



# Tai Chi—Dance Movement Therapy Integration: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Mind- Body Psychotherapy

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**Tai Chi—Dance Movement Therapy Integration: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Mind-  
Body Psychotherapy**

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## **Abstract**

From a holistic health perspective, this paper investigates the practice of combining Tai Chi with Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and its benefits as an integrative therapy—Tai Chi-DMT Integrated Movement Therapy—in cross-cultural therapeutic applications. The study first analyzes the philosophical foundations and cultural background of Tai Chi and DMT, pointing out their complementary nature in promoting mental, physical, and spiritual health. Tai Chi originates from traditional Chinese philosophy, which emphasizes achieving harmony and balance between body, mind, and spirit through smooth movements and meditation. In contrast, dance movement therapy is rooted in Western psychological theories that value individualism and personal expression, as well as the importance of body movement in promoting mental health. This thesis argues that by combining Tai Chi with DMT, a comprehensive therapeutic framework can be constructed that is both adaptable to various cultural backgrounds and able to bridge Eastern and Western therapeutic traditions. This paper explores a practical approach to solving health problems by analyzing the philosophy of Tai Chi and dance movement therapy and its application in the therapeutic process. I introduced Tai Chi-DMT Integrated Movement Therapy, which combines Tai Chi's serialized meditation reflection with DMT's emphasis on emotional expression and personal growth, aiming to provide a cross-cultural treatment plan. This study adopted the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) framework, a multidimensional therapy model that focuses on promoting creative expression and supports individual therapy processes. ETC framework ranges from basic sensory experience to complex symbolic expression and cognitive understanding. Through this systematic approach, this treatment model aims to meet diverse

treatment goals and pave ways for the global application of cross-cultural body psychotherapy.

The conclusion highlights the importance of adopting a cross-cultural and whole-person approach to health, noting that its value transcends traditional monocultural or monotherapeutic models. By combining Eastern philosophies of meditation and movement with Western individualistic and psychotherapeutic approaches, this approach exploits the shared body language of humans, deepens the understanding of therapeutic philosophies of different cultures, promotes communication of new methods of health and treatment among people from different backgrounds, and thereby enhances diversity and inclusion in the global health field. Therefore, this Tai Chi-DMT integrated therapy can be considered an important complementary and innovative tool in the field of global public health.

**Keywords:** Tai Chi, Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy, Holistic Health, Cross-cultural Healing, Comparative Philosophy, Mind-body Integration, Body Psychotherapy, Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC), Global Health Practices.

## **I. Introduction**

### **1. From Tai Chi to Dance Therapy: A Personal Exploration of Healing Therapies**

This paper explores the philosophical foundations and practical applications of a cross-cultural treatment model, Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy, by combining Tai Chi and dance movement therapy (DMT) and applying the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) framework. I have practiced Tai Chi and DMT since kindergarten, and these two practices have become central to my life and the foundation of my personal growth.

To me, Tai Chi is much more than a simple physical exercise. It is rooted in my identity as a Chinese person and embodies a deep respect for the wisdom of our ancestors and our precious master-disciple heritage. Whenever I stand on the Tai Chi practice field, I feel as if I am having a conversation with ancient wise men and have found a kind of spiritual peace. Tai Chi inspires me to both practice its movements and to understand the cultural and philosophical meaning it carries. Through the stories of families and masters passed down through the ancient history of Tai Chi, I understand that every movement reflects the deep relationship between master and disciple. These cultural traditions have become the key to cultural inheritance and maintaining the purity of Tai Chi, which makes me feel that practicing Tai Chi is like a relay marathon, taking each practitioner back to history and leading them into the future.



"Zhen Wu Ling Ying Album" - In this painting with the theme of Tai Chi apprenticeship scene, the figure of the instructor shows his majesty and wisdom. Tai Chi apprentices bow to his instructor, and his actions express respect for his instructors and recognition of his abilities.

(Source: <https://www.soundofhope.org/post/450592>)

At the same time, driven by the methods behind dance movement therapy, I began to value self-expression and scientific methods of exploration in body psychotherapy. DMT allowed me to be more proactive in therapy and understand my uniqueness through analysis and reflection. I gradually developed my own dance style that was a direct expression of my

own emotions and personality. In my DMT experience, the emphasis on rationality behind this therapy allowed me to express my emotions while also exploring the reasons and logic behind each action through discussions with the teacher. This helped me understand my emotions and reactions and was an integral part of my personalized healing experience. Therefore, for me, when I practiced DMT, I felt the emphasis on personal initiative and rational cognition. These principles allow me to feel free in self-expression and self-exploration, and also ensure the treatment process is both rigorous and efficacious.

As a practitioner of both Tai Chi and dance movement therapy, I've gained a unique perspective on the cultural differences in movement healing therapies. Through Tai Chi, I experience a sense of community and continuity. The practice of Tai Chi taught me how to find harmony and balance between myself and others. When practicing with a Tai Chi group, I feel connected to the wider community, which provides me with a sense of belonging in my busy life. At the same time, dance movement therapy allowed me to explore another side of personal expression. DMT gave me the opportunity to explore and express my emotions and thoughts through body language, encouraging me to discover and show my uniqueness. This kind of freedom and creative space makes me more confident and willing to explore myself. Reflecting on my practice of Tai Chi and dance movement therapy, I observed contrasts and complementarities between Eastern and Western healing traditions. Tai Chi taught me the value of community and smooth movement that demonstrates collective wisdom that is passed down from generation to generation within a deep-rooted cultural framework. This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals within wider society and nature. On the other hand, my experience with DMT in a Western context supported self-exploration, encouraging a deep dive into personal autonomy and scientific understanding of the

therapeutic process. This made me appreciate the unique therapeutic pathways that both traditions offer: Tai Chi provides a sense of belonging and stability through its collective ethos, while DMT promotes emotional expression and self-discovery through its focus on individualism and evidence-based practice. Together they form a more holistic approach to well-being that bridges cultural divides and enriches my personal growth. Through my practice, I have come to realize that the convergence of these models provides both a path to personal wellness and a blueprint for cultural dialogue and mutual learning. As this study continues to explore and value the unique contributions of Eastern and Western healing traditions, I hope that it can help to pave the way for innovative approaches to cross-cultural healing and understanding.

## **2. Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to explore the integration of Tai Chi and dance movement therapy (DMT) as complementary practices in body psychotherapy, with a focus on a holistic and culturally inclusive approach to health. This study aims to use comparative analysis to explore and interpret the philosophical foundations and cultural relevance of Tai Chi and DMT. It examines how these culturally relevant practices can be combined to improve health outcomes. Specifically, the study will evaluate the potential benefits of combining the disciplined meditative movements of Tai Chi with the emotional expression of DMT. The goal is to develop the culturally appropriate integrative treatment model “Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy” and provide a practical framework for global health practitioners.

**Objective 1:** Discuss the philosophical foundations and cultural relevance of Tai Chi and dance movement therapy; clarify how these two therapies can have a positive impact on health within their respective cultural and philosophical frameworks; reveal how the traditional Chinese philosophy of Tai Chi and the Western theory of DMT are respectively implemented in their therapeutic practice.

**Objective 2:** Examine the integration of Tai Chi and DMT as complementary therapies in the field of body psychotherapy; conceptualize a culturally inclusive treatment approach that combines the meditative reflections of Tai Chi with the emotional expression focus of DMT and explore how this integrative practice, Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy, can deliver a comprehensive and flexible framework for treatment in multicultural contexts.

**Objective 3:** Develop a comprehensive treatment model called Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy that accommodates culturally diverse needs; employ an interdisciplinary approach to bridge the cultural gap between East and West and deepen understanding of body psychotherapy; construct a comprehensive health paradigm and provide innovative perspectives and methods for global health practice.

### **3. Background and Significance of the Paper**

The theoretical basis and practice of Tai Chi and dance movement therapy (DMT) reflect the integration and complementarity of Chinese Taoist traditions and Western philosophical ideas in understanding the relationship between body and mind. Tai Chi and dance movement therapy both belong to the category of body psychotherapy. This therapy is based on the theory of the intersection of psychology and physiology. It is believed that the state of mind is closely connected with the physical state, and that physical activities can

effectively regulate emotions and mental health. These two body psychotherapies enable individuals to explore emotional experiences by enhancing attention to body perception and movement, and through this process, promote positive changes in mental states and healing (Aposhyan, 2018, pp. 133-160). Historically, Eastern medical systems have long recognized the indivisible unity of mind and body. This view also finds resonance in the philosophy of Hippocrates in the fifth century B.C. However, the 17th century marked a turning point in the history of Western philosophy, when Descartes introduced the dualism of mind and body, dividing the two into mutually independent entities. This view was subsequently supported by many scientists, including Newton, and had a great impact on academic discussions for centuries to come. However, at the end of the 19th century, William James wrote in his 1884 article "What is an Emotion?", which discusses the interaction of mind and body. James questioned the dominant understanding of emotion at the time by introducing his James-Lange theory of emotions, which viewed emotions as perceptions of bodily reactions and emphasized the close connection between mental states and physical conditions. This perspective directly questions the mind-body dualism proposed by Descartes, laying the foundation for subsequent theoretical explorations of the unity of mind and body, thus promoting the understanding and application of mind-body integrated treatment methods in the fields of medicine and psychology (Clinton, 2005, pp. 8-9).

