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An External Expression of the Inner Spirit: Dance, Religion, and Taboos in Christianity

Erin E. Ingram

The University of Southern Mississippi

An External Expression of the Inner Spirit: Dance, Religion, and Taboos in Christianity

by

Erin Ingram

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Approved by

_____
Rachael Goodman, Ph.D., Thesis Adviser
Professor of Anthropology

_____
B. Katherine Smith, Ph.D., Thesis Co-Advisor
Professor of Anthropology

_____
Bridget Hayden, Ph.D., Chair
Department of Anthropology

_____
Ellen Weinauer, Ph.D., Dean Honors College

Abstract

Dance, religion, and the presence of taboos have each been recognized as what is known throughout the social sciences as "cultural universals." For example, though not every individual dances, dance can be found in all societies (Brown, 2004). Furthermore, many cultures use dance as part of religious or ritual worship. The following thesis explores possible answers to these three intertwined questions: "Many cultures across the world have developed dances for the purpose of religious or spiritual rituals and celebrations. Does dance as a form of expression stem from a biological, spiritual, or cultural need? Why do cultures turn to dance to express themselves and their religion? How do dance and religion react to the emergence and evolution of cultural taboos?" It will do so by analyzing a distinct religious culture, Christianity in the United States of America. Dance is deeply rooted in Christianity, and the cultural views and usage of dance have evolved together, though not always complimentarily. The hypothesis before conducting research was that the human need for dance cannot be limited to a single cause – cultural, spiritual, or biological. Rather, each factor plays an important role. Additionally, the inevitable evolution of culture will cause changes in the relationship between religion and dance, will be evidenced by taboos, and will continue through the course of time as it is a complex and ongoing process. Research concluded that dance has persisted despite taboos in the American church by evolving alongside culture. Literature and interviews confirm that dance fulfills biological, spiritual, and cultural needs by providing imaginative intelligence, transcendent connection, and cross-cultural communication.

Key Words: dance, culture, religion, ritual, worship, universal, Christianity, anthropology, taboos, ethnography

Dedication

Mom, Dad, Tyler, Jordan, Kaitlyn, Hadlee Grace, Amberlee Elisa, and Pop

Thank you for loving me unconditionally.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Because I have trained in both ballet and modern dance and have incorporated

dance into my own religious practices, I am inspired to do this research because of the

unique way that autoethnography can inform my approach to the intersection of dance

and religion and help shape my ethics as a researcher. Autoethnography is a research

method made famous by Dr. Mary Louise Pratt that aims to avert the objectification or

domination of people being researched by using personal experience to understand a

cultural experience (Butz and Besio, 2004). I say this primarily to draw awareness to any

potential biases that may arise as I discuss a culture to which I belong. To avoid biases

and remain as objective as possible, I have used the method of cultural relativism along

with other anthropological methods that are discussed in the third chapter. Due to the

qualitative nature of my research, I decided not to make a concrete hypothesis. Rather, I

proposed a research question that I hoped to answer to the best of my ability through the

analysis of research and autoethnography.

After considering the goals of my research, I formed the following three-part

research question that served as a guide during this research process. The question has

three parts because I felt that the subjects were so interwoven that I must answer one

question in order to answer the other two.

> *"Many cultures across the world have developed dances for the purpose of*
>
> *religious or spiritual rituals and celebrations. Does dance as a form of expression stem*
>
> *from a biological, spiritual, or cultural need? Why do cultures turn to dance to express*
>
> *themselves and their religion? How do dance and religion react to the emergence and*
>
> *evolution of cultural taboos?"*

To answer this question, I am going to examine a distinct religious culture where dance has survived as a form of worship despite the effects of colonialism, nationalism, and Puritanism: Christianity in the United States of America. Dance is deeply rooted in Christianity, and the cultural views and usage of dance in the religion has evolved in complex, interesting ways alongside American culture.

Some of these cultural views on the function and practice of dance within religious and spiritual rituals include cultural taboos unique to Christianity. Taboos are the "unthinkable" actions and behaviors largely avoided by people within a culture due to the sacredness or cursedness of that behavior and a fear of the consequences or punishments that may ensue when a taboo is not observed. Taboos evolve alongside culture, and they can even lessen in importance or completely disappear over time (Fershtman, Gneez, and Hoffman 2011, 139-142). Therefore, while the concept of taboos is universal, the large majority of taboos are unique to the culture in which they are found. This definition of taboos is important for my research because it serves as a filter of sorts as I document personal accounts and viewpoints, and it will allow me to do my best to understand the cultural factors that affected and motivated individuals to partake in or avoid religious dance.

I had several project goals that I hoped to accomplish during my research process. My hope is that this thesis is read by dance scholars, anthropologists, religious scholars, and individuals who are simply curious about the impact of dance and religion on each other. It is important to me that the information presented in this thesis has a feeling of accessibility to whomever is reading it. My aim was to use my autoethnographic viewpoint to contribute to the analysis of research as well as point out my personal biases

and the potential limitations that I will face while conducting research due to being a Christian dancer myself. I purpose to use biological, linguistic, and cultural anthropological techniques to answer my research questions regarding Christians in the United States of America as well as in regard to the global phenomenon of cultural dance.

I hope that this project offers new insights and the opportunity to dispel stereotypes and misunderstandings about the role of dance in religious practices. I also want this research to remind, or re-inform, readers of the cultural value and rich historical origins of Christian dance. Ultimately, the goal of my project is to prove that dance is a natural, global, and cultural construct that can cross language barriers and unite people from many ethnic backgrounds. I also hope to demonstrate the usefulness of dance as a medium of research that is deserving of discussion among scholars in other disciplines such as biology who may not think to approach research through an embodied perspective. I anticipate that my research will only lead to more questions as qualitative research reveals that the human need for dance cannot be limited to a single cause – cultural, spiritual, or biological. I predict that the inevitable evolution of culture has changed the relationship between religion and dance over the course of time and is a complex and ongoing process.

My research will contribute information to the small, but growing field of dance anthropology – a subfield of cultural anthropology as well as an area of major focus for dancers. While compiling my annotated bibliography, I became increasingly aware of the fact that there was not an abundance of anthropological literature that discusses the relationship between dance and religion. The lack of information furthered my desire to gather research pertaining to religious and ritualistic uses of dance forms. A probable

explanation for the lack of information is the only recent acknowledgement of oral

tradition in academic research (Muraina 2015). If oral tradition is only recently being

recognized, how does research marginalize or accept traditions passed through the body?

In the journals and books that I have read thus far, which will be discussed in the second

chapter, the research mostly explores the contemporary use of dance in cultures while

briefly touching on its origin. [1]

The purpose of this research is to provide information that is either omitted or

only briefly discussed in the research that presently exists. This project will provide in-

depth information on the origin of dance in Christianity while also touching on the first

documentations of dance within this religion, the *Torah*. I have interviewed both dancers

and non-dancers from various denominations of Christianity about their somatic response

to dance as it relates to worship, in addition to performance. Can religious dance serve

both an internal and external purpose and be worship and performance simultaneously?

