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Liturgical Dance: A Dance/Movement Therapy Treatment Modality to Build Resilience

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Liturgical Dance: A Dance/Movement Therapy

Treatment Modality to Build Resilience

by

Jana Élise Taylor

Submitted in partial completion of the Master of Science Degree in

Dance/Movement Therapy at Sarah Lawrence College

May 2015

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to promote the understanding of liturgical dance, explore how liturgical dance can be integrated into a dance/movement therapy session, and determine whether elements of liturgical dance can be used in a clinical setting to support resilience, especially with African-American children who are dealing the effects of complex trauma. To further the goal of building resilience for children with complex trauma, a dance/movement therapy intervention was developed using movement themes of liturgical dance to address five developmental domains. Goals focused on developing self-awareness, impulse control, boundaries, problem-solving, and physical health. A discussion of five movement themes of liturgical dance demonstrates how they could be used in a dance/movement therapy session to support these goals.

Keywords: Dance/movement therapy, liturgical dance, praise dance, resilience, African-American youth, complex trauma, children

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Ms. Keith E. Taylor for her intelligence and creativity. She is my source of strength and comfort as I continue to press my way through life. Also, I want to dedicate this to my maternal and paternal grandparents for their resilience and perseverance.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction

You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy. (Psalm 30:11 New Living Translation)

Being a Mover

I lift my arms extended high above my head, with my palms facing upwards. My hands and torso sway from side to side as my legs gradually shift from left to right. Then I stretch my arms wide to the side leaving my feet firmly planted to the floor, with my head hanging down in reverence. My breath begins to increase rapidly. I begin to sweat as my body temperature rises. I feel a warm sensation emanating from the pit of my belly. The weight of my body begins to lighten. Tears begin to flow from my eyes. I am oblivious of my surroundings that I am dancing in front of 300 people who are also on their feet clapping, shouting and crying joyfully. My focus is not on who or even what is before me. All I hear is the pianist massaging the ivory keys, the drummer striking the tom tom, and the robust voices of the choir. My body is connected to the rhythm, the sounds, and even something more powerful.

As I continue to dance, my spirit feels the breaking of the bondage and chains of my own insecurity, hurt, and disappointments. While I'm dancing I feel myself releasing the things that have been weighing me down. In church, some would call it "leaving it at the altar," which signifies leaving it with God. After dancing I feel refreshed, revived, and renewed as if I can take on the world. During this experience not only was my physical body feeling the effects of the movements, but also my mind and spirit. Some might describe it as a feeling of euphoria, but, for me, I felt the presence of God.

Whenever I dance, whether it's in church or at a dance performance, I always feel God's presence around and within me. I also feel the spirit of my ancestors that guides me. I feel their pain, struggles and what is most important, I feel them encouraging me to press on to continue despite the obstacles I may be facing. This internal connection with self, God and my ancestry has been the root of my experience as a dancer since I was an adolescent. Throughout middle school, high school and college, my choreography always embodied a spiritual theme.

Over the past six years, I have been involved in my church's dance ministry. This journey has allowed me to discover myself and develop a stronger relationship with God. It also has been an outlet during some of the most difficult times in my life. For example, the day after my grandmother passed away, instead of weeping at home alone, I chose to mourn by ministering to others through dance. Through dancing I was able to leave my pain at the altar.

Having the ability to use the art form of dance within a spiritual setting has been healing and therapeutic, not just for myself, but for the members in my ministry. As I've grown to know them better, I've learned that many of the members come to the ministry having their own difficult times, from surviving cancer to dealing with substance abuse. Liturgical dance has also been healing for them too.

Being a Witness

On one particular day our ministry danced at church, and although I was actively participating in the dance, I was able to witness that same movement experience through one of the dancers. Because, I personally know her story and the struggles she is facing, I saw

that her dance was a breakthrough for her. Although the music had ended, her movement had not. She rapidly flailed her arms in the air, twisting her torso up and down, with tears falling from her face. I can see her internal struggle being released. Through her movement, she allowed herself to express deep emotions. She was able to begin the healing process by connecting her body, mind, and spirit.

Liturgical Dance

When I first thought about a thesis topic, I knew I wanted to incorporate my knowledge and experience as a liturgical dancer, but I asked myself, do I have a clear understanding of liturgical dance? Through my research, the term *praise dance* is considered a type of liturgical dance, which I will further explore in this thesis (Kovacs, 1996). Initially, all I knew about liturgical dance was that it was done in church and it was described as someone dancing in the Spirit. When I began to dance, I knew I felt a connection with God, but I didn't understand the biblical application of my movement and the connection. However, as I began to grow as a Christian, I started to study the Bible, which taught me that dance was omnipresent in the Scriptures. For example, in 2 Samuel 6:14, when David and the Israelites processed into Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant, there was dancing, singing, shouting, and playing of instruments among the people. "And David danced before the Lord with all his might, wearing a priestly garment" (New Living Translation).

It's Not a Show, It's a Ministry

As with many other dance forms, liturgical dance is a nonverbal expression of emotions, thoughts and feelings to others, or even to oneself. Based on my years of

experience as a liturgical dancer, I believe that liturgical dance uses a language of worship, with which the dancer uses movement to communicate with God.