Based on this historical and theoretical background, recent longitudinal studies have further confirmed the practical effects of Tai Chi and dance movement therapy in promoting psychosocial skills and physical health. Studies have shown that dance movement therapy is particularly effective in improving psychosocial skills and physical health, particularly for children with emotional disorders and socially isolated older adults. It provides a lasting form

of psychological rehabilitation for patients with chronic diseases such as Parkinson's disease, by enhancing an individual's self-control and motor ability (Payne, 1992). Likewise, moderate-intensity Tai Chi has produced cardiovascular, muscle strength, and balance improvements in older adults, which can help improve cardiorespiratory function, lower-extremity muscle endurance, and reduce falls. Tai Chi also has a positive impact on mental health. It can effectively relieve depressive symptoms, enhance social interaction, and serve as a non-drug treatment method to provide treatment options for patients with chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease (Hong, 2008). These studies demonstrate that Tai Chi and dance movement therapy each demonstrate significant therapeutic benefits in actual medical practice, reinforcing their status as effective mental and physical health interventions.

Eastern and Western treatments each use different approaches based on their cultural and philosophical characteristics. Integrating these approaches can complement each other and promote innovation in treatments. This integration expands the scope of treatment and provides individuals with a more personalized path to increased vitality. For example, Hakomi therapy, pioneered by Ron Kurtz in the 1970s, integrates Eastern meditation and mindfulness practices with Western humanistic and systems theories to promote personal self-awareness and emotional regulation. This method uses the principles of nonviolent communication and mind-body coordination to deepen therapeutic effects (Gray 2018). In addition, Applied Somatics emphasizes the role of the body in emotional and cognitive processing within Western psychological therapy practices, and it also incorporates Eastern martial arts techniques to improve individual self-awareness through physical activities and effectively manage aggressive and defensive tendencies. Integrated psychotherapy (IBP) is another treatment model that combines Western psychological theories (including the views

of Freud, Jung, and Leahy) with Eastern mind-body techniques (including yoga and meditation), aiming to achieve a holistic health (Totton, 2003, pp. 114-115).

This thesis proposes a comprehensive framework that integrates Chinese Tai Chi and Western dance movement therapy, Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy, hoping to open up a cross-cultural path for body psychotherapy. While elaborating on this framework, the thesis particularly emphasizes an in-depth comparative study of the philosophical roots, cultural background, and application practices of the two therapies. This research explores how to integrate these therapeutic methods in the context of the history and philosophy of science, reviewing how different cultures have influenced the cognition and practice of mind-body therapy through the evolution of its philosophy from ancient times to modern times. With this as a background, the thesis further examines how the integration of Tai Chi and DMT can inspire new philosophical and cultural dimensions into global health concepts through multiple therapeutic strategies that promote inner peace and personal self-expression. By examining this therapy model, Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy, within a philosophical context, the paper aims to demonstrate how historical philosophical ideas can be used to guide modern therapy practice, thereby providing a richer perspective and methodological support for the pursuit of holistic well-being.

On this basis, this paper introduces the role of the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) framework as a methodological basis for realizing the integration of Tai Chi and DMT. The ETC framework provides a structured assessment and intervention process for treatment through its systematic multi-level processing - from the kinesthetic/sensory level to the perceptual/affective level to the cognitive/symbolic level. This framework ensures that the integrated application of Tai Chi and DMT can cover a wide range of therapeutic goals, from

simple physical relaxation to complex emotional and cognitive integration, promoting smooth transitions between different therapeutic goals. In particular, the ETC framework also emphasizes the importance of music as an auxiliary tool throughout the therapeutic process, and with carefully selected music, it can guide emotional context, stimulate creative expression, and enhance the fluency and effectiveness of therapy. This integrated therapy, through the sequential meditation of Tai Chi, the emotional expression of DMT, and the reflection integration of Tai Chi, constitutes a complete treatment process from meditation, expression to reflection. In addition, the combination of Tai Chi and DMT provides extremely high flexibility in personalized treatment, allowing therapists to adjust treatment plans according to individual specific needs and cultural background, making treatment more consistent with individual life reality and cultural identity in a globalized society, thus improving the effectiveness of treatment and individual participation.

The cross-cultural therapeutic practice of Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy both deepens the exchange of Chinese and Western cultures, and demonstrates the core value of cultural diversity in promoting mental health and therapeutic practices. The combination of Tai Chi and DMT demonstrates the philosophical principles of wholeness, balance and dynamic equilibrium, combining Taoist philosophy of mind-body unity and yin-yang balance with Western psychological healing and expressive therapy to establish a global framework that promotes cross-cultural dialogue. This approach integrates therapeutic wisdom and techniques from different cultures to advance global mental health and demonstrates the adaptability of body psychotherapy in the diversity of globalization. Through this combination, the tranquility of Tai Chi and the emotionally expressive power of DMT interact to provide participants around the world with treatment plans that are both

personalized and culturally sensitive. This promotes the development of body psychotherapy toward a more comprehensive, inclusive, and harmonious global mental health treatment paradigm, reflecting a deep understanding and response to cross-cultural communication and personalized treatment needs in the context of globalization.

## **II. An Exploration of Tai Chi's Role as a Traditional Chinese Mind-body Practice**

Tai Chi, an ancient Chinese martial art that integrates the principles of traditional Chinese medicine with Taoist philosophy, has gained global recognition as a preferred form of body psychotherapy. This widespread appreciation stems from its focus on Qi flow and the Yin-Yang balance, which are fundamental to both Taoist theory and the practice of Tai Chi itself. Through gentle and consistent practice, Tai Chi can help improve people's vitality and prevent disease (Frantzis, 2006). The philosophical foundation of Tai Chi lies in Taoism, which advocates the harmonious coexistence of man and nature, and achieves a balance in life through the interaction of yin and yang. The influence of Zen Buddhism also enriches the connotation of Tai Chi, which emphasizes understanding of the mysteries of oneself and the universe through personal experience. Tai Chi brings these ideas together and encourages people to explore inner peace and harmony (Crompton, 1993, pp. 1-13). From the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine, Tai Chi maintains people's physical and mental health by adjusting the flow of "Qi". It is quite different from those fitness methods that focus on high-intensity exercise. Tai Chi focuses more on promoting internal health of the body through moderate exercise, helping to enhance organ function, regulate emotions, and provide abundant energy for people's daily activities (Frantzis, 2006, pp. 69-94).

By examining traditional Chinese literature, we can discover that Tai Chi is based on the Taoist philosophy of Chinese history. The foundational principles of Tai Chi are articulated in the *Wang Zongyue Taiji Quan Treatise [Wáng Zōng Yuè Tài Jí Quán Lùn]*, where it was stated, "Tai Chi originates from the Ultimate Nothingness, and serves as the mother of Yin and Yang" (Chen 1943). This statement attaches Tai Chi to Taoist cosmology, suggesting its emergence from the primitive state of the universe, and also emphasizing its role in coordinating these fundamental forces. The treatise further clarifies, "Without Yang, Yin doesn't exist; without Yin, Yang doesn't exist. The interdependence of Yin and Yang facilitates the understanding of force" (Chen 1943), which highlights the necessity of balancing these dynamic forces to understand the true essence of Tai Chi's power.

Zhang Sanfeng, a legendary figure often credited as the founder of Tai Chi in Chinese martial arts history, in his *Taiji Quan Treatise [Zhāng Sān Fēng Tài Jí Quán Lùn]*, added another layer to people's understanding by focusing on the physical execution of Tai Chi. He instructed that "In every movement, the whole body must be light and agile, connected throughout" (Chen 1943), which indicated that Tai Chi movements, inspired by nature and animals, should flow naturally and effortlessly. This principle was echoed in *The True Meaning of Taiji Quan [Tài Jí Quán Zhēn Yì]*, which advised practitioners to "Forget the physical to follow the natural, act as the heart wishes" (Chen 1943), encouraging a transcendence of physical constraints to allow the mind to return to its natural, unrestrained state, thereby aligning one's actions with their true desires.