This distinction between somatic responses requires an inquiry into the differences

between dance performance and dance in worship since both take place in front of others

who are not necessarily participating in the act of dancing. The results from the

interviews offer interesting perspective and raise more questions as some believed that

the words performance and worship were merely semantics while others believed that

worship is the antithesis of performance.

Finally, though I will discuss how dance has evolved with culture, I would like to

take the perspective of a cultural preservationist and look at how dance in ritual has

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[1] Another group of researchers focus on the transition of dance from ritual to entertainment. Though important in its own right, it does not offer helpful insights into why dance continues in contemporary rituals.

survived despite the popular gravitation towards entertainment as well as the opposition

to dance forms through colonialism and the development of religious ideas. I hope to

contribute facts and data that support the idea that dance is fundamentally human, as

discussed in Judith Lynne Hanna's book *To Dance is Human*, in its biological, cultural,

and spiritual applications because I believe that dance is an important medium that can be

researched for use in global contact, multi-cultural understanding, and peaceful

interaction (Hanna 1996).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Universality of Religious Dance

Dance is a universal phenomenon. Though not every individual dances, a form of dance is found in every culture. Considering that dance as a form of human expression has persisted since the beginning of human history despite wars, religious suppression, and political changes, one must question the importance of dance for humanity. Judith Hanna, a dance anthropologist, defines dance as "human thought and behavior performed by the human body for human purposes" (Hanna 1979, pg. 3). What human purposes does dance fulfill? The continued use of dance points to a social need, but it may have also been important for the biological and evolutionary development of humanity (Hanna 1979, pg. 3).

The need for dance is proven in its connection to many other aspects of life including communication, belief systems, and social relations (Hanna 1979, pg. 3). Dance could be an adaptive pattern, or it could be the result of previously selected adaptive processes (Hanna 1979, pg. 63). Alexander Alland Jr. (1976) states that the beneficial aspects of dance include exploratory behavior, a sense of rhythm, metaphorization, and the neural ability to make fine distinctions. Natural selection could even favor skilled dancers in societies in which selecting a mate is influenced by the display of talent in a dance (Hanna 1979, pg. 63). The survival of a species is dependent on its ability to effectively communicate (Hanna 1979, pg. 64). Dance has become a part of cultural communication and conveys information purposefully through body language, gestures,

and symbolism. It is because of dance's unique form of communication that social

barriers including age, language, sex, status, and ethnicity can be overcome.

Dance is Physical

What physical movements can be considered dance? Surely the extension and

flexion of muscles alone cannot be considered dance, though it is a coordinated, thought-

out process that can have meaning. A professional ballerina may say that dance must

involve music and technique. A post-modern dancer may argue that walking in a circle in

silence is considered dance. After taking into consideration the definitions and uses of

dance in many societies, Judith Hanna proposed a four-part definition that can be used

universally to define what physically counts as dancing.

> "Dance can be most usefully defined as human behavior composed from the
> dancer's perspective, of (1) purposeful, (2)intentionally rhythmical, and (3)
> culturally patterned sequences of (4a) nonverbal body movements (4b) other than
> ordinary motor activities, (4c) the motion having inherent and aesthetic value."
> (Hanna 1979, pg. 19)

If a movement meets these four criteria, it can be considered dance (Hanna 1979, pg. 57).

Dance is Spiritual

All dance has a purpose. The purpose of dance can be as simple as moving for the

sake of moving, or it can have more symbolic purposes. For example, hakas performed

by Mäori men, women, and children are used for weddings, funerals, and intimidation

during wartimes (McLintock, 2009). Dance often serves a religious, or spiritual, purpose.

Religious dance can be broken down into four categories: worship or honor, conducting

supernatural beneficence, effecting change, and embodying the supernatural (Hanna

1979, pg. 106). Records from ancient Egypt, classical Greece, imperial Rome, the

European Middle Ages, India, China, Africa, Australia, and the Americas all bear witness

to the use of dance within religious practices, and dance is still observed in the major world religions that exist today (Davies 1984, pg. 4). Within Islam, dance is considered unlawful by the Sunnīs, but it is accepted by the Sūfis as religious ritual. Furthermore, the Sūfis have a *sema* (rotating dance) that is performed by the Whirling Dervishes as a *dhikr* (spiritual exercise) in order to directly experience Allah (Davies 1984, pg. 6-7). In Hinduism, dance techniques such as Kathakali and Bharatanatyam are used to perform a narrative dance with themes drawn from ancient epics and myths. The dances were intended to lead spectators into personal emotional involvement with the performance and to create a heightened religious experience (Davies 1984, pg. 7). Dance can also be found in Shintoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, and Judaism as well as in numerous Native American and African traditions. However, it must be stated that just because religious dance is universal does not mean that every genre or type of dance is religious (Davies 1984, pg. 7-8).

Background on Dance in Christianity

The relationship between the art of dance and Christianity has a long, complicated history. Christianity has its origins in Judaism and adheres to both the Old Testament, or Tanakh, but differs in that it accepts the New Testament and believes in Jesus as the Messiah. Dance is noted in Biblical texts as far back as the fifteenth chapter of the book of Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament. Here one sees the first use of the Hebrew word "מָחוֹל" (mechol or mecholah), which is "χορός" in the Greek Septuagint and "chorea" in Vulgate Latin (Adams 1980, pg. 6, 24-25). *Mechol*, *mecholah*, and their infinitive *chul* are the primary Hebrew terms for dance in the Old Testament, and each one indicates a communal dance in which the group dances in a circle. In fact, the

Hebrew word for "company" is derived from the word "dance," indicating that dance as an act of worship was meant to draw a community together and take the focus off individuals (Adams 1980, pg. 6, 24-25). Psalms 149:3 states, "Let *them* praise His name with dancing" (Holy Bible NIV, 2017).[2] Group dancing *xopós* is seen in the New Testament in Luke 15:25 in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son when he returns home to his father (Adams 1980, pg. 30). From the beginning of Christianity, dance was intended as a means for communal worship and celebration.

Dance in the Patristic Period

Despite being found, even commanded, throughout scripture condemnation of dance in the church began during what is known as the Patristic Period. The Patristic Period begins at the end of the New Testament; it is generally thought to end in 451 with the Council of Chalcedon and includes the writings of the Great Fathers of the early church (New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia). One of the first attacks against dancing in the church was Arnobius' *Against the Nations* circa 305A.D., which attacked the Greek and Roman myths while asking his addresses whether God would have sent souls into the world so that human beings could "abandon themselves to clumsy motions, to dance and sing, form rings of dancers..." (Davies 1984, pg. 19-20). Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379) condemned women who danced on Sundays even going so far as to say that women risked both their salvation as well as the salvation of any onlookers who might be led into lustfulness. This is one of the first recorded instances of the body as taboo in Christianity because of the potential for dance to become sensual. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople (c. 350-407) said, "Where there is dancing, there is the devil" (Davies

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[2] Emphasis to "them" added to emphasize the act of group worship versus individual worship.

1984, pg. 20). The Councils of Laodicea forbade dancing at weddings, and Ambrose of Milan (339-397) warned mothers against teaching their daughters the art (Davies 1984, pg. 21).

