

Movement Encounters in Black and White: Understanding Issues of Race and Cultural Competency in Dance/Movement Therapy.

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Dedications

I dedicate my thesis work to my family for their support and unending endurance in hearing me repeatedly say “after thesis is done then we can...”. A special thanks to my mother for all her support, love, and patience, and my brother Tracy for his listening ear. To the field of dance/movement therapy that has given me tools to understand myself and others better and hopefully through this work I have given something back. To my sisters, Vicky and Melody, who have died during my college years, much of what they have taught me was perseverance even through what seems insurmountable, and that knowledge carried me through this process even without their physical presence. To all the ancestors who had to endure some of the horrific encounters about which I write in this work, on their shoulders I stand. To both my grandmothers, Ernestine & Julia, thanks for passing on the passion to dance through life. I carry on the dance on earth while you watch from beyond.

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ABSTRACT

Movement Encounters in Black and White: Understanding Issues of Race and Cultural Competency in Dance/Movement Therapy.

Lysa Monique Jenkins-Hayden, MA, R-DMT

The objective of this study was to examine and cross reference literature, across related fields of study, and assist in generating hypotheses for understanding the Black client/White therapist relationship as it may be experienced and expressed nonverbally. This literature based study involved a review and qualitative analysis of literature in several topic areas and from a number of professional fields, in order to discover associations between the various literatures. The data were analyzed using grounded theory methodology as outlined by Boyatzis (1998) & Creswell (1988). Literature data was gathered from four major discipline categories, body image, nonverbal communications, multicultural competence (inclusive of sociology, psychology, family therapy, black psychology) and dance/movement therapy (DMT). Themes were identified and coded into 24 codes and then clustered according to related characteristics into 6 larger categories. The 6 categories were analyzed to determine any causal and developmental hierarchy between the themes. Finally, eight theoretical propositions were concluded and discussed with clinical implications for DMT practice with Black clients.

As this study was theoretical and not empirical, its theoretical conclusions are preliminary work towards: a) introducing race and ethnic considerations into the theory, practice, and research of DMT; b) operationalization the multicultural competencies for DMT practitioners; and c) introducing the scholarly lexicon and theory of Sociology and Black Psychology in order to improve effectiveness with Black clients in the DMT setting. Although Critical Race Theory (CRT) was not used for analysis, the conclusions of the study were consistent with the major assertions of CRT.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to develop standards and protocols that may guide culturally competent practice in dance/movement therapy, specifically within the Black client/White therapist therapeutic movement relationship. This literature based study will apply grounded theory methods to a review of nonverbal communication, dance/movement therapy, body image, and multicultural competency literatures that address Blacks and Whites in the United States and their social interactions.

The objective was to examine and cross reference literature, across related fields of study, to generate theoretical hypotheses for understanding the Black client/White therapist relationship as it may be experienced and expressed nonverbally. It is expected that the study will raise awareness, support dialogue, and provide guidance for operationalizing multicultural competence standards for dance/movement therapy (DMT), especially when working with Black clients. The research question is “What is the nature of a culturally sensitive and competent Black client/White therapist cross-racial/cultural movement relationship?”

Concerns regarding problems in cross-cultural therapy in the United States first prompted a call to recognize a need to develop guidelines in the 1970’s. Discussion that addressed cultural diversity and cross racial/cultural therapy practice emerged to define multicultural competence, to identify cross-cultural competencies, and to suggest ethical standards

Sue, Bernier, Durran, Feinberg, Pedersen, Smith & Vasquez-Nuttal (1982) introduced 11 cross-cultural competencies divided into three categories: beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. This work has provided the foundation for further investigations into multicultural competence over the past two decades (Ridley & Kleiner, 2003). In 1992, Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis published an official call to implement multicultural counseling competencies into ethical codes to guide counseling practice and standard educational requirements in order to better serve minority populations.

Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, & Stadler (1996) followed these authors and operationalized the counseling competencies previously offered by Sue and colleagues (included in Appendix A). Of unique note, what Arredondo and team proposed, was the critical understanding of how dimensions of personal identity affected individual differences and shared groups identities, as well as how power/privilege, oppression/limitation, and normality/health is assigned or defined based on various identity dimensions. These authors stimulated awareness as to how consideration of these concepts was vital to the therapeutic process. Namely, if therapists were to effectively understand their social impact on

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clients, they would need to acknowledge, for example, that their communications style was developed within a cultural context and how it might clash with a racially, ethnically, or culturally dissimilar client.

Historically, concerns about barriers to therapeutic effectiveness when working with minority populations were outlined, by various authors mainly in the field of counseling psychology (Ridley & Kleiner, 2003). They continue to be discussed in current literature across various counseling professions.

The American Psychological Association (APA), in 1993; and the American Counseling Association (ACA), in 1995, both revised their codes of ethics to include statements supporting cross-cultural approaches and condemning discriminatory practices (Sue et. al, 1998). However, while multicultural counseling competencies (MCC) have gained a significant position in many therapy professions, the process of implementation has been slow in pace, especially in understanding how sociopolitical dynamics (e.g., racism, oppression, discrimination, etc.) affect the counseling process, training programs, and the field of psychology in general (Liu & Pope-Davis, 2003).

This literature based study seems timely as it coincides with recent increased attention to diversity issues in the dance/movement therapy (DMT) profession. The American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) recently added a nondiscrimination clause to its ethics standards (2008), hosted a national conference on Dance/Movement Therapy in a Diverse Society (2008), and initiated a Board of Directors ad hoc committee to investigate diversity barriers within the organization and profession (2008). The dance/movement therapy (DMT) literature that currently exists in the area of diversity or cultural competence, is a growing but limited body of scholarship that primarily addresses Black Americans (Alexander, 1995; Cherry, 1998; Crapps, 1990; Fountaine, 1982; Harmon, 1994; Saint James, 2006); cultural concerns in practice (Boas, 2006; Chang, 2006; Farr, 1997; Pallaro, 1997), movement observation (Moore & Yamamoto, 1988; Tepayayone, 2004), and several master's theses which address culture specific practice models (Davis, 1993; James, 2006; Madrigal, 2002). The DMT literature has developed largely without reference to the broader, foundational or recent body of MCC literature burgeoning in family therapy, counseling, and psychology in the past ten years. At the same time, there exists a gap in the overall MCC literature, as it is written primarily for therapists who use a verbal medium. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has elected to review body image and nonverbal communication literatures, commonly referenced within DMT, in relation to literature addressing the therapeutic movement relationship and multicultural counseling literature to assist in understanding the cross racial/cultural DMT relationship.

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