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Voice From the Deep: A Black Student's Journey in a Dance/Movement Therapy Graduate Program

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VOICE FROM THE DEEP:
A BLACK STUDENT'S JOURNEY
IN A DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPY GRADUATE PROGRAM

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of Columbia College Chicago

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Master of Arts

in

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the author's experience in a dance/movement therapy program through poetry written while in graduate school. The author uses the methodologies of lyric/poetic inquiry, artistic inquiry, and autoethnography to structure this thesis research. The thesis provides affirmation that cultural background and faith affect the perspective of an individual's experience in graduate school. Data analysis of eighteen poems written by the author revealed themes as the results of this study. The author discusses the meaning and significance of these poems that communicate the graduate experience as a whole.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When I began the Dance/Movement Therapy and Counseling (DMTC) program at Columbia College Chicago (CCC), I was one of two Black women. I was very excited to have someone like me to go through this program. “Finally!” I thought, “I am not the only minority in this counseling program.” I thought this because in my undergraduate Christian school, I was the only Black woman to graduate in my class. In graduate school, I thought things would be different, and they seemed to be in the beginning. But, by the end of my first semester, not only was I the only Black student, I was the only identified Christian. I was confused and felt alone. At times, I questioned if my feelings were valid and common amongst other minority students that came through the program before me. Because of my insecure feelings, I began to wonder about my place in the DMTC program.

As I went through the program, there were many times when I did not understand what my professors were talking about. I remember sitting in class trying to get comfortable in my chair. It was very common for our class instruction to take place in a circle without desks, but for me the desk provided a sense of security and a boundary between myself and the others in the room. I looked around the awkward circle naming the pattern of people to myself, “White girl with dark brown hair, White girl with dark brown hair...uh...White Italian girl raised around Black folks, White girl with red hair, White Jewish girl, White Jewish girl, White man, White, White, White...(pointing to myself) Black Christian girl.” They were all talking. All relating. All laughing. I was not. Class began, and the professor looked around the room, noticeably breathing in and out the energy of those in it. As the professor scanned the room intentionally, I asked myself,

“I missed something. What’s going on here?” As each of my classmates responded to her intentional, piercing, gentle scanning eye, silence filled the place like a cloud. I cringed in my seat thinking about how I missed the safety of the desk. Then, her eyes glanced over mine. My eyes met hers with the strength of an ox, but I was internally vibrating with fear like a little puppy.

As the professor introduced the various topics of the class, I found my mind wandering and waiting for the class to end. I was confused. I thought that everyone had learned a language I had not. Every so often, I would check-in and attempt to join the conversations in class, but I would soon check-out again when I did not understand. I waited and watched my classmates ask questions I did not understand. When I would open my mouth to ask a question, I felt like the silliest person in the history of dance therapy saying, “I’m lost.” One day after another would pass by and I would keep thinking, “White, white, white...” And, also thinking, “I don’t get it! What did we learn today? I’m reading this stuff, but it doesn’t make sense! Can I get away with learning 50% of the material and tossing the rest out because it doesn’t mean anything to me? Am I intelligent? Wait, I know I am but why can’t I understand my peers and my professors? Is my Christian faith welcomed in this environment? Am I too Black?”

“Am I too Black?” was the question that kept running through my mind. The reality of the color of my skin and the different way I thought was magnified in the DMTC program. I wanted to talk about this with my professors but felt like I did not have a voice to speak about this matter with them. When I would try, they did not get what I was trying to communicate. In my communication style, I was a beat-around-the-bush kind of person. I am very indirect when it comes to discussing my thoughts and ideas to

others. With this communication style, it required patience. When I would attempt to talk about my thoughts and feelings with my professors, I would get a blank stare from them that seemed like I had put them in some sort of trance as my words frolicked in the meadows of their mind, escaping them. I would wonder constantly, “Does my Black-ness play a role in me understanding people in my class? Is culture something that people fail to talk about with one another?” Many more questions emerged later as I progressed through the program.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to finally *voice* my own experience in the DMTC program. The word *voice* has a special significance to me. Physically, the voice comes from the vibration of sound within the vocal cords that is projected and heard from the mouth to the ears. When people lose their voices through different kinds of issues such as laryngitis, throat cancer, or a simple cold, there is a feeling of not being able to relate or speak to others clearly. There is a preoccupation with trying to get their voice back so that they will feel normal again. When someone has a voice, their desires are heard by those being spoken to; there is a sense of respect for the one speaking, and there is an acknowledgment of the one speaking. But without a voice, there is a feeling of hopelessness, fear, and despair. I recall a time toward the end of graduate school. I had just had surgery and when I awoke, there was a tube down my throat in order to help me breathe. When the tube was taken out, it took four weeks before I was able to speak clearly again. Therefore, I understand the physical experience of not having a voice. It was scary, and I felt like my voice would never come back. The significance of this word

is that it serves as a metaphor throughout my thesis. My hope is that I will be heard and that my voice will return to me as I share my story.

My research is committed to the investigation and communication of my own experience as a Black student in the DMTC Department at CCC. I also hope that my research will open the door for more Black students and practitioners to have a voice when it comes to dealing with race in their environments and with clients. Based on some of the literature I have found, it is safe to say that many Black and African-American students walk quietly through their higher education while carrying the feeling of not being heard. Gasman, Hirschfeld, and Vultaggio (2008) discussed this in their article stating, "...African-American graduate students frequently sense that their perspectives are not valued in the classroom...[they] often feel academically isolated in the classroom due to the lack of alignment between their viewpoints and those of their white professors" (p. 129).

I want to tell my story because I believe that it is valuable. It has the ability to communicate in a small way the felt experience of being the only minority and Black student in my class of the DMTC graduate program. I also hope that it will motivate others, especially Blacks/African-Americans, to share their stories. My story is relevant because I come from a Black/African-American background, ethnically and culturally. Although others such as Tyson (2006), Johnson (2008), and Gilmore (2005) used their experiences as Black DMTC students to inform their research, I am the first to speak about my experience in the DMTC program personally. In telling my story, it will bring awareness to the faculty of the program, students, and others in order to hear students from different ethnic backgrounds, specifically Blacks and African-Americans. If they

use their voices, and are heard, I believe their graduate experiences will be more fulfilling and supported.

Theoretical Framework

The approach of this research is from a multicultural counseling theory and the dance/movement therapy framework of Blanche Evan. The multicultural theoretical framework acknowledges the significance of the cultural and racial background of the client within therapy. This theory of counseling is “described as a meta theoretical approach to helping that recognizes that all helping methods ultimately exist within a cultural context” (Ivey, D’Andrea, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan, 2007, p. 359). With this in mind, it is important to understand students’ cultural backgrounds as well as their personality traits. This framework acknowledges that culture influences the way people think.

Multicultural counseling was created to specifically support Black/African-Americans’ cultural identity. These theorists believed that the Black/African-American experience in therapy was legitimate, important, and useful in their practice of therapy. The multicultural theory of counseling “is concerned with counseling and psychotherapy as liberation--the view of the self in relation to others and to social and cultural contexts. Interdependence is basic to the philosophy and actions of this meta theory” (Ivey, D’Andrea, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan, 2007, p. 361). Black clients understand themselves more as they relate to others, hence are considered to be more interdependent. This, in a way, is related to my story. I often looked at myself and wanted to know how I related to my classmates but more often saw how different I was from them. Much of my wanting to get to know them was met with some hesitancy. This idea of interdependence within

the Black/African-American community potentially could be traced back to the slave trade. Because many of the slaves did not come from the same country, they had to figure out a way to keep their cultural background and influence even though they were forced to throw it away. The only way to stay connected to their land was in the psyche.

Black theorists further assert that psychological linkages with Africa have been retained even with the forced transplantation of millions of African persons and the continuing press by the dominant cultural group to have African-Americans forget the past and divorce themselves from their cultural roots. This was made possible, in part, because of the rigidly enforced isolation of Blacks through formal and informal forms of segregation that continue to be manifested in many parts of our contemporary society. The various forms of segregation and isolation that mark this nation's treatment of people of African descent allowed (and perhaps even required) retention of a deep psychic orientation toward self-in-connection. (Ivey, D'Andrea, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan, 2007, p.364)

As an example related to the quote above, in the DMTC program we explored a lot of relaxation techniques that were developed by White/Europeans, and there was no way I was able to connect to my own culture's way of relaxation. I felt a constant forced adoption of their way, rather than figuring out my way. I found that it was true that I wanted to know how I was connected to my own people (Black/African-Americans) while in the program. Being around the dominant White culture on a consistent basis caused me to thirst for connection in some way with others like me. Mostly, I found this connection at my church. Many times through my misunderstandings with some of my White peers and professors, I clung all the more to the identity of myself being Black and

a Christian. I did this because I sensed and felt that most of my White/European American professors and classmates were coming from a worldview that was White/European American. Because of this felt sense, I was driven to see all the more how different I was and decide whether or not I would adopt their worldview completely.

My desire for connectedness was contrary to the worldview and perspective of others in my class. In some ways, these two paradigms fought each other in the classroom and again my Black worldview lost the fight. For example, in my classes, we were often brought to really emotional points with the reading and exercise materials of the class itself. I witnessed many of my peers become upset to the point of tears in our classes. Many times we were warned by our professors to be aware of material that may come up in class that needed therapeutic attention. My peers and I were often walking that fine line of material for therapy versus material that could be shared in class. This was confusing for me. I understood that the person in authority (faculty and professors) did not have the complete freedom to share their own information about themselves personally, but because of my own background I was open to hearing from my peers about their own struggles and issues in the class environment. When I am peers with someone, there is the familiarity of sharing and being open about issues and concerns in life. I would witness my peers crying and would want to hear their stories, but they refrained. Granted, it was their choice to be open (or not) about their pressing matters; however, their lack of doing so caused me to hesitate as well. In addition, since we were all adults, I believed that we were capable of setting our own boundaries with those around us. My worldview was to connect with them and offer some comfort and support, but the professors seemed wary of such actions.

And, I did not understand and felt forced to assimilate, in which I acted without doing some inquiring on my part. The literature offers the following explanation of what may have been worldview of my professors:

North American-Eurocentric worldview tends to divide the world into discrete, “knowable” parts; handles emotion somewhat carefully, even to the point of emotional repression; focuses on self-actualization and independence as a goal of life; emphasizes the clarity and precision of the written word; is oriented toward a linear “doing” view of time; stresses individuation and difference rather than collaboration and interconnectedness; and is more oriented toward youth than the elderly. Traditional counseling theories tend to support this cultural worldview. (Ivey, D’Andrea, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan, 2007, p. 364)

While articulating more clearly my own experience, I believe that the multicultural counseling theory helped me identify my pressing thoughts and validated them. In many ways, I was able to process this worldview myself before I began the program, but some questions surfaced for me. They were the following:

- Are my White/European professors trying to get me to think the way they do?
- Even though I’m Black, how can I connect on the same level with my peers?
- Am I really accepted among these people or just tolerated?
- Because of my Christian faith, how can I integrate what I believe without offending others?

This research cannot answer these questions, but they were with me throughout my experience, and re-surface in many of the poems included in this thesis.

Blanche Evan's perspective supports this research. Evan was committed to working with urban adults in dance therapy. She believed that the emotional life was suppressed in the body. This is significant because people, like myself, seem to keep silent when they need to speak up. Evan acknowledged this and looked to address this within a therapeutic environment. Levy (2005) stated:

According to Evan, the hands, face and voice were often the last areas to be released. She spoke of the tendency for the neurotic to try to mask his or her feelings by constricting the facial muscles, which otherwise made the emotions visible. Regarding the voice, which she believed was the hardest to release, [Evan] stated, 'Self-produced sounds seem to wake up the whole person in an immediate kind of way.' Through sound, the emotions were heard as well as seen. (p.32)

Could Evan's approach to dance therapy set free the voices of many Blacks and African-Americans like myself? Could it help them release pent up anger in their body toward the dominant culture and then find freedom to express themselves in a contained, supportive, and accepting environment? Can this therapeutic technique have the opportunity to work within the multicultural counseling perspective with Blacks and African-Americans in order to bring about acceptance of their cultural identity? Through self-expression, can Evan's approach to dance therapy have the potential to foster healing for those of the Black culture as well as those from various ethnic cultural backgrounds, in both educational and mental health environments?

Conclusion

As I investigated my felt experience of being in the DMTC program and shared

this experience with other Blacks in the field of DMTC, I made the decision to share my experience with the greater dance/movement therapy community through my thesis. First, I reviewed the experience of students in higher education and focused specifically on minorities and Black/African-Americans. Next, I included poems written by me, set to music created in MixCraft and GarageBand. I did this as spoken-word with my voice being heard throughout to express when I felt unheard and wanted to be heard. I later discuss my methodology and the results of my research. Some of my poems may be found to be melancholy, others frustrating, and still others exciting and contemplative. No matter how readers may experience this research, my hope is that my voice is heard and that others are moved into action to release their voices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

While going to graduate school can be an exciting and delightful experience in the beginning, it is also important to know the perspectives of students who continue in graduate education. In this literature review, I will examine the experiences of White/European-American, international, and minority students in graduate education. One of my purposes is to discover whether more research needs to specifically address the Black/African-American perspective in higher education. In this review, I explore the graduate school experience through the following: student experience in higher education and graduate study, student experience in counseling and counseling programs, and student experience in creative arts and dance/movement therapy programs.

The questions this review attempts to answer include the following: (1) Is the graduate school experience different among Whites in comparison with minority groups? (2) Do minorities, specifically Blacks, have the freedom to express and discuss openly their felt student experience?

Experience in Higher Education

Hess, Sauser & Walfish (2001) support that the student experience in graduate school is different than the student experience in undergraduate school. Specifically because of the nature of graduate school, the hope is that all students would have the opportunity to connect with other professionals within their field of study. Hess, Sauser & Walfish (2001) mention:

Graduate school, although new and exciting, differs enough from undergraduate work to produce uncertainty about which courses to take, which topics to

research, and how to interact with faculty members. During this period the typical student expects a lot of guidance from the faculty. (p. 100)

The experience of students in higher education is influenced by advisement and the involvement of faculty members. Hess, Sauser & Walfish (2001) also assert that students need to have realistic expectations of the time allotted by the faculty in order to meet and advise students. This perspective keeps students from having a disillusioned ideal. The interactions between students, colleagues, faculty, and staff are vital in clearing a smooth path to graduate school.

Beeler (1991) stated, “Circumstances of graduate students vary and require unique responses from policymakers and practitioners” (p. 170). He continued, “Graduate students develop a professional identity, not from a single individual, but from a composite of many professional models both positive and negative” (p. 170). This is a weighty reminder to all college and university personnel of the importance of facilitating successful adjustment to graduate study.

In order to help incoming students adjust to graduate school, all facets of the graduate department need to assist students in the transition. Beeler (1991) described this adjustment in four stages, each with a set of questions that represented how students would think at each stage. If faculty and staff were aware of the following stages, they would be more prepared to assist incoming students into graduate school. Being aware of these stages could also help the graduate student to feel more comfortable with their new experience. Beeler’s stages are identified as: Stage 1 *Unconscious Incompetence*, Stage 2

Conscious Incompetence, Stage 3 Unconscious Competence, and Stage 4 Conscious Competence.

In the Unconscious Incompetence stage, students come into their graduate program oblivious to their lack of knowledge in their subject area. Initially, students fear and doubt unconsciously. In the Conscious Incompetence stage, students understand that they are unsure about their subject matter. They are seen as being hesitant with their participation in the classroom because of this. In the Unconscious Competence stage, students tend to question their ability to practice what they have learned. Finally, during the Conscious Competence stage, students know that they are able to do what they have been taught throughout their program.

Beeler (1991) acknowledged the shortcomings of his study. He stated that there needed to be more research on the theory's applicability to those of different ethnic groups in other fields of study and those who attend for various lengths of time. Therefore, the question still stands: What is the experience of those from different minority groups in higher education and graduate study?