With so many examples in the Old Testament and no renouncement of the practice in the New Testament, it seems absurd that these leaders of the church would be so opposed to dancing. In his book *Liturgical Dance: An Historical, Theological, and Practical Handbook,* J.G. Davies points out that Christianity will always be influenced by the prevailing culture of the time. The early church was surrounded by the culture and philosophy of the Roman Empire, and many of the early Roman and Greek thinkers simply did not tolerate dancing. For instance, Cicero (106-43B.C.) has been quoted, "No man who is in a sober state and not demented would dance either privately or in decent company" (Davies 1984, pg. 22). The early church rejected dance because of the opinions of the educated scholars and voices of that day.

Another reason for the rejection of dance in worship by the early church is the connection that had formed between dance and pagan worship. Dance was used in Greek and Roman stage plays to depict the ancient myths of gods and goddesses. John Chrysostom sought to contrast pagan worship from Christianity by saying, "In the Grecian mysteries there are dancings, but ours silence and decency, modesty and bashfulness" (Davies 1984, pg. 23). Because many dances told the legends of these gods, Christians were compelled to ignore dances in order to avoid committing idolatry.

It must be noted that during the Patristic Period (and still today), the Jews engaged in traditional dances of worship and celebration. Though the early church tolerated Judaism, there came a point at which the church wished to distinguish itself.

The rejection of dance was just one of many ways of doing so. Augustine even said of Jewish women, "It were better for their wives to spin wool on the Sabbath day than to dance shamelessly the entire day as if they were Maenads" (Davies 1984, pg. 26).[3] The rejection of dance was enforced by both Christian and non-Christian alike and would continue until the Renaissance and Reformation when the arts were called into question by great thinkers once more.

Dance and the Reformation

In 1531, Sir Thomas Elyot was one of the first people to call the rejection of dancing into question in his work, *The Boke named the Gouernour*. Sir Thomas announced that he would reject all dances that were superstitious, hinted at idolatry, or contained unclean motions of venereal lusts. However, he offered that other kinds of dance could be considered legitimate as a healthy exercise and form of recreation (Davies 1984, pg. 29). Martin Luther, leader of the Reformation, had no problem with dancing as long as modesty and decorum were observed. Luther argued that dances and dancing could also be reformed and that the misuse of an activity by one did not make it wrong for all (Wagner 1997, pg. 35) Contrarily, John Calvin, Luther's successor in the Reformation, banned dancing entirely throughout Geneva on February 3, 1547. Calvinists remained firm in the patristic teachings about dance, and the same can be said for the English Puritans (Davies 1984, pg. 29) (Wagner 1997, pg. 35).

Dance in America

The anti-dance sentiments of the English Puritans became well known in the New England colonies by Increase Mather (1639-1723) who wrote the first American anti-

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[3] Maenads: female followers of Dionysus; literally "the raving ones"

dance treatise, "An Arrow Against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing Drawn out of the Quiver of the Scriptures" (Wagner 1997, pg. 47). Mather stated, "for persons to Dance at a Time when God calls them to mourn, is certainly unlawful. But such is the case at this Day." Mather believed that a time of mourning should be observed for the affliction that the church at large faced at that time, and he argued that dancing was unacceptable during a time of mourning.

America and Dance in the 18th Century

In the eighteenth-century, John Locke's *Thoughts Concerning Education* was widely read throughout the colonies and expressed similar sentiments regarding dance as Sir Thomas Elyot, though for different reasons (Wagner 1997, pg. 70). Locke saw the social value that dance lessons offered to men and women and considered carriage and motion central to becoming a Christian gentleman (Wagner 1997, pg. 70-71). The ideal of a gentleman firmly took root in the Southern Colonies and dancing became very popular in the eighteenth century as a way to show social status (Wagner 1997, pg.71). Dancing in the middle colonies was controversial. Dancing was not strongly opposed by the Dutch Calvinists in New York, and a dancing assembly was even organized in 1758. However, there was great opposition to dancing in Philadelphia by the Quakers who believed dancing was taboo, to the extent that the Quaker-influenced Provincial Assembly of Philadelphia passed laws that included fines and imprisonment for those caught participating in dances (Wagner 1997, pg. 79). Despite opposition in Boston, dancing spread throughout the New England colonies, and in 1787 in Hartford, Connecticut, Jon Griffiths opened a dancing school for both men and women that even allowed spectators at weekly balls (Wagner 1997, pg. 82).

America and Dance in the 19ᵗʰ Century

Despite being seen as a valuable tool for teaching etiquette, dancing once again faced Christian opposition in the early nineteenth century. In 1814, the New England Tract Society was formed in Andover, Massachusetts by Congregationalists and aimed to distribute tracts that would appeal to Christians across denominational lines. They sought to encourage a life of piety; one of the ways they did this was by issuing a treatise, *Fashionable Amusements.* This treatise addressed dancing at balls or assemblies with the following sentiment, "that fashionable amusements are not consistent with the general tenour of the scriptures... and unfit the mind for communion with God..." (Wagner 1997, pg. 112). The Treatise also included topics such as female education and modesty. Once again, the dance is tabooed because of the inherent sensuality of the body. The themes of the New England Tract Society were also enforced by the Presbyterians who expressed their disdain for dancing in the *Essay on Dancing* (Wagner 1997, pg. 113). This essay argued that since dancing conveys no useful ideas to the mind it is merely a pleasure. Furthermore, something that is merely pleasure must be regarded as a carnal activity that only pleases the lowest of human faculties, animal sensuality. Therefore, according to Presbyterian books, dancing is taboo and prohibited by the Bible. It should be noted that Baptist sentiment, such as that expressed by Reverend Jeremiah Bell Jeter, reflected that of the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians.

By 1850 in America, the Roman Catholic Church had 3 million members, the Methodists had 1.25 million, the Baptists had 1 million, Presbyterians had 750 thousand, and Lutherans and Congregationalists each had 250 thousand members. Despite the intolerance of dance by the clergy, dance, including European ballet, became very

popular (Wagner 1997, pg. 142-143). Because of the interests of their parishioners in dance, preaching on "fashionable worldly amusements" became increasingly popular. A duality existed between profitable actions and those that were considered wicked or wasteful, and the majority of evangelical clergy cast dance into the latter (Wagner 1997, pg. 147).

The Church's Real Problem with Dance. The main issue that most evangelicals had with dancing was the heterosexual nature of fashionable dances such as the waltz and polka. Methodist Reverend Moses M. Henkle considered sex the main attraction of dancing and went so far as to say that a young girl's purity and innocence would be diminished by attending a ball. Baptist pastor William Calmes Buck (1790-1872) placed women in the same role of temptress as Eve (re: Adam and Eve in Genesis) claiming that the dances and dresses of women put ideas into the minds of men (Wagner 1997, pg. 153). Here one can see an interesting contradiction in the condemnation of women. Women who danced were either considered to be seducers or they were viewed as victims subjected to dancing with strange men. The evangelical opposition to dance remained the same in the quarter century following the Civil War (Wagner 1997, pg. 193). This taboo against sensuality was not only found in dance; fashionable dress, the use of make-up, and going to the theatre were also looked down upon because of their potential to arouse the senses.