*The Song of the Thirteen Postures [Shí Sān Shì Gē]* further investigated the mental and spiritual dimensions of Tai Chi, contending, "In stillness, be like the dynamic; in motion, maintain calmness" (Chen 1943). This paradoxical guidance captured the essence of Tai Chi

practice — finding stillness within movement and coherence in fluidity, which symbolized the pursuit of equilibrium and flow. *The Explanations of the Mind and Power in the Thirteen Postures [Shísān Shì Xíng Gōng Xīn Jiě]* elaborated on this philosophy, stating, "Be as still as a mountain, move like a great river" (Chen 1943), which revealed that Tai Chi movements are initiated by the mind, with physical execution following mental intent and Qi (life energy) being guided through relaxation and focused intention. Accordingly, from Wang Zongyue's discussion on the origins of Tai Chi to Zhang Sanfeng's emphasis on the lightness and agility of movement, and further to the exploration of mental and willpower, it was observed that Tai Chi is both a form of physical exercise and a method of spiritual cultivation.

These principles of Tai Chi practice, such as the flow of movement from mind to body and inner peace, indicate its deep connection with ancient Chinese culture and Taoist philosophy. The history of Tai Chi traced back to many centuries ago, starting from the era when Fuxi drew trigrams in ancient times, about five thousand years ago, that is, in the ancient period around 3000 BC. Fuxi, a legendary figure, laid an important foundation for the development of Tai Chi theory by creating the Bagua (eight trigrams). His Yin-Yang theory was introduced into the book "Neijing" by the Yellow Emperor, further integrating the basic elements of Tai Chi. Later, inspired by "Zhuangzi," Hua Tuo created the Five Animal Frolics, adding a new dimension to the development of Tai Chi (Xu 1921). During the Tang Dynasty, the development of Tai Chi was significantly promoted. Xu Xuanping, a hermit living in She County, made an important contribution to the innovative teaching methods of Tai Chi through his detailed recorded lifestyle and personal characteristics. The version of Tai Chi that he named “三世七” (Sān Shì Qī) consists of 37 postures. It uses the feature of single-move coaching, learning one move at a time until mastery before moving on, allowing each

movement to gradually connect naturally. Additionally, in the long history of Tai Chi, Zhang Sanfeng is an important and essential figure living in Song Dynasty. His extraordinary courage and combat power shown during the Song Dynasty under Emperor Huizong shocked the people of Shanxi at that time and allowed his martial arts skills to be widely spread in the Shaanxi region. Later in the Yuan Dynasty, a man named Wang Zongyue from Xi'an, inherited Zhang Sanfeng's skills and attracted many scholars from Wenzhou and Chenzhou to learn Tai Chi (Xu 1921). After this, the influence of Tai Chi expanded further to various places in the northern and southern China. Representatives from the southern style, like Gan Fengchi, and from the northern style, Jiang Fa and his student Chen Changxing and his two sons, all made significant contributions to the spread of Tai Chi. The development of Tai Chi did not stop there. Yang Luchan, a Tai Chi master from Yongnian County, introduced "软拳" (ruǎn quán) or "化拳" (huà quán) to the capital city "Jing" and taught martial arts in the Qing Dynasty court, helping to spread Tai Chi further. Today, through the continuous efforts of Yang Luchan's three sons and later generations, Tai Chi continues to be passed down, enabling it to be widely spread around the world (Xu 1921). In summary, the history of Tai Chi has witnessed the combination of traditional customs and philosophical ideas in the history of Chinese society, and demonstrated the enduring value and practicality of Chinese ancient philosophy in dealing with the challenges of the modern world.

### **III. Principles and Historical Evolution of Dance Movement Therapy**

Dance movement therapy (DMT) is a form of body psychotherapy: unlike therapies such as psychoanalysis or psychodynamic therapy that rely primarily on talk, DMT, like other art therapies such as drama therapy, art therapy, or music therapy, uses creative activities to help treatment (Meekums, 2002, p.4). The core idea of DMT is that the body and mind

influence each other, that is, a person's expression of movement can affect their overall state and reflect personality. DMT also holds that therapists and clients can establish their relationship through more than just words, and allows people to symbolically express thoughts and feelings through dance and movement, even those they may not yet recognize (Meekums, 2002, p.8). This means that DMT is not just about improving people's physical conditions, it focuses more deeply on people's emotions and psychology, helping them explore and express their inner world. These principles mark DMT's status as a unique psychotherapeutic approach, demonstrating that it includes a holistic exploration of the emotional and spiritual aspects of human experience.

The origins of DMT's emphasis on emotional and spiritual exploration can be traced back to ancient tribal communities, where dance was widely used in ritual and ceremonial settings. In the views of ancient people, dance was a means of expressing oneself and understanding nature. For example, in ancient Greek rituals to please the gods, participants entered a state of excitement through dance and music, and they believed that this practice of dance and music helped in spiritual purification. As another example, many cultures made extensive use of dance in celebrations. Through dance, they paid respect to the gods and conveyed awe and gratitude to the natural world (Chaiklin, 2015, p.2). These dances were both forms of celebration and social interaction, and ways for them to express their emotions and important links between them, their gods, nature, and community. These symbolic dance practices demonstrated the unique functions of dance in ancient culture and provided a theoretical basis and inspiration for the modern practice of dance movement therapy.

In the early 20th century, dancers and psychologists with innovative theories and practices laid a solid foundation for developing modern dance movement therapy. Dance

artists such as Isadora Duncan and Mary Wigman provided key theoretical support for DMT through their personalized innovations in traditional dance. With the development of mind-body integration theory, the close connection between movement and psychological state has been further explored (Chaiklin, 2015, p.3). On this basis, the academic trajectory of dance movement therapy suggests that many of its major proponents were experienced dancers. After deeply immersing themselves in their art, these dancers turned their attention to observing the psychology and behavior of their students. Influenced by the prevalent psychoanalysis of their time and familiar with post-Freudian psychiatric theories, they studied the works of H.S. Sullivan, Jung, Adler, and others. Recognizing the transformative power of movement, they explored its therapeutic potential. Notably among these pioneers was Marian Chace, who had a history with prominent dance companies from the 1930s. Chace shifted her teaching focus to satisfy the demand of individual needs, integrating body movement for personal harmony. During WWII, she offered her expertise at St. Elizabeths Hospital, a psychiatric hospital located in Washington, DC, aiding returning soldiers. At the same time, the intersection of Mary Whitehouse and Jung's teachings gave birth to the technique of "Movement in Depth," which later came to be known as "Authentic Movement."

Furthermore, Trudi Schoop's influence was not diminished by her migration from Europe to California, and she further expressed the creativity of dance movement therapy. Simultaneously, scholars such as Blanche Evan, Liljan Espenak, Alma Hawkins, and Irmgard Bartenieff also made significant contributions in the field of dance movement therapy, among which Norma Canner and Elizabeth Polk conducted relevant research on children (Chaiklin, 2015, p.4). In the mid-1960s, in response to the growing demand in the field of dance movement therapy, the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) was formally established in 1966. The original intention of the association was to provide a unified

organizational structure and communication platform for the emerging dance movement therapy community. To strengthen communication and exchange within the industry, ADTA adopted newsletters, professional directories, and academic journals. As the field expanded and deepened, ADTA clarified its mission in inheriting knowledge and maintaining industry ethics, and formulated a series of detailed standards to guide the steady development of the industry and individual professional certification (Chaiklin, 2015, p.7). In modern society, dance movement therapy is widely recognized and applied, playing an irreplaceable role in schools, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and research institutions (Chaiklin, 2015, p.8).

With the widespread recognition and application of dance movement therapy in modern society, its unique therapeutic process, especially the central role of movement metaphors, has become the key to promoting individual creativity and understanding of behavioral patterns. Movement metaphor serves as the central tool that mediates the entire therapeutic process. As a body psychotherapy, DMT employs movement metaphor to deeply understand non-verbal communication methods, providing therapists with insights into individual creativity, behavior patterns, belief systems, and interpersonal relationship modes (Meekums, 2002, p.13). Movement metaphor, by requiring an "as if" attitude, is not directly equivalent to the meaning or object it represents, but allows people to understand and experience the meaning it conveys in a metaphorical or indirect way through a creative sense of distance (Meekums, 2002, p.23). In the practice of DMT, movement metaphor exists in the potential space between client and therapist, becoming a unique form of non-verbal communication. Through bodily movements or postures, individuals can symbolically express their burdens or experiences. Through movement metaphors, individuals can express themselves in a comprehensive and integrated way, including not only the physical and

emotional levels, but also the cognitive and linguistic levels, thereby promoting communication and coordination between the left and right brains (Meekums, 2002, p.25). The unique use of movement metaphors transforms dance movement therapy into an independent form of body psychotherapy. This form is based on a creative process, using the metaphor of movement as a mediating tool, emphasizing the interaction and integration between body, emotion and cognition.