Canna, et al. (2003) stated, "It occurred to me that far less was written about how to survive graduate school than how to get into graduate school" (p.234). In his article, he focused on planning as a key component in assisting people to be successful in graduate school. Because this article was written for *The Behavior Therapist* journal, it approached the experience of graduate school from the perspective of a behaviorist. The author claimed that if people followed certain steps they would be successful in graduate school and that everyone could go to graduate school if they followed this model. Most people who feel comfortable with this one-two-step approach would immediately take it

to heart because it seems so simple. The truth of the matter is that people are not that simple. This study lacked the important discussion about things that keep people from being successful in graduate school.

When entering a graduate program, socialization is important as well. However, the experience of students from varying ethnicities in a given program can be different from those with White/European backgrounds. Weidman, Twale, & Stein (2001) discussed the difference in the socialization experience between the minority student and the White student in higher education. They stated,

White women tended to describe their graduate environments as cooperative, collaborative, and collegial; nonwhite women used words such as competitive, uncollegial, and isolated to describe their perceptions. Majority women were more likely to have mentors than minority women. The researchers found gender disparities to be magnified by racial discrimination. Consequently, white women were more skilled at participating in professional activities that socialized them for networking, presenting scholarly work, and coauthoring manuscripts than were their nonwhite female classmates. (p. 45)

Their statement captured the need for more research involving the socialization of minorities in higher education.

Stewart (1995) stated, “There are few orientation programs for new graduate students, however, who typically arrive to campus alone and will probably be too busy...[for] a social support network during their first year” (p. 21). The importance of having specific programs to aid the graduate student experience is essential for the student’s success. These organizations have the ability to help smooth the transition

process for those entering into graduate school. Yet, the unfortunate thing is that there are few available. Stewart's work raised a question: how does an institution support students that have many time constraints which prevent them from being involved in their academic community? According to Stewart, this concern is critical in the first of three graduate student developmental stages: the *entry stage*. The other two are termed the *engagement stage* and the *exit stage*.

Stewart (1995) looked at the stages from a clinical perspective in counseling graduate students. The entry stage recognized the vulnerability of the students and the constant evaluation they endure during this stage. The engagement stage is described as, "the point at which procrastination may begin to emerge as a way of dealing with any fears or self-doubts about one's ability to meet certain demands or deal with failure" (p. 21). The exit stage is described as "a process of disengagement and reintegration characterizing...a reorientation to reality" (p. 22).

These stages effectively summarize the transitions that many graduate students go through. Stewart admitted that his goal was to provide a simple model that explained what was happening in the life of a graduate student. However, he was only able to discuss his own experience in working with students in individual and group counseling. On the other hand, I agree with his premise of "[helping] students themselves as they recognize that they are not alone and that the issues with which they are struggling are not unique" (Stewart, 1995, p. 23). Two questions that arise from this article are: How do minority students move through these stages? Does their movement look different from the general population of students? These questions left me concerned for those that do not necessarily fit into the identified stages.

Minority graduate students.

What is the experience of minorities as they pursue degrees in higher education? According to Reid and Radharkrishnan (2003), upon entering a college campus, minority students are more perceptive of racial climate than those of the majority student population. Reid and Radhakrishnan commented in their article:

Consistently, prior studies found that students of color perceive GCC (general campus climate) more negatively than their White peers do. Compared with other students, African American and Latino students reported the most negative perceptions of campus climate and academic climate than White students. (p. 264-265)

Their research testifies that the experience of a school's racial environment by its minority students, including African-American graduate students, is quite different from their White counterparts. Their investigation provides evidence that race did influence the outlook of students' experience on campuses.

In observing that race and culture play an important role in educational experience, Reyes and Ríos (2005) described their own personal experience as Latinos during graduate school. Now as faculty members reflecting back on their experience, they stated, "Moving beyond an undergraduate degree is an accomplishment, however this also increases the pressures faced by students of color in graduate school environments" (p. 381). Being Latinos, they recognized that their experience was different from others because of the financial pressure they felt going into graduate school as well as the social pressure they faced. They discussed how their needs and concerns were quite different from their peers who were not Latino.

After the discussion of their experience in graduate school, they admitted, “The practices and experiences of others are as important as our own. A greater understanding of the challenges in our context might provide guidance for those who choose to follow in our foot steps” (Reyes & Ríos, 2005, p. 391). They recognized that no matter how significant their experiences were, the experiences of others are valid too. The authors looked for ways to assist other minority students in succeeding in academics. This article was valuable because it shed some personal light on the Latino/Hispanic experience and concerns in higher education.

As mentioned above, finances were one of the issues that concerned the authors. Finances also influence other minority students in the amount of time spent in a graduate program. Therefore, some students decide to go to graduate school part-time. Taylor (1993) wrote, “Because minority students often tend to have less money than their White counterparts, they have a real need for part-time programs” (p. 23). One individual stated, “It’s hard but it’s worth it. I just have to get to the point that I just have to do it” (p. 24). Even though many people may struggle with financing graduate school, it is especially difficult for minority students.

Black/African-American graduate students.

What about Blacks in higher education? Gasman, Hirschfeld, and Vultaggio (2008) found, “African Americans represented just 4.4% and 4.9% of all graduate and professional students attending Ivy League institutions between 1980 and 2004” (p. 126). This is really an enormously small amount considering the percentage of Blacks/African-Americans in the general population. While looking at the percentage of Blacks in

graduate institutions, there is a felt sense that their opinions are not affirmed in the class setting. The above authors stated:

According to literature, African American graduate students frequently sense that their perspectives are not valued in the classroom...[they] often feel academically isolated in the classroom due to the lack of alignment between their viewpoints and those of their white professors. (p. 129)

With this in mind, the authors are saying that students of color need acknowledgment and acceptance from faculty and mentors in order to succeed. Based on this statement, Blacks need to be heard.

In reference to being heard, Spraggins (1998) dedicated her dissertation to helping Blacks in higher education be heard by others. She conducted interviews with Black female students at universities and institutions. She discovered that “These women lifted the veils on their graduate experiences” (p. 141). One of the women described her experience as the following, “This is a modern day plantation and I’m just a slave” (p. 142). This statement was one of the many negative experiences of the women she interviewed. Spraggins’ quote implies it is critical that minorities, specifically Blacks, experience a sense of belonging. Do these findings apply to students in counseling programs as well?

Experience in Counseling Programs

Counseling graduate students in general.

What is the counseling program experience for most graduate students? Buttrum (1976) wrote an article about his experience in a clinical psychology program. In a way, he spoke about feeling neglected in training by the faculty at his university. He stated,

“The staff seemed badly overworked and didn’t have much time for me. However, I have lots of freedom to do what I wanted. I tried some testing, individual therapy, group therapy, etc., but I had to learn pretty much on my own” (p. 17). The author felt that he did not get what he was expecting from the program he was studying. What does Buttrum’s experience imply about the minority student experience in counseling and psychology programs?

Students who enter graduate counseling programs come in with their own spiritual or religious belief systems that are, at times, challenged by their course of study. Rollins (2009) addressed the discussion about faith and counseling. He spoke of an individual who was getting his doctorate:

When Robert Brammer attempted to obtain a dual doctorate in counseling and religion, he was told that the fields were incompatible. [Brammer said], “My initial reaction was that it was very sad that we don’t see how intertwined these two fields really are. After all, the cultural identity of religion is fundamental for a large number of people.” (p. 28)

Rollins later stated that, “studies have shown that mental health practitioners tend to be less religious than the average American” (p. 29). Students within counseling programs, according to Rollins, felt that topics such as spirituality and multiculturalism should be addressed more often.

Rollins (2009) also discussed the need for more dialogue about culture and spirituality in counseling. Although this topic is weighty, the author encouraged students and therapists to think about how to keep this conversation going with others, including interaction with religious clergy.

In counseling programs, students have the opportunity to be supervised by one of their faculty members as well as their specific site supervisor. This relationship was built on the idea of helping students learn more about their given profession. Armeniox (2000) stated:

The supervisor and supervisee relationship serves as the base of all effective teaching and training in the helping profession. A well established supervisee and supervisor relationship provides a context for addressing conflicts that may arise between [them], which can be problematic for [them]. (pp. 24-25)

Armeniox's statement implies that the conversation of religion and therapy could be addressed within the supervisor/supervisee relationship. Is this being discussed with minorities in counseling programs?

Minority counseling graduate students.

While working with minority students, faculty members need to be aware of the potential power dynamic that has permeated American culture as a whole. Nilsson and Duan (2007) stated, "White privilege is present and unspoken in all cross-cultural interactions" (p. 219). They explained how this difference in power could bring confusion in the supervisor/supervisee relationship. This confusion has the ability to affect the graduate experience.

Role ambiguity refers to supervisees' lacking a clear understanding of what is expected of them...Adding racial and power dynamics to the integration of these opposing roles may make the process even more complex for U.S. racial and ethnic minorities. (p. 220)

This article touched on the idea of prejudice and how the supervisee may experience this within the relationship with his or her supervisor. Basically, if the supervisee does not feel valued or cannot trust the supervisor, there will not be much disclosure within the relationship. For example, the authors stated, “In comparison with their White supervisee counterparts, African American supervisees have been found to expect their supervisors to be less empathic and less congruent and to provide less regard” (p. 221). In essence, they do not think that they were liked. Based on the input of the minority student experience in counseling training, this study found that if prejudice was perceived, the relationship was bound to have conflict and interruptions. The authors acknowledged that more research needs to be done on the relationship of prejudice and supervisory behavior. They also welcomed further research on racial relations in counseling programs.

International student experience in counseling programs is also worth discussing. Ng and Smith (2009) believed that many international students:

encounter unique problems because of cultural and identity background variables.

Though each student is unique, it has been noted that the degree of support and the type of services needed by [them] are often greater than those of domestic students. (p. 58)

The authors found that international students from non-Western countries experience pressure to assimilate to the culture of the U.S. In summary, their mentality and worldview (thinking, living, seeing, etc.) are different from those of Western culture. The researchers stated,

most American university counselor training and related programs operate from a Western paradigm of counseling and education. Although most counselor training programs in the US would promote multicultural awareness, the major training approaches will inevitably reflect a paradigm that embodies Western values, beliefs, traditions, and practices. (p. 67)

The researchers supported the difficulties of the international experience and recognized the small sample size of their study. However, I believe that they over-generalized the culture of the domestic counseling trainees. I do agree with the authors that the international student experience is unique to counseling programs as a whole.

While searching the literature, it became clear that student diversity is important to the development of the counseling field. It has the ability to stimulate a broader perspective of others in counseling programs. Dickson and Jebson (2007) stated, “Counseling students have identified their experiences and interactions with colleagues from culturally different backgrounds to be among the most influential experiences in their development of multicultural competency” (p. 91). People from diverse backgrounds are needed in the counseling field. What does this say about students in creative arts therapy and dance/movement therapy programs?

Creative Arts Therapy and Dance/Movement Therapy Student Experience

In the creative arts therapy literature, including dance/movement therapy (DMT), I was unable to find much written on graduate student experience. In the field of art therapy, I found one individual who discussed her experience in graduate school. Boston (2005) hoped that in sharing her experience others would be able to understand her perspective. She stated:

As an art therapist of color, I am often haunted by the memories of my experiences of discrimination in educational institutions and worksites. To reflect upon those times is still occasionally painful. As I share the sources of my anger and pain from that time, I'm concerned that some who read this piece still may not understand or will be offended by my depictions. It is not my intention to dig up the bitterness of my past. But I am taking a risk by sharing these issues that are not addressed publicly, and by doing so, I hope to foster understanding. (p. 190)

She later stated how her attitude and responses to others had to shift depending on the situation. This was something that she personally had to learn as she went through school. She said, "More than 20 years later, reflecting on those classroom experiences, I'm a stronger, more assertive person than I was then. I understand that as a person of color, one's response may vary depending upon the setting" (p. 191).

Within DMT literature, there is limited information about a student's perspective and experience during graduate study. Payne (2001) wrote about students involved in a DMT group experiential. The participants in this group were trainees in the program. The purpose of the group was to probe the viewpoint of the students about safety and personal development. According to Payne (p. 268), "...no studies in either the arts therapies or psychotherapies invite student perceptions of their personal development experiential group during or following their training." This statement is noteworthy because it makes me wonder why those in creative arts therapy programs hesitate to write about their experience. Can a student's experience be credible research? Do students perceive quantitative research as more acceptable than qualitative research?

In reference to Payne's (2001) article, there was one limitation. The research was not diverse. The group consisted of seven all-white, female students. During the process of the group, the theme of safety was addressed. Within this element of safety, many other sub-themes were identified such as boundaries, role of facilitator, etc. In light of this, I wonder how much more these themes would be magnified with individuals from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Chang (2009), however, discussed the cultural bias of DMT in the sense that its history was founded upon Western psychotherapy. Like Ng and Smith (2009) did for counseling, Chang clearly addressed this phenomenon in the following, "Historically, the clinical theories and models for dance/movement psychotherapy have been based on western European and North American concepts of mental health" (p. 301). She also illustrated this with her own story of how assumptions influence the practice of movement therapy. Chang stated:

In our graduate DMT practicum class, we were practicing a resistance-pushing dyad exercise. It is possible that of all 15 students in the class I, as the only Asian, was unable to "stand up to" my teacher and push her off balance. In the discussion after the exercise, I was critiqued by the class for my inability to activate my strength effectively... However, in this particular class example, the analogy was drawn that I must have some "problem with authority figures" because I could not move the professor off place. (p. 301)

In her thesis, Nishida (2008) discussed and elaborated upon her experience. She was a Japanese student who referenced her own thoughts and feelings of being in the DMTC program in Chicago. She talked about her own growth throughout her experience

and what she learned. She articulated the difference between her Japanese-Asian worldview and the Western-White-American worldview. Her research focused on distinguishing her need to assimilate into the American culture while trying to keep her ethnic identity in the program. She supported how people may interpret things from their own cultural bias and perspective. The examples of the experiences of people from Asia support the reality of DMT's Western cultural influence. This influence has the capability to cause unawareness of and conflict with others it may want to serve. Therefore, awareness of the cultural differences of students should be considered when working with students in DMT programs.

In investigating the experiences of Black and African-American DMT students, a few sources were found. On the other hand, most are related to the professional field of DMT rather than their own experiences within their graduate training. Tyson (2006) was a dance/movement therapy student who completed the DMTC program at CCC. She stated in her thesis introduction, "As I grow in my identity as an African American dance/movement therapist, I detect a cultural void within the practice of dance/movement therapy" (p. 1). Even though her thesis does not really touch on her own personal experience in the program, her statement suggested something about her experience. She later stated, "As an African American student, I investigated the possibilities of integrating dance/movement therapy with African inspired healing movements to make dance/movement therapy more attractive and meaningful for African American clients" (p. 4). This brings to awareness the lack of effectiveness of implementing DMT with those among the Black culture. This also includes those who decide to go into this field of study.

When it comes to embracing a conversation about race, specifically with Blacks/African-Americans, there seems to be an underlying tension. Johnson (2008) identified this idea in her experience as “hard conversations” (p. 4). She stated,

Though my training in dance/movement therapy began with a week long course in socio-cultural foundations, I have found that concepts of race and culture were often absent from the larger curriculum and from class discussions...I pursued research to examine how dance/movement therapists experience race and culture and how that experience affects their work. (p. 4)

This exploration makes me ask these questions: What was Johnson’s personal experience in the program in regards to race and culture? What were some questions she had about race when it came to specific classes in the program?

Another eye opener about the field of DMT was from Gilmore’s (2005) thesis. She stated, “The results of current research indicate that some African American dance/movement therapists perceive Euro-centric biases as impacting the number of African-Americans entering the field” (p. 5). She later stated, “Currently, no research exists that has examined the experience of African American DMT students and professionals” (p. 5). My question is: Why? What keeps Blacks and African-Americans who study DMT from discussing their experiences in their professional training programs?