Liturgical dance uses a language of worship, with which the dancer uses movement to communicate with God. Through this experience, the liturgical dancer is ushering the Holy Spirit into a sacred place, whether it is a sanctuary or banquet hall. When a liturgical dancer is dancing before a congregation, they are not performing but are ministering. The responsibility of a liturgical dancer is not to entertain, but to bring the congregation into worship, to encourage them, and to direct them towards God. In the performance world, we hear the motto, *The show must go on!*, but as liturgical dancers, our motto is *God's truth must get through.*

I've observed that as sacred artists, liturgical dancers use their bodies to minister to the congregation in order to deepen their relationship with Christ. The mind, body, and spirit must be vertically focused on God, as well as focused horizontally on others. It is not about the ego (self) or even the dance steps. Through the movements, the liturgical dancer is able to evoke the emotions of the congregants. For some congregants, it is a sensory experience to witness the movements, as the movements can move them even more than just reading Scripture.

Roots, Religion, and Resilience

Although my training as a dance/movement therapist is in its early stages, I began to observe a trend among the populations that were receiving treatment. Through my training of reading and attending various seminars and workshops, I began to notice that a large portion of the patients/clients receiving therapy were of African descent, particularly, African American. This discovery made me reflect on the history of African Americans, as it is a

culture that had to endure so much (e.g. slavery, Jim Crow laws) and even today continues to deal with challenges (e.g. systemic racism, unemployment, socioeconomic issues). Despite the atrocities, having a strong family, and religious and social connections have helped African Americans overcome adversity. When I reflect back on the history of African Americans, one word comes to my mind... *resilience*. One of the many protective factors that contribute to African-Americans' resilience originates from having a strong belief system that dates back from Africa through the Middle Passage to America. This discovery has solidified my interest in exploring resilience among African Americans through a cultural framework as a way to build and strengthen resilience, particularly for the next generation...the children. Having an understanding of resilience through a cultural lens could provide a basis for a successful outcome when working with children or any other population.

Over the many years as both a mover and as a witness in the worship form of liturgical dance, I began to realize how it was a healing tool not only for me, but also for others. Liturgical dance has been instrumental in my spiritual growth, thus giving me the resilience I needed during difficult times, and it has been a guiding force throughout my daily life. I wish every person could have that same experience through dance and movement. Coming to this realization, I wanted to learn more about how liturgical dance can contribute to building resilience. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to promote understanding of liturgical dance, explore how liturgical dance can be integrated into a dance/movement therapy session, and determine whether elements of liturgical dance can be used in a clinical setting to support resilience, especially with African-American children who are dealing the effects of complex trauma.

Chapter 2: Liturgical Dance

Liturgical dance is a language of worship used through movement to communicate with God. It is “the language of expressing spiritual experiences which is founded on religious language” (Scott, 2000, pp. 249-250). Through this spiritual experience, the dancer is interpreting an encounter with God through movement, thus ushering in the presence of the Lord. The movement of dance can assist a person in connecting the “Self” and a higher source encouraging the person “to stand straight in the midst of confusion and to move with resiliency when surrounded by pressures” (Taylor, 1967, p. 8). The word ‘liturgical’ comes from the root word ‘liturgy,’ which according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, means “a fixed set of ceremonies, words, etc., that are used during public worship in a religion” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Also, it is defined “as a Eucharistic (spiritual communion with God) rite or body of rites prescribed for public worship.” The Eucharist is the sacrament or sacrifice that is partaken of during the Holy Communion. A ‘rite’ is defined as that which is ceremonial in nature. It is done as a public, congregational, or community display of celebration (Butler, 2002, pp. 47-48). Therefore, liturgical dance is an outward expression through movement done in public. “Liturgical dance is a movement from the Creator through the creature in harmony with creation, containing praises to the Creator” (Pardue, 2005, p. 77).

Liturgical dance is a form of movement that is integrated into liturgies or in worship services where the body is used to express the word of God. It is one example of *sacred dance*, which is the utilization of movement to express an individual’s spiritual journey. Liturgical dance is a form of prayer, which can be done in a single manner or with a group, using the body to commune with a spirit. Sacred dance can take many forms. First, it can be

ecstatic movement, which can place the dancer into a trance. Second, it can be *ritualistic*, where the dance is used throughout the ceremony. Third, it can be liturgical where the dance “is a part of a larger ritual structure” (Gagne, Kane, VerEecke, 1984, p. 95). Liturgical dance is not meant to be done in private but as part of a community, structured around the liturgy. According to Thomas Kane, “Liturgical dance bridges the visible and invisible world of the spirit” (Gagne, Kane, VerEecke, 1984, p. 97). It is the role of the liturgical dancer to usher people into the presence of the Lord.

History of Liturgical Dance

As part of the Hebrew tradition, dance was an important part of the celebrations within ancient Israel. It was used as worship in daily life and for special occasions that celebrated victories. The dance was sacred, through which the movement brought forth the connection between God and man. In the Hebrew tradition, dance functioned as a medium of prayer and praise, as an expression of joy and reverence, and as a mediator between God and humanity (Taylor, 1976, p. 81). In the Old Testament, there are many references to dance as being a joyous celebration and a reverent worship. For example, in 2 Samuel 6:14, ‘David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod’ (2 Samuel 6:14 New Living Translation). The Scripture describes David and the Israelites dancing before the Ark of Lord, which meant that God was present. Hopping and whirling movements were done to express joy. Another example can be found in Exodus 15:20, when the Israelites were delivered out of Egypt and defeated Pharaoh’s armies after crossing the Red Sea. In celebration of this victory, ‘Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances’ (Exodus 15: 20 New Living Translation). There is no confirmed description of the

movement, but it has been suggested that there was hopping movement (Deitering, 1984). During Biblical time, Jewish dance was the central dance, and the movement consisted of clapping, stomping, whirling, singing, and shouting. These dances were usually done at festivals, victory celebrations, in preparation of battles, and feasts.

