

## **Report to the Education Committee**

### **Frameworks for Movement Observation and Pedagogy Working Group**

#### **A. Working Group Names**

- Frameworks for Movement Observation – Eri Millrod Meg Chang, & Suzanne Hastie
- Movement Observation and Assessment Pedagogy– Nancy Beardall & Sherry Goodill

The groups met from February-August of 2021 both separately and together establishing a baseline from which to explore and expand. This work is ongoing and the Movement Observation frameworks and pedagogy working group's process were shared during the virtual workshop at the 2021 ADTA Conference. The workshop was entitled, *Towards Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Movement Observation: A call for Diverse Bodies, Movement and Voices*.

#### **B. Introduction and Objective**

The Education Committee (chaired by Jessica Young and currently by Tomoyo Kawano) formed working groups in response to several factors specific to past and current concerns that can be identified in each graduate program. "Students are bringing a critical and anti-oppressive lens to the access of all bodies within larger psychological theories, DMT theories and movement observation systems" (Imus, Bell, Blanc, Young, 2021). Ebony Nichols' thesis (2019) "Moving Blindspots: Cultural Bias in the Movement Repertoire of Dance Movement Therapists" summarizes this theme when Nichols states that "the purpose of her research was to assist in creating empirical data, assessments and systems beneficial to diverse populations and to look at ways the field of DMT can become more inclusive as a practice and as a result offer a viewpoint from the experience of statistically labeled marginalized populations in a way that creates dialog and meaningful change" (p. 36).

The ADTA listening sessions that were in response to the national crisis prompted by the recognition of racial inequities and reverberating in the ADTA led to multiple sessions that were held with members of ADTA's affinity groups over the summer of 2020. Suggestions from the listening sessions resulted in the ADTA DEI Action Recommendation dated, July 3, 2020 (ADTA DEI Work Group, 2020). One recommendation was that DMT education programs "revise materials and curriculum used to teach the history of the US profession of DMT...including movement analysis" (p. 3). During an Education Committee meeting with DMT educators from degree granting DMT programs in the US, working groups were formed: one was to examine the history of Laban in movement observation; a second was to expand movement observation frameworks and to develop inclusive pedagogy.

The pedagogy working group was tasked with examining how movement observation is presented and taught to identify pedagogical perspectives and practices that do not marginalize or oppress, but instead promote diversity and inclusion. The frameworks working group was to identify movement observation frameworks that educators can use to expand what they teach in their classes so that DMT movement observation is more inclusive of diverse cultures, identities, bodies, and movements. These two working groups collaborated since there is considerable overlap in how and what is taught/practiced in DMT movement observation and analysis. Expanding movement systems/frameworks that are taught and practiced requires revising pedagogy and vice versa.

C. The following questions were identified and discussed by the working groups as outlined by Kawano and Chang (2019).

**ETHICS & CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION:** How aware are we of the ways in which we verbally and nonverbally embody and enact our privilege in the role of the supervisor or educator? What characteristics of the person do we notice first? Where does our attention initially go in relation to the use of space, facial expression, eye contact, gestures, touch, and use of time with the other person? How do we interpret these cues? Is the client or student being disrespectful when they avert eye contact, or arrive late? Or is there a cultural misunderstanding about kinesics—gestures and facial expressions; or chronemics—the use of time? Is the student on the spectrum because their affect is flat? Or are they able to contain their emotions in public as they were culturally raised to do so?

**SUPERVISION:** How are we, both supervisor and supervisee seen? How do we present ourselves in movement? What happens when there is a misunderstanding or harm caused based on a power differential, culture, or dance background? And how do these impact the therapeutic relationship?

**RESEARCH:** How can dance be a driver for raising awareness of social justice issues? How can dance serve not only as a form of communication but a source of knowledge and a conduit for lifting the voices of marginalized persons and groups, and for creating a vision of what DMT's future can hold?