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to gain more knowledge of the experiences of students in graduate education, especially those of minority cultures. As mentioned throughout this review, more research needs to be done in finding the silent

voices—especially in the fields of counseling and DMT. The purpose of my thesis project is to step out of the dark corner and bring to light my own experience as a graduate student of dance/movement therapy. I hope in the future that others will be able to discuss their experience as Black students studying the field of dance therapy, and that more research will be conducted along those lines. With this in mind, the poem below is an expression of my being one of the few Blacks/African-Americans speaking up and letting my voice be heard:

*Out of the shadows I come forth,
Like a baby that is birthed,
From the dark comforts of the womb,
Kept warm, safe, and secure.
Fears and anxieties thrive,
In the concept of bearing me.
Leaving the place where I hide,
I go and be free.
Culture can tear us apart,
Without realizing the affliction.
But once the condition of the heart,
Is bursting forth,
The great addiction becomes love.*

Chapter 3: Methods

Etherington (2005) stated,

When I tell or write my stories, I am helping myself and others understand who I am. I am also creating meaning out of my existence: making sense of my life.

When I hear or read other people's stories, I begin to understand them more fully by reflecting, not only on the content of their stories, but also on how they tell them, their language, intonations, images and metaphors. (p. 306)

Like Etherington, I conducted my research through the use of poetic writing. To help the reader better understand where I was coming from, portions of my research included elements of lyric/poetic inquiry, artistic inquiry, and autoethnography. I chose these methodologies because I found that throughout my graduate school experience, I looked to creating poetry in order for me to make sense of what was happening in my environment. Usually, I created poetry when I was stressed out and needed a creative outlet that captured my experience in a nutshell. I had the freedom to write my experience quickly and easily without having to explain myself completely using well thought out paragraphs on my feelings.

In my life, writing poetry came naturally for me. Writing poems has helped me deal with difficult emotions and situations that I was unable to articulate in normal journal writing. In my prose writing, I have found that I have difficulty articulating my thoughts fully and clearly. I have struggled with prose writing my whole life. Through poetry, I have found the freedom to leave gaps and clearly connect with my own experience. Poetry gives me a voice. Prose writing, on the other hand, is more difficult for me and causes frustration. Poetry assists me in expressing who I am. Prose writing

makes me feel like I cannot communicate with anyone. Therefore in presenting the following methodologies, it should be known that they have helped me to better articulate my experience in the DMTC program at CCC.

Methodology

Poetic/lyric inquiry.

This is the question I have been investigating throughout this thesis: What was my experience in the dance/movement therapy program as a Black student? As mentioned above, I used poetry in order to inform my answer to this question. When using poetry, I gleaned from the methodology of lyric/poetic inquiry. First, lyric inquiry according to Nielsen (2008) is:

a methodology that acknowledges the role of the expressive and poetic in inquiry and in the aesthetics of communicating the results of such inquiry, regardless of discipline... To engage in this inquiry is to engage in all manner of no rationalist writing--narrative, poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction, journals, prose poetry, dialogue, and monologue—to explore and to communicate to others an issue, dilemma, or phenomenon. (pp. 95-96)

Specifically, my focus was on making poetry. Based on this literature, I realized that poetry could be used as valid data for research. Shapiro (2004) wrote about the potential of poetry as data that brings about understanding of ideas, issues, and/or situations:

Qualitative research further favors the view that its task is not to verify or predict [an] enduring ‘truth’ but rather to discover and better understand the multiple, socially constructed realities that surround us... Similarly, poetry is not concerned

with prediction; rather, it provides a kind of deep understanding of subjective experience that it is difficult to access in other ways and is capable of presenting diverse, often contradictory, narratives and images simultaneously. (p. 173)

Furman (2004), a therapist, used poetry as data in order to investigate his emotional state during his father's battle through cancer. Furman's poetry contained autobiographical/personal data. Although acknowledging that the researcher must have a reflexive nature about themselves, he also acknowledged the importance of researchers being genuine with others. Furman stated:

Autobiographical data often contains information about a researcher's fears, difficult emotions, and vulnerabilities. It is a valuable lesson for researchers to push themselves toward self-revelation. Indeed, how can we expect our research participants to be open to us if we are unwilling to be open ourselves? (p. 164)

Through vulnerability of researchers, Furman supported poetry's potential to open doors of healing to others.

Wiebe (2008) used poetry in her research in order to express her religious background and as a means to better understand her past:

Through writing poems about my "mennocostal" (Mennonite and Pentecostal) background, I am coming to new understandings of myself, my past experiences, and my writing-research practices. In turn, these insights help me better understand some experiences and writing practices of my research subjects, as well as what the scholarly literature says about such practices. I research how writing personal narratives can be an act of inquiry—how it can help the writer construct new understandings about herself and her topic. While studying how

writing can be inquiry, I practice writing as inquiry. I also perform the poetic data from my research. (p. 1)

I too took the opportunity to perform my research data. However, I gave it a twist. I put my data to music. How I did this will be discussed in following sections.

Artistic inquiry.

The next methodology I used was artistic inquiry. According to Hervey (2004), artistic inquiry, like any research, is a focused, systematic inquiry with the purpose of contributing to a useful body of knowledge. In addition it will have some or all of the following characteristics:

1. It uses artistic methods/art-making [for] data collection, data analysis, and/or presentation of findings.
2. It engages in and acknowledges a creative research process.
3. It is motivated and determined, at least in part, by the aesthetic values of the researcher(s). (Hervey, p. 183)

My research followed this artistic inquiry model in many ways. My poetry and music were forms of art-making. I consistently went back to them in order to collect data and analyze them in order to present my findings. My research process was very creative. I spent much time putting music together, deciding which poems would fit with particular styles of music. My decision whether or not to create music for a poem depended on the poem's texture and how I felt about it. In writing my poems and producing the music for them, I unconsciously went through the stages of artistic inquiry. Later, I was able to recognize how my process was creative in nature and how this methodology supported it.

Autoethnography.

The last methodology used in my research was autoethnography, the use of one's own experience in order to build and formulate an analysis (Sparkes, 2000). In research, Sparkes found that this type of research was known as narratives of self or forbidden narratives. In research, she recognized that "...[creative] writing is also a way of knowing.---a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways we discover new aspects of topics and our relationship to it" (p. 22). Narratives of self are writings that explicitly inform readers about one's experience in life.

Etherington (2005) added that autoethnography is "...a blend of ethnography and autobiographical writing that incorporates elements of one's own life experience when writing about others" (p. 300). She wrote about a person's experience writing and discussing trauma in childhood. She stated that there was value in autoethnographical research in discussing one's story as well as others' stories in research. In the same way, I see my research as one placing value on my experience in the dance/movement therapy program. It not only acknowledges my experience as a Black student, it also has the potential of enlightening other Black students' experiences and could stretch as far as the experience of Black clients in therapy.

Ellis (2004) stated plainly about autoethnography:

[It is] research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political. Autoethnographic forms feature concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection portrayed in dialogue, scenes, characterization, and plot. [It] claims the conventions of literary writing. (p. xix)

In her book, she explained autoethnography by writing about it concurrently with

teaching a class about it. She stated, “In showing what happens in the classroom, I want to provoke readers to experience the power of autoethnography, to feel its truths as well as come to know it intellectually” (p. xix).

Procedures

My creative process.

Writing poems.

I wrote poetry throughout graduate school. At the beginning, I only wrote a handful of poems, but toward the end, my poetry writing increased. This was because of my research methods class. The thought of research frightened me because I am not a linear person. Research papers were very linear. Therefore, it took me a very long time to decide on a topic for my research thesis. While feeling the pressure of class, my creativity in making poetry helped me function and survive the rest of graduate school. When I finally decided on a research topic, I chose to keep track of my feelings by continuous writing of poems during my last semester of school. I began to connect more and more with poetry because of the stress I experienced at that time. As my research topic developed and my internship proceeded during my last semester, I noticed that I began to write two to three times a week. Poetry writing kept my sanity and motivated me to complete what I had begun.

Music-making.

In my first year of graduate school, on the other hand, I learned how to make music on two computer programs I had found online called MixCraft4 and GarageBand. During the Christmas break, I delved into this interest of mine. I spent a lot of time on the computer figuring out how to fit beats, sounds, vocals, and instruments together. When

school began after break, I found myself taking breaks while doing homework in order to relieve the stress I had experienced from school and work. During my internship, I realized how the clients enjoyed music-making, and I included it in my treatment for them. As I made music with them, I was encouraged all the more to keep using this medium for myself and had several instrumental tracks made. My excitement for creating music was soaring, and I wanted to do something more.

Fusing poems, music and research.

Finally, an idea popped in my head. I thought, “Why don’t I put some of my poems to music?!” This idea emerged from me wanting to play with my poems and my music just to see if they complemented each other. I just wanted to see if the music would add to the message and emotional weight of the poem. Because my music and poetry making were a parallel process, sometimes I did not have music for the poem or vice-versa. If this was the case, I made music that reflected the poem or a poem that reflected the music. Two examples of these are *Race Reality Check* and *Relational Boundaries*. For *Race Reality Check*, I made the music first and then wrote the poem. However, for *Relational Boundaries*, I wrote the poem first and then made the music.

With this found freedom, so to speak, I still had the question of research pounding in my head. Music and poetry found a way to come together, but research was still up in the air. I started to notice that I was reflecting a lot on my graduate school experience. With this inspiration, I wrote poetry that captured specific memorable experiences I had in my classes. Eventually, I had an epiphany: “Why don’t I use the poems and the music to discuss and tell about my experience in graduate school?” A light-bulb went off inside my brain and my heart. I had wanted to do this all along but thought that it was not

important enough. Therefore, I resolved to include every poem in my thesis that I had placed to music. That was a simple decision to make because it gave me a sense of containment within my research. The poems I picked best captured my experience: physically (what was actually happening), emotionally (how I felt), and heuristically (what does it mean).

Data Analysis

I picked a total of eighteen poems to discuss more closely and delved into my experiential process of graduate school: fifteen put to music and three without music. As mentioned above, poems were chosen according to whether or not they captured my graduate school experience as a whole and/or how they moved me emotionally. For most of these poems, I used music. The process was quite invigorating. First, I listened to all the music and poems. While listening to each song, I recorded, in just a few word pictures, what I felt as I listened to the poems. For example, with the poem *The Transition*, I wrote as I listened to it:

- feels refreshing and thoughtful
- asking questions
- internal apprehension
- expectation

Later, I listened to the poems again. I began describing what the texture of the music was, why I created the different sounds, and described the poem. After listening to the music for the third time, I wrote about how the music and the poem informed me about the experience I had in the DMTC program.

In addition to selecting a collection of eighteen poems, I analyzed all the poems I wrote, searching for recurring themes. I read all 59 poems a total of three times or more in order to gather the main ideas I discovered in each poem. For each poem, I wrote down words that seemed significant and listed them. Every time I saw those words in other poems, I made a check by them. For example, I saw the word *light* eight times as I reviewed all of my poems.

After reading these poems, I had gathered a list of words that stuck out to me. I grouped these words into themes. The themes of my poetry were investigated with thoughtful reflection on my part. I separated all the words that caught my attention. I began to group them with similar words, opposites, or based on the overall essence of them. After grouping, I described what each group of words meant by giving names to the themes I discovered. These themes helped me reflect on my experience in graduate school as a whole, whereas the individual poems had communicated and represented isolated responses.

Conclusion

In the proceeding chapter, I will present the results of my findings. I will point out my themes in the 18 poems I selected to be a part of this thesis. I will discuss their meanings as it is related to my research question. Also, with 15 of these poems, there are voice recordings of me reciting the poetry with music. In order to listen to these poems, the track number will be indicated in the thesis and an audio CD will be with this thesis as well.

Chapter 4: Results

The question of my research was: What was my experience as a Black student in the DMTC program? In this chapter, I will present the themes identified from an analysis of all of my poems. The themes capture my overall experience of the DMTC program at CCC. They include: faith, relational roles, interactional feelings, inner process and/or conflict, journey, and inner light. The chapter ends with the presentation of 18 selected poems and descriptions of their meanings, their identified themes, and the description of the music, if it applies.

Themes

Faith.

In my poems, I found that I often used the words: He, You, His, Faith, Belief. These words represent my faith in Jesus Christ who I see as the one leading my life. I believe that I truly find myself in knowing that I am completely accepted by Him. I have been able to find much comfort in knowing that as I have walked through my life. My own personal belief sustains my meaning and purpose in life. It reminds me constantly that the negative opinions of others do not compare to His love and full acceptance of me. This fact has been challenged in many situations I have experienced in graduate school. On one hand, I know the truth about myself, my faith, and who I am. On the other hand, I find that I begin to listen to what others think of me and live my life according to that. Sometimes, I let negative opinions influence me. One can think of it as a tug of war. The hope is that the truth will pull hard enough to make the lies and misconceptions fall in the mud and bow down to it. At this moment, the truth is elevated. In consistently following the truth about me, I do not let others dictate my life, and I am who I am.

Interactional feelings.

In my poems, I saw that I used several words that I felt had interactional meaning. These include: uncomfortable, attunement, support, love, express, emotion, anxious, hesitation, anxiety, process, play, tune in, mirror, deep, joy, fear, reflection, birth, witness, frustration, abruption, empathy, support, feel. Several of these words are similar to one another. However, their meanings carry a different texture and perspective between them. An example of this is mirror and reflection. They both come from the idea of showing something to self or to another. A mirror usually is an object. In my poems, a mirror served as an object or action that is trying to reveal something about someone. Reflection, in contrast, has to do with what is being seen by the one looking. These words are both used to show how I interacted with others and my response to the interaction. In the use of reflection and mirroring, I hoped to open the door to a healthy interaction with others.

Another example is tune in and attunement. Tune in paints a picture of searching for a radio station, fine tweaking the way I interacted with it until I found what I was looking for. Attunement was an idea that filled space between two people. By using these words, I observed my desire to meet people where they were no matter their response to me. The desire to reach out in relationship to them was evidenced by my efforts, even though I was afraid of how they would respond to me.

In relating to my clients and others, I see that feelings play an incredible role. They are shown whether or not a relationship is going well. This theme shows and explains my feelings as it pertained to relating to clients, classmates, and professors. Based on my feelings, I saw that I was insecure and uncomfortable in my relationship

with others. This is demonstrated by the feelings of anxiety and fear I had in relating. As I contemplate this, I can see how the sub-theme of support is relevant to this theme. I felt unsupported because, as the only Black student, I was unsure initially of how to relate to my peers without thoughts of my culture constantly being on my mind.

Also, interactional feelings are related to my experiences in my internship, where I mostly worked with Black/African American clients. I found that I was anxious and so were they, considering that many of them were hurt by people from our race. And, many times, I saw myself in them which triggered my own counter-transference. I felt unsupported myself but was also challenged to be some support to the clients. In this way, I needed to give what I lacked to those around me.

Relational roles.

In my poems, I spoke a lot about various relationships. Words that reflect this are: therapist, relationship, therapy, support, brother, son, together, family, paraclete, authority. They all spoke of my process in becoming a therapist as well as being real as I met with my clients. In my internship, I worked with a predominantly Black population of children and adolescents. I watched how I was engulfed into a family-like atmosphere where I was the big sister. This process was cyclical in nature: therapist, sister, family, authority, mother, friend, and back to therapist. At times, I went back and forth among all these roles. I did not sense this sort of thing happening with any of my peers working with Black/African American clients. I often wondered how being a Black woman in a therapist position affected on my clients' responses.

The word therapist appeared most frequently, as if I had to keep reminding myself of who I was in relation to these clients. I frequently hoped I would eventually be seen as

a guide, an example, and an encouragement to them. I wanted them to be able to see me and desire more for themselves than just being children from disadvantaged communities and households. My idea of an advocate is reflected by the Greek word *paraklete* or *paracletos*, which can mean “counselor” or “one who walks alongside” (Advocate, n.d.) in English. I wanted to be one who walked with my clients. In a way, I can say that I finally morphed into the counselor who walked with the client. Cycling through the various roles was needed in order to figure out how to become this kind of therapist.