During the first five centuries of the Christian church “dance was still acceptable because it was planted deep in the soil of the Judeo-Christian tradition” (Gagne, 1984, p. 43). Because of the Hebrew tradition, Christians were accustomed to celebrating through the movement of dance, at worship and festivals. In two of the earliest Christian liturgies on record, dance was used in services, as dance was perceived “as one of the heavenly joys and part of the adoration of the divinity by the angels and the saved” (Hedgeman, 2007, p. 60).

In the early Middle Ages, converts were beginning to following the teachings of Jesus Christ. Dance began to change, and this was in sharp contrast to the practices of the Early Church. Although there was some dancing, the church begin to oppose some dances that they deemed too secular. This distinction between sacred dance and pagan was also made by the Israelites, and was reinforced within the Christian church. The church supported dances that glorified God, but prohibited dances that appeared to be pagan and not honoring God (Hedgeman, 2007).

By the later Medieval Period, which was considered the age of dramatic expression, the church began to move away from accepting dance as prayer and toward using dance more formally. Consequently, the dances became mainly theatrical and not devotional. The connection to God and the body was being lost. Upon entering the Middle Ages, the church began to become restrictive toward forms of dancing mania. One of the most notable dances is The Dance of Death, also called *Danse Macabre*, which was a dance that informed people

through its message about death and how death is inevitable, and that everyone must prepare themselves to appear before their judge. However, its meaning was transformed due to the Black Death, a form of bubonic plague that raged throughout Europe in the middle of the 14th century (Gagne, Kane, VerEecke, 1984). This was a time when people became obsessed with death, but by the 17th century, the focus had shifted. Despite the controlling influence of the church and its attempt to suppress dance, dances still continued. However, the focus of these dances was on the movement of the body and was not on the heavenly connection or devotional features of dance (Gagne, Kane, VerEecke, 1984).

During the Renaissance Period, dance was used as a part of processional celebrations, theatrical ballets and interpretation of hymns and psalms in worship. During this period, many changes occurred, including the Protestant Reformation, which affected how the Church viewed liturgical dance. Because the use of creative expression through dance in the liturgy was prohibited by the Protestant and Catholic Churches, dance was forced back into society, specifically for court society. By the 1700s and the Reformation Period, “religious dancing either disappeared, survived in isolated places, changed into folk or court expressions, or remained nearly undiscernible, hidden just below the surface in the prescribed movements of the Mass itself” (Gagne, Kane, VerEecke, 1984 p. 59).

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the American Shakers, a separate off-shoot of the English Quakers, and grew in size as a community, becoming more known and the subject of published accounts (Davies, 1984). Their movements astonished some and disturbed others. According to J.G. Davies, “The Shakers did not consider that their dancing was simply an imitation of what was recorded in the scriptures; they believed it was right and proper because it expressed the principle of union fostered co-operation and gave recognition

both to natural aptitudes and to the equality of the sexes” (1984, p. 64). Not only did the Shakers believe the Spirit was guiding them, but they did so based on the Old Testament. Their worship involved them wholly. The Shaker dances were organized, set steps with special patterns which comprised an array of repertoire dances. They had shuffle dances, a forward-and-backward square order dance marches, round and ring dances, and wheel dances (Davies, 1984, p.67).

Liturgical Dance in the 20th Century

In the early 1900s, dancing was either recreational or spectacular where the connection between the spirit and the body was lost. Dance was seen either in music halls, or as ballet, in the theatres, where it was the heir of the pastimes of the court and aristocracy, and was primarily the presentation of stories in danced form (Davies, 1984). By the 20th century, with “the arrival of modern dance, and its gradual acceptance, which has reached its climax in the post-war years, brought entirely new insights into the possibility of liturgical dance” (Davies, 1984, p.70).

Modern dance wasn't concerned with how it looked but rather by how inner feelings explained and communicated the meaning of life via movement (Davies, 1984). To the pioneers of modern dance, Isadora Duncan, Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham, Mary Wigman and Doris Humphrey, dance was a language. The sole essence of modern dance, is the movement and its outwardly use of expression, which is similar to liturgical dance. Because of the rise of modern dance, liturgical dance become more of a feasible option than ever before. (Davies, 1984). Since dancing had become accepted in society through its educational value, as well as the fact that many of the modern dance pioneers

were themselves either Christian or their dances expressed a religious theme, the church's attitude changed, thus allowing it to be integrated into worship services.

Liturgical Dance in the African-American Church

Thomas Kane identified seven characteristics of liturgical dance as: (1) It is largely determined by the ritual structure in which it is performed. (2) It must clearly be prayer and not performance. It is intended to involve all the participants in the ritual action. In ritual, there are no spectators, all participate. (3) It includes solo and group dances and may include assembly dance or gesture. (4) It is communal, drawing the community together. (5) It is inspirational, uplifting the spirit to God. (6) It is evangelical, witnessing to the message of salvations. (7) It is prophetic, challenging the participants to live the gospel (Gagne, Kane & VerEcke, 1984, p. 115).

Liturgical dance within the African-American church took on some of the same seven aspects, but it also had strong influences from both Africa and the African-American experience. In the African culture, dance was part of every aspect of daily life. It was a "natural expression of life" (Scott, 2000, p. 254). Dance was used in celebrating harvest, marriages, births, and deaths. As a form of religious expression, its purpose was spirit possession. The link between Africans and African Americans was the ritualistic form of drumming, singing and dancing (Raboteau, 2004). Albert Raboteau, in *Slave Religion*, says, "The ritual experience of West African peoples is the vibrant pattern of music. Dancing, drumming, and singing play a constant and integral part of the worship of the gods and the ancestors" (Raboteau, 2004, p. 15). The spiritual experience of dance in worship was communal, where the entire community joined in the activity (Scott, 2000). Boka di Mpsi Londi describes the function of dance as a communal participation:

Dancing has a very special function in a shared action carried out by the whole assembly under the guidance of an animator. On the one hand, it bears witness to the depth of the participants' feelings. On the other hand, it symbolizes their contact with the sphere of mystery. Dancing testifies to a special density of feeling that cannot, in the normal course of events, be exteriorized in any other way. The intensity of feeling united vertically with what lies beyond this world has repercussions in the horizontal communion through the fact that it is shared with the community in dancing. The dance therefore marks the summit of communication between beings. (as cited in Scott, 2000, p. 254).