#### **IV. The Philosophical Foundation of Tai Chi**

Tai Chi originates from the concept of Tai Chi in the *Book of Changes*. It shows a fluid and graceful form of martial arts by demonstrating the philosophical essence of yin and yang and the harmony of strength and flexibility. By pursuing the harmonious balance between motion and stillness, as well as natural laws and human nature, it reveals the philosophical notion of unity between humanity and the cosmos (Boedicker, 2009, p.13). Tai Chi integrates the concepts of the *Book of Changes* with Taoist views of the universe, attaining mental and physical balance by mimicking the flow of nature and managing Qi, reflecting the virtues of natural harmony and 'action through inaction'. Therefore, Tai Chi translates philosophical concepts into real-life experiences, and it also provides practitioners with an opportunity to interact with ancient wisdom and understand Chinese philosophy through body movements. In the following section, I will elaborate on how Tai Chi as an demonstration of Taoist philosophy and Yin and Yang theory, connects its three foundational principles—the balance of yin and yang, the wisdom of *We Wei* (inaction) and harmony with nature, and the flow of Qi (vital energy)—with the practical discipline of its form.

##### **1. Balance of Yin and Yang:**

*The Book of Changes* is a wise Chinese classic that lays the foundation for the cosmology and philosophical understanding of Yin and Yang. These concepts are dichotomous forces, symbolizing the complementary and reciprocal aspects of the universe. Yin is often associated with earth, darkness, receptivity, and femininity, while Yang is associated with heaven, light, initiative, and masculinity (Liao, 2007, pp. 6-9). Yin and Yang are not opposites, but interdependent: they are constantly generating and transforming each other (Song, 2019, p.4). As presented in the hexagrams of the *Book of Changes*, this constant change brings about myriad phenomena in the universe (Boedicker, 2009, pp. 14-15). Understanding the connection between yin and yang provides a framework for understanding the inherent harmony of the natural world. It emphasizes the balance and complementarity between things rather than the opposition in daily life. For example, day and night, cold and heat are interrelated and interdependent in the real world. This concept of balance is not just theoretical but is manifested in Tai Chi. In this practice, the philosophy of yin and yang is translated into a series of physical movements that echo the natural energy rhythms found in the ever-changing cycles of life (Lin, 2021, p.198). This alternation is not only reflected in movements, but also includes the use of breathing, thoughts, and strength. For example, a movement might start softly, then explode into a powerful movement, then transition smoothly to the next movement. Through Tai Chi, the practitioner's body engages with these fundamental principles, demonstrating the fluid exchange between stillness and movement, softness and strength (Lin, 2021, pp. 36-37).

## **2. Wu Wei and Harmony with Nature:**

Wu Wei (inaction) is also a core concept of Tai Chi. Wuwei, as described by Lao Zi in the *Tao Te Ching*, is a Taoist concept that promotes a lifestyle in harmony with the rhythms of

nature. It refers to taking measured, natural actions that conform to the inherent patterns of the world, providing a simplified way to deal with complex situations (Kaltenmark, 2022, p.53). In Tai Chi, this principle is demonstrated when the practitioner performs the exercise with gentle movements. From the perspective of Wu Wei, Tai Chi helps practitioners develop a keen sense of self and the subtle power to resolve conflicts naturally. As a result, practitioners are better able to listen to and follow the body's needs. This method increases sensitivity to the body, allowing the practitioner to fully immerse with every movement and breath with mindfulness (Lin, 2021, p.205). In this state of focused tranquility, practitioners can better experience the unity of body and mind. In Tai Chi, the principle of Wu Wei emphasizes the efficacy of simplicity and low effort, illustrating the victory of smoothness and calmness over brute force (Kaltenmark, 2022, p.57). This Taoist philosophy is reflected in the gentle and deliberate movements of Tai Chi, which teaches practitioners to combine movement with natural flow to create more power and harmony rather than relying on aggressive or overwhelming tactics.

In Tai Chi, practitioners will also find that their movements are in harmony with the inherent rhythms of nature, and this reflects the essence of Chinese Taoist life through learning the natural order through Tai Chi (Csikszentmihalyi & Ivanhoe, 1999, p.246). The movements of Tai Chi are inspired by the phenomena of the natural world, such as the graceful flow of water or the movements of animals, and they require practitioners to coordinate their movements with the natural order (Song, 2019, p.5). This imitation of nature establishes a deep affinity with the rise and fall of natural elements, cultivating a symbiotic relationship with the environment and the universe. By understanding the concept of Wu Wei and the philosophy of nature, practitioners are taught to respect and synchronize with the

forces of the universe, guiding them toward a harmonious existence of balance (Liao, 2007, pp. 78-81).

### **3. The Flow of Qi:**

"Qi" plays an important role in traditional Chinese culture, especially in Taoism and traditional Chinese medicine, and is often presented as the driving force of the universe. It continuously alternates between positive, building forces (Yang) and negative, diminishing forces (Yin). Qi is the vital force in humans, guiding life's cycles from birth to death according to Yin and Yang principles. Tai Chi is an expression of Qi's search for balance and harmony (Liao, 2007, pp. 21-24). Tai Chi, as a practice, emphasizes the harmonious flow of Qi. In Tai Chi, harmony between body and mind is achieved through deep abdominal breathing, movement, and mindfulness to keep the flow of Qi. By focusing on the present moment and reducing daily worries, practitioners can enhance the circulation of Qi and achieve a unified state (Qian, 2019, pp. 46-48). Over time, practitioners can sense and control their Qi, directing its flow through mental focus. Then, the concentrated breath transforms Qi (life energy) into Jing (powerful inner force). In Tai Chi movements, practitioners focus on condensing energy into the muscles and bones, condensing Qi to generate Jing. This technique requires deep, rhythmic breathing and relaxation so that the practitioner will feel signs of successful energy transformation (Liao, 2007, pp. 31-34). Advanced practices can direct the flow of Qi and produce perceptible Jing. This energy transformation and recycling of internal force emphasizes the inner workings of Tai Chi, which is the process of cultivating and using internal force through breathing, relaxation, and movement. Understanding Tai Chi through Qi provides a way to improve health and well-being, showing the importance of internal strength training in Tai Chi.

## **IV. Western Philosophical Perspectives in Dance Movement Therapy**

### **1. Dance Movement Therapy, Humanism, and Existentialism:**

Dance movement therapy is deeply rooted in western humanistic and existential philosophy and focuses on the holistic integration of the physical, emotional and psychological dimensions of the individual. Humanism emphasizes the uniqueness of each person and establishes a therapeutic environment based on respect and empowerment, which is reflected in dance movement therapy by valuing the free will and uniqueness of the individual. Existentialism emphasizes the individual's right to choose and the importance of pursuing personal potential (Sartre, 2011, p.9). In dance movement therapy, this principle is mirrored; therapists guide treatment direction while empowering participants to actively explore meaning.

Dance movement therapy is not limited to the theoretical level, it also actively integrates elements of Freud's art theory, using free movement as a window to the subconscious mind. It is in this way that DMT uncovers repressed trauma and hidden desires, reflecting the techniques in psychoanalysis such as revealing subconscious desires by interpreting unintentional mistakes (Wengrower, 2015, pp. 18-20). In addition, dance movement therapy echoes D.W. Winnicott's view that life is an ongoing creative process. To be more specific, the combination of dance and personal life experiences in DMT resonates with Winnicott's philosophy of ongoing creativity and self-expression (Wengrower, 2015, pp. 23-24).

Improvisation is a central element in DMT, setting it apart from practices relying on preset sequences, such as Tai Chi. This open-ended approach integrates core existential

principles of freedom, choice, and authenticity, providing a space for creative transformation (Chodorow, 2015, pp. 55-60). This mind-body approach breaks through the limitations of traditional treatment that relies on verbal expression, which highlights the importance of the individual as a whole, believing that the individual's body and mind should not be regarded as isolated fragments, but as an indivisible whole. In addition, this approach promotes understanding and acceptance of personal experience and existence by guiding participants to deeply explore existential themes such as identity, purpose, and essence, which encourages individuals to find meaning and purpose in their own experiences, and this manifests existentialism's focus on self-awareness and self-discovery (Sartre, 2011, p.10). Through dance movement therapy, individuals can understand themselves more truly, which is in line with the existential pursuit of true understanding.