**DMT THEORIES and MOVEMENT OBSERVATION:** How can DMT unintentionally contribute to the process of domination and colonization if a uniform description of dance/movement is imposed on teaching and during practice? DMT professionals cannot claim to be doing healing dance unless the profession recognizes what healing means and looks like for different groups of people.

The real work is to create an inclusive environment where the educational program, institution, and sites are willing to be challenged and respond to uncomfortable questions. To remain unconscious and insist on 'one right way' risks the perpetuation of racial, gender, and other forms of re-traumatization of trainees and clients. Collaborative and collective dialogue that focuses on culturally responsive pedagogy and counseling in listening to all voices is necessary for our work to meet the inclusive and equitable needs of our global world.

Movement observation systems, assessment practices and instructional practices can oppress and marginalize DMT students/trainees and client/patient of DMT in the following ways:

- through implicit/unconscious bias
- through the language that is used to describe movement
- by interpreting or meaning making without including the voice/experience/understanding of the client
- through the limitations of the framework being used
- by judging and/or correcting the mover's movements
- through practices that are inconsistent with the ADTA Code of Ethics and Educational Standards relating to assessment

#### **D. Movement Observation Pedagogy**

Nancy Beardall and Sherry Goodill, who comprised the pedagogy working group, met with 13 course instructors. In keeping with the scope of this overall project, they spoke with people who are teaching movement observation and/or assessment courses in US DMT education programs, in both university degree programs and in alternate route programming. This was not a systematic research project, and they used an informal snowballing-type sampling process that did not reach all individuals doing this work in the US. Thus, there are more instructors that can and should be invited into future conversations.

A focus of the discussions was around the question of “How are you developing and/or changing your courses in both content and teaching methods towards more inclusivity, broader cultural and population representation, and critical pedagogy principles and practices?”

From a teaching perspective we learned that several contextual factors are key to the choices that teachers of observation and assessment courses make. These include delivery formats (online, in person or hybrid models, intensive or term-long class scheduling), class sizes, and the sequencing of these courses in curricular study plans. From a demographic perspective, it is noted that of the 13 people we spoke with the majority were White.

The input from colleagues synthesized into a series of themes regarding both content of courses and teaching methods. They contributed to recommendations offered by the working group. One salient theme was the expression of a strong need and wish for more connection and discussion amongst the people teaching movement observation and assessment courses in DMT education. Input from colleagues is integrated here in the aggregate, thematically, and contributed to some of our recommendations.

##### **D.1. General themes**

- The body of knowledge and ways of teaching are in transition. There is a strong sense that nothing is fixed.
- Broadening and expanding movement observation frameworks

- Developing new methods and creative approaches to inclusive instruction
- Review frameworks through a critical pedagogical lens, co-create with students
- Self-awareness of student and faculty in relation to movement patterns and how they connect to implicit biases, including race and gender.
- Decenter or challenge “Euro/NA/Western” models that dominate US healthcare and higher education systems and DMT courses; continue to question the dominant narrative. For example, what are the relevant assessment questions when developing treatment plans for people who live in a collectivist (vs. individualist) culture, or in under-represented racial minority social groups?
- Teaching of movement observation and assessment needs to lead with information about how there are multiple ways of looking at movement and ways of perceiving and describing. Discussions should acknowledge ways of perceiving movement are rooted in culture and influenced by sociocultural conditions.
- More research needs to be conducted on movement observation from multiple cultural lenses and perspectives (i.e., diversity of research participants, of research approaches, and support: funding, scholarships, grants, publishing research, the development of a diverse community of researchers in DMT.
- Much of our research on observation and assessment topics has studied limited and homogenous samples and groups of people.
- Pedagogy needs to prioritize preventing experiences of harm for our students specifically regarding microaggressions based in race, gender, and class differences.
- Broader gender, racial, cultural, and ethnic representation in syllabi, readings, research, music, video materials, populations
- Commitment to and engagement in critically examining the LBMS/KMP related models.

**D.2. Pedagogical aspects** – For contributions aligned with principles of critical pedagogy see 2021 ADTA Annual conference presentation slides “Towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Movement Observation: A Call for Diverse Bodies, Movement and Voices”.