Within the relational roles theme, I also found the subtheme of support in the kinds of relationships I described. Throughout my graduate experience, support issues kept appearing in my relationship with my peers and professors. In some ways, I was unable to find the support I needed from professors; but in other ways, I was. I felt some academic and emotional disconnection between us; many times I thought that it was because of my cultural background. There were times in the simulated DMT groups where I was emotionally detached. In those instances, I would expect any empathic person to ask something as simple as, “Are you ok? How did the exercise go for you?” There were many times when I felt that I was not a part of the group because of the lack of inquiry. This is why I felt I needed support: so that I could have the freedom to express my concerns to others. Sometimes though, a glimmer of light would shine to let me know I was heard.

Inner process and/or conflict.

This theme reflected my internal process as well as the internal conflict I had about myself in relation to others. Because of this thesis, I have been urged to look introspectively in order to gather information about myself as I related to those of another

culture in my program. Sometimes, this theme was interchangeable in the sense that my poems represented my inner conflict more than my inner process and vice versa. I recognized it by the following words: time, choice, intention, intentionality, being me, me, hide, mask, I, center, core, breath, change, arrange, self, and needs. These words reveal some things I had difficulty reconciling.

For example, I wrote a poem about my experience with breath. I used the physical experience of breathing to help me adjust to school and all of my graduate life. During my first year of graduate school, I was diagnosed with some sort of asthma. I experienced shortness of breath leading to an inability to function. For a few nights in a row, I had been unable to sleep because I was coughing most of the night due to bronchitis. Not being able to breathe was the scariest thing I had experienced in graduate school. One night, I had a panic attack because I could not breathe and was rushed to the hospital. Breath, the one thing I had depended on, was hanging in the balance. The bronchitis affected my asthma, restricting access to my breath. I remember sitting in class, not able to participate in a breathing exercise because of this. I literally felt weak and sad to not connect to the one thing that kept me sane.

During data analysis, the word I was seen in 85% of my poems. Questions that came up during this time were: What does it mean to be me and be Black? How do I meet my own needs by investigating the core of who I am? In what ways do I hide myself from others because of the way I think and see the world? I sometimes made choices to hide my needs, thoughts, and responses from others. These choices expressed a sense that I did not care about the disconnection between us. However, in hiding myself from my classmates, I perpetuated my own insecurity of being different from them.

Journey.

This theme represented my journey in graduate school. Road, path, journey, voyage, way all express my walk through the program through metaphor and symbol. My adventure in the program was very much a path I had to take, something I felt I needed to do.

Graduate school was something I was afraid of because I believed that I was incapable of succeeding at the graduate level. I did not know what to expect. No one that I knew of, in my family had gone to an institution of higher learning for graduate school. This heightened my anxiety because I had no Black/African-American role models. When entering graduate study, I felt I was in a different place intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually from my peers. As I proceeded in the journey, I noticed how I began to grow in those three areas as well as understand many different things about myself and others. I saw how the road was rough, full of both gentle and bumpy areas. However, these trails were necessary to make me the person I wanted to be.

Inner light.

Sun, empathy, light, stars, rest, radiate, dark, brighten, darkness, illumination, night, shine, presence, twinkle, dimness, seeing, heart, seen, exposed: most of these words described my clients. Their personalities were hidden a lot of the time. Initially, their fears kept them from being themselves. Metaphorically speaking, their light was dim and not present because we were strangers. They were just clients who were given to me so that I could try to work with them. As I got to know them, I was able to see them for who they were because of our established relationship.

As I have reflected on the words of this theme, I saw that they did not only speak

about my clients' experience but also my own experience in graduate school. These words create a picture of the ways I have been able to reveal and unveil pieces of myself to others. One example is the word seen. I observed that I spent a lot of time seeing myself grow as a person and therapist. I noticed that as I became more and more vulnerable in a healthy way with others, I was able to reveal those hidden parts of myself. This also includes how I related to my clients. As I self-disclosed to them in a real way, they were able to bring parts of themselves out in order to find more and more healing within their own hearts.

Selected Poems and Descriptions

The following 18 poems were selected for discussion. Fifteen of them were put to music. In this section, I will describe the feelings of the poems and music. I will also describe their meanings and my reasons for making the music the way I did.

The Transition [[Track 1](#)]

How does integration work?
Uncomfortable is what I feel,
I don't understand the level of this field.
Dance/movement therapy seems strange to me,
But I think this is what I want to be.

How does integration work?
My teacher puts a string on the floor.
Our memories inside begin to jerk,
But they were only addressed inside the score.

Uncomfortable is what I feel.
I don't understand the level of this field.

In undergraduate school, I learned that integration meant the concept of bringing together counseling tools and ideas into a Christian worldview while sifting out the ideas and concepts that go against Biblical principles and the Christian worldview. In graduate

school, integration meant bringing together and connecting the mind and body in order to support full health in an individual. I wondered how I could bring these different perspectives together so that I could articulate my own view of integration. Now looking back at this poem, it brings out a new meaning of racial/ethnic integration at the graduate school level. How are students chosen for a particular program? Is there enough dialogue with students of color about their experiences in their program? Are they being reached out to or are they left to sink or swim? I felt full of thoughts, apprehension, and expectation. I really did feel uncomfortable. I had a lack of understanding of what was really happening in my classes but also felt excited about learning.

This poem reflects the theme of interactional feelings. I identified this because it mentions how I felt at the beginning of the program and in observing what dance/movement therapy was about. What exactly was dance/movement therapy? It gives a brief description of how I reacted to it and the people around me. It is about my first impressions of being in the program, looking back at my experience during the first week. I was asking questions and stating my feelings. I wondered how my idea of integration learned at my undergraduate school would fit in with the new idea of integration at my new graduate school.

The music in this song has an earth tone to it which comes from the ethnic drum being played throughout. It begins with a guitar playing and then the beat kicks in. Eventually, a piano comes in and seems to transition the song with the feeling that something is beginning to happen. The song ends with the djembe drum fading out and the expectant piano finishing the song. In orchestrating these musical instruments together, they describe a bit of my experience in the beginning of the program. The initial

experience felt earthy and there was a sense within myself of being prepared for something to happen. This sense was coupled with uncertainty of what it was and how I might change in the process.

In the Beginning [Track 2]

Excitement churned the depths of my soul,
Closing one book and opening another.
What would it look like to become whole?
It starts as I look around the corner.

In the beginning, I played and thought I knew.
I stared, and shocked was I,
At the course load of my school.
Very light, but really heavy and the burdens untied.

Observing myself fight with laughter,
By my side, it caused some friction.
I'm hiding but holding on the rafter,
I guess this is my initial condition.

The main theme present in this poem is inner process and/or conflict. I identified this by my response to the new situation of graduate school. In this poem, I laughed, I played and I hid in response. I used laughter a lot to help relieve the stress I was experiencing in my classes. However on the inside, I was frightened and sometimes used laughter to hide myself from others. The words "...shocked was I at the course load of my school" illustrate that my first semester was full of exhaustion and tiredness. This poem expresses with music the whirlwind I encountered at the beginning. From the poem, I sense the quickness of time moving ahead of me. The sounds convey a sense of racing around and not knowing what is happening.

The beginning of this poem starts with a loud, piercing, scratching sound. The beat skips a bit and then is consistent throughout. There is a clicking, mouth sound beat and a regular bass drum beat. What adds to the beat is a hip-hop stuttering sound that

seems to fade out after a few measures. Toward the middle of the song, there is a piano that seems to tip-toe through the music for a bit, as if it is trying to go somewhere quietly. Right after that, there is a loud, crisp guitar playing. It feels fresh and enticing as it plays with the upbeat music. The music ends with the guitar playing solo. While it fades out, there is a calming heartbeat at the very end. This song reminds me of my very first semester. It was a scratching wake-up call and then I began to run a race. This race consisted of homework, school, work, and rest. The very last heartbeat in the song reflects the end of my day after running around like a madwoman. All that was left of life, when the music faded, was my own heartbeat preparing for another day.

My Simulation Group

My self-consciousness,
Came out during this cycle.
The self was seeping with anxiousness,
And they...fickle.

Leading, for the first, those,
Who have been more exposed.
Unyielding myself to the room,
Upon the surface of my sensitivity.

Criticism flew thru the space.
An impenetrable cloud hovered over me.
My path was unlike theirs, and no grace.
Too soon my heart was inferred,
And left to thirst,
Amongst the negativity.

I did not set this poem to music. It describes my reactions to leading a simulation group during my first semester in DMT Theory I class. In this poem written much later, I recall the unpleasant experience of leading my peers for the first time. They said that I was being inauthentic. I remember the tangible feelings of judgment and ridicule from those in the room. In some way, I thought that my leadership ability was being judged

because I was Black. There was much criticism, and I did not feel a sense of understanding from either my professor or my peers. During that time, I felt this intense expectation to do well even though I had never seen a dance/movement therapy group in my life. After their criticism, I hid myself from the group because I did not think that they really wanted to get to know me.

This poem has elements of the inner process and/or conflict, interactional feelings, and journey themes. I noticed the inner process theme in “self” (meaning me). Everything was related to me and how I did the group during that time. I recognized the interactional feelings theme by my response to relating to others through the use of “anxiousness,” “sensitivity,” and “criticism.” I saw the journey theme from use of the word “path,” related to the way I led the class experience.

The texture of this poem feels like it is in space. The words that describe this are: “room,” “flew,” “surface,” and “hovered.” I believe these words speak to my experience at the beginning of the program. I was ungrounded and did not quite understand how to use DMT, let alone how to lead it. It was a frustrating and overwhelming time for me, and this poem captures this feeling. In the phrase “my heart was inferred, and left to thirst, amongst the negativity,” I attempted to paint a picture of needing some support and encouragement, and not receiving it. I also felt that in some way I was not accepted, and I wondered often if this was because of my race or because my peers were unsure of how to relate to me. I had a lot of wondering but I never was able to vocalize this to my peers.

Gasping Sea [Track 3]

Finding my place,
As I stare into this gasping sea.
I see myself diving into its embrace,
When I take the chance to be.

Be in the midst of the wind,
And the waters carry me.
So blue is the reflective mind,
of the full sea.

Sustained in the experience,
Of being broken within.
But finding the comfort in the essence,
The essence of knowing I'll mend...I WILL mend.

Floating to the shore,
Resting my head on the rocks.
Dabbing myself off and wanting more,
I run forward and out of the box.

This poem describes my feelings in Creative Arts Therapy class at the end of my first semester. I remember being so excited about this class. While in some way still carrying the criticism of my classmates, I was glad to have a class where I could express myself and come alive. This class gave me a glimpse of who I could be when given the freedom to express myself. I created this poem because of some artwork I did in that class. It was a picture of someone who appeared so small in comparison to the vastness of the blue rough waters he was overlooking. I imagined myself being that person overlooking the deep water and thought about jumping in. It was a picture of me following the path I had been given without having any second thoughts. And, it was a metaphor of me imagining myself diving into the waters of relationship with others that I feared so much after my first semester.

In the poem, I describe the experience of jumping in the water. The phrase “being in the midst of the wind and the waters carry me, so blue is the reflective mind of the full sea” represents my complete embrace of graduate school study. “The reflective mind of the full sea” describes the work and course load. It attempts to communicate that the

program requires a lot of brain power and vast soul searching. The water image shows that it is exciting but also risky. With this in mind, graduate school was exciting and a bit risky for me because it challenged me to get out of my own box. “Sustained in the experience of being broken within, but finding the comfort in the essence of knowing I will mend” speaks to what the waters of graduate school did to me. Through the soul-searching and strenuous course work, the waters of graduate school caused me to face my own failures. I learned that by facing them, I will heal. The stanza “floating to the shore, resting my head on the rocks, dabbing myself off and wanting more, I move forward and out of the box” speaks to the end of the journey of hard work and soul searching. The waters prepared me to move out of my box, to accept the journey ahead of me no matter what.

The themes represented are inner process and/or conflict and journey. I saw inner process and/or conflict because I was reflecting on my experience of graduate school using the “water” phrase. The reflection and images represent the experience I had in the program. I see the journey theme because I am carried through the water and describe what it is like for me. This metaphor explains my continuous journey in relationship with others no matter my cultural background.

The music begins with a space age and ambient atmosphere in the background, a light beat, and a choir of male and female voices saying ah. They all gradually get louder and then fade out. A rhythm or waves grounds it throughout. The voices and the atmosphere create a feeling of hugeness and vastness. Toward the end, just the beat is left. In comparing the music to my experience, school was really something huge before me, just like the choir’s singing. The whole experience of the music creates a feeling of

being immersed in something and excited about it. However, when the music fades the words, “out of the box” are repeated for dramatic emphasis.

Race Reality Check [[Track 4](#)]

Am I accepted?
I know I look different.
Different ideas cross my mind,
Time after time as I stand on this line.
This line of culture that some think doesn't matter.
As a matter of fact,
I see myself in the mirror,
As my ideals change, I shift and rearrange.
Who am I? Am I like you?
Some would say, “Yeah, I think it's true.”
But thoughts race and scatter my mind,
They tell me that I've been living a lie.
Am I white because I'm educated?
Do I really think that I've made it?
To the top is not what I've elevated.
I'm here to grow and become accredited.
Whatever that means,
I see a difference that tends to lean,
On the wall of indifference,
Because my backgrounds and experiences do exist.
A burden has been placed on me on behalf of a race.
One that questions its place.
But, the robe I wear is not my own.
How can I lay myself bare before the throne,
Of success that is founded in this world?
I don't belong.
Belonging to the One who calls me His own,
Who has created me and given me new clothes.
My feelings come and go,
Like waves on the ocean floor.
Grounded in the earth of firm belief,
On this I cleave,
And step into the blissful radiance,
Of being me.

I feel like this poem is one of the most vulnerable that I have written. It communicates longing to be understood. I grapple with thoughts of being accepted by others and just being myself. In this poem, I also address the impressions of other Blacks

when they see a Black individual coming from the neighborhood and getting advanced education. One feeling that resonates in my soul is that of being a betrayer of those I have left behind. This poem seems to go through phases of focusing too much on those around me, then going full circle to find a way to accept myself, knowing I am fully accepted by God, and taking comfort in being myself.

The prevalent themes were inner process and/or conflict, faith, and interactional feelings. This poem reveals the inner conflict I had about who I was regardless of my race and what people thought about me. I see the faith theme because this poem culminates with me coming to terms with my belief in God, represented by the words “One” and “His.” It also reflects the interactional feelings theme because this poem is influenced by my relationships.

The music feels like it is longing for something. It starts with a soft guitar picking and playing along, an emotional piano playing with it, and a small underlying bass line. They all join together to create a questioning feeling. After a few measures, a can-like drumbeat kicks in, giving the poem some sort of urban feel. At the climax, the urban beat continues and it is just the piano playing. The beat then picks up an Indian drum sound. I chose the Indian beat because I was trying to create a moment to be heard clearly as I recited the poem. This transitions into an orchestra playing with all the beats together while the piano and the guitar check out. I chose the orchestra loop because it created a feeling of someone crying out to others to be heard. In essence, I was crying out to be heard through the music. The orchestra checks out and the piano and guitar return. The song winds down with just the drumset beat and piano. After a few measures, the drumset drops out; the piano is left and closes the song.

Relational Boundaries [Track 5]

Boundaries are important in a relationship.
They are different from walls,
Like a line in the sand,
A ship that sails to the ocean floor,
And doesn't fall.

Even the waters know how far to go,
But sometimes in a storm they flow and overflow.
And the day that was once warm becomes wet and cool.
Boundaries are important in a relationship.

The importance of boundaries is explained through metaphor with images such as walls, a line in sand, a ship sailing, water, and storm. "A ship that sails" reflects boundaries by how it floats on the water. It utilizes the shape of the boat in order to stay afloat. If any part of the ship is broken or torn, it will sink. When water is given a boundary (as in a glass), it stays there. The water in this poem is kept in place by land. When a storm brews (hurricane, tornado, thunderstorm, etc.), it loses control and crosses the land boundary as well as other things on the land. A storm, in many ways, has a tendency to destroy things. This is reflected in poor or lacking boundaries in a relationship. Without boundaries, a relationship will be destroyed.

Water also represents people who attune well to others and have safe boundaries, hence the waters "know how far to go." When people have storms or straining situations in their lives, they are capable of crossing boundaries and damaging relationships. If a relationship is damaged or compromised, it could cause harm or be "wet and cool."