However, the belief that dance is a “summit of communication between beings” was threatened when the Africans were brought to America. For the Africans, this required a separation of what they had known to be integrated as one in worship. Because of slavery, the slaves were limited to when and where they could express their sacred form of worship. “This separation was particularly violent in the lives of Africans kidnapped from their homeland and placed in slavery in America. They were forced to search for truth amid the devastation of slavery without the benefit of familiar cultural and religious expression.” (Scott, 2000, pp. 255 – 256). Because of slavery, the Africans were unable to practice their native religion and worship was forbidden by the slave master. However, in order to address their own needs and beliefs, the slaves used the language of Christianity to find meaning and religious understanding. Therefore they were able to find new ways of moving and making rhythm, as well as find alternative places of worship (Scott, 2000).

The Ring Shout

One of those “alternative places to worship” was the *ring shout*. Although the word ‘shout’ is used, it doesn’t mean “to shout” or “to yell,” it was to describe the “ecstatic dancing” in the ring shouts. In the ring shouts, participants would gather in a circle during worship services and take turns to sing praises, pray, and dance (Davenport, 2012).

H.G. Spaulding witnessed a *ring shout* in the South in which he wrote about his experience in the *Continental Monthly*. As cited in Callahan, 2006, at the end of the service, Spaulding observed:

Three or four [people], standing still, clapping their hands and beating time with their feet, commence singing in unison...while the others walk around in a ring, in single file, joining also in the song...Soon those in the ring leave off singing, the others keeping it up with increased vigor, and strike into the shout step. (p. 67).

In the ring shout, a small chorus of people would provide vigorous accompaniment to worshippers who formed a circle:

Sometimes they danced silently, sometimes the song itself is also sung by the dancers. Most of the time, a band with the best singers would stand to the side of the room, singing the song and clapping their hands together or on their knees. They would provide rhythm by clapping their hands, stamping their feet, and pounding the floor with the end of broomsticks. All would sing as those in the circle moved in unison counterclockwise, shuffling their feet in tempo without lifting them from the ground. The sound and tempo of the

singing and dancing would gradually increase until members of the circle became ecstatic (Callahan, 2006, p. 67).

The ring shout is similar to the funeral ring dance of the Ekoi people of Nigeria (Scott, 2000) as well as the West African Ibo, Yoruba, Ibibio, and the Bakongo of central Africa (Callahan, 2006). This ritual dance was done counterclockwise to a rhythmic acceleration of a chorus to facilitate possession of the dancers by spirits of the ancestors. The rhythm would be created by clapping hands, stamping the feet, and pounding the floor using a broomstick. This ritualistic dance was a way of connecting the living to their ancestors (Callahan, 2006, p. 67). Folklorists John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax in *Folk Song U.S.A.* who witnessed ring shouts in Louisiana, Texas, Georgia and the Bahamas, recorded a ring shout in Louisiana in 1934. As cited in Pardue, 2005, they described how each of the locations were similar:

(1) The song is “danced” with the whole body, with hands, feet, belly, and hips; (2) the worship is basically, a dancing-singing phenomenon; (3) the dancers always move counter-clockwise around the ring; (4) the song has the leader-chorus form, with much repetition, with a focus on rhythm rather than on melody, that is, with a form that invites and ultimately enforces cooperative group activity; (5) the song continues to be repeated from sometimes more than an hour, steadily increasing in intensity and gradually accelerating, until a sort of mass hypnosis ensues. (pp. 90-91).

Key Influences on Dance in African-American Churches

Liturgical dance in the African-American churches had three key influences: The first influence was the Judeo-Christian religion. Within the Hebrew Scriptures (Exodus, Samuel and Psalms), particularly in the Old Testament, dance was mentioned, as it was a part of Jewish worship. (Scott, 2000, pp. 251 – 254). The second influence was Western/Euro American Christianity and culture. As the church grew in Western Europe, the difference between sacred and secular activities became pronouncedly defined, thus breaking the relationship between dance and Christian worship (Scott, 2000). At the same time, dance began to flourish in the secular world of Western Europe, where the church allowed peasant and court dances to be performed. Because sacred dance was removed from the church and treated as an art form, it affected how dance was accepted later as a part of Euro-American Christian worship (Scott, 2000, p. 253). The third influence was traditional African worldviews. In the African context, dance is always a part of the religious experience. The sacred and secular are integrated (Scott, 2000, p. 253).

Chapter 3: Movement within Worship

Dance is a “language we speak from before we are born until the moment of death, a language we speak all of the time whether consciously or unconsciously, on the most basic level, movement is the very sign of life. The sense of movement is a necessity for life” (Deitering, 1984, p.11). For the liturgical dancer, he or she uses his or her body as instruments to communicate non-verbally. The movement can express emotions, ideas or tell a story. The movement can be rhythmic in line with the music or the movement can be without sound. When a liturgical dancer moves, she or he is reaching deep within her or his soul to express his or her faith.

Liturgical dance can be spontaneous, choreographed, or a production. The movement can interpret music or a song. The movement can express what is happening in the Spirit, a visualization of how God’s people are feeling. The dance is an extension of worship by expressing a prayer, and Scripture in the form of movement. Liturgical dance is part of the worship service, and the type of dance done in the service is determined by its function within the liturgy (Gagne, Kane, VerEecke, 1984).