Questioning the Status Quo. In the late 1850s, Edward Everett Hale demanded that the church and government place amusements, or entertainment, in their proper context. The notion that the church had taken an erroneous stance in the preaching of abstinence from dance had growing support among clergy from several denominations all

across the country (Wagner 1997, pg. 210). Washington Gladden, a Congregationalist in Massachusetts, went so far as to call the policy of abstinence "a stupendous failure" (Wagner 1997, pg. 211). Gladden stated, "... If the grace of Christ is sufficient to keep a man honest and truthful amidst the temptations of trade, doubtless it is sufficient to keep him sober and steady amidst the temptations of amusement." The radical idea perpetuated by Gladden was that God could be glorified in play and work as well as in worship. Gladden preached that man should practice discerning between amusement and its abuses and participate in moderation (Wagner 1997, pg. 211). In 1867, Marvin Richardson Vincent, a Presbyterian pastor, criticized the church for "forgetting to develop the inherent good in amusements" (Wagner 1997, pg. 212). After chronicling the dancing of the Hebrews in the Old Testament, Lutheran minister Joseph B. Gross published a treatise in which he stated, "The Hebrews... habitually and approvingly worshipped God in the dance, and why should it not be proper to introduce the dance into the Christian Church, as a leading and holy element in the cultus of the New Testament? *Unto the pure all things are pure!* Titus, first chapter and fifteenth verse" (Wagner 1997, pg. 215). The argument against dancing would continue to be broken down by many other dance advocates well into the twentieth century.

America and Dance in the early 20th Century

In 1933, Baptist cleric Robert Campbell wrote a book entitled *Modern Evils* because it appeared to him that the army of dance opponents had surrendered to the popularity of the "modern dance" that arose during the early twentieth century. Many other Baptists and Lutherans agreed with Campbell, and the majority of anti-dance sentiment after 1930 came from these two groups (Wagner 1997, pg. 320). Though

Campbell believed that preachers and teachers had simply given up, it very well may be that other issues outshined the issue of dance. Beginning with the Great Depression and continuing with the rise of Hitler and WWII, Americans had to put personal and individual concerns away to focus on national matters (Wagner 1997, pg. 321).

When movies became available to the general public in the 1930s, American moviegoers were exposed to many forms of dancing by both men and women, including the iconic Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers (Wagner 1997, pg. 323). Famous choreographers George Balanchine and Agnes De Mille choreographed for Broadway shows. The invention of the radio in the 1920s ushered in the big band and swing dance era (Wagner 1997, pg. 323). By January 1937, dance in the United States had become a "craze," according to *Literary Digest* (Wagner 1997, pg. 323).

Unsurprisingly, opposition from the church arose, criticizing once more the "embrace" of closed-couple dances (Wagner 1997, pg. 329). Dr. John H Fritz said, "the promiscuous dancing of the sexes in the usual way in which dancing is practiced is sinful because the naturally highly charged sex mechanism is apt to be unduly excited and the sex urge unduly stimulated" (Wagner 1997, pg. 329). In 1945, Baptist minister Jesse Marvin Gaskin claimed that, "Sex and the dance are inseparable," and he condemned ballet by pointing to the costumes as a violation of Paul's charge to modesty in the New Testament (Wagner 1997, pg. 330). Like earlier anti-dance advocates, the anti-dance advocates of the 1930s-40s saw dance as problematic because of its potential association with sex and sensuality, placing the blame on women. A decade later the evangelist John Carrara claimed that women lose their modesty when dancing (Wagner 1997, pg. 332).

America and Dance in the late 20th Century to Present Day

With Elvis on the scene in the 1950s the use of hips was in to stay, and by the 1960s individual, uncodified, and unsynchronized dancing in the United States changed the meaning of the word "dance" (Wagner 1997, pg. 339). Popular dances such as the pony, the Watusi, and the swim became fads, moving in and out of fashion quickly. In 1965, dance gained a major ally with the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts created by Congress to fund tours of dance companies (Wagner 1997, pg. 339). Universities were able to develop majors in dance and curricula were created to teach choreography, production, dance history, ethnic dance, etc. In the 1980s, dance gained popularity once more with the films *Flashdance, Footloose,* and *Dirty Dancing*; the names of the films reflecting the long history of opposition to dance (Wagner 1997, pg. 348). In 1981, the National Association of Schools of Dance was founded to accredit dance curricula in higher education.

The number of anti-dance publications dwindled significantly from 1930 – 1969. However, the publications that did surface between 1946 – 1970 show that the Southern Baptist Convention continued to firmly oppose dancing (Wagner 1997, pg. 341). Baptist minister Marion Edgar Ramay wrote in 1958 that he was convinced that "anything that was ever sinful within itself, is sinful now" (Wagner 1997, pg. 342). The prevailing argument in every opposition was that dance tempted people to participate in immoral activity and aroused the "sex instinct," and sex or sensuality is generally tabooed in Christianity (Wagner 1997, pg. 342). Despite dancers now having the ability to gain a college degree in dance, Oral Roberts University (a charismatic evangelical school) forbid social dancing of any kind on campus, and Liberty University (a Baptist/evangelical school) forbid students from attending nightclubs or any disco/rock

concerts. However, in 1996, Baylor University, the largest Southern Baptist school in the country, ended their 151-year ban of dancing on campus with the headline in the news reading, "Baptist School Goes Footloose" (Wagner 1997, pg. 349-350).

The Appearance of Dance in American Churches

In 1988, around a thousand pastors who attended the International Conference of the Worship Symposium in Florida expressed a desire to develop a dance ministry in their churches. In 1987, *The Evangelist* reported spontaneous dancing prompted by the Holy Spirit in "spirit-filled churches"[4] and also intentional, planned worship dancing (Wagner 1997, pg. 350). Dance has continued to grow as a ministry tool in churches through participation in both spontaneous, Spirit-lead movement as well as choreographed liturgical performances. Today, there are Christian ballet and modern dance companies that tour and perform Gospel presentations through the medium of dance. Many churches have praise teams that include a dance ministry to help lead the congregation in worship and participation. Despite the present-day acceptance of dance by many denominations, Christian dancers and churches that allow dance still face opposition from fellow believers. Opposition includes arguments against its use, being personally forbidden to dance in church, and being criticized for using dance as worship. There is an ongoing connection between dance and sexuality or sensuality. Some Christians will not accept dance until they believe that it can be done in ways that do not arouse sexual feelings. Those who allow dance to be used as worship believe that it can be done in a way that does not always make people think of sex. It causes one to wonder

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[4] Neo-Pentacostal, New Apostalic Reformation, or Charasmatic churches are known for their acceptance and use of dance. There has been an increase in the charismatic movement in the United States, especially with the popular use of worship music from Bethel Church and Hillsong Church to name a couple (Abraham, 2018).

if the roots of sexism and legalism, the judging of conduct due to adherence to strict rules[5], will ever be replaced by grace and acceptance of an art form that in its earliest documentations in Christian literature was a means of worship and celebration, or will a taboo against dance always exist in the church?