## **2. Dance Movement Therapy, Body Narratives, and Enactivism:**

Enactivism is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the dynamic interaction between the mind, body, and environment. Enactivism contends that individual cognitive processes and experiences are not only related to the mind, but also closely related to physical sensations and the environment in which the individual is located. This theory holds that the mind does not exist independently of the body and the external world, but is intertwined with the body's sensory experience and its interaction with the surrounding environment (Kronsted, 2020, p.49). In the context of dance movement therapy, this perspective emphasizes the important role of the body in shaping an individual's cognitive and emotional experiences. Practitioners of dance movement therapy understand that the body's movements and sensations are more than simple physical actions, but are integral elements of the therapeutic process. By engaging in expressive movements, individuals are able to express

their emotions, memories, and thoughts in non-verbal ways, which can help increase the individual's self-awareness and facilitate the psychotherapeutic process (Kronsted, 2020, p.50). At the same time, the concept of body narratives in dance therapy focuses on the importance of sensory experience in understanding and expressing the body, a process that does not rely entirely on language. The concept of "bodyfulness" advocated by body narratives challenges the concept of "mindfulness" which emphasizes that the value of the direct experience of the body is the same as the value of the thinking process. By trusting the body's sensations and signals and allowing these signals to naturally influence the body's behavior and responses, this approach helps individuals gain greater bodily autonomy and be able to resist authoritative information or pressure from outside (Downey & Kierr, 2022, p.24). In dance therapy, body narratives allow therapists and clients to access body experiences that are often suppressed or ignored, such as emotions or past experiences that have been hidden by the subconscious mind and stored in the body in the form of tension patterns or movement habits. Through body movement, these marginalized body narratives can be brought to a conscious level and expressed and explored in a safe therapeutic environment (Downey & Kierr, 2022, p.26).

Dance movement therapy combines the core beliefs of narrative philosophy and enactivism. In dance movement therapy, individuals bring their individual stories into therapy and use movement as a medium of non-verbal communication to convey personal narratives. This therapeutic process goes beyond traditional verbal expressions and instead uses the body as a storytelling tool. Enactivism supports this perspective by emphasizing the centrality of the body in shaping cognition, highlighting that in dance movement therapy, body movement is a tool that facilitates emotional and psychological healing (Kronsted, 2020, p.50). Beyond

this, dance movement therapy encourages individuals to explore their own personal narratives and actively facilitates this process through movement. Dance movement therapy provides an opportunity for an individual's self-discovery to explore their past and present life story through movement. In this process, individuals reinterpret their experiences and gain new perspectives and insights into their own narratives (Kronsted, 2020, p.52). This reflects the enactivist view that meaningful experiences can be generated through concrete non-verbal expressions. Finally, narrative philosophy acknowledges the power of body narrative in shaping personal identity, echoing enactivist perspectives that focus on self-awareness and self-discovery through embodied action. Dance movement therapy allows individuals to use movement as a tool to express identity, take control of their own stories, and create opportunities for narrative transformation and trauma resolution (Kronsted, 2020, p.48). This is consistent with enactivism's emphasis on self-awareness and psychotherapy through movement. In summary, the emphasis on individual experience and narrative in body narrative philosophy is combined with the enactivist exploration of the mind, body, and their interaction with the environment to build a framework that promotes individuals to interpret and even reshape personal experiences through body movements. This is both a therapeutic process and a philosophical practice that reveals and shapes human nature through physical self-expression and self-discovery.

## **V. Comparison of Philosophical Foundations**

First, in the comparative analysis, the structured movements of Tai Chi and the improvised movement framework of DMT become one primary focus. Tai Chi, rooted in ancient Taoist philosophy, uses a structured and precise sequence of movements designed to achieve harmony between the individual and the energy of the universe. These movements

are both adjustments to the body and deep meditation for the mind. Through practice, a state of internal and external harmony can be achieved. The practice of Tai Chi emphasizes the regularity and precision of movements, aiming to improve physical and mental health through the coordination of inner "Qi", which manifests the importance of conforming to nature and inner balance. At the same time, DMT is deeply inspired by humanism and existential philosophy, and values individuals' freedom to explore and express their inner world through improvisational movements. The improvisational method of DMT gives participants autonomy and creativity, encourages them to use body movements to explore personal feelings and experiences, and promotes self-discovery and emotional release. The improvisational nature of DMT fosters direct communication with one's inner world through body language.

Through the comparison of the frameworks of structured movements and improvised movements, Tai Chi and DMT each demonstrate their unique methods and philosophies. Tai Chi, through its fine and orderly movements, pursues harmonious resonance with the energy of the universe, while DMT explores deep inner feelings and thoughts through the free expression of improvised movements. Both approaches deepen people's understanding of the connection of body and mind and highlight movement as an exploration of self-identity and purpose in life. They both urge people to deepen their understanding of human existence and personal experience through the practice of the body.

The second important point of philosophical comparison is that Tai Chi and dance movement therapy offer macro and micro approaches respectively to promoting holistic health. Tai Chi, based on Taoist cosmology, believes that personal health is connected to the universal energy system, and it focuses on the enhancement of physical and mental health

through synchronization with the energy of the external environment. Tai Chi practitioners use a series of movements and breathing techniques to live in harmony with the "Qi" - the life energy of the universe, and achieve harmony between the individual and the universe (Lin, 2021, p.29). On the contrary, DMT focuses on going deep within the individual, using body movements to explore and understand personal emotions and psychological experiences, and focuses on promoting the improvement of self-awareness and emotional health through the expression of body language and active personal participation.

These two approaches demonstrate the interaction between inner and outer health through different pathways. From a macro perspective, Tai Chi emphasizes the influence and importance of the external environment on individual health by mediating the flow of energy between the individual and the universe. DMT, on the other hand, starts from a micro perspective and deeply explores personal emotions and psychological states to influence and improve their interaction and relationship with the external world. Both approaches recognize that true health is not just the absence of physical illness, but a state of inner peace and harmony with the external environment that can be achieved through continued self-exploration and positive interaction with the outside world.

## **VI. Potential Adaptations and Synergies in Therapeutic Applications**

### **1. The Practical Path of the Philosophical Integration of Tai Chi and Dance Movement Therapy**

The disciplinary order of Tai Chi combined with the expressive freedom of dance movement therapy (DMT) provides for a philosophical exploration of the self, coordinating the outer and inner realms of human experience. Tai Chi, with its carefully choreographed

movements, serves as a metaphor for the structured aspects of people's lives, where discipline and routine create a deep connection to the cosmic order. It is ideal for those looking to increase overall vitality and find tranquility through a series of disciplined movements that connect them to the natural world. DMT, on the other hand, embodies the essence of freedom and focuses on the unstructured exploration of one's inner emotional landscape through spontaneous movement. It is suitable for individuals who wish to manage their emotional well-being and provide a creative path for expressing and understanding feelings.

Combining the structured movements of Tai Chi with the freedom and improvisation of DMT provides people with a cross-cultural integrated body psychotherapy that combines stability with adaptability. Tai Chi exercises promote order and emotional stability, contributing to overall health, whereas DMT emphasizes fluid movement, enabling individuals to express deeper emotions. This cross-cultural exploration is also a manifestation of a practice of how routine and freedom support each other. Tai Chi, for example, enhances the effectiveness of DMT by helping to maintain focus through its rhythmic patterns. At the same time, DMT integrates creative expression into Tai Chi, encouraging practitioners to learn and express their feelings, enriching the Tai Chi experience with greater innovation. Implementing cross-cultural body psychotherapy, which combines Tai Chi's structured sequences with DMT's improvisational movements, illustrates that health stems from balancing discipline with spontaneity.

## **2. Introduction to the Integration of Tai Chi and Dance for Therapeutic Exploration**

In this section, I propose Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy that incorporates Tai Chi and dance movement therapy (DMT), designed to promote movement

healing through a coherent process that consists of three phases. First, the meditation stage helps individuals achieve a state of physical and mental calm through Tai Chi exercises to prepare for spiritual exploration. Next, the expressive phase allows the individual to explore inner emotions through dance movement therapy. Finally, the reflection phase again uses Tai Chi exercises to help individuals reflect on their experiences in the first two phases, which promotes emotional integration and personal reflection. The Tai Chi-DMT integrated movement therapy combines the gentle discipline of Tai Chi with the free expression of dance to form a unique multi-layered body psychotherapy experience.

In addition, music plays a vital role in Tai Chi-DMT integrated movement therapy by linking the therapy's various stages and fostering creativity. Different types of music can inspire different dynamics and emotional responses. For example, the powerful sound of a West African drum may inspire dancers to make more determined and powerful movements to express their own strength and uniqueness. In contrast, the music of classical composers such as Mozart may support dancers in creating more lyrical and imagery-rich dance pieces (Downey & Kierr, 2022, p.70). Therefore, different music has its own inherent qualities that can set the tone for the therapeutic process. Properly chosen music can guide a dancer's emotions while expanding a dancer's expressive power and assisting in personal innovation and growth.