Types of Liturgical Dances

There are different types of liturgical dances that can occur during a worship service. Each dance has its own purpose and movement quality that is part of the liturgy.

Processional Dance is a dance of gathering where there may be a task at hand for the dancers. The dance can be used to open a ceremony through leading the church community through a march into the sanctuary. Dance movements can be included, or not, but can consist of dance-like movements. Flags, banners, candles, or the use of vivid colors can enhance the purpose of the procession. If the worship service is a celebratory service, the movements may be *outwardly-directed*, where the movements can consist of running,

marching, skipping, leaping, and hand clapping. If it is a somber service, such as those occurring during Lent, the movements can be *inwardly-directed*. The movements can be a slow walk, with the head held down in reverence of the occasion. *Worship Dance (or Meditation Dance)* is a dance that gives honor to God. The worship dance can be a response to a praise. The music tends to be slow and the movements are soft, free-flowing with ballet-type movements (Kovacs, 1996). *Celebration Dance (or Festival Dance)* is a dance of rejoicing. This type of dance can be a prelude or postlude to a worship service during which the entire congregation participates. It can be done in a circle with a group. The movements can consist of skipping, leaping, jumping, and twirling. *Dance of Travail (or Victory Dance)*, is a dance thanking God for answering prayers. This dance is similar to the warfare dance. “Dancing the dance of travail gives birth to the things that God desires to establish in the earth to fulfill His purposes” (Kovacs, 1996, p. 54). The movements are using circular or crouching as in giving birth (Hedgeman, 2007). *Prophetic Dance* is a dance where the prophetic dancer allows God to intercede, move on his or her behalf. It is a personal worship that the dancer moves spontaneously throughout the space. The prophetic dance is where the dancer “must be authentic” in his or her worship. The movements are unrehearsed and can be danced with music or a capella. *Warfare Dance* is a dance done to prepare for war. In the Old Testament, it is a means to prepare for physical battles, however, in the New Testament, the battle can mean what is happening within ourselves (Clark, 2009). The movements of a warfare dance can be aggressive with strong and quick movements like kicking, punching, stomping. *Praise Dance* is an ecstatic form of liturgical dance. This dance can be done spontaneously, or choreographed. The music is upbeat, and the liturgical dancers usher in

the presence of the Lord and the congregation into worship. The movements can be quick and light, but also quick and strong.

The Movement Qualities

Liturgical dance is an embodied movement that is organic and comes from deep within the soul. The movement qualities can be best described as: (1) Free flow movement where parts of the body such as the torso, knee or elbow can be Light Weight Effort, indirect, and swinging movement, which elicits the feeling of openness, naturalness, and freedom. (2) Sustained movement, which is steady and equalized release of energy. An example of sustained movement is lifting the arm slowly high above the head. This movement expresses beauty, strength, patience, gracefulness, and love. (3) Quick movement that exhibits Strong Weight Effort is sharp and aggressive, such as dodging, throwing, jumping or kicking. It requires force and quick contractions. This movement can express anger, war, rebellion, and soldiers marching. (4) Quick Time Effort with bound flow, such as quivering, shaking, and pulsating movements can express fear, sickness, strength, and glory. (5) Release movement, which shows no tension, such as a controlled fall, a complete relaxation of the entire body or body part. It can express giving up, receiving a hit, tiredness or death (Kovacs, 1996).

Just as the movement qualities are important, so is the position of the head of the liturgical dancer as the face can also evoke emotions. One of the primary movements in liturgical dance is the focus of *looking up*, which means hope, expectation, pride, and searching. This movement allows the dancer to receive. His or her hands can be lifted to give his or her emotional issues to God and can be stretched to receive healing from Him. When the dancer is *looking away*, it can mean rejection, denial or anger. *Looking down* is

another head position the liturgical dancer may express, which can mean sorrow, shame, or humility (Kovacs, 1996, p. 87).

The Kinesthetic Awareness of the Liturgical Dancer: “Let Go, Let God”

For the liturgical dancer, the dance has the ability to move the whole Self. It allows the dancer to become involved with his or her emotions and faith, as well as his or her relationship to God. There is an internal process that happens deep within the dancer that allows him or her to express his or her emotions. “The liturgical dancer must learn to trust his or her kinesthetic sense, relying on what is revealed through inner feeling during the movement work rather than an outward appearance. The dancer must let the kinesthetic sense lead, and allow the other senses to take their rightful, secondary, place” (Deitering, 1984, p. 106). Other than being *kinesthetically alive* with the movement, the liturgical dancer must develop the skill of letting go, allowing his or her body to submit to the Spirit. “Only God can enable one to “stand outside of” the self in the dance, but the artist must be willing to let go and let God work” (Deitering, 1984, p. 107). This is a challenge posed for the liturgical dancer, as dance is an art form that is an outwardly expression that has a performance quality aspect. For the liturgical dancer, he or she must be able to connect to his or her “inner self” and God, so the movement is authentic and not being done just for theatrics. Therefore, the dancer must learn “the abandonment of self,” which is the ability to remove the “Self” from the forefront of his or her focus on the movement, so that he or she is free to experience the movement (Deitering, 1984). As a result, it will help him or her place the focus on worshipping God, and not on Self, or man. This is the “internal process” a liturgical dancer must go through in order to truly make the “inner – outer” connection. In liturgical dance, there is no audience, because it is not a performance. The dancer is

ministering through the use of his or her body. This important fact is what distinguishes liturgical dance from secular dance.

