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Starting at the Root: Dance/Movement Therapy Implications for Early Childhood Anti-Bias Education

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Abstract

This thesis explores implications for dance/movement therapy as a tool for early childhood anti-bias education. Bias and prejudice are consistently consumed by children in American society. The presence of racial prejudice and cisnormativity in children's everyday environments distort understandings of race and gender, and guide the development of conscious and unconscious bias in early childhood. Dance/movement therapy, specializing in body-based practice and non-verbal communication, provides a unique approach to anti-bias work through somatic methods. With a focus on race and gender, this literature review discusses bias in children, bias communicated through the body and behavior, early childhood anti-bias education, and implications for dance/movement therapy. Considerations are outlined for the ways dance/ movement therapists can begin to reframe their practice within an anti-bias lens developmentally specific for children.

Keywords: race, gender, bias, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, children, early childhood, dance/movement therapy

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Introduction

From the moment in which a person is conceived, they are involved in the process of socialization. In-group bias and prejudice begin to form at a young age as children establish close relationships with their in-groups, including family and small groups of peers (Learning for Justice, n.d.). After years of developing bias through their environment, including their homes, education, media consumption, and family history (Learning for Justice, n.d.; Menakem, 2017), prejudice, whether conscious or unconscious, persists into their adolescent and adult years which ultimately leads to contributions to discrimination, oppression, and in extreme cases, hate crimes (Nesdale, 2004). The influence of one's environment becomes even more crucial when considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as children have increased access to unstructured time on the internet and heightened consumption of virtual misinformation (Claravall & Evans-Amalu, 2020). Adults often think it is too early to discuss prejudice with these younger populations and suggest waiting until later in development. Although anti-bias education is crucial in adolescent development as well, delaying allows more time for socialization and bias to take root, ultimately creating inflexibility and close-mindedness to conversations about oppressive systems (Husband, 2012). At a younger age, children are in the early processes of socialization and are more expressive and vocal about their observations; they have yet to develop the anxiety that adolescents and adults experience when discussing social identity and prejudice (Tatum, 1992). In this sense, initiating anti-bias education with younger children is more proactive.

Bias, discrimination, and oppression are often thought of in a cognitive sense, but activists have begun to spark discussion about the ways in which bias lives in the body as well (Menakem, 2017). In this paper, I analyze and understand bias in the body through the lens of embodied cognition, an approach that studies the ways in which our cognitive and sensorimotor systems are connected and influencing each other (Wilson, 2002).

Dance/Movement therapy is defined as the "psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual, for the purpose of improving health and well-being" (American Dance Therapy Association, 2020). Through mindfulness, movement expression, and attunement, dance/movement therapy can be used to support individuals in accessing their own body's wisdom, creating a space to recognize, explore, and better understand unconscious feelings, thoughts, and reactions (Caldwell, 1997). Similarly, the mind-body connection can reveal and give space to comprehend unconscious bias and prejudice (Cantrick et al., 2018). This opens up possibilities to deconstruct unconscious bias that lives in the body. Connecting to the importance of deconstructing bias in young children, this thesis studies how dance/movement therapy can be used as a strategy in anti-bias education for preschool-age children.

Throughout my educational development, I have been searching for the intersections between dance/movement therapy and social justice work. I have frequently asked my professors, colleagues, and peers, how therapists can work from an anti-oppressive framework when encountering clients who hold prejudice and discriminatory mindsets. Because my clinical experiences have predominantly been with children, I began to wonder how anti-oppressive practice could be applied with early childhood populations as well. This paper stems from a call

for therapists to develop an anti-racist, anti-sexist, and gender-affirming framework around

clinical practice that is proactive, educational, and sparks dialogue. The purposes of this

literature review are to shed light on how children process race, gender, and socialization, and

how clinicians can effectively facilitate anti-bias conversation with children in a therapeutic

context.

Throughout my research, I was able to find resources discussing bias formation in

children, the ways in which bias reveals itself in the body and behavior, and classroom

implications for anti-bias education with children. Despite these findings, I did not encounter

research on how dance/movement therapy can be used to dismantle racial and gender

socialization in children, nor did I find anti-bias frameworks for child therapy settings.

Considering these gaps in the literature, this paper seeks to make connections between current

conversations regarding children's bias, bias on a bodily level, early childhood classroom anti-

bias implications, and dance/movement therapy techniques, in order to make speculations

regarding possible practices and further research for dance/movement therapy as an anti-bias

tool.

When initially beginning the research process, I was interested in looking at how implicit

bias develops in children and how it can be unlearned; however, as I delved further into my

research, I began to realize the distinctions between implicit and explicit bias, differences in how

they develop, and how they work individually and together in upholding systems of oppression.

Because I did not want to narrow my research to one type of bias, I decided to expand it further

into both unconscious and conscious bias, which I explore further in my literature review.

Although there is expansive research on the progression of implicit bias and how it can be

unlearned, I did not come across ways to deconstruct conscious, explicit bias. It seems

researchers may be more interested in what is beneath consciousness when looking at bias such

as racism, sexism, and transphobia.

I faced challenges searching for peer-reviewed sources by authors with marginalized

identities. The criteria of the critical review of the literature requires a plethora of peer-reviewed

research; this brings one to wonder whose voices are left out of academia. According to a 2020

study:

> Of the 3.0 million postbaccalaureate students enrolled in fall 2018, some 1.6 million were
>
> White, 365,000 were Black, 292,000 were Hispanic, 215,000 were Asian, 81,300 were of
>
> two or more races, 13,600 were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 5,800 were Pacific
>
> Islander. (Hussar et al., 2020, p. 135)

Although I did not come across statistics of transgender and nonbinary students enrolled in

higher education, a 2016 study conducted by the American College Health Association revealed

that "out of a sample of more than 33,000 undergraduate students, 10% identified as gay, lesbian,

bisexual, trans, asexual, pansexual, or questioning" (Postsecondary National Policy Institute,

2020). These statistics present the gatekeeping nature of academia, as this reveals most sources

that are uplifted through peer-review are those most likely written by White, cisgender voices.

Acknowledging the paradox of incorporating marginalized voices within an institutional

structure that actively contributes to marginalization, this paper includes books and podcasts by

Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) and queer activists.