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[5] In Christianity, legalism often means placing more emphasis on the following of laws for salvation than grace alone.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

This study looks at the universality of dance as well as the human needs that dance satisfies by analyzing the beliefs of American Christians regarding the use of dance within their religious practices. It seeks to determine why some denominations of Christianity in America have chosen to allow dance as part of their religious practice and why others have chosen to forbid dancing. Specifically, this study focuses on the taboos of dance within American Christianity and the various reasons for those taboos. By looking at one specific dance culture, I hope to be able to answer, at least in part, the broader question of why humans dance.

To gather information that represented various Christian denominations and beliefs pertaining to dance, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with an interview base gathered using the snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is a way of identifying respondents (those willing to participate in the interview process) who are then able to refer the researcher to other respondents (Atkinson and Flint 2001, pg. 1). I chose this method to avoid bias in who was chosen to be interviewed as well as to expand my interviewee pool beyond the people that I know personally. These methods of research were approved by the IRB.

I began my snowball sampling by creating a digital flyer that summarized my project and asked those who were interested to reach out; my contact information was included. Along with sending this flyer to some initial respondents, I also posted information on my Facebook account about my project and asked for people to share it with those who they believed would be interested in participating in an interview process.

This method of gathering respondents was successful, and I was able to contact participants across the country who connected me to more potential participants.

This method of sampling also gave me access to a diverse group of interviewees. I wanted several denominations of Christianity to be represented, and I wanted participants of various ages and of both sexes. I also desired to interview both dancers and observers of dance who were either pastors, worship leaders, or members of their churches. Thanks to the snowball-sampling method, I was able to interview ten people from six different denominations of Christianity. This group was made up of three men and seven women from ages twenty-two to mid-sixties.[6] It was important to me to have many different perspectives as I wanted to be able to create a holistic view of dance in Christianity.

Table 1 - Names have been changed in order to maintain anonymity

Individual	Denomination	Sex	Dancer/Observer	Position in Church
Brandon	Baptist	Male	Observer	Pastor
Jordan	Southern Baptist	Male	Observer	Worship Leader
Bethany	Southern Baptist	Female	Dancer	Church Member
Meghan	Southern Baptist	Female	Observer	Church Member
Ashley	Nondenominational	Female	Dancer	Church Member
Hannah	Nondenominational	Female	Dancer	Church Member
Brooke	Nondenominational	Female	Dancer	Church Member
Teresa	Methodist	Female	Dancer	Church Member
Noah	Presbyterian	Male	Observer	Youth Leader
Rachel	Antiochian Orthodox	Female	Dancer	Church Member

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[6] See Table 1 for more details regarding the diversity of the participant group.

In order to obtain information from my participant group, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a formal interview that follows an interview guide but allows the interviewer to stray from the guide to follow topical trajectories in the conversation (Cohen 2006). The semi-structured interview format was the best interview method for my project and provided the most qualitative answers for several reasons. First, I knew that I would only be speaking to each participant once. Therefore, there needed to be clear expectations for both myself and the person that I interviewed in order to obtain as much information as possible. The semi-structured interview method provided this structure while still allowing the interview to feel personable and conversational; this created an environment in which participants were more likely to share personal anecdotes and expand upon their answers. Second, I knew that the people I would be interviewing are professionals and parents who would be making time for me during their daily routine. By having an interview guide, I was able to ensure that I gathered the needed information within the one-hour timeframe I allowed myself. Lastly, the semi-structured interview format provided "the opportunity for identifying new ways of seeing and understanding the topic at hand" (Cohen 2006). This statement could not have been truer, and I found myself making notes to conduct follow-up research on several topics mentioned by those that I interviewed.

Each individual that I interviewed was given a consent form which had been approved by the IRB. I also went over the main points of the consent form before conducting the interview to ensure that my participants understood that their information was confidential and that they could end the interview at any time. I took notes in a notebook, and I recorded each interview so that I could refer back to it as I wrote my

results. Due to the unforeseen circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of my

interviews were conducted via FaceTime and phone call. I had twelve questions prepared

for my participants.[7] I did not necessarily ask all twelve questions to each participant.

Some participants answered questions unknowingly, so there was no reason to ask that

question again. At other times, I could tell that a question was not relevant to the person I

was interviewing after establishing a rapport and gaining an understanding of their

religious background. In this case, it would have been insensitive to ask every question.

The semi-structured interview format resulted in pleasant interviews which fit inside the

allotted time and provided quality information for my research.

I chose to use grounded theory methodology to analyze the information that I

recorded during the ten interviews. Grounded theory methodology builds up analyses or

analytic categories from data, in this case interviews, and continuously returns to the data

to check ideas and develop middle-range theories (Charmaz 2015, pg. 397). I chose

grounded theory methodology (GTM) because it provides "a systematic analysis on the

basis of clearly defined analytic steps, while at the same time being sufficiently open to

provide researchers with room for maneuver in its application" (Ruppel and Mey 2015,

pg. 175). The GTM method works exceptionally well for anthropological research

because the narrative mode of GTM allows for change to be represented in chronological

sequence, and it takes into account the processes and subtleties of human life (Ruppel and

Mey 2015, pg. 175). Because my research relies on the narratives of the ten people that I

interviewed and the categories I created in order to analyze the data, the grounded theory

methodology was the best lens to use as I analyzed my results.

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[7] See Appendix C for the list of interview questions.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

To maintain confidentiality, the names of the participants have been changed. Because of the qualitative nature of the interviews, the results will be presented in a narrative form arranged by the twelve questions asked during the interviews.

Denomination

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I strove to interview people from several denominations of Christianity in order to gain a more complete perspective of dance as viewed by American Christians. The first question that I asked my participants was about which denomination they ascribed to, and more specifically, if they had ever ascribed to a different denomination. This question was important in order for me to understand better the lens through which each participant interpreted various ideas and theologies in the Bible. Several participants mentioned their denomination when responding to the flyer and the Facebook post used to gather the participants. However, it was interesting to learn that many of my participants had belonged to different denominations as children and adolescents than the ones they now ascribe to as adults. For instance, Ashley was raised in a Lutheran church but now describes herself as nondenominational. Likewise, Noah grew up in a Baptist church but now belongs to a Presbyterian church. The background of these believers did not change how information was recorded. However, I believe that knowing the religious background of the individuals was important because adolescents carry many beliefs with them into adulthood, and they may add to those beliefs or change them completely. I also believe this information is important because it allows me to place their current viewpoints into the historical perspective discussed in Chapter 2.

Dance in Religious Practice

The second set of questions in the interview was about each individual's experience with dance in their religious practice. I wanted to know when each person first considered dance an act of worship, and I wanted to know if they had ever participated in dance as worship. If not, I asked the participants if they would ever be willing to participate in a dance as part of their religious practice. I also asked them if there was ever a worship situation in which they thought that dance did not belong. These questions, as one might imagine, had many different answers. Five of the ten participants stated that dance had always been an aspect of worship for them. For Brooke and Jordan, dance was a normal part of the church they grew up in, which they stated was more charismatic in nature. Ashley, Hannah, and Teresa stated that because they had been both Christians and dancers since childhood, their faith and their talent/passion simply seemed integrated. However, all three mentioned having a realization in their youth that dance was separated from their church experience.