I found that this poem has the themes of relational roles and interactional feelings. This poem affirms the therapeutic relationship circle previously discussed, revealing the relational roles theme. Boundaries are tested in the therapeutic relationship. This poem

also speaks to the importance of attunement in relationship with the metaphor “the waters know how far to go” and illustrates interactional feelings.

In my graduate program, I felt that my classmates were hyper-sensitive to boundary issues with each other and the clients with whom we worked. The music to this poem reflects my classmates’ sensitivity. It begins with an elongated orchestral violin. The violin is embraced with a rhythm guitar, a simple drumbeat, and a djembe playing distinctly with it. This same beat is consistent all the way through; but at the middle of the song, a pulsating, deep bass guitar is introduced. It gives a feeling of a boundary test between the bass guitar and violin. The song ends with the djembe playing an upbeat sound.

I felt a similar boundary test with my peers. There was this intense time of going through the experience of graduate school together and being so tightly knit, but also trying to stay aware of how far was too far. A sort of artificial, temporary, and created relationship like ours was unique to the DMTC program. Some physical and emotional contact was appropriate with my peers but sometimes this was confusing. For example, many of my peers and I cried with each other in class, while according to friends of mine in other counseling programs, this behavior would be inappropriate for their classroom setting.

The Storm [Track 6]

My dreams have been tornadoes of late,
The storm whispering through the country of my mind.
Sometimes, I feared that it would take,
Me away and I would lose time.

I ran sometimes by the storm,
But it only consumed what was in its direct path.
So contained but dangerously formed,

Even in this I dashed.

Away as I look inside,
I see a part of me.
A part of me that wants to hide,
The life of day that is seen.

So dark the storm brings,
Hesitation and abruptness emerge.
Later, the sun births and streams,
And still the beat of the winds are heard.

In this poem, I wanted to re-create a recurring dream I had about a tornado. In one of my dreams I was panicking as the tornado took over. In another, I ran away from the tornadoes while they were perfectly formed and predictable. These dreams really impacted me and allowed me to see my own graduate school process. At first, it was a process of confusion and storm-like brain activity. Later, my inner “tornadoes” became more controlled even when I tried to run from them in my dreams.

This poem’s themes were inner process and/or conflict, journey, interactional feelings, and inner light. I recognized the inner process theme by the chaos represented. So many things were thrown at me, and I was unable to juggle them during the program. I noticed the journey theme because it began as a creeping storm, was much more present in the middle, and ended with just the “beat of the winds.” In retrospect, this represented phases of my experience in graduate school. At first, it was a mysterious foggy fairy tale. It eased into a completely stressful storm with strong winds. Then it ended with the residue of chaos the storm brought. The storm was quiet but it left a mark. How I was feeling in the storm revealed interactional feelings. The storm brought “hesitation and abruptness” to me, experienced as fear. I feared the storm because it was the unknown that swept over my mind and heart. Inner light appears at the end represented by “sun

births and streams.” This birth is of the open therapist I knew I would become but needed the storm to deliver.

The music to this poem begins with an intense and consistent drum beat. As the beat continues, violins strike a note that implies something serious is about to happen (the mysterious foggy fairy tale). As the music plays, rainfall is heard and pounding thunder cuts through the music. There is a storm created in this song with strong winds like a tornado. The violin and the staccato violin play while this happens. As the music closes, the violins fade and just the earth tone drum beat is left, the mark which remains after the storm. This poem speaks to the intense feelings of fear and dread I had. With all the information being thrown at me, I felt like I was being swept away by a storm.

I Do Know Creativity [Track 7]

My thoughts look toward creativity,
My heart beats for its longevity,
To keep those in my hands near reality.

As I toil and work and beat my chest,
It is hard to breathe and be at rest,
Conducting what I do to my very best.

Finally, a light bulb went off inside,
That I will not continue to hide,
The things I already know.
The things I have to show,
For my ability to do the work,
Watch my feet,
When all of my ideas flee,
And it's just me.

This poem was a response to the relationship I had with one of my academic supervisors. She always encouraged me and told me that I was doing the work of dance/movement therapy. She re-affirmed that I did not need to be anyone but myself. I believe that creativity is fostered and grows as long as it is exercised. In some ways, I

doubted my own ability to do therapy. I felt inadequate; but the more I did it, the stronger I became. Because of my feelings of inadequacy, I had a tendency to hide my creativity. By the end of the poem, I resolved to not hide myself from my clients and to trust my creativity to be able to help them.

For this poem, I see the themes of inner light and inner process and/or conflict. The inner light theme surfaced in “light bulb went off” when I realized that I was doing DMT. I noticed my own light coming through as I worked with clients. The first stanza about how I was working hard for my clients revealed the inner process and/or conflict. My process of looking to know the needs of my clients was hard work.

The music I picked for this poem feels like work repetition. It is continuous action for a purpose. It begins with two trumpets and congas playing along with a basic beat. There is a reggae feel, especially when the crisp harmonica plays. The song paints a picture in my mind of people working in the hot sun and breaking a sweat. As the music continues, it reintroduces the trumpet. The sound of hollow, thick wooden sticks begins. The music ends as the grounding, earthy beat of the congas fades. The description of the poem reveals how I felt during the program. There was a lot of straining to work involved as well as the release of things that may be out of my control. The term work in itself describes my experience in the program, and was at times difficult.

Breath Orientation [[Track 8](#)]

Breath, the beginning of life.
From small and great alike,
We see it at the beginning.

God breathed His breath into man.
Man breathes his breath into another,
Another one in whom he can call brother.

Breath combines and brings two together,
Large and small find each other.
And are able to obtain nourishment.

It bonds parts that have been broken.
Upon looking back and finding the token,
That is able to pay for the damages,
That exist but is paid for.

Thoughts have entered in,
The mind's top continues to spin.
Around and around it goes through the synaptic valve.

But when breath enters in,
The breeze of silence contends,
The ruthless depths of discourage-able voices.

Calmness fills the air with quiet,
Quiet lies aloof into my pores,
And provides the resource,
To ground itself and receive the change,
That is to come.

The themes in this poem were inner process, relational roles, and interactional feelings. I selected inner process because it is about the experience of breath and how it impacts relating to others. The poem was my way of understanding how breath brings life to others. Affirmation of the therapeutic relationship and what happens when breath is used support the relational roles theme. I recognized interactional feelings because it speaks to how people are brought together. Through the use of breath, relationships and thoughts can change for the better.

The music for this poem conveys relaxation and calmness. My goal was to depict how breath has the ability to relax us and assist us in reaching out to others. In my mind, breath is grounding and also connects us back to the Creator. I believe that God breathed into us, and He gave us the capability to breathe into others physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Through the simple bond of breath, people are brought together. The poem

comments on breath's ability to bring change to my mind when it has a tendency to spin out of control.

The music begins with waters flowing back and forth while crashing to the shore. The birds are chirping too. As the water and birds continue, a mystical ambient loop fades in. Wind chimes are heard. The music fades out as the wind gracefully blows and the birds are still heard. This song reminds me of times when we had to connect with our breath. Although it was difficult, I was able to successfully engage my breath even though things around me were going crazy. In the quiet moments, I was able to focus and continue on.

Laban/KMP Assess Together [[Track 9](#)]

Laban is like bones,
The structure upon stones.
That is connected to joints,
And ligaments that hoist,
Up the body of a person,
In which breath immerses in.
In and Out... In and out,
The waves of each mouth,
That like upon the bones of chicken,
As it exposes its finger lickin' goodness.
I'm impressed,
By the directness and indirectness,
Pressures of all kinds.
They blow my mind.
Time after time,
Quick and sustained,
I know I go insane!
But Flow, you know, it always goes.
Consistently, blissfully, caring and carrying me.
Space and shape I will not waste,
Deep levels, mid levels, high levels not disheveled,
But, each one takes me from the ground,
Then to the sun.
The sun envelops the shape of the face,
The face brings it closer to embrace.
Embrace, bathe, soak in relationship,

And relationship will permeate through as it's dipped.
 The dipping action of Kestenberg,
 Have you heard?
 That it's the blood that carries the flow,
 The flow then indulges and makes the bulge.
 But first we see this patterning inside,
 The environment that wants to hide.
 What needs, you need, I need, we need each other.
 Most of this we get from the mothers and the fathers.
 How to express this?
 How must I confess this?
 Orally, anally, right now, I really want to see.
 Urethrally, Inner Outer genitally.
 In reality, this I don't want to see.
 Emotions that crave,
 Sometimes as big as the grave,
 That is never satisfied.
 And, you cannot hide.
 As we learn and our wheels turn,
 We see our need to yearn.
 Yearn to defenses,
 You don't want to miss this.
 And when they emerge, no one,
 No one wants to kiss this.
 It keeps up the boundary of safety,
 But if you get close enough,
 Then maybe, just maybe you can get in, You can get in.
 YOU CAN GET IN!!
 And begin to move. Feel yourself feeling,
 Bulging, narrowing, shortening,
 All of this ing-ging.
 What are you drawn to,
 What repulses you.
 What direction should you take?
 What move should you make?
 The limits are before the waters,
 Just like the floor is the limit for the shower.
 Boundaries are imperative,
 To have in order to give.
 In a complicated union.
 At times you must tune-in,
 To the other person as they retreat.
 Or maybe you should have done this when near...hmmm
 Thought to ponder,
 I won't wander.
 It's important to know when to spread,

To enclose on an enfolding thread.
The comfort of its arms thread by thread,
By thread we can see this tapestry,
Of the meat, blood and flesh of KMP.
In my mind, they ought to work together.
Like the fabric that makes leather,
So tough and secure.

In this poem, I describe the way two movement analysis tools work together in assessing people's movement. I describe Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) as the "bones." This means that LMA holds the structural foundation on which movement is based. Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP) acts as the muscles that give the bones life. I attempt to articulate my own understanding of these two systems so that I can have peace even with the parts I do not understand. I also expose my growing edges in some areas of LMA and KMP.

The themes were inner process and interactional feelings. The inner process theme is seen by several references to "I." I was revealing my own process in learning LMA and KMP, and understanding the integration between them. Interactional feelings were demonstrated as I was specifically and directly speaking to the audience that would read this poem using "I," "you," and "we."

I wanted to demonstrate this poem to others with just my voice reciting it as spoken word. My voice creates its own tempo that speaks to my feelings about bringing the two concepts of LMA and KMP together. In some parts, my voice is soft. In others, it projects and is clear and firm. It varies between slow and fast tempos. My voice inflections communicate how my graduate experience was smooth and difficult. Some ideas were slow in coming, and other ideas came quickly to me, and I understood them.

Therapist in Training [[Track 10](#)]

As I learn to be a therapist,
There's something I must confess.
It's a surging and birthing of sorts,
Something that takes much experience and work.

It's like a mother teaching her children to fly,
To fly high into the sky.
But first you must show them how,
To be an example of the here and now.

It's not just about being on the ground,
To watch the child unravel and unwound.
It's training and nourishing to take steps,
To be able to cope in life's tests.

To pick them up again,
After falling down.
You place the bandages on and right the frown.
Dust them off and assist them standing,
Prepare them for take off again and a safe landing.

I use the KMP terms “surging and birthing” because becoming a therapist is a lot of work. Just because I went to school does not mean that I have learned everything about being a counselor and dance/movement therapist. I use the example of a mother teaching her child to do well and succeed in life. Basically, it is about people being the best that they can. In the mother example, she has the ability to be present with her children when they are upset with life circumstances. I learned that therapy is also about preparation and assistance for those who ask for it. Only the relational roles theme struck me in this poem through references to the therapeutic and parent-child relationships. The word “birthing” speaks of a parent giving birth, watching children grow up and then letting them go.

The feel of this poem has a steady movement to it with a steady beat throughout. This quick drumbeat represents how fast time passes in learning the material I need in order to be a therapist. It begins with a rush of drum rolls and a high-hat cymbal that plays throughout the whole song. When the drum roll drops out, sticks clicking together

begin. Shortly after, the drum rolls return. This imagery pertains to consistency; I experienced this same idea in my work with clients. The more I met with them, the more they were able to relate to me. I realized that I had to be a constant beat or presence in their lives in order for them to open up and begin to grow.

Reflection Group Dynamics

Doing group with class hasn't worked out before,
Because for me, I jumped too soon,
While not being connected to my core.

My turn...all alone,
To show my class how much I've grown.
I take a chance to bring memories back,
A representation of our beginning together,
My hope does not lack.

The *red string* is what I asked them to hold,
While we all formed a circular mold.
I stated that the inside represented what we haven't said,
To one another our feelings that have been kept on our bed,
As we slept at night.

Many tears flowed down that day,
Embrace flew across the room.
So firm and tight like stones,
That are unmovable,
However, the moment was there,
And now gone.

The interactional feelings and inner process themes are present in this poem. The interactional feelings theme was seen in embrace, together, and feelings—how I was relating to my classmates and their responses. Evoking my own process with my class showed the inner process theme. Inner process allowed me to see how they were able to be authentic with me and to one another.

This poem is about my Group Dynamics class. It was interesting for me because it brought up things that my peers were previously unable to say to each other. Before I

lead this group, I noticed that some of my peers were getting frustrated with me and others in the group. This class was not going as well as we had hoped it would go. I noticed this because my peers targeted me over my tardiness and they interpreted that this meant I did not care. This confrontation brought feelings of rejection back to my mind. Once again, I felt like I was being attacked and thought it was because I was Black. It was almost as if I became the scapegoat for the problems and issues my classmates were having with each other. This intensified my feelings of not wanting to open up to my classmates. Therefore, in a small way, I retaliated by leading the assigned group I named “Saying What You Have Wanted to Say with Movement.”

So, it was my turn leading a DMT group for my class. I based my group on this idea that there were many things my peers did not feel like they could say. I wanted them to have the opportunity to communicate with each other through movement. In this poem I spoke of a red string again, the same one referenced in my first poem *The Transition*. I brought the string back because it was an effective tool used by one of my professors the summer we first began the program. The string circle represented security, and we were free to express what we wanted without judgment when we stepped inside it. That is exactly what happened when I brought the string back. The room filled with intense, positive emotion as there was not a tearless eye in the room. I finally felt like I accomplished some sort of breakthrough for my class. It was a tangible emotional and joyful experience. It was this day that I was able to show my peers and professor that I was a good therapist and not just some Black woman trying to be a therapist. This poem represents the culmination of how I transformed as a student of the DMTC program and then as a therapist.

Tale of 2 Sons [Track 11]

As a parent awaits a son coming home,
So I have waited in expectation for you.
It has been one month since you've gone,
Much dance has ceased and nothing was due.

A mother is someone who always cares,
Even when she has been wronged.
It was hard for me as I stood with a blank stare,
Hearing that you had run.

I expressed how I had missed you,
With blushes you did not say many words,
Then you whispered that you missed me too.
I couldn't believe what I had just heard. (*kumbaya, kumbaya*)

Sweet fellowship that we had in this room,
I sensed that you had changed.
Like a crazed bird that seemed to go to its doom,
But returned to its nest slightly rearranged.

The one I thought would always be home,
It was then he proved me mistaken.
I thought our conversations and relations were built like Rome,
But then the city was shaken.

Sadness filled my heart to hear that you had left,
I couldn't believe it.
I see that you felt you had too many refs,
In this was your quick wit.

The prodigal has returned,
The faithful slipped out of the way.
My prayer is that in his return,
I won't be burned.
And that I will see him before my last day.

This is one of the poems I wrote about two specific clients with whom I worked at my internship. I thought that it was important to include a poem that was personal because my relationship with clients is at the heart of therapeutic development. It describes how I felt at the time when one client ran away and another was hospitalized. I

explain my relationship to them with mother imagery, how I missed them and the changes they made while they were gone. The foundation of our therapeutic relationship was shaken a bit because of these changes. For one, it improved. For the other, it became more challenging because he was not as open as he had been and we took a step backward. The prodigal son image made sense to me to include. The significance of the word “kumbaya” is that when I was a child, my mom and the church we attended used to sing this song. “Kumbaya” means “come by here” referring to the presence of God coming to the aid of His people and hearing their prayers. I felt that it was appropriate to include this word in the music with my poem to symbolize my relationship with these clients. Basically, I was asking God to come to my aid to help me and to help my two clients.