Social, Theoretical, Philosophical, and Ethical Perspective

Although it is typically unconventional in academia to devote pages to one's social and ethical perspective and theoretical frame, transparency is crucial within the work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. In the following section, I outline my positionality within the intersections of social justice work and dance/movement therapy, as well as the theoretical and philosophical foundations that frame the literature review.

I am writing this thesis as a white, cis-gender, queer person out of Boston, Massachusetts. I want to emphasize and value the mental, emotional, and spiritual exertion that marginalized people have undertaken to build, inform, and advance anti-oppressive work, and highlight that this paper comes after centuries of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, and queer-led advocacy in the United States. As a white, cis-gender person, I am not an expert, nor will I ever be; therefore, this thesis is grounded in critical race theory and queer theory, and works to center the voices and demands of those within marginalized communities. In the following paragraphs, I discuss Drew Nesdale's (2004) social identity development theory and Sonya Renee Taylor's (2018) Radical Self-Love as theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of this paper, as well as my ethical perspective of dance/movement therapy as anti-bias work.

Social identity development theory

According to Nesdale's (2004) social identity development theory, children progress through a series of developmental stages that lead to ethnic prejudice. The Undifferentiated period occurs first, before the ages of 2 to 3, in which children do not construct significance from racial or ethnic differences. Ethnic awareness is the second period, developing around age 3, as children become conscious of racial and ethnic differences. Ethnic preference surfaces around

ages 4 to 5, in which children show a preference or favoritism for their own racial or ethnic group. This period then leads to ethnic prejudice around the ages of 6 to 7, as children's preferences for their racial or ethnic in-group initiate dislike and hostility towards racial and ethnic out-groups (Nesdale, 2004). Considering this development, it is crucial to introduce anti-bias education at these early stages in order to prevent the evolution of favoritism, prejudice, and discrimination into adolescence and adulthood.

Radical Self-Love

In her work, *The Body is Not an Apology*, Sonya Renee Taylor (2018) described radical self-love as "deeper, wider, and more expansive than anything we would call self-confidence or self-esteem. It is juicier than self-acceptance. Including the word radical offers us a self-love that is the root or origin of our relationship to ourselves" (p. 26). Taylor (2018) explained that the relationship to the self ultimately impacts the relationship to others: "How we value and honor our own bodies impacts how we value and honor the bodies of others" (p. 24). She defined the radical self-love process as an individual and collective responsibility that requires assembling a world that does not merely accept, but radically loves all bodies.

In a podcast with Brené Brown (2020), Sonya Renee Taylor explained that human beings in American society live upon a social ladder that was built by external American norms and ideals. This social structure is reinforced through aligning one's internal worth to these external norms in an effort to climb the ladder. Upon reaching the top of the social ladder, Taylor explained that individuals cling to their social power: "I will move Heaven and Earth and all of you other people in order to continue to control that, because who am I without it? Who are we without it?" (2020, 37:40). Taylor connected this to social justice, explaining that bias and

oppression are embedded within the structure of this social ladder. Through competing with others for social control and authority, individuals subscribe to systems that uphold socialized norms, reinforce bias and oppression, and harm those within the margins of society. These systems rely on comparison as an indicator of self-worth. In order to break down these systems of oppression and genuinely accept the differences of others, Taylor shared that individuals must work beyond self-acceptance, and strive for their own radical self-love. This concept acts as a foundation for this paper in exploring the ways dance/movement therapy can be used to promote radical self-love and contribute to dismantling bias.

Standards, Ethics, and Anti-Bias

The standards and ethics that act as a foundation to counseling and therapeutic work should be reevaluated and redefined when establishing anti-oppressive practice. After initiating conversation about anti-oppressive practice in my standards and ethics course, my professor proposed that this may qualify as imposing values on clients. According to the American Counseling Association's (2014) code of ethics: "Counselors are aware of—and avoid imposing—their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors… especially when the counselor's values are inconsistent with the client's goals or are discriminatory in nature" (p. 6). I disagree with this categorization; Justice for marginalized identities should not be considered a value that cannot be imposed on clients. If counselors are to define their practice as anti-oppressive, they must find ways of confronting their clients with racist, xenophobic, sexist, or heterosexist ideologies. In his work, *How to be an Anti-Racist*, Ibram X. Kendi (2019) explained:

> One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is no in-between safe space of "not racist." The claim of "not

racist" neutrality is a mask for racism. This may seem harsh, but it's important at the

outset that we apply one of the core principles of antiracism, which is to return the word

"racist" itself back to its proper usage. "Racist" is not… a pejorative. It is not the worst

word in the English language; it is not the equivalent of a slur. It is descriptive, and the

only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it.

(2019, p. 9)

With Kendi's (2019) words at the forefront of this work, counselors and expressive therapists

must be active in challenging prejudice as it emerges throughout their practice. Although it is

beyond the scope of this paper, more research needs to be done on the ways in which counselors

can deconstruct their clients' biases while also remaining ethical in terms of standards and scope

of practice.

Dance/movement Therapy as Community Activism

As I define my roles in social justice work and dance/movement therapy, my perspective

aligns with recent calls to reimagine counselors as community activists: "When we frame

therapy as a medium for activism and look beyond the individual, we facilitate positive social

changes in the larger community" (Cantrick et al., 2018, p. 198). In an effort to explore how

dance/movement therapists use their skills in the field to challenge prejudice and bias, this thesis

hopes to investigate and inform how the body and mind can be used to both deconstruct

oppressive mindsets that develop in youth, as well as build an understanding of social identity,

equity, and inclusion.

From my position as a white, cis-gender woman and through frameworks of critical race

theory, queer theory, social identity development theory, and radical self-love, as well as my role

as a community activist, I write this paper searching for intersections between anti-bias work and dance/movement therapy within the stages of early childhood. In the following literature review, I will first distinguish bias and the ways in which it develops in children, next discuss classroom implications for anti-bias education, and finally share dance/movement therapy implications and critiques.