To be more specific, the initial meditation phase is designed to help individuals achieve a state of physical and mental calm through the practice of Tai Chi. The fluid movements and deep breathing of Tai Chi guide the individual into a state of deep relaxation. The calm, slow background music used during this phase can help reduce stress, improve concentration, and prepare the practitioners for the following phases of dance movement

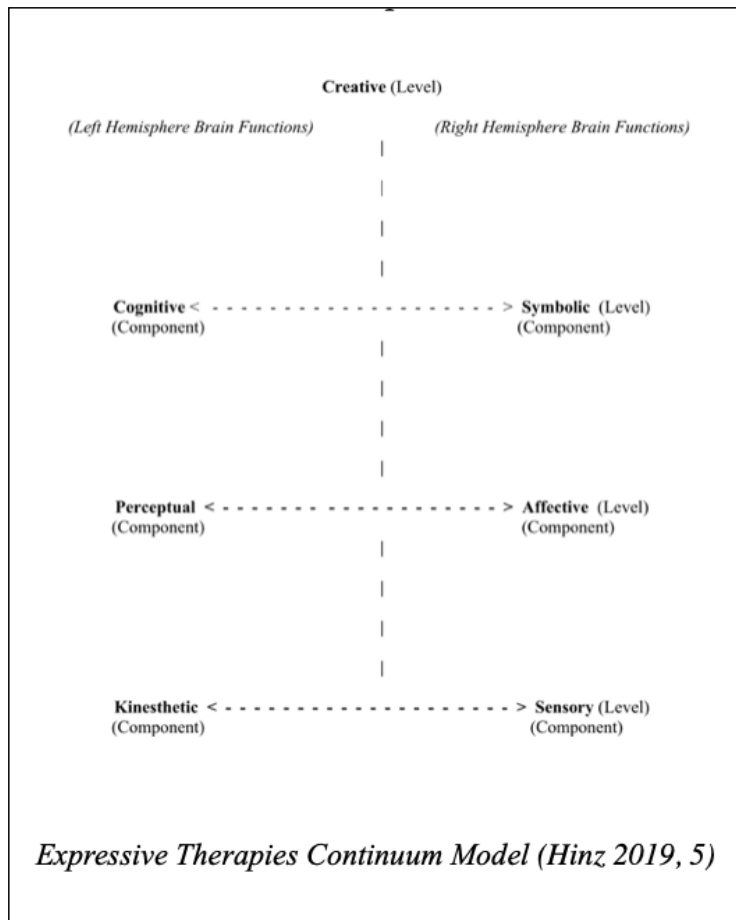
therapy. The expressive phase of dance movement therapy then encourages the individual to dance freely and explore their emotions and experiences through dance. The background music selection at this stage is more diverse and rhythmic, including various styles from classical to modern pop and even world music to stimulate individual emotions and creativity. At the same time, therapists should also support and encourage individuals to express their feelings and stories more freely during this stage. Finally, the reflection phase allows one to reflect on previous experiences in the meditation and expression phases by practicing Tai Chi again. The background music selection at this stage can be more calm and deep, such as guzheng or piano solo, to help individuals enter a state of deep reflection. The movements and breathing of Tai Chi help individuals integrate experiences and feelings from previous stages and promote deep personal reflection.

In summary, through carefully designed stages of meditation, expression, and reflection, Tai Chi's meditative calm paves the way for healing, then dance movement therapy allows for the release of emotions, and finally reflective Tai Chi practice integrates these experiences into the ultimate personal growth. Therefore, this Tai Chi-DMT integrated therapy provides a structured path for individuals to achieve a state of balance and introspection. The foundation of this treatment rests on the framework of the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC), which emphasizes the central role of creative expression and mind-body integration in the therapeutic process. This Tai Chi-DMT integrated therapy explores the importance of peace of mind, creative expression, and deep reflection, which provides a new therapeutic path for those seeking both inner peace and creative development.

### **3. Practical Analysis of Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Therapy within the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) Framework**

In this section, I focus on the application of the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) to Tai Chi and dance movement therapy (DMT). The ETC framework views psychotherapy as a broad continuum, extending from basic sensory experience to complex symbolic and cognitive expressions. The core goal is to help individuals enhance self-understanding and improve their psychological state through creative means. Through ETC, therapists can identify and respond to the cognitive and emotional barriers clients encounter in therapy, precisely matching treatment strategies with client needs through a structured assessment and intervention process. Combining the peaceful movements of Tai Chi with the emotional expression of DMT, ETC promotes in-depth exploration from intuition to emotion, cognition and symbolism, strengthening the coherence of treatment. In short, ETC strengthens the integrity of the treatment process and encourages the integration of experiences at different stages, providing a continuous treatment plan with a smooth transition.

Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) is a core model within the field of art therapy that provides an approach to understanding creative functioning. This model, originally developed by Kagin and Lusebrink at the University of Louisville in 1978, combines elements of visual representation with insights from psychology and neuroscience (Lusebrink, 2013, p.76). The main concept of ETC also incorporates the pioneering methods of American art therapy and cognitive psychology theory, thereby strengthening the foundation of its application in healing therapy (Lusebrink, 2013, p.84). ETC believes that the healing process involves different levels of information processing, ranging from intuitive reactions to complex thoughts and emotional expressions. ETC is specifically divided into four main levels: Kinesthetic/Sensory, Perceptual/Affective, Cognitive/Symbolic, and Creative, with the latter integrating all levels (Lusebrink, 2013, p.78). The components of the



model are linked to the functions of both hemispheres of the brain: the left hemisphere is responsible for organized, sequential processing covering kinesthetic, perceptual, and cognitive components; the right hemisphere handles sensory, affective, and symbolic components, relating emotions and concepts processing. The creative level integrates the functions of both hemispheres

and can occur at any level (Hinz, 2019, p.7).

Following the multi-level structure of Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) allows healing approaches to cover all aspects from perception and movement to emotion and cognitive processing. In combining Tai Chi and dance movement therapy into a new cross-cultural therapy, ETC provides a systematic approach, ensuring it can cover therapeutic goals ranging from simple physical relaxation to complex emotional and cognitive integration. At the same time, the ETC framework helps therapists determine when to focus on the physical and sensory experiences of Tai Chi and when to turn to the emotional expressions of DMT during the treatment, and turn to cognitive and symbolic aspects in the final process of healing (Friedman, 2001, p.272).

First, Tai Chi is introduced as a starting point of the initial meditation stage. The smooth and continuous movements combined with deep and rhythmic breathing, guide individuals to achieve a deep state of relaxation. This movement improves the individual's sensory awareness and helps release long-term accumulated physical and emotional tension to enter a more peaceful and concentrated inner space. The meditation stage aligns with the principles of the kinesthetic/sensory component in Expressive Therapy Continuum, particularly in its emphasis on body movement and sensation (Hinz, 2019, p.39). Tai Chi involves more than just physical movements, but also the sensory experiences that accompany those movements, which resonates with ETC's focus on experiencing sensory and emotional input mindfully without any thought or judgment attached to these experiences (Hinz, 2019, p.66). The smooth rhythm of Tai Chi increases participants' sensitivity to body sensations and promotes muscle contraction and relaxation in systematic movements and breathing, which helps relieve tension and stress and prepares participants for deeper self-exploration. This stage thus provides the body with an opportunity to relax and recover, and that through this deep inner immersion, the individual begins to establish a new sense of self and experience. These inputs at the Kinesthetic/Sensory Level form the basis of experiences that greatly influence the understanding of emotion and the development of memory (Hinz, 2019, p.9). Therefore, this meditation stage lays a solid foundation for individuals to further express their emotions and explore themselves in the next stage of expression stage.

Following this, dance movement therapy can be used in the next stage, as a key means to enhance emotional expression and perceptual integration. The expression stage forms a bridge from meditation to reflection, allowing individuals to communicate through body language those deep feelings and thoughts that may be difficult to express in words. Before

the expression stage, the practice of Tai Chi, whose balanced and stable movements provide a solid foundation for participants to transition through the perceptual/emotional levels of Expressive Therapy Continuum, where people can provide personal meaning emotionally, and explore different ways of seeing and interpreting the world (Hinz, 2019, p.10). As the core of this level, DMT promotes participants to transform inner emotions into the form of physical movements through structured and expressive activities, realizing the transformation of psychological activities into concrete expressions of artistic language (Hinz, 2019, p.80) . During this process, participants learn that it is acceptable to express emotions and use movement as a channel of expression to reduce stress (Hinz, 2019, p.104). DMT integrates therapeutic dance and music to allow participants to express their personal understanding to specific emotions through dance. This process guide participants through the transition to freer dance movements to deepen the patient's Kinesthetic/Sensory experience and promote integration on Perceptual/Affective level. In this way, DMT becomes a bridge between inner perception and outer expression within the ETC framework. It both promotes the development from basic perceptual experience to organized emotional expression, and ensures smooth transition and in-depth development of the treatment process between various ETC levels.