For Ashley, this realization came at age eleven, but at age fourteen she chose to make her dancing an act of worship. She said that dance and worship became fully integrated for her in college due to a statement made by a professor of dance history. When Ashley asked why the professor was not using the Bible as a source of dance history, the professor responded with something along the lines of, "Because the Bible only says negative things about dance." Unable to accept this answer, she began to search the Bible and research various passages of scripture in order to understand the meaning of the Hebrew words found in the original Old Testament texts. One of the several positive

examples of dancing that she found was Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." The Hebrew word for the word "rejoice" in this verse is *guwl* (pronounced "gool") and means to spin around under the influence of violent emotion such as joy. Ashley then argued that if scripture in its original language is to be believed, then God himself dances joyfully. This makes a positive statement about dance.

For Teresa and Hannah, dance was not used as worship in the churches they attended in their youth. Teresa always viewed dance as an act of worship because she believes God is the source of her talent. It was not until she was around thirty years old that she used dance as an act of worship in a public forum by organizing a group of dancers at their church. Hannah said that since before she could remember, dancing had been her response in worship. As an adult, she joined Christian dance companies and was able to fully incorporate dance into her religious practice. She also began attending churches where dance was allowed during worship services.

The other five individuals I interviewed first encountered dance in worship at various ages and in many different ways. For instance, Meghan first encountered dance in worship twenty-five years ago at Willow Creek Church during a service on the topic of community. Rachel, who grew up in the Antiochian Orthodox faith and who was also a dancer growing up, encountered dance in the context of worship for the first time just four years ago when attending a Christian dance conference, Dance Revolution, with her daughter who now dances at a Christian dance studio. Interestingly, Noah first saw dance used as worship in a skit on YouTube when he was in the ninth grade. Bethany grew up

in church and dancing, but it was not until she attended Ballet Magnificat!'s summer intensive at the age of twenty that she saw dancing used for the purpose of worshipping God.[8]

Brandon, Bethany, Ashley, Hannah, Brooke, and Teresa all claimed to have used dance as worship either regularly or at some point in their life. Jordan, Noah, and Rachel claimed that they would be willing to use dance as worship as long as it was in the right context. When I asked them to expand upon what they meant about having the right context, I received varying answers. Jordan simply said that dance should be inclusive and able to lead the corporate body in an act of worship, so if the timing is wrong or the movement is distracting and takes away from the message, then dance may not be the most effective means of expressing worship at that time. Noah and Rachel, however, both stated that they did not believe that dance should take place during Sunday morning worship services, but that it was okay to use dance in other worship events such as a special Easter service. Intriguingly, they had two different reasons for this view. Rachel explained that the Antiochian Orthodox churches all around the world all have the same liturgical services each Sunday with the message being sent out to each diocese from the Metropolitan, the head of the Orthodox Church. She further explained Orthodox Christians believe that the Antiochian Orthodox church was the first church. She reasoned that if dance did not exist in the services of the first church, then it should not be added to them now. She did continue on to say that the Orthodox church supports dancing outside of the liturgical Sunday services.

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[8] Ballet Magnificat! is a Christian professional ballet company based in Jackson, Mississippi.

Noah cited the Regulative Principle of Worship as the reason that dance should not be permitted in Sunday morning worship. The Regulative Principle of Worship is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, doctrine followed by the Presbyterian church worldwide, and states that "the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself and so limited by his own revealed will" (WCF 21.1). In other words, if an expression of worship is not explicitly mentioned as an aspect of corporate worship in the Bible, then it should be saved for use during personal worship times. Meghan, though Southern Baptist, also ascribes to the Regulative Principle of Worship. She also believed that dance as worship is great as long as it does not take place during the corporate gathering. However, she was the only participant who said that they would not be willing to use dance as worship simply stating that it is not her gift/talent.

The Purpose of Dance

All ten participants agreed that dance serves a purpose in worship for both an individual and a group of believers. I was given seven different purposes of dance in worship, with some participants listing more than one and several participants listing the same purpose. Meghan, Teresa, Jordan, and Bethany all stated that dancing in the worship setting allows Christians to display their God-given gifts and offer them back to God by using them for His glorification. Meghan, Ashley, and Brooke mentioned that dance acts as a form of prayer, communicating what cannot be said through movement. Brandon claimed that Christ should be represented in every arena of the mainstream media; therefore, Christians should be a part of the secular dance community. Hannah and Brandon both believe that dance uniquely allows Christians to worship with their

whole body as commanded in Luke 10:27 which says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind." Ashley stated that she believes dance can be a healing act of worship as Jesus and the Apostles healed people by the laying of hands in the New Testament, and dance often requires human connection and touch. Rachel said that when dance is used in the context of worship, the motivation for dancing shifts from glorifying self to glorifying God, and having the correct motivation to perform is important. Lastly, Hannah claimed that dance leads individuals and congregations to freedom by allowing them to express their worship with their entire being and finding the freedom to move in their own body without shame or fear of judgment.

Dance in Scripture

I asked each interviewee if they believed that dance was supported by the Bible, and all ten participants responded with an emphatic "Yes." As mentioned before, there were disagreements as to when dance should be used according to scripture, but all ten individuals believe that the Bible says that dance is permitted, even commanded, for Christians. Many different scriptures were quoted in response to this question including Zephaniah 3:17, 2 Samuel 6:14, Psalm 149:3, Ecclesiastes 3:4, and Exodus 15:20.

Opposition to Dance

During the interview process, I asked four questions regarding opposition to dance. I first asked each participant if they had personally ever been opposed to dance within a worship experience. I then asked the participants who dance if they had ever faced opposition personally. I also questioned them as to why dance is allowed in some denominations and not in all. Lastly, I asked if they believed that opposition to dance has

always existed or if it developed more recently due to political, social, or cultural changes.

None of the participants claimed to have ever been opposed to dance. However, most mentioned that they were not opposed as long as dance was used at the appropriate time in a respectful way. Rachel, Meghan, and Noah all restated that they are not opposed to dance in general. However, they are opposed to it within the Sunday morning gathering of believers.

Teresa, Ashley, and Jordan admitted to facing personal opposition for allowing dance in their religious practice. Teresa said that she received pushback from some of the people at her church when she first organized the dance group, but she said that dance was well received after it was used the first time. Contrastingly, Ashley stated that the majority of opposition she felt was internal, or spiritual, opposition from the enemy. For instance, fear of comparison or fear of being a distraction would try to prevent her from using dance as worship. She was also asked by a new worship pastor at a previously attended church to stay in the chairs so as to not scare anyone away. She had danced freely at this church until the change in leadership. Jordan, though not a dancer, said that he had been criticized as a leader for allowing dance. His church allows all forms of dance as a worship expression, including mime, because they believe that representation matters. He said that there have been questions of racism from the white face paint that is used in miming, usually performed in church by African Americans. He said that he addresses this by talking through issues with members of the congregation to encourage them to see the importance of every member being represented.