Literature Review

Bias

In-group bias, one's conscious or unconscious favoring of their own social group over another social group, begins to develop in early childhood (American Values Institute & Perception Institute, 2013; Learning for Justice, n.d.). Before exploring how to deconstruct in-group bias in children, it is important to distinguish explicit and implicit bias.

Explicit bias is on a conscious level in which individuals are aware of their beliefs and actions (Dovidio et al., 2002). American Values Institute and Perception Institute (2013) explained that, in terms of race, those who hold explicit bias "will rarely understand their feelings as 'racist' because they do not involve active animus against people of other races" (p. 8). They do not view their favoritism for their racial in-group as harmful or discriminatory; however, their preferences ultimately contribute to the imbalance of power and privilege. Implicit bias, however, works on an unconscious level and dictates how the mind categorizes individuals (Qian et al., 2020). It is not as apparent as explicit bias, as it presents itself through subtleties of thought and non-verbal behavior (Dovidio et al., 2002). In turn, both these biases, whether conscious or unconscious, influence an individual's actions (Dovidio et al., 2002). However, where explicit bias is more clear and overt, the destructive nature of implicit bias is

often overlooked. Because of this, there is debate regarding the classification of bias when looking at discrimination, as "people are likely to hold others less accountable for discriminatory behavior that is thought to be due to implicit, rather than explicit, attitudes" (Daumeyer et al., 2019). With this in mind, it is crucial to understand how these biases work together to uphold systems of oppression, and how both are learned in the early years of childhood.

Familial and Social Environment

A child's environment heavily influences the development of bias and prejudice. In terms of race, it is suggested that explicit bias is a product of children's varying social experiences, including what is learned from adults and peers as well as interactions with in-group and out-group members, while implicit bias is a result of "early perceptual experiences of processing own-race versus other-race faces (e.g., recognition vs. categorization)" (Qian et al. 2020). Considering their impact, the adults in a child's life act as change makers towards anti-bias, including caregivers, educators, mental health counselors, and more. These role models have the opportunities to support children with "[questioning] their values and beliefs and [pointing] out subtle stereotypes used by peers and in the media" (Learning for Justice, n.d.). Therefore, caregivers, educators, and mental health counselors in the child's life are responsible for deconstructing their own held biases and prejudices as well. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, further research should explore anti-bias education for educators and dance/movement therapists, as it is crucial to facilitating productive anti-bias spaces.

Media Consumption

In addition to social and familial interactions, media consumption also plays a significant role in the expansion of implicit bias. Stereotypes and identity preferences are often portrayed in

children's television, and potentially have greater impact on prejudice than what is learned from parents and guardians (Learning for Justice, n.d.). In terms of race, Learning for Justice (n.d.) explained that children should consume more diverse media that extends beyond an all White, male dominated world, including more central roles and positive portrayals of women and people of color. Although it is not mentioned, this should also be applied to the LGBTQ+ community, as children's television often showcases cis-gender, heterosexual characters. Fostering a more positive image and main focus on queer identities in children's media has potential to reduce bias and misconceptions about gender and LGBTQ+ communities. The following sections include studies exploring the development of racial and gender biases throughout childhood.

Children's Racial Bias

Nesdale et al. (2005) gave insight to the ways in which in-group racial bias develops in young children. Their study tested social identity development theory through a qualitative experiment and survey approach to test in-group and out-group liking and preference with groups of 5 to 10 year old children. Results of the study aligned with social identity development theory, as children's heightened in-group identification evolved into ethnic preference and prejudice, even more so when children viewed the out-group as a threat to their success (Nesdale et al., 2005). This is useful in understanding the progression of prejudice in children, as it can inform interventions for dismantling bias with children.

Children's Gender Bias

Conry-Murray and Turiel (2012) studied the ways in which children view gender norms at different ages. Children ranging in ages 4 years old, 6 years old, and 8 years old were interviewed to examine their understanding, judgement, and flexibility regarding gender norms.

In terms of authority figures deciding children's play activities, the 6 and 8 year old groups were more flexible with gender norms, understanding them as a guideline for the child according to their culture, while also taking personal choice and play preferences into account. Although the majority of the 4 year old age group showed similar flexibility, a significant percentage revealed rigidity with regards to gender norms: "they negatively evaluated the reversal of gender norms in another country, did not accept personal choices as the basis for parental choices, and positively evaluated regulations pertaining to gender norms" (p. 156).

Although flexibility seemed to develop with age in this study, children's defaults to gendered play, as well as the strong gender bias apparent in younger age groups, shows the need for early childhood anti-bias work. Considering the binary nature of this study, more research should be done on the ways in which children understand gender fluid and nonbinary identities.

Bias in the Body and Behavior

In view of socialization and bias development in these early stages of life, one must consider the effects of bias on an individual's conscious and unconscious bodily reactions and behaviors. The following section shares literature discussing the ways racism resides in the body, and how bias surfaces in social behavior.

White Supremacy in the Body. Bias and prejudice are unconsciously communicated through the body in terms of physical sensations and reactions. Psychotherapist Resmaa Menakem (2017) explained that White supremacy and racism exist not only in a cognitive form, but on a bodily level as well. He shared that the body stores knowledge through an individual's experiences, feelings, and familial histories to define what is considered to be safety and danger: "The body is where we fear, hope, and react; where we constrict and release; and where we

reflexively fight, flee, or freeze. If we are to upend the status quo of white-body supremacy, we must begin with our bodies" (p. 4).

In discussing the complexity of oppressive systems, it is crucial to deconstruct the socialized somatic experiences as well. Although these experiences are in the context of adult bodies, Menakem's (2017) connections between racial prejudice and bodily reactions accentuate the need for early childhood anti-bias efforts that work with the body.

Body Reading and Norming. A frequent, unconscious perpetuation of bias is an individual's process of assumption making through body reading and norming. Similar to Sonya Renee Taylor's (2018) analysis of American culture, movement therapist Rae Johnson (2018) explained that socialization has led individuals to judge and read others' bodies based on their own internalized body norms and rules. Individuals rely on body norming to govern the self, and innately project these norms on to others as well. Johnson (2018) conducted an exercise in which they asked their students to verbalize assumptions about social identities based on reading external body language, indicators, and cues. The activity revealed the following: (a) American culture has created discomfort around drawing attention to another's body; (b) Body analysis of others and connections to social identities is often done automatically and unconsciously; (c) Individuals are more drawn to body cues connected to their own social identities. Once individuals recognize and begin to understand the automaticity of body reading and analyzing, they can begin to explore how preference and prejudice are connected to this process (Johnson, 2018).