The themes I noticed were relational roles, inner process and/or conflict, and interactional feelings. The relational roles theme surfaces from seeing my relationship to the clients as my “sons” and what it felt like to be a “mother” to them. I observed the inner process and/or conflict theme by my use of “I” and in recording how I felt relating to them. I was processing my feelings but also felt conflicted when their response to me changed from positive to negative or vice versa. This leads to the next theme, interactional feelings. I saw this theme in the emotional response I had to my clients’ actions as I got to know them: “cares,” “expressed,” and “fellowship.”

The music begins with four record scratches, a double bass drum beat, a mixed drum beat, and rickety tone. The music is upbeat and sounds like a sad rap song. As these sounds continue, a weird sound emerges, as if a radio is shaking while playing. This sound drops out soon after and maintains the regular beat. Throughout the poem, the

word *kumbaya* repeats. In making this song, I wanted it to be relevant to the kids to whom I addressed the music. This song rings true to my active involvement in my clients' lives as I grow as a therapist. It was a bumpy ride for me; rough when it came to expressing my own feelings about the state of my clients.

Supervision Tale [Track 12]

Supervision began like a cloud over my eyes,
Unsure of the relationship that resides.
In a new place, hoping that what I bring matters,
While letting the clouds pierce through and shatter,
My ideals that are make believe.

As we've worked together I begin to see,
The wisdom that lies within me.
It was this relationship that challenged,
Through the bumps on the road I've managed.

Saying goodbye again and hello again,
My heart has a difficult time letting go friends.
I will always take with me,
The insight you gave me,
As I walk this road equipped for the future journey.

This poem reflects the awkwardness of the supervisory relationship. During my time at CCC, I experienced four kinds of supervision. Two were at my clinical placements and the other two were at school. I felt a bit uncomfortable in these relationships as a whole, as I approached them with many expectations. At first, I felt like I was not liked or accepted for who I was. As I became more able to communicate with my supervisors, I understood the relationship and used it in an appropriate way to grow as a therapist. During termination, I discovered I was able to find camaraderie as I related to them, and was able to be vulnerable as the relationship allowed it.

The themes detected were interactional feelings, relational roles, and journey. I saw the interactional feelings theme in my description of supervision relationships in

school and at my internship. My feelings of apprehension were inferred throughout this poem. Relational roles were seen as I was trying to figure out the relationship I had with my supervisors. The journey theme was seen in the beginning when I was “unsure” about the purpose of the relationship. Toward the end, I speak about how I was able to let the supervisory relationship impact me and prepare me as a therapist. It was bumpy at first but it later smoothed and became more meaningful.

This poem begins with a tuneful djembe and an African drum playing. After a few measures, a bass cello comes in and creates this *Charlie Brown*-like feel, but it is not from Charlie Brown, a purposeful awkwardness. As this leaves, a violin comes in and makes the texture of the song feel like an adventure. When that subsides, the beat continues and a melodic piano plays until the end. This song gives an impression of uncertainty and a wobbly-like experience in the supervision relationship. I did not know how exactly to approach it. As it progressed though, I was able to accept it, work with it, and move on.

Graduation Walk [[Track 13](#)]

My heart leaps for joy,
At the major completion at hand.
Family and friends enjoy,
Seeing me tall as I stand.

While I await the time to walk,
Forward into the near future,
My mind refuses to talk.
To talk myself into being mature.

My phone buzzes as I keep myself in the moment,
Also trying to shake the expectations of others.
Sitting there while a speaker continues to torment,
And keep us from getting our empty folders.

This expression of accomplishment I never thought would be,

Has entered every part of my body.
I receive the hood,
That commands my shoulds,
And...
I still don't have a job.
Hope springs in the air,
As I'm supported by friends who are family,
Those I love.

The recognized themes were interactional feelings and inner process. Going through my graduation process and thinking about this being the end for me revealed inner process. Interactional feelings were demonstrated by how I felt about the whole experience of graduating from CCC, including family and friends. I was glad that people I cared about, besides my family, went to the ceremony. I expressed how I felt a sense of achievement. My words are serious and playful.

The music begins with an electric guitar, a djembe, and a drumset. As the song continues, it introduces an organ lead that plays a ballad used in African-American church services. As the music resumes, piano keys are introduced and give it a reflective touch. This song reveals how I am able to unveil a piece of myself as it is related to my culture. I demonstrate my own integration of who I am in this song—bi-cultural, both African/Black and American. I brought the Black culture and the dominant culture together in my music as well as my own personal integration at the end of the program. I have found reassurance in this.

Real Hip-hop2 the End [Track 14]

At times I think but don't cry,
As I reflect and look in your eyes,
I see future beings,
Being human and seeing.
Seeing stars that radiate like the sun,
The sun that's not like Attila the Hun.
He feared to trust so bad,

That even this ancient character became mad.
But what we see at Night at the Museum,
Is Ben Stiller learning to meet him.
Where he's at,
You know the fact is,
That you are attractive,
When you're doing what's right,
And don't fight.
The authority that's all around,
You pay attention and don't let anger surround.
You have taught me so much how to be,
A therapist and learn to heed.
To heed to what you would like to do,
To build trust and not act a fool.
Most of you put your faith in God,
You made a choice to not humiliate His pride.
He has blessed you beyond what you know,
Now He's calling you to show.
Up with your heart mind and soul,
To trust Him to take control.
Self-control is what He's given to,
You know whatchu' gone do?
This is a word I want to leave behind,
As I say goodbye don't chu hide...RISE.

This poem was written as a way to terminate with a group of adolescent male clients. It was a way for me to express to them a word of encouragement and was also a fun way to close and end the group. I use imagery from a movie in order to express the fear I saw in them as I related to them. I name specific emotions that kept them from moving forward. I also challenged them to rise to the occasion of taking responsibility for their actions and growing more toward wholeness.

The themes I noticed in this poem were relational roles, interactional feelings inner light , and faith. I saw the relational role theme in my observations of these clients as their therapist. Later, interactional feelings emerged as my voice used urgency to get them to "trust" and have self-control when it comes to their experience of anger. The inner light theme was seen in the imagery of clients as "stars." Faith surfaced when I

acknowledged that the clients placed their faith in God. I utilized this knowledge and encouraged them to reach out to Him for guidance.

This music begins with a fading gust of wind sound. After that, a quick mixed beat comes in. While this continues, an electric guitar enters and plays a fancy rhythm. After a little bit, an atmospheric-like harp sound is heard periodically through the remainder of the song. Then the lyrics from Boyz II Men are heard singing, “It’s so hard, to say good-bye to yesterday.” When these lyrics cut out, the beat continues. The atmosphere noise comes in twice and the electric guitar plays. A bass guitar lead comes in with the beat. You hear more lyrics from the music group saying, “And, I’ll take with me the memories to be my sunshine.” The beat of the music and the guitar keep playing until all that is left is the sound of the bass. With this poem, I attempted to rap it out to my clients. It did not flow as well as I would have liked, but they seemed to appreciate my effort. This music brought out my pleasure in this style of music. It made me realize how I was completely able to meet my clients where they were in order to enhance our therapeutic relationship.

End Session Groove Reflection [[Track 15](#)]

As I go down this path,
This path where the math,
Is not important.

The important thing is that I’ve learned,
Learned to be and do and turn,
The hearts of people to health.

Health is the thing,
The thing that takes and causes one to sing,
About what has been and what is to come.

What is to come on my voyage?
I do know this...there is a heritage,

Full of peace knowing I'm His.

He will lead me.
He will guide me.
And, I trust His process,
In making me full of kindness and love.

This is a poem reflecting upon my learning. I wonder if I have accomplished what I set out to do. I focus on the meaning of health and how to recognize it in a client. I recognize the importance of learning rather than just getting good grades. I progress toward knowing that God will lead my journey and set me where I need to be in life. This was added so that my hope would be placed on God helping me to be the best person I can for Him, my co-workers, and my clients.

The themes I recognized are inner process and/or conflict, interactional feelings, journey, and faith. I saw the journey theme in my "voyage" imagery, related to what was next for me after graduation from the DMTC program. I was looking ahead in hopes that I would be going in the right direction. I tried to make sense of the meaning of health and what I learned along the way, revealing inner process once again. I recognized the interactional feelings and faith themes in how I relate to people and how I relate to Him (God). I found that His peace and trust would guide my life.

This poem begins with a mixed beat and a mysterious harp throughout the entire music. Towards the middle, a deep, dark cello is introduced along with a violin. After that, some electronic piano keys play a chord right before the cello plays again. The texture seems to pull one into the story it is telling. It paints a picture of an unknown road in a fog at the end of a highway. There is a slight feeling of mystery, fear, and apprehension. This song validates how I confronted the end of the program as it stared at me in the face. There were many signs of anxiety and sadness within me because I did

not know what was before me. I had to release this unknowingness to God and trust that He was with me, leading me.

Direction (a poem with sets of haikus)

From intentional,
To intention I will seek.
My thoughts become clear.

The direction goes,
Hesitation drives the wind.
My time soon begins.

The process speaks deep.
My mind scatters in the heat.
Breath returns to me.

The way manifest,
As to stare into dimness,
Through fogs inquiry.

The inner process, journey, and inner light themes are seen in this poem. I noticed the inner process theme in the sense that I was coming to terms with something about my thesis topic, but I had “hesitation” about it. The inner process theme supports how “breath” returned to me when it came to a deep decision I had to make about my thesis process. It was the right thing to do even though there was still some uncertainty for me. The journey theme is present in the words “the way manifest.” My path was forming as I continued to take steps in the right direction. The inner light theme was seen in “dimness.” Inside me, I was unsure of the way and the light in me was not as clear. As I walked closer to it, it became brighter, and I eventually was more sure.

This poem illuminates the difficult time I had deciding on a research topic. It is about my own process of finding the research that best fit me as an individual. It reflects my experience of trying to do what my peers were doing. I wanted my research to be

valid for the whole DMT community, to formulate research that would help me gain approval from my peers, faculty, and other researchers. In looking back, this poem communicates how I tried to fit a circular block into a square hole. However, I discovered I was unable to do that until I accepted both myself and the shape which fit perfectly into the hole.

The poem begins with two very familiar words: “intention” and “intentional.” These words convey the idea of doing something on purpose and with meaning. As I began to think about doing things with a purpose in graduate study, the clutter in my mind became “clear.” In the next stanza I focus on: “direction,” “hesitation,” and “time.” In LMA and KMP terms, these words have to do with the elements of space and time. These elements speak to me about the idea of moving forward but not actually going anywhere, hence hesitation. As the poem comes to a close, “breath” is introduced. Breath grounds me and helps me prepare to move even when the way seems unclear. As I took my journey step by step, the way became more and more clear, and I believe it led me to the light of my thesis topic.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Being a Black-American in the DMTC program is central to this research study, even though it literally only appeared in two of my poems. I often wondered about whether my lack of understanding of norms and other aspects of my program were due to my cultural interpretation of things. I often wondered if my background and faith kept up the veil between my professors, classmates, and me. My background colored my whole experience in graduate school. I did not feel like I needed to write a lot of poetry about this because when I wrote my poems, it was constantly through a racial/cultural/ethnic lens.

Given the above, my research answered the question: What was my experience as a Black student in the DMTC program? Each theme in the previous chapter (faith, interactional feelings, relational roles, inner process/conflict, journey, and inner light) communicates the answer to this question in its own way. The following is a description of how each theme answered my research question and the connection these answers have to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Discussion of Themes

Faith.

If it was not for my faith, I believe I would have given up on the DMTC program. The theme of faith in my poems brought to light the following:

- It explained more about my feelings of loneliness and how I was different from others in the DMTC program.
- It helped me understand and describe the conflict between belonging and being myself.

My faith did in fact get me through graduate school. My faith was a support because it helped me stay focused and see the big picture of my reasons for being there. In graduate school, I hoped to learn more about myself and how to help people, and my faith supported this. It was a source of sanity for me because graduate study was intense and overwhelming. At times, I noticed that professors did not take into consideration the beliefs of the students in the program. My beliefs sometimes prevented me from participating in a few group exercises. This is similar to what Rollins (2009) discussed. He stated that religion and psychology's importance are not addressed, and that student and client religious beliefs are repeatedly neglected in the classroom as well as in therapy. The importance of culture and faith need to be taken into account when dealing with students from minority backgrounds. According to Rollins (2009), students in counseling programs desired more discussion about spirituality and multiculturalism. This raised a question for me: Would my experience have been different if I had been able to discuss how my faith impacted how I practice counseling?

Interactional feelings.

The theme of interactional feelings answered my research question by illustrating how I interacted with others and feelings about those interactions. It also explained my feelings about myself in the program and how I was able to reconcile and bring peace to them. Overall my poems suggested that I was hesitant and fearful as I related to others. I could go as far as saying that my feelings came from my need to perform and prove myself to my White/European-American peers and professors.

In the literature I discovered that “compared with other students, African American and Latino students reported the most negative perceptions of campus climate

and academic climate” (Reid & Radharkrishnan, 2003, p. 264-265). My results agree with this statement in the sense that I perceived the faculty and my peers in a negative way. The literature also stated, “White women tended to describe their graduate environments as cooperative, collaborative, and collegial; nonwhite women used words such as competitive, uncollegial, and isolated to describe their perceptions” (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001, p. 45). My results affirm that my graduate experience was a bit competitive, and the only way for me to cope with it was to constantly remind myself to be true. I especially felt this competitiveness during the field placement/ internship and the thesis topic decision processes. During both of these, I felt like I had to beat my peers to the best internship site or to prove that I would have the best thesis topic. It produced a lot of stress and dissatisfaction. Once I realized that I needed to accept where I was within my own process, I felt better about myself.

Weidman, Twale and Stein also found that “Majority women were more likely to have mentors than minority women” (2001, p. 45). My results confirm there were many times in the program I noticed that many of my classmates were able to connect to the faculty in this way. I felt misunderstood and did not feel that I could reach out to my professors in order to begin a mentoring relationship.

Many times, I kept looking around my classroom hoping that someone like me would emerge just so I could prove I was normal. I often felt that my thoughts and ideas were not valued by others and were misinterpreted. This affirms what Gasman, Hirschfeld, and Vultaggio (2005) stated, “African American graduate students frequently sense that their perspectives are not valued in the classroom...[they] often feel academically isolated in the classroom due to the lack of alignment between their

viewpoints and those of their white professors” (p. 129). I felt this fully when it came to choosing my thesis topic. I thought I had to prove myself academically, but I eventually decided to do what I believed was in my heart.

Another aspect of interactional feelings was the whole concept of boundaries. Payne (2001) discovered that elements of safety and boundaries were important to the students who participated in her study, who were all White. In the same way, I found in my results that these elements were important for me too, and even more so. As the only Black student in the program, safety and boundaries were magnified and often blurred due to the difference in culture between my peers, the professors, and me. The boundary lines were different for me. At times I felt apprehensive sharing my feelings with peers and professors for fear that those topics would color their perspective of me by the information I disclosed. For example, at one point I shared something in my class about the topic of mothers. During a later exercise with one of my peers, someone stated that I was trying to project the mother image on my peer. In fact, I was not. That peer’s forward statement caused me to reconsider what I shared with the class. In doing so, I found myself feeling unsafe in the classroom.

Relational roles.

The theme of relational roles illuminated my experience of coming to understand the different roles a therapist might play in the therapeutic relationship. The poems related to this theme also helped me describe what it felt like to be supported by faculty and peers.