Ultimately, as practitioners transition from the active expression of the expression stage to the reflective stage of Tai Chi, they carry with them the experience of emotional release and creative expression achieved through dancing. This transition is a process from outward expression to inner reflection and integration. Through the practice of Tai Chi's reflection stage, individuals can mentally smoothly shift from emotional expression to deep personal reflection and emotional integration. The return to Tai Chi practice in the therapeutic

process is an important step after completion of the meditation and expression phases, marking the therapist and patient's entry into the reflection phase - the cognitive/symbolic level within the ETC framework. During this phase, Tai Chi's slow and intentional movements help participants calm their mind and body, providing the balance necessary to process the intense emotions expressed in expression phase with DMT. At this level, cultivating the patient's cognitive component involves complex thinking processes, including abstract concept formation and logical thinking (Hinz, 2019, p.123). In this way, Tai Chi serves as a powerful tool for integrating the emotional experience of the DMT phase. Doing Tai Chi in this phase enables participants to move from active emotional expression to a more peaceful and focused state, helping with emotional regulation and mental and physical balance. The practice of Tai Chi facilitates the transition from physical activity to emotional calm, and is a key step in the patient's psychological integration in cognitive/symbolic level. During this process, participants deeply explore emotional experiences and the symbolism and abstract concepts behind them. The healing power of symbolic components lies in helping individuals find personal meaning within the context of universal symbols, assisting in self-definition and personal growth by using symbols to summarize personal experiences into abstract qualities (Hinz, 2019, p.148). In this way, the therapeutic process becomes a transition from emotional climax to deep self-reflection and psychological integration at the cognitive/symbolic level within the ETC framework, promoting the patient's growth in emotional expression and psychological understanding, and deepening their understanding of the inner world.

The creative level serves as a comprehensive way of exploration and expression in Tai Chi-DMT Integrated Movement Therapy. The central role of the creative level is to integrate

experiences at different levels of processing. By engaging in creative movement, individuals are able to bring a variety of experiences together in a coherent and expressive way and achieve a sense of self-wholeness. This integration process promotes growth and healing for individuals and allows them to fully express themselves (Hinz, 2019, p.7). Tai Chi-DMT Integrated Movement Therapy allows people to explore and express a variety of experiences—physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts—by going through meditation, expression, and reflection stages. This emphasizes the importance of fully participating at a creative level.

Throughout Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy, progressive changes in music form the core of the treatment. These pieces of music provide individuals with opportunities for rich emotional experience and creative expression. From the peaceful melody in the Tai Chi meditation stage, to the various rhythms in the DMT expression stage, to the introspective music in the Tai Chi reflection stage, the music selection closely supports the treatment process. Through the emotional guidance of music, individuals can smoothly transition between calm meditation, self-exploration and deep reflection. The music selections improve the coherence and effect of therapy, making music a key link throughout the entire treatment process and connecting various stages, driving the treatment process forward.

During the initial Tai Chi meditation phase, the music is chosen to help the individual achieve physical and mental relaxation and concentration. To do this, the therapist can choose soothing natural sounds as background music, such as the quiet sound of running water. The music, coordinated with the gentle movements and deep breathing of Tai Chi, creates a peaceful therapeutic environment that allows the individual to more easily access a peaceful inner space. During the transition to the expression stage, the transition music can gradually

change from peaceful and soothing to more energetic and inspiring melodies. For example, the therapist can use music that gradually increases in rhythm and intensity, such as transitioning from tranquil natural sounds to ballads or light music with a brisk rhythm. Such transitions can awaken the individual's vitality and creativity and prepare for the expression stage.

In the second expression stage, music provides the rhythm and emotional background for dance and also inspires individual creative expression. As the dance moves into deeper, more complex emotional realms, music is chosen to reflect and enhance the thematic and emotional shifts experienced by the individual. For example, as the emotional depth of the dance increases, the background music can transition from soft classical music to contemporary music characterized by a more vivid emotional tone, such as electronic dance music or an emotionally charged movie soundtrack. This ensures that the music is closely integrated with every change of the emotional and narrative elements presented in the dance, creating a cohesive and emotionally resonant experience for dancers.

Finally, in the Tai Chi reflection phase, music is chosen to promote a state of emotional peace and deepen self-reflection. In order to achieve this transition, it is crucial that the music transitions from energetic or emotionally charged pieces in the expressive phase to more tranquil and introspective music. This transition can be achieved by gradually reducing the tempo and intensity of the music while introducing deeper musical elements, such as the gentle melody of a piano or guzheng. Through changes in music, individuals can reflect in a peaceful and deep atmosphere. At this stage, individuals can ease the emotional fluctuations that may have occurred in the previous stage, and use music to provide them with an ideal environment to deeply reflect on and integrate their emotional experience. Therefore,

throughout the treatment process, music is a key element that connects the various stages of treatment and allows the treatment process to be personalized to the individual's specific needs and treatment goals.

Within the framework of the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC), the core of the creative level lies in its ability to penetrate and integrate all levels of therapy, demonstrating the importance of its comprehensive role. Scholars such as Jung have emphasized the critical role of creative experiences in promoting individuals to achieve wholeness and individuality (Hinz, 2019, p.12). Creative practice in ETC particularly emphasizes the importance of a supportive environment, where the appropriate choice of music significantly facilitates an individual's creative expression at different stages. In Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Movement Therapy, music, through its careful selection and timely changes, both provides emotional context and creative stimulation for each stage of therapy, and ensures that starting from the peacefulness of Tai Chi, through the emotional expression of free dance, to the concluding cycle of introspection through Tai Chi, each stage can be seamlessly connected. Music enhances the flow and effectiveness of the therapy, and through the perspective of the ETC framework, music emerges as an important element in bridging the creative level's therapeutic phases.

In this section, I have explored how the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) provides therapists with a refined assessment and intervention framework that helps therapists accurately meet the individual needs of their clients. Combining Tai Chi meditation and reflection with the emotional release methods of DMT, ETC greatly enhances the overall coherence of the treatment plan. The ETC model also places special emphasis on the role of music in stimulating participants' creative expression, which deepens the effect of treatment

and demonstrates the therapist's ability to flexibly adapt to the needs of participants at different stages. The practical application of ETC provides participants with a therapeutic experience covering the entire process of perception, expression, and reflection, which promotes individual emotional release and self-exploration, and also deepens individuals' understanding and insight into their inner world. In summary, as a comprehensive therapeutic framework, ETC's application in Tai Chi and DMT demonstrates the practical utility of innovative methodologies in the field of body psychotherapy. With the deepening of future research, I believe that the application of ETC in promoting individual mental health and therapeutic effects will be further verified and developed, thus contributing more scientific basis and practical guidance to body psychotherapy practice.

#### **4. Challenges and Limitations**

In combining Tai Chi with dance movement therapy (DMT) as an innovative treatment approach, therapists, practitioners, researchers, policy makers and others have encountered many challenges, and these challenges place high demands on them on multiple levels.

First of all, in this integrative therapy, there is a shift in the therapist's role to that of an interdisciplinary explorer, and that requires deep insight into the culture and philosophy behind their respective therapies. For example, Tai Chi instructors typically need to master the smooth movements and meditation techniques of Tai Chi, which often come from their background in martial arts and complementary medicine; while DMT practitioners need a background in psychology or counseling, plus professional dance therapy training, in order to help participants explore their personal emotions through dance. As a specific example, if one

wanted to design a comprehensive treatment plan for an adult experiencing work-related stress, the therapist would need to be able to use Tai Chi to help relaxation and focus, while using DMT techniques to promote emotional release and expression. The successful implementation of such a treatment plan relies on the therapist's ability to effectively combine and apply expertise and skills from two different areas. Therefore, systematic planning and support become particularly critical to ensure that therapists can personalize treatment plans (Hays, 2007, p.61). I believe that a comprehensive curriculum system can be developed that contains training content that can help therapists gain in-depth expertise in the fields of Tai Chi and DMT, and can also help them learn how to combine the advantages of both therapies to adapt to different participants need.

Besides, when DMT (based on modern psychology) meets Tai Chi (rooted in ancient Chinese culture and Taoist philosophy), we need to go through a challenge of cross-cultural understanding and adaptation, and explore how to make it accessible to other societies without sacrificing philosophical and cultural depth. DMT, which is based on modern psychological principles and also draws on theories from various other fields, including applied kinesiology, medical science, and so on, may be more easily understood and adopted in multiple cultures around the world due to its consistency with widely accepted mental health frameworks (Goodwill, 2005, p.21). As for Tai Chi, it is an ancient martial art and health-preserving technology rooted in traditional Chinese culture and Taoist philosophy, and its deep philosophical concepts may be quite different from the mainstream ways of thinking in some other cultures. This cultural adaptation may require individuals from non-Chinese backgrounds to put in extra effort to understand and adapt to Tai Chi. For example, for the principle of "directing Qi with intention" in Tai Chi, which emphasizes using mind and intent

to guide body movements (Huang, 1993, p.14), in societies where movements often rely more on external power and direct control, they may not easily gain immediate resonance. Also, Tai Chi emphasizes "overcoming hardness with softness," which means using soft movements to neutralize the opponent's strength. This strategy may not be directly understood or recognized in a culture that advocates strength confrontation (Huang, 1993, p.70). Therefore, when people try to introduce Tai Chi to groups who do not have a deep understanding of its culture, they must critically consider the obstacles posed by cultural differences and reflect on how to make Tai Chi accessible to these societies without sacrificing the rich connotations of Tai Chi itself. While adapting Tai Chi's teachings for a Western audience may require contextualization, it is critical to retain its philosophical essence without oversimplification. On this basis, presenting specific health benefits and scientific research can enhance Tai Chi's cross-cultural validity reliability. However, we must treat this evidence with care in order to ensure that it does not lead to over-conformity with Western scientific paradigms at the expense of Tai Chi's unique values.