Children's Social Relationships. Bias can emerge in children's social behavior through exclusionary play, verbal bullying, deficit-based friendships, and overpowering and oppressing

behaviors (Derman-Sparks et al., 2019; Yu, 2020). Yu (2020) conducted a qualitative case study exploring children's understandings of race beyond a Black and White racial lens. Observing a predominantly Latinx first grade after-school program, Yu (2020) studied the students' interactions with a recently-enrolled Chinese immigrant girl. The Latinx students first approached the new student with curiosity, which exposed the children's socialization and stereotypes they digested about people from China. Following this phase, one of the Latinx girls in the program began to build a deficit-based friendship with the girl from China, basing their relationship on her ability to help the Chinese girl with reading. Once the Latinx girl recognized the Chinese girl's growing independence in the program, the Latinx girl relied on overpowering and oppressing through over-extending her help in order to maintain her status of social power in the program. The teacher's often classified these behaviors as "'being mean' and 'not being respectful to others,' without having further discussion on such race- and ethnic-based issues" (p. 545). Yu (2020) concluded that an anti-bias early childhood education requires a continuous commitment to challenging prejudice and stereotypes in the classroom, recommending that teachers engage the whole classroom in collective dialogue and problem solving when racial and ethnic issues arise in order to promote the experience of establishing justice in a community.

Considering the small number of children observed in this study, more research needs to be done on the presence of curiosity, deficit-based friendships, and overpowering and oppressing behaviors in children's social relationships, and each of their connections to explicit and implicit bias. Although one may argue that these behaviors are unrelated to race and are signifiers of typical child development, these behaviors must be put into the perspective of the oppressive

systems in which children develop, as they inform the origins, assumptions, and motivations

behind these behaviors.

Implicit and explicit bias are consumed in children's everyday lives through their

environment, initiating in-group favoritism that promotes out-group prejudice and rigidity of

norms. These biases develop cognitively and somatically, emerging through physical sensations

of fear and tightness that connect to socialized stress responses. Once learned, bias is then

perpetuated through behavior, as individuals rely on body-based assumptions, stereotypes, and

oppressing behaviors to consciously and unconsciously maintain social power dynamics. The

way in which bias relates to children is essential to understanding how dance/movement therapy

can be used as a tool for early childhood anti-bias work.

Classroom Implications

Considering the various and complex ways preference and prejudice develop in

childhood, anti-bias education is necessary in these early stages of life. In order to inform and

frame dance/movement therapy as anti-bias work, this section of the paper will be dedicated to a

range of youth educator's experiences of and implications towards dismantling bias in the

classroom setting.

Identity, Diversity, Justice, and Activism

According to Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2019), the four main goals of anti-bias

education with young children include identity, diversity, justice, and activism. The first goal is

for students to feel confident in their social identities "without needing to feel superior to anyone

else" (p. 7), and is the foundation for the next three goals. The second goal, diversity, promotes

learning about and celebrating how people are all similar and all different. Derman-Sparks and

Edwards (2019) explained that there is a common misconception that only focusing on what individuals have in common avoids bias; however, "Differences do not create bias... It is how people respond to differences that teaches bias and fear" (p. 7). The third goal, justice, supports children with building social empathy and understanding fairness through critical thinking skills. This process has the potential to ground children deeper in their identity and enhance their peer connections, emphasizing the importance and power of relationships in anti-bias work. The fourth goal, activism, connects children with the "sense of empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions" (p. 8). Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2019) specified that anti-bias education should occur across multiple "child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities," including children's everyday interactions and conversations, teacher's activities, and larger community events (p. 10).

Derman-Sparks and Edwards' (2019) early childhood anti-bias framework aligns with previous theories and studies emphasizing the relationship to self as a crucial and foundational pillar in deconstructing systemic oppression (Taylor, 2018), as well as the collective approach to justice and activism (Yu, 2020). Although this appears to be an effective anti-bias framework, more research should be done on its reliability across different cultures and identities. In addition, it is important to consider caregiver's reactions to the anti-bias framework, as Husband (2012) explained, "educators working toward resisting and combating racial oppression in schools must be willing to risk encountering and enduring potentially negative experiences by parents, colleagues, administrators and other community members" (p. 370). This highlights the need for more research on how educators can both prepare for negative responses from caregivers, and include children and their families together in the anti-bias education process.

Gender-Inclusive Education

Diamond (2020) discussed the social struggles that are faced by children with gender fluid and nonbinary gender identities, and implications for creating a more gender inclusive school environment. Considering the norm of basing gender on appearance, as well as the misunderstanding and skepticism of gender-fluid and nonbinary identities, gender inclusive education should have a school-wide and family-wide approach that reevaluates rules and regulations regarding names, pronouns, and restroom use to promote safety and wellbeing of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth. Children should receive education on a range of gender identities, breaking down gendered norms of expression and behavior: "a broadened affirmative approach can encourage youth to give voice to the *full range* of gender-related experiences and consider a broader range of options for gender expression" (p. 113).

Similar to current literature (Bryan 2019; Claravall & Evans-Amalu, 2020; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019), Diamond (2020) highlighted the essential role of acknowledging and appreciating a range of diversity and difference, acting against and challenging social norms, and families in anti-bias work. Additional research should be done on the interpretations of gender identity across culture, as well as implications for specifying gender-inclusive education to various cultures.

Challenging Eurocentric, Gendered Play

Bryan (2019) called on teachers to dismantle dominant narratives about Black masculinity in their classrooms by normalizing a full range of Black boy's play. Over centuries, Black boys have consumed White supremacist depictions of Black men through the media and their social environments. At preschool and elementary ages, children use play as means of

communicating with each other, which can ultimately reveal bias: "Black boys' meaning making of and engagement in childhood play activities are both connected to how they perceive, internalize, and uphold expressions of hegemonic and Black masculinity" (pp. 317-318). To counter bias that emerges throughout play, Bryan (2019) asked teachers to begin by dismantling their own biases around Black boys' play, and including conversation that centers and celebrates multiple and diverse forms of Black boy's play in classroom curriculum. The set up of children's play spaces should be reevaluated in order to provide a wide range of play that, "[broadens] what is accepted as conventional… for Black boys and all children" (p. 322). Bryan (2019) also suggested having a proactive approach when educating families regarding the significance of countering dominant narratives about Black masculinity through play, explaining the benefits for their child's development early on in the process.