When asked why dance is permitted in some denominations but not all, there were two sentiments repeated by the participants. First, dance as an art form is often unknown and therefore uncomfortable for most Christians. Second, the Protestant fear of sexuality (as discussed in Chapter 2) prevents churches from allowing dance because the only dance with which they are familiar is the dancing seen in mainstream media. Rachel said that it was similar to throwing out the baby with the bathwater because anything good is allowed in moderation. Dance is good as long as it is not used provocatively. Noah reflected this sentiment claiming that a totalism mindset influences whether dance is used or not. This mindset would say, "It can turn into bad things, so abstain completely." Hannah also mentioned that churches have a fear of looking like the secular world. If secular dance is all that is known, then dance is avoided altogether. Churches must see dance used as worship to understand that it can be used in a way that does not reflect popular culture.

When asked if the opposition to dance has always existed, five people stated that opposition has always existed, and four people stated that they believe that opposition has developed over time. Ashley explained that dance has always been opposed because Lucifer (the angelic name of Satan before he fell from heaven) was the angel in charge of leading worship in heaven. She said that it only makes sense that he would pervert anything that brings glory to God, including dance. Teresa believes that dance has always faced opposition but that the opposition intensified during the Puritan era. Bethany said that it has always existed because political and social differences have always existed. Brooke stated that the opposition has always existed and is due to cultural differences.

Those who believed that opposition has developed over time either mentioned Protestant conservatism, mainstream media, or social standing. Rachel said that opposition to dance in worship could not have always existed because Orthodox Christians are not against dancing and the Orthodox Church was the first church. Similarly, Hannah said that opposition did not exist at the beginning of the church because dance is accepted in Jewish culture, rather, opposition is influenced by the media of the times and how dance is defined. Despite the various opinions, it is clear that dance has faced opposition in its history with the church.

Christians, Taboos, and Dance

All ten participants agreed that there are taboos regarding dance in Christianity. Interestingly, the same three ideas were echoed by most participants. Movement of the pelvis or chest, costuming, and music choice were the three reasons given for the taboo against dance in church. Regarding movement, Brandon explained that sensuality is mysterious and touches into the transcendent or spiritual realm. This makes it harder to understand and therefore it is tabooed. Rachel said that movements such as twerking are okay in different dance settings with different purposes. This exemplifies the taboo against the use of the pelvis in worship. Hannah argued that the pelvis "should be unlocked and should be moved and can be moved in a non-sensual way." She teaches African-jazz classes that incorporate pelvis and chest movement used in that genre with worship music. Costuming was mentioned several times as a taboo, specifically costuming that is too tight or that shows the midriff. These clothing taboos in worship dance are also linked to the avoidance of sexuality. Finally, specific genres of music such as pop, rap, and hip-hop are taboo in the church because of their secular nature.

Performance versus Worship

   To better understand the way that dance satisfies a spiritual need, I asked the

participants to explain the difference between performance and worship. I wanted to

know what occurred phenomenologically that changed dancing from a public

performance to personal worship. Ashley answered by quoting Colossians 3:17 which

states, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord

Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." She said that it is all about intent

because everything can and should be done as worship, with the intent of glorifying God

and giving Him thanks. Jordan stated that it comes down to semantics. He said that

worship is just performance plus intention because everything should be done with

excellence as unto the Lord. This comes from Colossians 3:23 which says, "Whatever

you do, work at it with all your heart, as working unto the Lord, and not unto man."

Contrarily to Jordan, Noah believes that performance is antithetical to corporate worship.

Meghan also believes that it all comes down to the intent in your heart. Rachel said that it

is more than just intent because movement should mimic intent. If your intent is to

worship God, then your movement should reflect that and be appropriate for worship.

Hannah stated that dance as worship must be explicit in sharing the Gospel. She said that

a Christian dancing without a meaning does not serve any purpose. Bethany explained

that there should not be a difference between performance and worship because the use of

a talent should not change if there is an audience or not. Brooke was the only person who

spoke of a divinely inspired somatic experience. She said that dance as worship is an

unplanned, somatic response inspired be God that occurs when one's intent and focus is

on worship.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Putting It All in Context

Because of the long history of opposition to dance in the church by several

Christian denominations, I was surprised to discover that all ten of my participants

believed that dance can and should be used as worship either individually or corporately.

It is clear from my interviews that in the last twenty years, Christians from many

denominations have been going back to the Bible and examining scripture to understand

what is or is not allowed in worship rather than following the ideas set forth by previous

religious leaders' interpretations.

Despite the clear movement in churches towards the acceptance of dance as a

form of worship, the taboos that have existed since the Patristic Period regarding dance

are still prevalent. All ten interviewees mentioned either sexuality, a specific body part,

or clothing that reveals the shape of the body when asked why dance is sometimes

opposed. While the Bible does discuss the importance of modesty[9], the entire book of

Song of Solomon discusses the goodness of sexuality in its proper context.[10] In Psalm

139:14-15, David acknowledges the beauty of the human body saying,

> "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are
> wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was
> made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth."

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[9] 1 Timothy 2:9 states, "I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes..."

[10] Proper in this context referring to the Biblical description of sex within the context of marriage between one man and one woman.

If the body and its sensuality is so clearly celebrated in the Bible, why do Christians fear its use, especially in the context of dancing? In her interview, Ashley touched on this enigma. She said that the enemy wants there to be a separation between the natural expression of mankind (movement) and the spiritual expression (worship). Dance overcomes this separation. Noah also began to answer this question with his discussion of totalism; if dance has the potential to lead people to sin, all dance should be banned. While it is clear from the Bible that temptation should be avoided,[11] the Bible also says that Christians should not live in fear because God will provide a way to escape temptation.[12] Analyzing the responses from my interviews, it appears that Christians desire to live in freedom rather than the fear of potential sin.

Another theme clearly seen in the literature review was the impact of culture in the creation and prevalence of dance taboos. The interviews confirmed that culture, in fact, was a major cause in the development of dance being seen as taboo by the American church. In the literature review, it was Greek and Roman theatricals that created opposition during the Patristic Period. The influence of patriarchy in European culture contributed to the sexualization of women's bodies, a major concern for religious leaders who felt that it was their responsibility to keep the men of the church from being tempted to sin. This patriarchal influence and desire to remove anything that could be viewed as sinful from life was brought to the Americas by the Puritans and Protestants. In the interviews, it was this conservatism in early America and the mainstream media of today

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[11] Matthew 26:41 says, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

[12] 1 Corinthians 10:13 states, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

that participants believe influence the American church's view of dance. As both Teresa and Jordan pointed out, if the dancing seen in pop culture is a church leader's only exposure to dance, they are of course going to oppose dance in the church because the goal of the church is to look different from the secular world. It is clear that culture creates and sustains taboos.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like place the information gleaned from both the literature review and the interviews into a broader perspective by answering my original research question and comparing the results to my hypothesis. As a reminder, my original question is as follows:

> *"Many cultures across the world have developed dances for the purpose of religious or spiritual rituals and celebrations. Does dance as a form of expression stem from a biological, spiritual, or cultural need? Why do cultures turn to dance to express themselves and their religion? How do dance and religion react to the emergence and evolution of cultural taboos?"*

First, I do believe that upon looking at the work conducted by Judith Lynne Hanna and J.G. Davies that dance aids in fulfilling biological, spiritual, and cultural needs. Hanna's work explains both the muscular and cognitive benefits of dancing while Davies' work proves the value of dance in culture by giving several examples of its uses in many cultures. Pastors in the early American church also advocated for the use of dance as exercise. The responses of my interview participants clearly point to the uses of dance to fulfill spiritual needs such as connection, prayer, and praise.