Chapter 4: Resilience: Looking at the Source through a Cultural Lens

Resilience is about the human condition, how a person can survive, succeed and evolve in the face of adversity. It is about having that inner strength, that source from within to bounce back from life's trials and tribulations. Many scholars have offered various definitions for resilience, but for the purpose of this thesis, the word *resilience* is defined "the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands (Hampton, Gullotta, Crowel, 2010, p. 109). It means having the ability to adapt positively despite negative influences. An individual's ability to develop resilience depends on various factors (internal and external) based on his or her exposure to risky or harsh environments, and his or her ability to cope (as cited in Neville, Tynes, Utsey, 2009, p. 380).

A Cultural Example of Resilience

Exploring resilience through a cultural framework would provide a better understanding of the concept of resilience. The African-American culture is one of many cultures that embody resilience. In reflecting on my own personal journey, I could not help but look at my own ancestral lineage and my faith to understand why I have been able to survive life's challenges. A recent online article on AtlantaBlackStar.com talks about The Journal of the American Medical Association's report on depression among black women. The writer, Taylor Gordon states, "The Black community boasts a lineage of incredibly strong and resilient ancestors" (2015). This statement only confirmed my choice to explore resiliency among African Americans. This section will briefly examine the historical origins of the culture and religion of African Americans, and why resilience is embedded within the culture. It will also examine how to strengthen and build resiliency among African-

American youth. Using the history of the African-American experience as a cultural framework to examine resilience will provide a better understanding of how to build resilience within different populations from other cultures in a clinical setting.

The Source from Within

African Americans have a rich history that is deeply rooted in African culture, strength, faith and resilience. In order to understand their resilience, one must begin by acknowledging the journey of survival for African Americans. That journey originates in Africa, where Africans were kidnapped from their villages, forcibly separated from their families, and ripped apart from their homeland. The African slaves were chained and shackled to one another as they marched through the wilderness of Africa to board the ships anchored off the coast. During the journey of the Middle Passage, the African slaves had to witness the deaths of their family members, friends and other Africans. During the 400 years of captivity in America, African slaves endured physical, mental, and emotional abuse, as well as daily challenges in order to adapt to a new culture. Their ability to adapt was essential to their survival, thus building their resiliency.

Even after being emancipated, many former enslaved African Americans had hoped to become a part of American society, and be treated as equal, having the same access to the same resources and opportunities that were afforded to other members of society. Unfortunately, the post-Civil War discriminatory Jim Crow laws prohibited African Americans from having access to those resources and opportunities, such as education, health care, economic opportunity, and employment.

The Source of Survival

In the face of adversity, African Americans were able to survive segregation, racism, and discrimination. However, African Americans continue to face challenges that are the result of the lasting effects of slavery, and include socioeconomic, health, and educational issues, to name a few. Not only did slavery have a direct impact on the lives of African Americans in relation to their economic, cultural, or social status, but it also caused emotional and psychological effects, some of which have been passed down through generations. This reality is evident by the challenges being faced by today's African-American youths.

Despite the challenges, what has sustained African Americans through slavery, segregation, and discrimination has been having a strong kinship and family bond, as well as having a strong belief system. The utilization of family and religion as a support system has remained a strong practice among African Americans and has transcended through generations (McCubbin, 1998).

The Source from Above

Even before placing their feet on American shores, the ancestors of African Americans arrived having their own belief system, since religion was intertwined in the African culture. For African Americans, having a strong belief system was essential to their survival because religion has been a vehicle for expression. It has been a "resourceful testament to the power of faith to uplift and sustain in the face of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion" (Taylor, Chatters, Levin, 2004, p. 11). For African Americans, the church supports that belief system and is a place of refuge.

A Strong Healing Force...The Black Church

In African-American communities, the church is the epicenter. It is the mecca of the black experience. The black church is representative of the African-American community, its spirituality, and Africentric values. It has become a safe and sacred place where African Americans can celebrate their culture even in the midst of being oppressed. The church is a contributing factor to African-Americans' resilience through its religious teachings from the Bible, which relay messages of hope. The stories within the Bible were stories of resiliency that African slaves were able to apply as they coped with their own trials and tribulations. During slavery, African Americans identified with the Biblical stories of oppression, compassion, and freedom, and that there was higher power, a spiritual entity that guided them during their difficult times (Neville, Tynes, & Utsey, 2009).

The black church also provides various means of support within the African-American community. In the *Handbook of African American Psychology*, authors Mattis and Watson identify four ways the black church contributes to the support of its members. First, it provides political leadership and civic instruction, education, healthcare education and support, as well as social services such as food, clothing, housing, jobs and financial support, and social and emotional support (Neville, Tynes, & Utsey, 2009, p. 94). For example, if a church member were to lose his or her job and fall onto hard times, the church can provide financial assistance, as well as career training and opportunities. Second, the black church supports the mental health of the church community by offering opportunities through various activities, such as having church members speak during services and read church announcements or recite scriptures, offer musical training and performance through the sacred arts (music, drama, or dance ministries), or through other activities, such as sports,

Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and volunteer work. These opportunities allow church members to cultivate skills and talents that may be under developed, overlooked, or unacknowledged in other surroundings (Neville, Tynes, Utsey, 2009, p. 94). Third, the black church promotes psychological well-being by publicly recognizing and acknowledging personal achievements of its church members. For example, the pastor may acknowledge youths who were on the honor roll or adults who have graduated from higher education, or reward those who have been active members within the community. Through this recognition, it can bolster self-esteem and create connection among its member. Fourth, the black church can help foster lasting relationship among its members. For example, for young people who may not be receiving support from home, creating a relationship with a religious leader can provide them with a source of mentorship, moral guidance, advice and emotional support (Neville, Tynes, Utsey, 2009, p. 94).