In the program, I noticed that the social and cultural perspectives of the classes were pre-dominantly European/White-American. When investigating the practice of

therapy and counseling, the professors encouraged the White students to become more culturally aware because the dominant populations they would serve in the city were Black and other minority groups. I often questioned how it would be different for me as a Black person to provide therapy to those within my own cultural background. This was not addressed in the classes. Through my own investigation of doing therapy with the Black population, I had to learn on my own how to deal with some of my client's expectations and projections. Some of these projections are mentioned within my poems: sister, daughter, granddaughter, and mother. Because extended family roles are very common within the Black community, even to the point of considering non-blood relatives part of the family, as a Black therapist, I had to figure out how to connect with clients in my therapeutic role while maintaining healthy boundaries with them.

Another aspect of the relational roles theme was the supervisor/supervisee relationship. In my results, the poem *Supervision Tale* speaks to my experience of being in this relationship. Over the course of graduate school, I had three academic internship supervisors: two on-site internship supervisors, and one thesis advisor. With each of these relationships, I was unsure if I would be understood and have a positive experience. Nilsson and Duan recognized that, "In comparison with their White supervisee counterparts, African American supervisees have been found to expect their supervisors to be less empathic and less congruent and to provide less regard" (2007, p. 221).

Like most graduate students, I had mixed experiences with supervision. However, as I learned and grew from my experiences, I found my supervisors helpful. The most impactful of these was the thesis advisory relationship. This is because ours became more of a mentoring relationship. It helped me articulate my thoughts about the

program and how it affected the way I saw myself in it. The professor was a White/European-American who really invested her time getting to know me, and not just what I could bring to the world of DMT. This affirms what Dickson and Jebson (2007) stated, “Counseling students have identified their experiences and interactions with colleagues from culturally different backgrounds to be among the most influential experiences in their development of multicultural competency” (p. 91). However, this relationship did not fully develop until I completed the coursework in the DMTC program. In the literature, Armeniox (2000) stated,

The supervisor and supervisee relationship serves as the base of all effective teaching and training in the helping profession. A well established supervisee and supervisor relationship provides a context for addressing conflicts that may arise between [them], which can be problematic for [them]. (pp. 24-25)

I wonder if my experience in the program would have been even more fulfilling if I had the opportunity to have this type of relationship with my advisor in the beginning? How would this supportive relationship have benefitted me at the beginning and middle of my time? How would having this relationship have altered my perspective of the DMTC program?

Another part of this theme for me was to see only one Black professor teaching at CCC for DMTC. It took one whole year before I was able to meet this professor. This confirms the lack of Blacks/African-Americans in the field of dance/movement therapy as cited by Tyson (2006), Johnson (2008), and Gilmore (2005). This also speaks to the lack of Blacks in graduate school as a whole. Gasman, Hirschfeld, and Vultaggio (2008) stated that “African Americans represented just 4.4% and 4.9% of all graduate and

professional students attending Ivy League institutions between 1980 and 2004” (p. 126).

If I had been in closer contact with this one Black professor, would my experience in the DMTC program have been enhanced?

Inner process/conflict.

The inner process/conflict theme sheds light on my internal battles during graduate school and how I coped. It also helped me find my voice. The conflict stemmed from wanting to open myself to others but finding that I was unable to do so at times. I was constantly trying to figure out if I was accepted; finding that I was in some ways but not others. I was accepted by my peers because I brought a different perspective into the classroom environment. In other ways, I was not accepted because my worldview did not mesh well with theirs, and my leadership style at times made them feel uncomfortable.

Boston (2005) discussed her experience as a Black student in an art therapy graduate program. She identified the need to change her attitude towards people who seemed insensitive to her regarding ethnic background. In the same way, I found that I needed to shift my internal process to begin to see people more positively and try to focus on our commonalities.

Journey and inner light.

The journey and inner light themes illuminated my experience through metaphor. Etherington (2005) stated what it meant to her when she used metaphor to tell her story:

When I tell or write my stories, I am helping myself and others understand who I am. I am also creating meaning out of my existence: making sense of my life.

When I hear or read other people’s stories, I begin to understand them more fully by reflecting, not only on the content of their stories, but also on how they tell

them, their language, intonations, images and metaphors. (p. 306)

In my poems, metaphors helped me paint a picture of my thoughts and feelings while being in graduate school. Poems were a way for me to express and understand what was happening in my life. Therefore, I thought that it was appropriate to name and discuss these themes metaphorically.

Graduate school was a journey full of obstacles and dead ends. At times, I was tired and lost on the road. I had to take a break on the road and camp out for a while. However in the end, I reached the exit door and was able to walk through it without regret.

The inner light theme represents unveiling myself to others. When I decided not to hide in my own insecurities, I was able to express myself to those around me more clearly and let my voice be heard. This theme brings to light how I did a disservice to my peers by not authentically sharing my needs and feelings. This is an ongoing struggle. I am continuously learning to listen to myself when there seems to be a sense of longing for connection. My voice is the tool that exposes my light to others. Making my voice heard correlates to Spraggins' (1998) commitment in her dissertation. By interviewing Blacks/African-Americans about their experience in graduate universities, she hoped to give a voice to Blacks and an opportunity to speak to their own personal experience in higher education.

Another aspect of the inner light theme is the realization of how to be myself and be comfortable with the differences between my peers and me. One way I found to relate was by acknowledging our humanity and the capacity we have to care for one another. This supports what Stewart (1995) recommended: "[Helping] students themselves as they

recognize that they are not alone and that the issues with which they are struggling are not unique” (p. 23). I think that in acknowledging that my peers were similar to me in some of their graduate school struggles, I was able to connect with them on a deeper level. In seeing their inner light, I was able to be more understanding and respond to them in a positive way. How could this realization have been stimulated sooner in the program rather than later?

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of my research are that it gave a deep, detailed, symbolic and profound perspective of my personal experience in the DMTC program at CCC. It is a creative approach to the thesis project and gives readers a fresh new way to explore the experience of someone who may be different from them, who has been through the DMTC program. Its strength is also in giving me a voice as a Black-American woman in a mostly White system. Through an elaboration of my experience, this research has the ability to reach other Blacks/African-Americans. It encourages them to let their voices be heard regarding their experience in the creative arts therapies, especially dance/movement therapy and counseling. It will help readers understand that there is a difference in perspectives between Blacks and Whites in this DMTC program.

On the other hand, there are some limitations to this research. One limitation is that this research reveals the account of only one individual’s encounter in the DMTC program of Columbia College Chicago as a Black student. It does not represent the voice of every Black/African-American’s experience in every DMT training program. Although this study does not speak directly to people of other cultural backgrounds, in this research, there was no way to determine whether or not they could relate to this

project. experience in the program. This study could be improved by including interviews with present and past DMTC students regarding their graduate school experience and what could have been done to help smooth their transitions and interactions. Another limitation to this study is that it does not speak directly to the international student's experience, even though there may be some similarities. The final limitation in this research is that it does not speak to the student experience of all of the creative arts therapies (drama therapy, poetry therapy, art therapy, music therapy, etc.). Its sole focus is on dance/movement therapy and counseling.

Recommendations to DMT Students and Educators

What does this mean for educators and students? Below are a few recommendations for educators and students of color in order to assist students in their graduate education in dance/ movement therapy.

For educators.

- *Help students connect with dance/movement therapists*

It is important that Blacks and other minorities have the opportunity to see and get to know people with their same ethnic background working in the field of dance/movement therapy. This has the ability to give them a sense of direction for their own lives.

- *Mentorship*

Connecting minority students with faculty members has the potential to help them through graduate school. This positive relationship provides the opportunity for minority students to receive support, encouragement, and validation.

- *Unique Events*

Unique events such as retreats designed to explore diversity issues have the ability to assist in the transition of new and continuing minority students in the DMTC program. They could begin to foster a safe environment in order to discuss social and cultural issues within the program. If this event is done well, it could help minority students and others embrace their universality and appreciate each other beyond the color of their skin.

- *Recruit more students/faculty of color*

It is important for the DMTC department to be aware of the impact of the lack of minority faculty and students in the program. Therefore, be intentional about recruiting minority students and faculty into the DMT community. This could alleviate some of the sense of being alone that minority students have.

- *Ask questions*

There have been times during my graduate experience where my professors did not ask me questions about myself perhaps out of fear of saying the wrong thing. I would encourage asking questions because this brings affirmation and empowerment to minority students in the class, valuing them. Something as simple as “How are you?” or “What do you think about that?” or “How does it feel being the only minority here?” is a start.

For students.

- (White students) *Do not assume you understand*

You may think you understand but you really do not. This is okay. You do not have to. The best thing you can do is be yourself, have an open mind, and listen.

- (White students) *Ask questions*

If you have a question, speak up. When you ask questions, it causes the elephant in the

room to get smaller and disappear. Asking questions about a minority student's experience aids in the development of empathy toward others and helps the minority students become more open about their lives.

- (White students) *Minorities can only speak for themselves*

All minority students can only speak about their own personal experiences and not the whole population of minorities. It is good to ask specific questions about someone's personal experience but do not expect them to answer questions about the whole population.

- (Black students) *You are not alone*

You are not the only one who has felt alone. There are people that have been in the program and have not felt heard. You still have a voice. Use it.

- (Black students) *Reach out to your community*

It is okay to make yourself available to those around you in your classes. Get to know the people with whom you feel comfortable. Also, it is helpful to be connected in a community of faith and/or get involved in a small group of like-minded people. This is helpful because it gives you a place where you feel like you belong while you are in graduate school.

Suggestions for Further Research

The purpose of my research was to track my personal experience as a Black student in the DMTC program through poetry. What other research could expand upon my findings? Below is a list of some ideas for future research:

- Survey or interview minority students and graduates in DMTC programs in order

to decipher if their experiences were similar to mine. How did they feel in the program? Did they feel isolated, unsupported, misunderstood, etc? Interview students from a religious minority group. Explore whether having classmates from the same background reduced these feelings.

- Interview minority students about their relationship with faculty members. What is the relationship like with a majority faculty member? How is it compared or contrasted from one of the same minority group?
- Interview minority students from faith groups about experiences in their DMT programs. Were there any conflicts in their training that related to faith? Did faculty respond in an understanding way?
- An investigative video of a few Black/African-American students' experiences in their program focusing on how they danced or moved. Examine similarities and differences in their bodies and discuss these findings through performance. How did their movement convey their feelings of support (or lack of it) at the beginning of the program and at the end?

What Did I Learn Throughout This Whole Thesis Process?

As a result of this thesis process, I learned that every Black/African-American person has a voice and a story to tell. I am not alone. I have learned that because I am Black I must speak out and not let the pressures of others keep me from being true to myself. One valuable lesson to remember: It is more important to do what you are called to do instead of do what you think others want you to do. This research has helped me creatively express my concerns, disappointments, and connections I had in the DMTC

program. I believe that what I have shared throughout this thesis is just the tip of the iceberg of the hundreds of untold silent narratives of others. I hope that my research will begin an awakening of unheard voices coming from the depths of silence into the ears of the listening.

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Appendix A

Definition of Terms

Artistic Inquiry

Hervey (2004) stated that artistic inquiry “uses artistic methods of data collection, data analysis, and/or presentation of findings. It engages in and acknowledges a creative research process. It is motivated and determined, at least in part, by the aesthetic values of the researcher(s)” (p. 183).

Autoethnography

Ellis (2004) stated, “[Autoethnography is] research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (p. xix).

Kestenberg Movement Profile (KMP)

Created by Judith S. Kestenberg, KMP is “a complex instrument for describing, assessing and interpreting nonverbal behavior” (Kestenberg Movement Profile, n.d.).

Laban Movement Analysis (LMA)

This is “named after its creator, Rudolf Laban. [He] created a system of working with movement that can facilitate an individual's access to, understanding of, and expansion of their movement possibilities through the four lenses of Body, Effort, Shape, and Space” (Laban Movement Analysis & Bartenieff Fundamentals, n.d.).

Poetic/Lyric Inquiry

A methodology that acknowledges the role of the expressive and poetic in inquiry and in the aesthetics of communicating the results of such inquiry, regardless of discipline (Nielsen, 2008).

Appendix B

This is the list of poems I did not include in my thesis. They reflect my thoughts and feelings about the program, myself, and my relationship with the clients I served.

Forget the Light

Have I been hiding?
Lying about things,
That seem so simple,
Like the dimple,
On my face that is only one,
At times 2 can be seen.
As I embrace the next chapter of life,
I realize who and what I should keep.
In relationships, there are choices.
And many times, there are voices,
That tell me I talk too much,
And such is such,
The way I go to and fro,
But, God, You change,
You re-arrange my heart,
As I go.
Sometimes, feelings are deceitful,
They're full of lies,
That try to combat the truth.
That whispers and says, "It's You."
Maybe it's me,
That can't see.
In the dark as I plea,
I forget to turn on the light.
May I keep my focus,
This the token,
To succeed in Your eyes.
Music worships You,
With the true words of notes.
That sing Your name,
In the midst of pain.
My person, my cause toward stress,
Could keep waters @ rest.
What can be done what is best?

My Body Part: The Sacrum

The middle,
The center.
The place that carries the load.
The place that feels the pain,
Of the lost touch.
The defender.
The one who stays connected.
The one who supports the rattle,
And keeps the spine on its line.
Sensitive to light.
Responds to care.
Protected in a basket;
Exposed to the world.

Feel, Move, Support

There are *different kinds* of people,
There are many ways to move.
Just like my heart found *freedom*,
I hope that my clients would find it too.
Dance as *expression* brings life to the soul,
Movement is a way to make people whole.
It connects them deeper with the *pain* and *needs* inside,
It gets them to the place where their *frustrations* abide.
My creativity and interaction as a therapist,
Can help people feel, move, and be *supported*.
As I empathize with their movement,
They could sense that they are *heard*.
They are *listened* to.
It is in this moment that my attunement,
Could not ruin their desire to be *challenged*.
My hope is that they would see that to *grow* is important.
To be connected and *know* is the goal before us.
My dream is to see others inspired,
Just as I was by the people who surrounded me.
In one way, they helped me understand,
That change does not come at the turn of my hand.
It happens step-by-step, day-by-day,
And still sometimes they have to guide me in the way,
That is set before me,
They try not to bore me,
With the things that keep me in my lack of motivation.

Intentional Wall

As I think about being intentional,
My thoughts lead me to being unconventional.
Is it related to wisdom?
How could one really get underneath its sum?
To me, it feels like this wall,
This wall of brick that was installed,
Within my mind.
My mind runs as fast as it can,
In its own lifespan.
I ask the Lord for *insight*,
This foresight within the lives,
Of the people I work with.
Where can this knowledge be found?
How do I really know,
That my intentionality
Can connect them to their reality?
'For the Lord gives wisdom,
and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding (Prov. 2:6).'

Am I being too demanding?
I just want to be in preparation.
Preparation for when my concentration,
Begins to focus and become enthralled,
With the majesty of the wall,
I've come to.

Response to the Man

Coming with a plan,
I met little man...he stood,
Frown on face, sadness.

Wanted time to think,
Session today wrapped quiet,
Around thoughts pondering.

While knowing the needs,
Mindfully probing the rare,
Sweet son of my spirit.

Always thinking in,
Warding off the demons filth,
While lying to self.

Pulling the Expression

One child worked it out,
His movements were slow but smiles,
To another place.

I participate,
Tried to stir some emotion,
He took the old man.

I pulled expression,
From lack of motivation,
A moment was won.

Compassion

As I see your pain,
I feel the guilt and shame,
Pouring through your life from the window panes.
My heart reaches for you.
My heart cries out for you.
Because I too have been through.
I will enter the door of your life,
I will carry your strife,
I will do this with all of my might.
I will go in and out like oil mixes with water,
I will be a shelter even when you're in the gutter.
And when all is said and done,
And my altruism has gone its far,
I would have been you,
And you me,
As we have walked this road and I have taken you out.

Empathy

As you sit here in my presence,
I can't even imagine the essence,
Of your continuousness.
Your bravery amazes me to see,
Just how precious of a jewel you are to me.
And, this diamond in the rough you have entrusted this to me.
As you paint the picture of your life,
The response that comes to my soul and mind,
Is one of sorrow and acquainted with grief.