Bryan's (2019) first hand experience as a Black man provides valuable insight for the ways in which teachers can support children in dismantling bias at the intersections of race and gender through play. His recommendations align with the importance of recognizing and valuing diversity in anti-bias work as well as a family-centered approach as indicated in additional studies (Claravall & Evans-Amalu, 2020; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2019). Research should be conducted exploring the effectiveness of Bryan's (2019) recommendations and implications on race and gender bias across a range of cultural, social, and political identities.

Self-Regulation, Empathy, and Compassion

Claravall and Evans-Amalu (2020) provided implications for challenging dominant narratives in virtual secondary education. With the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic and political climate, adolescents are at increased risk for consuming xenophobic ideologies and

misinformation that reside within the virtual world. In response, Claravall and Evans-Amalu (2020) created a Critical Triad to Anti-Racist Digital Citizenship for adolescents which focuses on the significance of self-regulation, empathy, and compassion in anti-racist education. In the context of anti-racism work, self-regulation refers to building the skills to pause and analyze one's initial emotional responses to external information encountered online. Empathy signifies a student's ability to take on different perspectives and assess the origins and motives behind information they consume. Finally, compassion for others and desires for justice motivate students to act and contributing to anti-racist work. Claravall and Evans-Amalu (2020) explained how the triad works as one:

> Empathy helps us understand and identify the struggles of people who are affected by xenophobia. As we identify the stressors and define the oppressions that take place in social media, we self-regulate our emotional reaction and critically analyze the validity of the source. This self-regulation brings us clarity of mind and enacts compassion. (p. 52)

Claravall and Evans-Amalu (2020) also noted that parents and guardians play an essential role in the anti-racist process, and calls adults to model this framework for their children, especially with the nature of the pandemic increasing the students' time spent at home.

The framework put forth by Claravall and Evans-Amalu. (2020) provides a unique and timely perspective of anti-racism for adolescents as the world becomes increasingly virtual. It addressed the impact of student's families that has been discussed in current literature (Husband, 2012; Learning for Justice, n.d.; Qian et al. 2020), emphasizing a whole family approach to anti-bias work. Although this framework is specified for secondary education, it highlights necessary skills for children to develop leading up to anti-bias work in adolescence. More research should

also be done on the effectiveness of this framework across multiple cultures, identities, and political stances.

White Youth and Structural Racism

Thomann and Suyemoto (2018) explored understandings of structural racism and implications for anti-racist education for predominantly White schools and towns. Through a qualitative approach, Thomann and Suyemoto (2018) interviewed white students attending a seventh and eighth grade weekly anti-bias class, and noted their developing understandings of structural racism. Findings revealed that many students experienced guilt in relation to their White identities. It was found that while empathy and perspective taking deepened through learning, colorblind perceptions of race caused students to "avoid seeking consultation with adults or peers for fear of appearing racist... [and] impeded their progress toward a deeper understanding of structural racism, as they could not fully engage in the awareness and reflection cycle" (p. 764). Once white students understood their role in structural racism and their potential in the process of social change, empathy motivated participation in social activism. Considering student's difficulties with acknowledging and identifying with their Whiteness, Thomann and Suyemoto (2018) suggested "providing models or knowledge about taking action as a White ally" to support students with building and growing into their identities as White activists (p. 766).

Thomann and Suyemoto (2018) contributed insight for anti-bias education specific to white students. Although secondary education is the focus of this study, I speculate that implications for modeling constructive White activism would be effective in early childhood anti-bias education as well; however, additional research should be done in this area. Thomann

and Suyemoto's (2018) findings align with previously discussed literature highlighting the

essential role of identity development and empathy in anti-bias work (Derman-Sparks &

Edwards, 2019; Taylor, 2018). The authors do not share their racial identities, so it is not clear if

these are ideas coming from those directly affected by structural racism and White supremacy.

According to numerous studies and educational frameworks, identity development and

one's relationship to self acts as a foundational aspect to anti-bias work. Learning about and

valuing the differences of others is unanimous across multiple anti-bias frameworks. One's

relationship to others through empathy and perspective taking is consistently considered a crucial

part of analyzing and establishing justice. Engaging in activism through challenging dominant

narratives and prejudice empowers children in their identities as collective and individual change

makers. A multitude of studies conclude that caregivers, families, and educators would also

benefit from anti-bias work, as they act as an influential role model for their children. Although

additional research is necessary to determine the effectiveness with various cultural, social, and

political identities, these pillars of anti-bias education provide structure for the ways dance/

movement therapists can approach anti-bias work with children.

Dance/Movement Therapy Implications

The rising presence of anti-bias work in early childhood education lays the foundation for

the ways dance/movement therapists can contribute to anti-bias work in their practice. This

section will discuss dance/movement therapy implications for early childhood anti-bias

education, exploring role modeling, body analysis, interpersonal movement, dance/movement

therapy frameworks including Dicki Johnson Macy's Rainbowdance© program and Rena

Kornblum's violence prevention work, and critiques of dance/movement therapy's Eurocentric foundations.

Modeling through the Body

Cantrick et al. (2018) explained that dance/movement therapists can foster anti-oppressive therapeutic spaces through "mindful and intentional use of non-verbal communication to navigate cultural difference by working to disrupt non-verbal enactments of bias stemming from culturally oppressive power disparities" (p. 197). As the therapist leads by example using non-verbal communication, "clients gain awareness about the nonverbals of power, they learn skills needed to critically assess their own embodiment of both oppressed and privileged parts of their identity" (p. 197).