Second, I would like to propose that cultures turn to dance for cultural and religious expression because of its accessibility to all ages, ethnicities, and genders. My

interview participants encountered dance at various ages, came from different ethnic backgrounds, and consisted of both males and females. Each participant was able to recall a time in which dance ministered to them personally. Dance also has a unique way of connecting communities as indicated by the fact that the Hebrew word for dance came from the word for "company" as well as by the emergence of trendy group dances in the 1950s and 1960s that unified the United States from East Coast to West Coast.

Lastly, I think that it can be confidently stated that dance persists through time and cultural changes. The taboos against dance seen all throughout history have done little to extinguish the human desire to move. Though I think it is important to mention the way taboos, like dance, both persist and change. As can be seen in the literature review, taboos against dance re-emerge (mostly rooted in the issue of sin and sensuality) when new forms of dancing become popular. There seems to be almost a dialectical relationship between the popularity of dance in American culture and religious opposition to dance, at least until recently. Why in the last thirty years has dance become more widely accepted? Is it because more people are returning to scripture, or because more people are incorporating dance into worship? Maybe it is because certain forms of worship like charismatic Christianity are becoming more mainstream with the streaming of popular worship music from charismatic churches such as Bethel Church and Hillsong Church (Abraham, 2018).

This continuing dialectic further proves the biological, spiritual, and cultural need to dance. It is a human expression that occurs naturally; it is not taught. Technical genres of dance only build upon the movement that already exists in the physiological abilities of the body and the imaginative capacity of the brain. Dance has clearly evolved and

changed in both its expression and uses throughout human history, as evidenced by the first communal Jewish dances and the 1970s disco craze. I would like to conclude by supposing that dance has always been important for human expression and will continue to be as culture continues to evolve with the advancements of humanity.

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Appendix A

Office of Research Integrity

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

118 COLLEGE DRIVE #5125 • HATTIESBURG, MS | 601.266.6576 | USM.EDU/ORI

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-19-505
PROJECT TITLE: An External Expression of the Inner Spirit
SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Anthropology and Sociology
RESEARCHER(S): Erin Ingram, Bonnie Smith

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited
            7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: March 3, 2020

Donald Sacco Jr.

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

Appendix B

ORI | Office *of*
Research Integrity

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT

STANDARD (ONLINE) INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURES
The Project Information and Research Description sections of this form should be completed by the Principal Investigator before submitting this form for IRB approval. Use what is given in the research description and consent sections below when constructing research instrument online. Last Edited May 13th, 2019

Today's date:
PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: An External Expression of the Internal Spirit		
Principal Investigator: Erin Ingram	Phone: 601-218-2866	Email: erin.ingram@usm.edu
College:　　　　University of Southern Mississippi	School and Program: Social Science - Anthropology	

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

1. **Purpose**:

By participating in this interview, the participant will aid the researcher in answering the following three intertwined questions, "Many cultures across the world have developed dances for the purpose of religious or spiritual rituals and celebrations. Does dance as a form of expression stem from a biological, spiritual, or cultural need? Why do cultures turn to dance to express themselves and their religion? How do dance and religion react to the emergence and evolution of cultural taboos?" This research is being conducted for an Honors College thesis and will be published as a peer-reviewed, scholarly work.

2. **Description of Study:**

This interview will consist of 11-15 questions regarding the participants own experience with religion and the art of dance. The interview will last around 30 minutes with a 1 hour maximum time limit. The participant is free to skip or ignore any questions that they feel uncomfortable answering.

3. **Benefits:**

There are no monetary benefits for participating in this interview. However, the participant may benefit from the experience on a personal level as they are provided a space to reflect and share beliefs or ideas that they hold as important.

4. **Risks:**

There are no known risks for participating in this interview. If the participant becomes emotionally stressed by any of the questions, they may skip the question or end the interview altogether at that time.

5. **Confidentiality:**

While personal interviews are not considered anonymous, the participant may let the researcher know if they would like for their name to be omitted or changed within the reported information from the interview. All material will be kept in locked files on the researcher's computer and deleted when they are no longer relevant.

6. **Alternative Procedures:**

Not applicable

7. **Participant's Assurance:**

This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5125, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, 601-266-5997.

Any questions about this research project should be directed to the Principal Investigator using the contact information provided above.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I understand that participation in this project is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Unless described above, all personal information will be kept strictly confidential, including my name and other identifying information. All procedures to be followed and their purposes were explained to me. Information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to me if that information may affect my willingness to continue participation in the project.

Include the following information only if applicable. Otherwise delete this entire paragraph before submitting for IRB approval: The University of Southern Mississippi has no mechanism to provide compensation for participants who may incur injuries as a result of participation in research projects. However, efforts will be made to make available the facilities and professional skills at the University. Participants may incur charges as a result of treatment related to research injuries. Information regarding treatment or the absence of treatment has been given above.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

By clicking the box below, I give my consent to participate in this research project.

☐ Check this box if you consent to this study, and then click "Continue." (Clicking "Continue" will not allow you to advance to the study, unless you have checked the box indicating your consent.)

If you do not wish to consent to this study, please close your browser window at this time.

Interview Questions for Thesis

1. To what denomination of Christianity do you ascribe? How old were you when you became a Christian?

2. When did dance become an aspect of religious practice or an act of worship for you? Are you an active participant or observer?

    a. If you are an observer, would you ever consider participating? Why or why not?

3. What purpose does dance serve in your religion for you as an individual and for a group of believers/practitioners as a whole?

4. Do you believe that dance is allowed according to your religion's sacred texts and literature?

5. Is dance allowed in all types of worship services? (Regulative Principle of Worship)

6. Have you ever been opposed to dance in your religious practice or worship experience?

7. Have you ever faced opposition for allowing dance in your own religious practice?

8. Why do you think dance is sometimes opposed in some denominations or by some practitioners of your religion and not by all?

9. Do you think that opposition to dance in worship has always existed or may have developed due to political, social, and cultural changes?

10. Are there any taboos in your religion regarding dance? I.e. Costume, movement of specific body parts, music, etc.

11. If you are/were a worship leader, why/would do you include dance in your worship services?

12. What is the difference, or is there a difference, between performance and worship? Is it purely a change of intention, or does it have to do with the types of movement used, clothing worn, music used, etc.?