Building Resiliency within the Next Generation

Because culture and religion are protective factors, African Americans have the ability to persevere through life's obstacles, and thereby promote and support their own resilience. However, in today's world resilience is being challenged, which is evident by today's realities facing African-American youth who are exposed to many risk factors, such as poverty, violence, and unemployment, all of which hinder their progress.

In a report by the American Psychology Association Task Force on Resilience and Strength in African-American Children and Adolescents, the report explores how resilience can be developed and supported among this population. Instead of focusing on the risk factors of the African-American youth, the report focuses on the strength and protective factors that support their resilience and contribute to their healthy development. The report

identifies five widely known child development domains (identity, emotional, cognitive, social and physical) and reexamines how they can contribute to building and strengthening resiliency among African- American youth (APA, 2008).

Identity Development

Identity development supports the idea of awareness of self and an individual's characteristics to support that identity. Today, African-American youths' sense of self is being challenged through the images seen in media, entertainment, as well as the institutionalized racism experienced within their communities. The report states, "...positive gendered racial identities are essential to the personal and collective well-being of African American youth" (APA, 2008 p. 3). Protective factors that can support their identity development are racial identity and racial socialization, as racial identity which provide them with a sense of self, while socialization also supports their "racial identity and self-concept." These protective factors can affect how the child sees him or herself in the world and can support creating strategies in coping with relationships and interactions (APA, 2008).

Emotional Development

Part of a child's development is how he or she identifies and manages his or her emotions. Once a child learns how to understand his or her emotion, as well as how to express them, then he or she will have the ability to empathize and communicate well with others. For African-American children, it is important to understand the "cultural expression of emotion" and how it relates to resilience and strength. The report suggests that "programs that foster the growth of empathy in African American youth, promote racial socialization as a method for reducing anger and aggression, improve aspects of parenting associated with the

early development of conduct problems, and promote social and cultural competence in early-school-age children have shown promise” (APA, 2008, p. 4).

Social Development

Positive social interactions and healthy interactions with others in every aspect of their lives are important to the healthy development of African-American children. For example, in school, children need to have the necessary skills to interact positively with their teachers and peers, thus creating an effective and functional academic setting. Within the community, positive examples are crucial to the survival of the youth. Various community-based programs that are culturally-sensitive are great resources as part of the preventive process. The report also finds “empathy and religiosity such as a belief in God or a higher power, and church attendance” can also support resilience. Developing the ability to care for others and believing in a ‘higher purpose’ may direct children onto a positive path (APA, 2008, pp. 4-5).

Cognitive Development

In order for African-American children to be resilient in terms of cognitive functioning, they need to be “self-motivated to critically examine and understand themselves and the world around them. This critical mindedness requires not only fundamental academic skills (e.g., literacy, math), but also an interest in seeking out relevant information combined with higher order information processing (e.g., analysis, synthesis, problem-solving) skills” (APA, 2008, p. 25).

Physical Health Development

With the rise of childhood obesity, youth from all racial and ethnic groups are at risk for a wide range of illnesses. However, African-American youths are more at risk (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2010). By providing resources such as early health education

and positive role modeling it can support the youth into making the right decisions concerning their health. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “African-American youth who are in good physical health are more likely to experience positive mental health, fewer behavioral and social difficulties, and sharper or more responsive cognitive functioning” (as cited in APA, 2008, p. 6). To address the increasing health problems facing their youth, the African-American community has begun educating the community by focusing on “two important protective factors for childhood obesity: diet and physical activity” (APA, 2008, p. 6). For example, churches have begun to offer ministries that promote physical activity for young people, such as sports or dance ministries.

The future of African-American youth is uncertain as they endure obstacles and challenges, but with the support of community-based programs that offer content and strategies to strengthen protective factors, their future can be limitless.

Chapter 5: Integrating Liturgical Dance with Dance/Movement Therapy

Through exploring liturgical dance and resilience through a cultural lens, themes have developed that can be applied in any clinical setting, but particularly for children dealing with complex trauma.

Complex Trauma

According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, the term *complex trauma* describes “both children’s exposure to multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature, and the wide-ranging, long-term impact of this exposure.” These events begin early in life and can be severe and pervasive, and can disrupt many aspects of the child’s development and formation of self. Because these events often occur in the context of the child’s relationship with a caregiver, they can affect the child’s ability to form a secure attachment bond (“Complex Trauma,” n.d.). Many children who have complex trauma have experienced various types of traumatic events, which may include witnessing or experiencing domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, community violence, as well as having suffered loss.

As a result, many children can develop social, emotional, physiological, and cognitive impairments, including, but not limited to, being diagnosed with various disorders such as: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Attention Deficit (ADHD), or oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). Across the life span, children with complex trauma are at risk for developing co-occurring disorders, such as addiction, chronic physical conditions, depression and anxiety, self-harming behaviors, and other psychiatric disorders (“Complex Trauma,” n.d.).

Studies have shown that children who have been traumatized have problems with unmodulated aggression and impulse control, attentional and dissociative problems, and difficulty negotiating relationships with caregivers, peers and, subsequently, intimate partners (van de Kolk, 2005). They have trouble concentrating and learning, as well as issues with self-image and interpersonal relationships. Because of their inability to regulate or express their feelings, children have difficulties in their daily lives, such as in school where they may show aggression towards adults and their peers. This behavior can also transfer to home where parents/caregivers may seek outside assistance from the police or the Department of Social Services (DSS).

