcrafters’ dedication to the concept of authenticity, allow for persistence of the Trachten tradition in the face of change.

Negotiating authenticity of form. The guidelines addressing the form (i.e., silhouette and components) of the Trachten ensemble afford rather limited opportunity for change. For example, Trachten can

be handed-down and altered to fit a new wearer, and if new components are required, they must match the basic character of the traditional Tracht ensemble. Additionally,

In areas where Tracht is no longer worn, but old patterns and motifs are known, the Tracht should be newly constructed based on these templates. If new Trachten are created, they are to be carefully inspected...based on documentation...

(BHV Trachtleitlinien, 2013, para. 11)

As these examples demonstrate, the guidelines provide clear criteria for sustaining Trachten traditions relative to form by establishing and evaluating the authenticity of ensembles requiring alterations or ensembles that are newly produced.

Despite the standards set out in the guidelines, findings demonstrated that change in stylistic form of the Trachten ensemble and/or its components is, in fact, part of lived practice in contemporary Black Forest society. For instance, Annette, a Trachten tailor, shared that she has accommodated clients' requests for smaller, less boxy, shirt silhouettes. Annette noted also that, in a neighboring community, Trachten wearers had begun to adopt a larger version of their traditional headwear, suggesting a departure from the style worn prior to 1900. Thus, although limited change to the form of the Trachten ensemble is sanctioned by the guidelines, in lived practice, change to the ensemble and its components is necessary to accommodate the tastes and comfort of contemporary wearers. These negotiations are necessary for the tradition to remain relevant and are undertaken in such a way that the overall appearance of Trachten remains authentic.

Wearers: Lived practice and the negotiation of authenticity. Although the guidelines allow for some departure from the traditional methods, materials, and forms of Trachten production and crafting, they do not afford any measure of leniency for the wearing of Trachten. That is, the guidelines include specific rules that address when to wear Trachten, how to wear Trachten, and what can and cannot be permitted while wearing Trachten (i.e., issues of comportment):

It is the mission of the [BHV] guidelines...[to serve as] an aid and guide for the responsible Trachtenvereine as well as for the individual Tracht-wearer and serve to prevent discrepancies.

(BHV Trachtleitlinien, 2013, para. 6)

Thus, the guidelines formalize the practice of wearing Trachten, and in so doing, enable the persistence of the tradition.

Although, for the most part, Trachten wearers seemed to comply with the BHV practices established in the guidelines, findings revealed that, at times, liberties were taken and rules of authenticity were challenged, suggesting that the Trachten tradition is, in fact, a lived practice negotiated in daily life. For example, wearers frequently violated rules regarding the basic forms of the ensemble. Although tights are specified as required legwear, knee- and ankle-length socks frequently were observed on

children. Similarly, apron strings were observed hanging beneath the skirt hemlines of several women; this also represents an infraction of the guidelines.

The guidelines also outline the types of accessories that can and cannot be worn with Trachten, yet, on several occasions, breaches of the rules were observed. For instance, the guidelines specify that neither fashion jewelry nor facial piercings incorporate the character of the Tracht (BHV Trachtleitlinien, 2013, para. 30), however, frequently, these forms of inappropriate adornment were noted. Trachten wearers also were observed violating the guidelines for comportment while wearing Trachten at public events; most notably, several wearers were observed smoking; some did so openly, while some attempted to hide the act from other Trachtenvereine members. Seemingly, wearers were attempting to balance their desires to uphold tradition with their needs to express who they are in a contemporary society.

Conclusion and Implications

This research sought to better understand the persistence of the Black Forest Trachten tradition in contemporary society, thereby extending understanding about the tradition to present day practice. Analyses revealed that the endurance of this ethnic dress tradition could be understood and interpreted in terms of both themes of persistence and change. Continuity with the past was emphasized in the fundamental social and cultural identities communicated through Trachten practices. Further, findings highlighted varied efforts to purposefully “keep the Trachten tradition alive.” Participants referenced formalized Trachten guidelines—again, strongly grounded in the past—and clubs that served to regulate and safeguard Trachten practice as well as Trachten festivals and events that celebrated the connection of Trachten to local cultural heritage. Additionally, because participants viewed Trachten wearing and crafting as deeply meaningful ways to build and express their cultural identity (e.g., as an expression of Heimat), they regarded it as worthy of preservation and worked toward that end to promote Trachten as a cherished cultural practice.

In another sense, Trachten, itself, is, “alive,” as Ingrid observed during her interview:

[Trachten] have always changed, although the basic form has remained the same. Elements are taken out of fashion trends even today...It remains alive, because the things get incorporated...We say: “The Tracht is alive!”

(Ingrid, Trachten expert and wearer)

Thus, findings revealed that, although, in some ways, Trachten wearing and crafting were bound by traditions of the past, they also constituted a lived practice that reflected the incorporation of changes related to technological, social, and cultural patterns of contemporary life. In turn, participants sought to make sense of these changes by framing them within the context of authenticity. That participants located relevant meanings (e.g., cultural identity, heritage, Heimat, authenticity) in their Trachten and related practices illuminates the role of such meanings in promoting the persistence of cultural traditions within a context of change.

Findings also provide insight to understand existing theory within the context of ethnic dress as a lived practice in contemporary society. Eicher's (1995/1999) proposition that ethnic dress traditions may change in ways that enable its persistence was strongly evidenced in the data. As Trachten producers and wearers have incorporated some modicum of contemporary with traditional, Trachten has remained relevant. It is through these changes in practice, based on the formalized past, in the mixing of new with old, that Trachten persist. It is clear, however, that multiple understandings of what constitutes "authenticity" in Trachten coexist, somewhat complicating the local Trachten practices for wearers and producers (cf. Theodossopoulos, 2013). As Keyes (1995) reminds us, however, it is in the interplay between past and present that identities are negotiated in the context of swiftly changing contemporary life. Within these contexts, the "voices of the past"—such as those embedded in the Tracht guidelines—enable the maintenance of Trachten traditions as meaningful cultural forms and practices.

The present study invites opportunities for further inquiry. This work focused upon practices and traditions relevant to the making and wearing of Trachten by women. However, men also participate in the Trachten tradition, and as such, it will be important to explore how men's experience of wearing and making this form of ethnic dress may differ from women's. Additionally, it would be valuable to examine the process by which younger generations are socialized in the Trachten tradition. Certainly, findings from such an inquiry would have implications for gaining a deeper understanding the mechanisms of persistence and change within the Trachten tradition.

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