Considering this approach to working with unconscious bias is more reactive in nature, further efforts should be made to adapt a proactive method in which individuals can explore and assess internal biases prior to harm being done. Although this method is more focused on adult populations, it provides unique insight for the ways in which dance/movement therapists can model activism and allyship for children using the body.

Body Analysis

Through acknowledging the learned habit of body reading as previously discussed in Rae Johnson's (2018) work, individuals can begin to investigate their own "problematic assumptions and assessments" that they use to govern their own bodies, and recognize how this impacts their views and judgements of others on the surface (p. 106). Drawing from queer theory, Johnson (2018) suggested that individuals should begin to take notice of the choices they make with their bodies, and acknowledge any feelings that emerge with these choices, as a way to "introduce

information that was not available to us previously—information that might shift how we understand our bodily behaviors, preferences, and assumptions" (p. 103). This recognition could help individuals begin to understand internal and external interpretations of body norms, and how one might govern themselves and others.

Johnson's (2018) work connects with Sonya Renee Taylor's (2018) use of radical self-love as a way of dismantling the social ladder. Although Johnson's (2018) suggestions for checking in with typical body practices are directed for adults, I imagine this exercise can be adapted to preschool-age children as a way of connecting to radical self-love and dismounting from the social ladder as Taylor (2018) discussed in her work. Additional research should explore how body norms can be analyzed with children, as well as its effects on bias in early childhood.

Mirroring and Interpersonal Movement

Research by Qian et al. (2020) highlighted the necessity for early childhood anti-bias work, and explored how synchronous and asynchronous movement and music making affect children's implicit and explicit racial biases. Interpersonal movement synchrony refers to "matched timing of movements among interactants" (p. 2). For this study, Chinese preschool children were placed in dyads with Chinese or Black adults to engage in a game that included either synchronous or asynchronous movement and rhythm making. Qian et al. (2020) measured implicit bias using an Implicit Racial Bias Test that was geared towards preschool children, and measured explicit bias through a self-report set of questions. Results showed that synchrony was more effective in fostering social closeness between dyads, and "both synchronous and asynchronous interpersonal movements with an other-race interactor" decreased explicit racial bias (p. 13). Where the exercise showed to have no effect on implicit bias, Qian et al. (2020)

speculated that increased contact quality and contact quantity with racial out-group members may be a key factor in decreasing both implicit and explicit bias.

Qian et al. (2020) offered valuable insight for dance/movement therapists' use of interpersonal movement to decrease racial bias in early childhood spaces. In dance/movement therapy practice, synchronized movement is used to build social empathy and trust with the client or group, often referred to as mirroring. Although this practice has shown to have benefits, recent conversation has revealed intergroup mirroring as a controversial dance/movement therapy technique. Murdock (2019) explained:

> This need for embodied cultural humility seems especially weighty for dance/movement therapists, and ought to be considered along with other elements relating to cultural humility, such as what it could look like to support clients with different cultural identities and movement styles without falling into cultural appropriation or "mirroring" that could be considered insincere or mocking. (p. 35)

Activist Annemarie Shrouder expanded on this concept, as "body language, voice, tone and other non-verbals... [are] interpreted differently depending on who is embodying it" due to the workings of explicit and implicit bias (2018). Therefore, body language and use of space should be considered as it relates to power and privilege. Because of the potential negative impacts of intergroup mirroring, it is imperative that dance/movement therapists are mindful of their own bodies and how they exercise this common practice. Additional research should explore the effects of intergroup mirroring on marginalized identities, and seek positive and productive ways of engaging in interpersonal movement that avoid harm to marginalized groups.

Rainbowdance©

My experience as an intern at Boston Children's Foundation has granted me the opportunity to work alongside dance/movement therapist Dicki Johnson Macy and implement her Rainbowdance© framework with children. I have witnessed the way Rainbowdance© fosters positive self-image, self-regulation, and social empathy through "the use of ritual, song, gesture, story, and natural movements" (p. 3). The facilitator provides verbal and non-verbal signs of validation and acceptance through facing and smiling at the child, maintaining eye contact, and attuning to the child's movement. Johnson Macy (2018) explained that competition as a central focus of American culture causes children to "experience their peer groups as 'mobs' rather than as 'flocks': fighting each other to make their way through life" (p. 4). With this understanding, Rainbowdance© works to rebuild a flock experience and mentality through periods of individuality and togetherness:

> Healthy beings dynamically move between affiliation and solitude: joining, interacting, playing, dancing, expressing out, taking in, then retreating to a quiet place of introspection where they ponder the experience of affiliation, play with it in their mind's eye, and retain what of it will become uniquely their own. (Johnson Macy, 2018, p. 8).

Through this balance, individual movement expression develops self-esteem, and the creation of safety and absence of competition in this therapeutic space diminishes feelings of superiority and increases community building skills.

The structure and goals of Rainbowdance© align with key objectives of anti-bias education in previously discussed literature, including relationship to self, emotional self-regulation, and social empathy (Claravall & Evans-Amalu, 2020; Derman-Sparks & Edwards,

2019; Taylor, 2018; Thomann & Suyemoto, 2018). Additional research should explore the reliability of Rainbowdance© intervention across multiple cultures and intercultural groups, as well as its impact on implicit and explicit bias.

Body-Based Violence Prevention

Dance/movement therapist Rena Kornblum's (2003) violence prevention framework, *Disarming the Playground*, teaches children how to appropriately use movement, body language, and voice to shut down bullying behaviors. She encouraged targets and witnesses of bullying to gesture an assertive stopping motion, using their whole body to add strength into their gesture and to lift their posture while shouting "'Stop!' or 'No!'" (2003) in individual and collective ways. This use of space, posture, and voice empowers children to stand up for themselves and others, taking part in decreasing bullying and violence while instituting justice within their communities.

Kornblum's (2003) body-based violence prevention work provides a unique perspective for the ways children can engage in social justice. Where her techniques focused on bullying behaviors, additional research should assess the effectiveness of this intervention for confronting prejudice and discrimination in children's communities, as well as its reliability across various cultures and populations.