Addressing the Five Domains of Development in a Dance/Movement Therapy Session

This section will discuss therapeutic approaches using the five developmental domains within a dance/movement therapy session to support the goal of building resilience for children with complex trauma. This section will also discuss how five movement themes of liturgical dance that can be applied in a clinical setting to further develop resilience among children with complex trauma. Based on the five developmental domains, the treatment goals include: (1) Self-Awareness, (2) Impulse Control, (3) Boundaries, (4) Problem-solving, and (5) Physical health. Interventions have been created with integration of five movement themes of liturgical dance. Below is an overview (Figure 1) of the dance/movement therapy goals and interventions that will address the domains.

Table 1

Developmental Domains and Corresponding Dance/Movement Therapy Interventions

Developmental Domains	DMT Goals	Interventions
Identity	Self-awareness, body awareness, self-esteem, self-concept, self-image	Use of imagery Use of props Use of touch and rhythm Body taps
Emotional	Self-expression, impulse control, learn relaxation techniques	Start/stop activities Mirroring exercises Breathing exercises Role-playing activities
Social	Boundaries, safety, interpersonal skills, leadership skills, group cohesion	Teamwork activities Be a leader activities
Cognitive	Problem solving, motor-planning	Start/stop activities Mirroring exercises Teamwork activities
Physical Health	Physical fitness, motor-planning	Ball game activities Dance and movement activities

Incorporating Five Movement Themes of Liturgical Dance into a DMT Session

By learning and understanding about the different types of liturgical dances and its movement qualities, movement themes have been created to support the goals to building resiliency for children with complex trauma.

Theme One: Celebration of Self

This theme originates from the liturgical dance type, *Praise Dance*. This form of movement allows children to learn how to express themselves, as well as to build self-concept through learning how to celebrate the 'self,' thus building confidence and self-esteem.

Theme Two: Letting Go

Originally from *Prophetic Dance*, this theme allows the child to explore his or her movement through time and space. With the use of props, the goal of self-expression is being addressed as the children are using creativity and imagery to express him or herself as well as expanding his or her movement repertoire. For example, in a group session with adolescent girls, the song “Let it Go” from the movie *Frozen* can be used to elicit this movement quality and build upon developing group cohesion. By using scarves as a prop, the girls are able to express themselves as well as using their voices to singing along in unison with the song.

Theme Three: Empowerment

This theme originates from the liturgical dance *Warfare Dance*. For these children, some are dealing with the traumatic effects of physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence, as well as community violence. With these external forces interrupting their childhood, many of these children feel like they have no control of their lives, therefore they are fighting with an internal force, the self. Through this movement theme, the children learn how to release that internal conflict through their bodies. The movement is focused directly on the lower body half by allowing the children to stomp out his or her frustration, anger, pain, or hurt. The upper body half, such as the arms and hands, can be used to throw away those internal forces that have taken control. Because this movement theme can be strong and physically exhausting, it may lead to verbal communication to discuss the emotions the children are feeling and how to process it.

Theme Four: Surrendering

The theme of surrendering can be a good way to transition from the theme of empowerment. The surrendering theme comes from the liturgical dance, *Worship Dance*. In liturgical dance, worship dance focuses on surrendering to God, thus allowing Him to intercede on your behalf. The liturgical dancer learns to trust God with his or her emotions. After the children have stomped out their frustration, they may feel vulnerable as they experience their emotions. The movements of surrendering can allow the child to pick up whatever they stomped out and let it go. This can be done with the upper body half, by raising the arms and hands, and releasing it into the air. Within a session, a ritual can be created that is not religiously-focused, but focused on Self, allowing the child to give away whatever is bothering her or him to a higher place, whether it is God or up to the sky.

Theme Five: Community

The community theme is based on the *Processional Dance*. This dance can be done at the beginning of a group, as way to ground the children and to build cohesion with the group. It can also support the goal of impulse control through creating starting and stopping movements. For example, in the beginning of a group session with adolescent boys diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, the boys can mull around the room to the beat of a drum. This movement can become a ritual for each session by working with them on impulse control and learning how to attune to the sounds of the drum. This activity also addresses the goals of establishing boundaries, self-expression, rhythm, and impulse control. Also, within the group, each boy would have the opportunity to use the drum to create his own rhythm, thus learning how to start and stop. This activity also builds on learning

leadership and interpersonal skills by experiencing the act of sharing the drum with others in the group.

Conclusion

This thesis is just a small step in my life's journey of investigating and exploring how liturgical dance and its movement qualities can support resilience among various populations. Through this process of learning about liturgical dance and resilience, as a dance/movement therapist I also have learned some things about myself. I have discovered that when I am in a session with clients, that my *spirit of liturgical dance* is present. It is within me as I walk, talk and move with my clients. Although, I might not see it, I do feel it, and so do my clients.

As a dance/movement therapist using the dance form of liturgical dance, it is my goal to create a sacred space for my clients where they can dance and move freely, ushering in their creativity of self-expression. I am the facilitator to support them as they learn to let go and free themselves of their own chains and bondage of insecurity, hurt, and disappointments. I am just the therapeutic vessel to support them in building the resilience to survive adversity, whether it is a woman dealing with depression, or a child recovering from abuse. As the dance/movement therapist, it is my goal to guide them through the healing process through movement, to connect to their body, mind, and spirit, so they can feel refreshed, revived, renewed, and most importantly, free.

Dancing for His Glory

When I dance for the glory of God

I feel the Spirit of the Lord

I feel His presence

I feel connected to my African ancestors

I feel the angels of my loved ones who have left this earthly realm

Dance has allowed me not to be ashamed to express my gratefulness to God. I am not afraid

to praise Him in front of anyone.

When I dance for the glory of God, I feel alive and powerful!

When I dance for the glory of God, I feel free!

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