In addition, in actual practice, it is crucial to customize treatments to different populations. Therapists need to adapt treatment strategies to fit each person's unique physical, emotional, and psychological circumstances (Pénzes, 2024, p.77). This requires a scientific validation process that is not limited to an initial assessment but also includes a thorough understanding of the patient's body awareness, movement patterns, and psychological state (Van, 1997, pp. 17-18). For example, for younger students, if the goal is primarily on managing stress and enhancing concentration, it may involve a structured sequence from the focused concentration exercises of Tai Chi to the confidence-building aspects of DMT. The purpose is to relieve the cognitive stress associated with academic performance. Recovering

athletes, on the other hand, might have to deal with the aftermath of physical trauma and the associated emotional stress. Their treatment goal can emphasize restoring physical function through the flexibility and balance exercises of Tai Chi and addressing emotional recovery through the expressive power of DMT. Reflecting on these different approaches, the challenge is the therapist's ability to discern and implement the most effective combination of the goal of Tai Chi and DMT for each situation. This approach also requires ongoing assessment and adjustment based on the subjective nature of changes in the participants' conditions (Pénzes, 2024, p.77). Therapists are therefore tasked with both developing a personalized treatment plan and assessing its effectiveness in real time, which requires a deep understanding of each patient's unique treatment strategy (Hays, 2007, p.83). However, while the methods may vary, the basic principle remains the same: to promote holistic recovery of mind and body. This process of response and reflection ultimately defines the therapist's role in meeting the challenges of this integrative treatment.

Lastly, providing personalized treatment in resource-limited public health systems or private clinics also poses significant challenges, which require significant time and additional human resources. Integrative therapeutic practice also requires a solid scientific evidence base to verify their effectiveness and safety in different populations and conditions (Van, 1997, p.4). Therefore, therapists are encouraged to make evidence-based decisions, which involve conducting a thorough evaluation to ensure that treatment is consistent with established scientific knowledge, especially given the lack of standardized evaluation methods for Tai Chi (Friedman, 2001, p.100; Horwood, 2002, p.i). Assessing the qualifications of Tai Chi teachers is also particularly complex in a cross-cultural teaching environment. Language barriers and cultural differences may interfere with perceptions and

expectations of Tai Chi education and practice, while also making it more difficult to assess the technical level and depth of experience of teachers. Therefore, the introduction of Tai Chi and DMT as treatments must both be based on scientific evidence, and consider how to overcome the difficulties in these teaching environments to ensure the effective delivery and implementation of treatment methods (Frantzis, 2006, pp. 260, 274). In order to increase the adoption and efficacy of the integration of Tai Chi and DMT, it is critical to collect and analyze conclusive research data demonstrating their benefits. This approach requires collaboration, specialized training, and research among practitioners, researchers, and policymakers (Friedman, 2006, p.298).

## **5. Future Directions for Research and Practice**

With in-depth research on the integrated therapy of Tai Chi and DMT, the gathering of scientific evidence will be key to supporting the widespread application of this new treatment model (Staunton, 2002, p.204). Tai Chi and dance movement therapy have proven benefits for physical and mental health when used alone (Payne, 1992; Hong, 2008), but there is no research on their combined use. Therefore, detailed research is needed to evaluate the effects of Tai Chi-DMT Integrated Movement Therapy on managing chronic diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, as well as on long-term mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. To accurately assess the benefits of this therapy, future studies should design and conduct randomized controlled trials that compare the integrative therapy with other conventional treatments or with individual therapies. By tracking long-term changes in the same group over time through these longitudinal studies, we can understand the actual effectiveness of this combination therapy in different patient's backgrounds and ultimately develop treatment guidelines for different patient needs. This will help promote a larger scale

adoption of Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Therapy as effective health promotion and disease treatment tools.

The integration of Tai Chi and DMT also can create a concrete collaborative platform that brings together research methods from psychology, empirical findings from sports science, insights from various cultural backgrounds, and traditional techniques from Traditional Chinese Medicine. Such a platform can integrate expertise in various fields to maximize treatment effectiveness (Clinton, 2005, pp. 40-41). To achieve this goal, an interdisciplinary team composed of psychologists, sports scientists, cultural scholars, and traditional Chinese medicine experts could be established to focus on exploring the effective application of Tai Chi-DMT therapy in practice and its impact on individual health. Through experimental designs and small-scale pilot studies, the team can try to discover best practices for combining the two approaches and thereby identify effective treatment processes and assessment criteria. At the same time, building partnerships with medical institutions and community organizations is also the key to promoting and implementing this comprehensive treatment program. Such collaboration would increase the social accessibility and promote wider application of the treatment model and benefit a wider range of people.

## **VI. Conclusion**

This study illustrates the synergistic effects of Tai Chi and dance movement therapy (DMT) on a philosophical and practical level, as well as the importance of this integration in promoting overall wellness in a cross-cultural context. Tai Chi, rooted in Chinese history and Taoist philosophy, reflects the principles of "Healing through Non-Interference", "Let Nature Take Its Course", and "Yin-Yang Balance", indicating coordination with natural patterns of

movement to achieve physical and mental harmony. In contrast, DMT is derived from Western psychology and modern dance concepts, focusing on using body movements to explore and express one's inner world. By comparing Tai Chi with dance movement therapy, this study proposes Tai Chi-DMT Integrative Therapy treatment model that reveals the mutual complementarity of these two therapies in both a technical level and a cultural and philosophical level. The practice of Tai Chi assists individuals to follow the laws of nature and seek inner balance and tranquility; while DMT provides a platform for self-expression and emotional release, fostering individual self-exploration and emotional liberation. This integration opens up a unique path of self-discovery for the individual.

This study deepens the understanding of the philosophical foundations of Tai Chi and dance movement therapy by introducing the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) framework, and explores the interaction and complementarity of these two therapies in the actual treatment process, constructing a comprehensive treatment model, which expands the scope of treatment, allowing practitioners to more flexibly meet the needs of different participants. In addition, this cross-cultural treatment model also promotes cross-cultural communication for practitioners of body psychotherapies, and the exchange and integration of health concepts in different cultural backgrounds.

I also put forward further research recommendations for this treatment model, including empirical research to verify the effectiveness of the model and its specific application in clinical practice. At the same time, the importance of detailed training planning and research for practitioners is emphasized to promote the exchange of health concepts between different cultural backgrounds. Although this study could not directly implement the

comprehensive application of Tai Chi and DMT, by raising this possibility, it aims to stimulate interest in future research and practice in this field.

In the context of contemporary globalization, this cross-cultural therapeutic practice responds positively to the strong call for holistic health and diversity of treatment methods. This innovative treatment framework challenges our traditional understanding of health and paints a richer and more flexible picture of health. This new health concept breaks away from the constraints of a mono-cultural model based solely on Western medical science, and advocates a view of health that is inclusive and respects differences: true health is not just freedom from disease, but more importantly, individuals can actively participate in life and deeply understand and express their emotions. Therefore, the purpose of treatment has also changed from simple physical restoration or disease cure to promoting the comprehensive development of individuals in aspects of physical health, emotional balance and spiritual growth. This involves both a revolution in health concepts, and a philosophical discussion that leads us to rethink the nature of health and treatment and success.

From a global health perspective, the combination of Tai Chi and DMT provides a potential common healing language for people from different cultural backgrounds around the world. This cross-cultural approach to treatment promotes a shared understanding of health among global citizens and deepens mutual respect between different cultures. In this way, the practice of health and healing becomes both a means to promote individual well-being and a manifestation of human commonality. In the ever-changing globalized world, facing common health challenges and life stress, the integration of different cultures and traditions provides people with a new solution, which is based on an understanding of the common human need to seek balance, harmony and connection. I hope that such a concept of

health can help people find tranquility in the fast-paced modern life and more resonance and connections in the context of globalization. It reveals to us that the true meaning of health lies in harmonious coexistence with the rhythm of life, the courage to express oneself, and the deep exploration of the multi-layered nature of life. This understanding encourages us to reconsider our personal relationships with the world, leading to a deep appreciation of the value of individual autonomy and authentic interaction. I also hope that the popularization of this health concept can promote a revolution in values, encouraging the public to redefine their understanding of health and happy life, promoting the global society to move in the direction of more humane care and global solidarity, building a new world that values both empathy and inclusiveness.

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