Challenging Eurocentric Norms in Dance/Movement Therapy

Dance/Movement therapist Carla Sherrell (2018) offered critiques of dance/movement therapy practices, calling attention to the systemic demands to imitate White body norms in predominantly White spaces. She described these demands as a "structural pressure loaded onto [her] body to restrict and remove [her] control of [her] own body" (p. 148). Embodiment is a

frequently utilized word in dance/movement therapy, a predominately White practice, referring

to the ways in which individuals somatically express thoughts, feelings, and unconscious

information. Sherrell (2018) framed this term and dance/movement therapy in the context of the

larger racially oppressive system, explaining that embodiment, "as typically employed in dance/

movement therapy and body psychotherapy, is code for white bodily processes and states," and

therefore acts as a perpetuation of the demands to somatically take on White body norms (p.

149). Sherrell (2018) emphasized the need for white therapists to recognize the racial trauma of

people of color as linked to the "internalized domination and white supremacy" that resides in

white people, as it is inherently tied to the ways white practitioners pathologize people of color

(p. 149). She analyzed the White-dominated field of dance/movement therapy and its perception

of Black embodiment:

> [How] might my therapist assess my markers of embodiment that may present very
>
> differently than in white mainstream clients? Has the white therapist turned inward to
>
> explore white embodiment? What sensations, feeling states, and cognitions occur, in the
>
> therapist's white body, in relationship to racism and white supremacy? Has the therapist
>
> of color, trained in white somatic assumptions and institutions, explored the somatic
>
> dynamics of internalized and horizontal racism? (p. 150).

Considering the deep-rooted nature of systemic racism and White supremacy in the counseling

profession, it is necessary for dance/movement therapists to ask these questions throughout their

practice as a way to dismantle the oppression within the system of mental health.

Dance/movement therapy graduate Ebony Nichols (2019) expanded on Carla Sherrell's

critiques, echoing the need to challenge and dismantle the Eurocentric conformity that informs

movement repertoire, assessments, and practices. She explained that dance/movement therapists should work towards building "population specific movement-based assessments and techniques that will seek to further deconstruct Eurocentric frameworks of [dance/movement therapy] while offering diverse alternatives" in order to make practice more culturally informed and individually-focused (p. 36).

Role modeling, body analysis, interpersonal movement, Rainbowdance©, and body-based violence prevention work have the potential to expand and align within an anti-bias scope. These techniques and interventions share goals with current frameworks and implications for anti-bias education, including relationship to self and identity formation, learning about and valuing the differences of others, emotional self-regulation as it connects to empathy and perspective taking, and establishing justice through action. Although some of the dance/movement therapy frameworks were not specified for decreasing prejudice (Johnson Macy, 2018; Kornblum, 2003), their use of identity, self-regulation, empathy, justice, and empowerment as a way to decrease of violence and strengthen relationships amongst children should be further researched regarding how they function within an anti-bias frame. Practices directed towards adult populations (Cantrick et al., 2018; Johnson, 2018) require further research exploring how these exercises and interventions can be adapted to children.

Future implications for deconstructing the Eurocentric norms rooted in dance/movement therapy is imperative for transforming the practice into an anti-bias tool. The effects of intergroup mirroring and use of embodiment should be further examined beyond that of the experiences of white, cis-gender, women that dominate the professional field of dance/movement therapy. Considering Nichols' (2019) critiques of dance/movement therapy, the effectiveness of

anti-bias frameworks may differ across cultures and identities; therefore, multiple anti-bias

curriculums specified to children's social identities require additional exploration.

Discussion

Although further research is necessary, the findings and connections between current

literature reveal that dance/movement therapy has the capacity to play a significant role in early

childhood anti-bias work. The various ways children develop implicit and explicit bias through

their environment and media stress the crucial role of anti-bias education within early childhood

learning. Considering the workings of embodied cognition and Menakem's (2017) connections

between racism and the body, dance/movement therapy offers a unique potential to enhance anti-

bias efforts. Cantrick et al. (2018) explained that "the body becomes a vehicle for understanding

how oppression is unconsciously perpetuated through the bodies of both oppressed and dominant

groups" (p. 193). Non-verbal communication (e.g. gesture, posture, facial expression, spatial use,

touch, eye contact) "shapes and is shaped by power differentials in social interactions" (Johnson,

2011). Through exploring this unconscious material with children in a non-verbal manner, they

can begin to develop an understanding of the ways in which socialization and oppression

function.

The rise of early childhood anti-bias education offers valuable and expansive insight

towards dance/movement therapy implications for fostering an anti-bias lens with children.

Derman-Sparks and Edward's (2019) early childhood anti-bias framework offers a clear structure

that synthesizes current discussion regarding implications for anti-bias education, including

relationship to self and identity, celebrating the differences of others, perspective taking through

empathy and self-regulation, and compassion that motivates activism to take place (Bryan 2019;

Claravall & Evans-Amalu, 2020; Diamond, 2020; Thomann & Suyemoto, 2018). In these final pages, I will speculate the ways in which dance/movement therapy can be used through this framework of identity, diversity, justice, and activism, and discuss implications for future research.

Identity

Sonya Renee Taylor's (2018) radical self-love connects to the foundational goal of identity in children's anti-bias education. Although the concept and purposes of radical self-love may be complex for preschool-age children, research on bias in childhood emphasizes its necessity at these early stages of development. Children can begin to learn about the system of socialization and oppression in simple, age-appropriate terms. They can learn about the hurt caused by innate human function to compete for superiority, and begin the process of understanding and building their own radical self-love.

Johnson Macy's (2018) Rainbowdance© work strives to develop positive group experiences amongst children that decrease competition for survival, emphasize affiliation with others, and build individual's self-esteem. Considering these goals, Rainbowdance© could be a potential entryway for establishing radical self-love in dance/movement therapy work with children. Further research should explore how Rainbowdance© and other dance/movement therapy practices can shift from a positive self-image to radical self-love framework.

Diversity

Dance/movement therapy has the potential to foster the learning and celebration of children's similarities and differences through offering and valuing a range of play and movement qualities with children, and cultivating positive interpersonal experiences between

intergroup relations. Findings from Qian et al. (2020) suggest that dyadic connections with an adult of a different race reduce children's explicit bias. Although further research is necessary, the Rainbowdance© framework could have potential to reduce explicit bias through one-on-one interpersonal interactions with racial out-group leaders, expanding children's exposure to different identities through positive group experience.