But, you have come to me to help me witness,
The decisions you may make in your distress.
And, to watch how I would treat you,
Like a reflection of a man in a lagoon.
What you get from me and what you see,
Is a person who serves as a paraclete.
Someone who walks side-by-side,
Even in the dark places one tries to abide.
And like two turtle doves.
They fly together,
Into the light of the gentle rays of the sun,
And the cool breeze of the coming dawn.

Alive

A lways learning to guide,
L ittle lights placed in front of my eyes.
I llumination as I begin to see,
V ibrancy deepens its eternity.
E very construction of its shape.

Where You Go, I Go

I met to discuss,
But pictures lit the session,
Mountains, volcanoes.

Forgot about dance,
Like winter in the summer,
Presently I stand.

Boxes, triangles.
Picture of me, I will see
Where You go, I go.

Feeling Felt

My heart has paused,
I notice the pain in your eyes.
There is nothing or no clause,
That the shame I feel is a prize.

Your body is inclined so low,

Although you stand so tall.
My mind is baffled to know,
Your thoughts that quickly fall.

What can I say?
This is the question at hand.
What won't you say?
That I can understand.

You live a life constantly fighting,
Those that care for you so much.
This love you feel...you want to keep biting,
Because part of it you think is a crutch.

Why do you do the things you do,
There are many who don't get it.
But the ones who sit with you,
They kind of admit.

You have soul,
You have love.
Just make your hands like a bowl,
And you'll keep getting more than enough.

When one holds so tightly,
The sand slips away.
Let it go, turn fiercely,
From your melancholy grey.

You State Your Wants

We write and write some more,
The thoughts and feelings of what's adored.
As I reflect on what we script,
It sounds to me she might be getting jipped.
I don't want to put words in your mouth,
Like a bird does the food in its baby's mouth.
I see you want to change,
To continue to switch lanes,
Of your past life.
Feelings come and go like strife.
The heart betrays,
But I can't tell you what to say.
The road you travel depends on you,
What do you want to do?

This is a question I would like to ponder,
Expectantly, I won't wonder,
From what the needs of the client are.
I want to reframe from going too far.
You state your wants, needs, and desires,
Maybe, I'll support, respect, and admire.
I can't tell you what to say,
But I pray you'll listen and heed anyway.

Realness in Relationship

Rigourously poking,
Everyone to hear,
Always talking,
Listening feared.
Nobody really knows,
Eagerness to be known,
Suspectful of all,
Silently afraid.

I
Notice the desires to connect,

Related to change.
Examples of others,
Lives do not re-arrange.
Avoiding hearts deflect,
The unknown that thrives.
Intellect unhinged,
On defensive slide.
No one knows the trouble in this room.
Sleepless nights could only tell the gloom.
Hesitant noiselessness choked their bodies,
In the seats where they sat.
Pin could have dropped...all would await.
In this, how am I supposed to act?

The In-Service

Outcome feared about,
Bringing therapeutic dance.
To see if fits in.

Movement Therapy,

At times I cannot explain,
My words need arrange.

Eyes were opened more,
To the knocking of the shore.
Agreed movement helps.

Some questions don't know,
The answers precedes what's known.
Constantly sharp'ning.

Moving Through Uncertainty

It's hard for me to work with an indecisive,
Person who constantly is excited,
About the things she wants to do,
But fails to let herself to go through and pursue.

How can I allow my patience to stretch,
Like Stretch Armstrong who tries to fetch,
For a ball that's a mile away,
While his body stays in one place.

How did I let frustration grip my mind?
Is this something that happens to those who put her in line?
But I can see how her thoughts continue to race,
To the place where the feeling of disgrace,
Persistently nags you, rags you, and tags you,
Until you just want to stand still.

Back and forth, up and down.
Pleasure comes then goes back around.
Like a rollercoaster of emotion,
But not like a rollercoaster because there's no motion.

What can I do to relay this to her?
Decisions need to be made even if they hurt.
Sometimes contentment appears in the moment,
Of something that seems like it will torment...you.
Into uncertainty.

Fostering Creativity

Silliness in the room keeps the silence,
Drawings of trees and faces,
Triangles connected by traces.
Relaxation emerged the name,
The name of the group while playing a game.
Music was the objective of the time,
As they wanted to make up all the rhymes.
A team works together, but as a way to not flock,
2 of them would like to be the ones to shock.
While one of them wants to just be,
Be with others that bring him jubilee.
Frustration toward each other crept into the room,
Because their thoughts wanted to assume.
Assume the other was just messing around,
But in fact the other wanted to control the round.
For once they came together without having to be crazy.
That it ended up reflecting how lazy,
They were in truly looking at themselves,
Expressing the trouble that was created by others, but now themselves.
Fostering creativity in these guys,
Can really help them stay alive, thrive.

Facing the Giant

The task was on facing one's giant,
My explanation was confusing but the girls were compliant.
Each one received a tool of sort,
Some responded that their tool was not important.

As they walked toward the path,
Bursts of excitement made them laugh.
But then when it was time to face the fear,
Most of them were a bit sincere.

While Away...

I cannot believe the things I've heard,
The crazyness that seems absurd.
You attempted to push and fight,
Those that you were so tight.
With the things that they put up with you,
If it was me, I wouldn't know what to do.

Sometimes I think you're scared,
Of those that have treated you so fair.
As a therapist, I am so glad that I can see,
Your progress and attitude that leads me to believe,
That you have so much possibility before your path,
As long as you stay focused and don't fall into your own wrath.
As I have been working with you thus far,
I feel like it's ok that I could bring my humor in with the door ajar.
At this point of the beginning of my career,
I see that I have a tendency to fear.
To fear my adult voice begin to surface,
Among the kids where I feel that I could play and nurse this,
Part of me that is really child-like.
The place where I feel like,
I didn't grow up but have to grow,
So that my authority and credibility others would know.
This part of me is underdeveloped,
But, I feel sometimes I need to envelop,
The voice of one who is wiser still,
And knows what can help someone heal.
...With few questions and fostered humility.

Frustrating Issue

I don't know how I let this grip me,
The frustration I had with thee.
I couldn't believe the power struggle,
Just because of a giant trouble.

I asked you to do it this way,
Instead you wanted it your way.
So bad I wanted to hang on so tight,
But felt that it wasn't worth my might.

This helped me see something,
Inside of me that wants to hold a string.
I am not here to control anything,
But to let you know we're on the same team.

What is this within the abyss?
So deep that when it comes I want to resist?
The idea of one who may know what they want,
But at the same time might want to stomp.

On the authority of the one who knows,

Would like to get loud and show.
Off that he could make his own decisions,
But forgets that this was why he's in this.

Place called a children's home,
To work on the things that make his parents groan.
Moan and groan about his behavior to defy,
And hope that this place would help him reply.

Could this be my own issue as well?
I guess only time would tell.

Being Dissed

"Today, can you see me?" she said.
"Nope," was the answer I unthread.
"Forget you!" was another comment given to me.
"Alright then," was my reply to her undercover plea.

C: "But, why can't you see me anymore?"
T: "Because you decided to walk out the door.
You don't understand how much you were missed,
But guess what? We got used to being dissed.
I had to take another kid to be in your place."

C: "Whatever. I don't care!"
T: "Oh yes you do!
Because you wouldn't be asking me to come for you."

C: "Could you help me with a story? I don't know what to write."
T: "Just write about where you've been those days and nights."
C: "What should I call the title?"
T: "Who I am."
C: "Ok."

Termination

I don't know how to,
Express my burdens within.
My heart feels like bricks.

Termination is,
A world wind of memories,
Flooding back at me.

Holding on, let go;
Of the pain and sorrows flow,
Laid down wet blanket.

Achy ness of heart,
Makes the mind sick of the time,
Draws so close and near.

School On Sunday

I can't believe I have school on Sunday,
A paper due Monday,
My thoughts within me begin to say.
I get so angry that,
I can't be at the place I be at,
Where I go to worship and chat.
With my adoptive family,
I always feel accepted and full of glee,
And where I can always be me.
As I sit in my class,
Wishing I was dashing,
Out to go hit my drums and crash, crash.
School on Sunday,
A paper due Monday,
This weekend I can't play.

Wounded-ness Heals

From my wounds you heal,
This I don't want to shield,
From others that desperately need,
Peace of mind and soul to cleave.

My pain is so deep,
Deeper than the river creek.
Channeling and shifting along a marked way,
Quickly carving itself at the bay.

"What can I give?"
This question pulsates my thoughts as I dive.
Dive into the pit to show I care,
But feeling regret because I've never been there.

"Wounded-ness heals"...sounds like an oxymoron,
but, am I the moron,
that speaks from the depths and core of the being?

Will I really shed light on what I'm seeing?

This light flashes into the darkness,
The darkness escapes the light and exposes,
What needs to be seen.
Or, wants to be seen.
There you hear the voice: "You found me..."

Remembering T—Group

Test group,
Tolerant group,
Trauma group,
Tight group,
Teachable group,
Taunting group,
Terrible group,
Teasing group,
Threatening group,
Two groups,
Tamed group,
Therapeutic group,
Training group.

Establish Trust

How do you establish trust,
To one who doesn't give you much?
Like full clouds in the air,
That act like they're gonna' tear.
And when you drive and forget the clutch.

Aggression is where she is,
Expressing it, takes care and holding the biz'.
Nesting it like a gentle egg,
In a tree, but hanging at the thread,
When it falls, you hope you don't miss.

Present Emotions/ Held Closer

Harsh reality of words,
Exhorted with pressure.
Left with things heard,
Difficult to measure.

Careful hesitation of soul,

L imited to the one cord.
O ptimism suspected as pessimism in my bowl,
S adness surrendered and forged.
E nhances my impiety,
R esignates with me thoroughly.

Crazy Day

First thing that comes to my mind,
I think about it all the time.
My head be spinning,
Because I don't know what's in it.
And, why do I have to rhyme?

Today was a crazy day,
When I thought about what to do.
My homework sometimes gets in the way,
Of what is really due.

Being here now is like being in the park,
A place you go to play.
But when it begins to be dark,
You know it's the end of the day.
Work can be satisfying,
Even when you go to work out.
Work out the things that make you sweat.
Sweat the things you don't need anymore.

Too late to draw near to you,
But the time is almost through.
It's getting dark and afternoon is over,
When I awake then I'll turn over.

The Road Less Traveled

Sometimes my words find words,
To say how precious you are.
You fight so much to be heard,
To be seen, but seems so far.

Up and down and turn around we go,
You call me, oh, so mean.
What I planned only showed,
How I needed to intervene.

Rigorous road ahead,

If there is no compliance.
But what I should think instead,
Is the evaluation of the therapeutic alliance.

My Lines

Sunny weather and cold temperatures,
Makes me look to Spring,
That I see reflection.
My bones shake with utter glee,
Home is where the heart is.
Over the buildings and in the sky,
The bitter gasp of my cheeks,
Keeps my lungs from receiving its breath.
Withstanding the test is what I aspire...
May is upon us...May.
I won't say...I will abstain.

Regulating Me

Space was the name of the game,
Musical chairs was how it was explained.
Safety is the thing they need to learn,
That it is taught? I'm a bit concerned.

This group expresses themselves in their own world,
Constantly moving from here to there.
Twists and turns and then over there twirls,
Bringing them to containment is what's fair.

How can I be regulated with them?
As their anxiety enters the room,
I feel my words and heart trim.
This thing called empathy makes it hard to attune,
To this disorganization.
My revelation is tired...wired.

Patience is Key

Began with hesitation and gentleness,
This client was full of mess.
At first, she was willing and tried mirroring,
Many times my thoughts would ring.

I thought I was making progress,
I felt like a real therapist.

The light of wisdom shined,
Almost like the climbing of a vine.

Through frustration, confusion, and sadness,
All this I must confess.
Sometimes, anger gripped me,
But I maintained empathy.

I asked her primary what I should do,
None of the answers were new.
“That’s how she is, patience is key,”
At times, it worried me.

Learning to Play

“Felt good” is the way she presented,
with her emotions that I’m not convinced.
Things at school make her feel constricted,
This was something that was elicited and sensed.

As I get to know this young girl,
A part of me wants to stay.
Here and understand her world,
As we are here and learn to play.

Braking Gripping Fear

When we entered the room,
Her body was stiff as I encouraged her to relax.
As if she was going to her doom,
My hope was to decrease her fear at the max.

Through attunement the one thing I had in my belt,
I felt her emotions calm.
Though bound-flow was something I’ve felt,
My heart was an open palm.

We sat in the chair on an angle of each other;
I did not want to threaten.
When laughter came to me one next to another;
Her face began to brighten.

Theoretical Framework (Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, Integration)

Pre-Encounter

I don't like who I am,
I wish I was you.
What you do, I want to do.
I don't want my family.
I hate myself, my color,
And my history.

Encounter

I can't believe this thing,
I love the place I've been.
My hair is okay.
My body is shapely,
I think my eyes are fine.

Immersion/Emersion

I hate what people think and what they say,
I'm proud of myself and hate the way,
I'm looked at like someone who doesn't matter.
I'm so glad I'm this way and not the latter.

Integration

This process for me is like giving birth,
To an idea of myself and who I am.
I love you and I love me.
And, sometimes, I don't understand.
Now, I can articulate this.

Looking for Answers

Looking for answers,
Asking questions about dance,
Songs come out instead.

The stare pierces eyes,
Ignored intensely with laughs,
As play continued.

Motivation sought,
Puzzles grasp my splendid gaze.
Deepness left confused.

What You Can Do

Finding a way to get one to express,
Their feelings and things to address.
The body moves to show action,

How to show one's own reaction.
The point was to get him to see,
Just when he would believe how he could be.
How important is it that you are cared for?
Does it matter that this place doesn't treat you like before?

These Girls

Talkative so sweet,
Not sure where to go with them.
Pressured to succeed.

Began with feelings,
States, emotions, on school...life.
One open, other closed out.

In the end, points seen,
Excitement about what's gleaned.
Self seen but not full.

Within Contact

Experience breath,
Soul was calmed, memory spaced,
One-to-one mirror.

Reflection communed,
Interaction reached, fulfilled.
Music paints background.

Acceptance feels good,
For me and for them touched deeply,
Touched within contact.

My Wants

In my life,
I want a lot of things.
The fact is...
Will I go get it?
So far, I'm going to be a therapist.
However, will I continue,
To go get those letters behind my name?
Will I continue to allow shame and dysfunction,
Continue to hold my function?
Let it keep me down,

And keep me believing I can't?
In this world, Life is lived mostly by good intentions,
But, my conviction is to run toward it.
To lay hold of it because God's called me to it.
I can do it? I want to do it? I WILL DO IT!!

Intentionality

Intentionality is not the reality I live in.
My personality tends to sit,
Sit and stare and think within.
When it comes to therapy,
I originally wait to see,
To see where the group will lead.
Though I have become very skilled at this,
And although it's a bliss,
The aura I release in space,
Leaves me in a place.
A place of loneliness and disgrace,
Because I did not expand my movement...
Toward spatial connection.
This is relationship.

This Crew

My first crew you are,
Sparkle and twinkle like stars,
I appreciate.

Sky does not limit,
The sun can't even shine,
Enough for Your light.

Learning Process

S. has come a long way,
A. seems to have found her way.
K. has opened up her heart,
K. is finding a way to start.

No matter how hard the road has been,
There is some light that shines within.
Because at the end of the day,
I know that I can say,
That these girls have taught me so much,
On how to be compassionate and love and such.

Even though our time is up, I hope that they will keep looking up.

Appendix C: Music Tracks with Thesis Poems

The Transition [[Track 1](#)]

In the Beginning [[Track 2](#)]

Gaspig Sea [[Track 3](#)]

Race Reality Check [[Track 4](#)]

Relational Boundaries [[Track 5](#)]

The Storm [[Track 6](#)]

I Do Know Creativity [[Track 7](#)]

Breath Orientation [[Track 8](#)]

Laban/KMP Assess Together [[Track 9](#)]

Therapist in Training [[Track 10](#)]

Tale of 2 Sons [[Track 11](#)]

Supervision Tale [[Track 12](#)]

Graduation Walk [[Track 13](#)]

Real Hip-hop2 the End [[Track 14](#)]

End Session Groove Reflection [[Track 15](#)]