

The lived experiences of people of color in Dance/Movement Therapy graduate programs: A pilot study

Abstract

This preliminary study explored the experiences of students of color in graduate dance movement therapy (DMT) programs. In an effort to “research back”, the purpose of this pilot study was to begin to build knowledge towards an anti-oppressive practice for DMT education by first understanding through a phenomenological qualitative study how students and recent professionals of color experience DMT programs. The question under investigation was what are the educational experiences of students of color and recent graduates (under 3 years) of color in dance movement therapy graduate programs. Four female participants between the ages of early 20’s to late 30’s were recruited. Two participants identified as African American/Black, one participant was Native American and White, and one participant was Latinx and White. A phenomenological approach using arts-based research methods for data analysis in an anti-oppressive framework were used. Two semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. Seven voices were illuminated these included realization, waver and exhaustion, privilege, anger/disappointment/sadness, acceptance and support, purpose, and caretaking and advocacy. All voices were framed in a theory of professional development to understand the experiences from prior to beginning a DMT graduate program, student of DMT graduate program to professional. The discussion both confirmed and refuted research on students of color from the literature review. Implications to the field of DMT are to bring voices and experiences of people of color to the forefront in the DMT literature and to begin to develop understanding on what changes need to occur in DMT education.

Biography

Chevon Stewart, BC-DMT, LCSW (she/her/hers), is a 3rd year PhD student in Lesley University's Expressive Therapies program. She is also Teaching Faculty and Low Residency DMT Coordinator at Antioch University New England. She completed the Alternate Route Program at the Harkness Dance Center. Email: Cstewar8@lesley.edu