Bryan's (2019) research offers insight on the intersections of race and gender and how they inform child play. Framing dance/movement therapy in the context of play, practices should be used to explore the diverse and multiple masculinities of Black boys in order to normalize feminine and masculine attributes, and dismantle toxic masculinities and biases in play. Future research should examine whether acceptance of non-gendered play and flexibility in regards to gender norms decreases children's prejudice towards transgender, nonbinary, and gender fluid identities.

Considering the stigma surrounding gender fluid and nonbinary identities, gender inclusivity should be taught in early childhood spaces to reconstruct what children grow up understanding to be true about gender (Diamond, 2020). It is possible that dance/movement therapy can contribute to gender inclusive education through the exploration of masculine, feminine, and androgynous movement qualities with all children; however, further research is required in this area. Therapists should also model sharing pronouns each session, not just for remembrance, but to normalize gender as a fluid, flexible, ever-changing construct.

Justice

Through building social empathy, self-regulation, and critical thinking skills, dance/ movement therapy can support children in understanding fairness and justice. Empathy and

emotional self-regulation have been shown to be crucial aspects of perspective taking in anti-bias

work (Claravall & Evans-Amalu, 2020; Thomann & Suyemoto, 2018). Although this has been

consistent in anti-bias work with adolescents, it provides a framework for skill building that will

support children in more advanced anti-bias education in the future. Dance/movement therapy

structures, such as Rainbowdance©, can assist children in developing social empathy and self-

regulation skills necessary for perspective taking and critical thinking that assesses prejudice and

bias.

 Although Conry-Murray and Turiel's (2012) study was meant to assess children's

flexibility with gender norms, I suspect it can be reframed as an early childhood educational

conversation that encourages critical thinking and sparks an understanding of fairness and justice

in the context of gender. I am interested in how rephrasing questions around caregiver's choice in

child's play can alter gender education. Rather than asking what play activities caregivers should

choose for their child, discussion could center the ethics of caregivers choosing their child's play

preferences. This alteration may open up greater conversation around fairness, autonomy, and

self-expression that aids children in practicing perspective taking and critical thinking imperative

for conceptualizing justice.

 Furthermore, while reading Johnson's (2018) work, I have come to recognize that the

assumptions individuals make about other's bodies are often kept inside and not worked with

externally in American culture. Throughout my childhood, I often heard the phrase, "If you don't

have something nice to say, don't say it at all." Johnson's (2018) work has caused me to rethink

and reframe this phrase in a way that is more productive to anti-oppressive work. Consistent

throughout the educational anti-bias spaces I have occupied, the fear of hurting others impacts

participation in necessary discussion. As seen in the literature, this ultimately disrupts the flow of unlearning and relearning (Thomann & Suyemoto, 2018). If the child shares something that is not nice to a group or an individual, it may harm others. However, if the child holds the thought inside, it is unable to be deconstructed, further reinforcing socialized beliefs and internalized body norms. I am wondering how American culture would be affected if the phrase was restructured to "If you don't have something nice to say, reach out to an adult." In this way, the child receives support with emerging feelings, as well as specialized, individualistic assistance with empathy, self-regulation, and critical thinking in relation to unlearning bias.

Activism

Dance/movement therapy can begin to engage children in activism through collective justice and use of movement qualities and voice to confront bias. Yu's (2020) observations of the teacher's responses to racism in an after-school program emphasizes the importance of distinguishing bullying and racism, how the two can be interlaced, and how they must be approached in different ways. Similar to suggestions in Derman-Sparks and Edwards' (2019) framework, Yu (2020) recommended the collective approach to addressing bias in the classroom, as this inspires student empowerment and activism in social justice issues. Considering these implications, the use of restorative justice circles with children in a therapeutic context deserve further exploration. In addition, Kornblum's (2003) body-based violence prevention work empowers children to engage in justice through verbal and non-verbal expressions of strength, and can potentially offer individual and collective ways for children to counter bias or prejudice. Future research should study how this framework can be adapted to specifically address discrimination within the classroom.

Considering anti-racism specifically with white children, Thomann and Suyemoto (2018) bring attention to the guilt white youth experience with their racial identity, ultimately raising the importance of children's early exposure to role models engaging in productive White activism. Dance/movement therapy offers the opportunity to work with feelings of White guilt in the body and support the shift towards productive White activism. In addition, discussion by Cantrick et al. (2018) regarding the modeling approach to unconscious bias in the therapeutic space offers insight for the ways dance/movement therapists can model effective and productive activism for children.

Suggestions for Future Research

Considering children's varying cultural environments, learning styles, and abilities, the reliability of these four goals of anti-bias should be explored with a range of populations. Furthermore, the influence of children's environment emphasizes the need for research on a whole family approach to anti-bias education. This paper predominantly focuses on race and gender; therefore, more research should be gathered on the ways in which ableism, classism, and heterosexism develop within children and their bodies, as well as the intersections of these identities.

Although it is a frequent conversation in therapeutic spaces, I was not able to find a lot of literature discussing intergroup mirroring as it relates to cultural appropriation and its impact on marginalized identities. The ethics and harm regarding mirroring people of other cultures needs further dialogue in the literature before considering it as a technique for establishing empathy in anti-bias work. Dance/movement therapy as a whole has been critiqued by BIPOC folks for years, particularly for its White-centered movement analysis, culturally appropriative practices,

and complicity to systems of oppression. These critiques have been ignored and swept aside by white dance/movement therapists for years. If dance/movement therapists are truly dedicated to leading anti-racist practice, they must listen to BIPOC voices and demands, and commit to making the necessary changes to their practice.

Conclusion

Utilizing the identity, diversity, justice, and activism framework, dance/movement therapy can widen their efforts of confronting prejudice and bias in both therapeutic and educational spaces. Through fostering children's self-love and dismantling a focus on superiority through self-expression and community building, celebrating both children's similarities and differences, developing emotional self-regulation and empathy through intergroup attunement, and finally engaging in social activism through empowered use of space, voice, and movement qualities, dance/movement therapy can make strides towards understanding and deconstructing bias and prejudice in children and in their bodies.

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