- Including **learners’ own creative process** so that they have access to their own creative problem solving when doing client centered, culturally responsive DMT. Bring this into observation and assessment courses.
- Using course materials with **broader cultural representation including:** authors, research, music, films of dance/movement from outside the “western” paradigms.
- Teaching that meaning making out of movement is done with the **client’s lived experience** and input, in a co-created way, whenever possible
- Building in **collaborative, interactive** learning experiences.
- **Role modeling** as teachers, including teacher vulnerability and not-knowing.
- Teachers needing to **speak about movement in non-judgmental ways** and teach students to do the same.

- **Teachers are developing** and using learning structures, assignments, and in-class tasks. New uses of familiar structures, creating new ones, looking at critical pedagogy and mapping into the movement medium.

### **Transparency & Accountability**

- Transparency with history and addressing the difficult questions related to origins of the Effort/Shape system.
- Understanding the ways that assessment is changing and needs to change in practice.
- Increasing transparency with students regarding why we are assigning what we are assigning and doing what we are doing in class.
- **New ways of assessing** student learning (e.g., from a strengths-based perspective)
  - What needs to change and what innovations in assessment of student learning can get us all to our collective goals as a professional discipline (including programs meeting educational competency and knowledge standards)?
- Class size varies, and delivery formats vary (e.g., online, intensive, land-based over a term) and both seem to influence some instructional practices.

### **D.3. Some overall recommendations for teachers and program leaders:**

Teachers of movement observation and DMT assessment in degree and AR programs are advised to consider the following when designing courses, selecting materials and structuring experiential learning:

- Who are my students?
- Is this course in person, virtual, or hybrid?
- Do I have mastery of the material (framework) I am teaching? If not, can I bring others in who do?
- What are my learning objectives and are they clearly articulated?
- How do I align my learning strategies, methods, materials used, and experiences to specific, defined outcomes? Or learning objectives?
- How do I integrate the intellectual and experiential aspects of the course content and material?
- Am I open to student questions and suggestions?
- Am I personally accessible and accountable?

### **E. Movement Observation Frameworks**

**E.1. Code of Ethics and Standards** -- The ADTA's *Code of Ethics* (2015) as well as the *Standards for Education and Clinical Training* (2019) provide guidance on maintaining a multicultural perspective on movement observation and assessment.

- Movement observation and assessment is a holistic process (use verbal & non-verbal methods) that must reflect the whole person, the intersecting identities.

- Movement observation and assessment can be formal (using instruments) and informal (real time observations in session) – need to be sensitive to the context in which observations and assessments are being made.
- Movement observation and assessment is a collaborative endeavor between dance/movement therapist and mover/client – include mover/client input & perspective; do not assign meaning/interpret or judge – ask the mover/the client.
- Obtain consent from the client and inform the client of its purposes and uses – appreciate the power structure inherent in movement observation and assessment; who is doing the observing/assessing and who is the mover; what is at stake.
- Recognize cultural factors that affect client-therapist relationship, DMT experiences, and client presentation – do not assume what is observed in one context is fully representative of an individual.
- Identify personal biases as well as biases inherent in the movement observation framework – the framework in use can limit what is observed, described, analyzed, and assessed.

**E.2. Four Phases of DMT Assessment** – Biases can be present during any of the four phases of DMT assessment; must engage critical consciousness throughout the process to maintain integrity and inclusivity.

- **Observe**
  - Observation system influences what is observed.
  - Cultural background and context affect what is visible.
  - Not only visual – observe through the senses.
- **Describe**
  - Available language and choice of words limit what is described/worthy of describing.
  - Biases affect what and how movements are described.
- **Analyze**
  - Theoretical models impact how movement is understood (psychoanalytic, humanistic, relational, critical, etc.).
  - Meaning making is highly culturally defined & personal.
- **Assess**
  - Medicalization of diagnoses (DSM) - Negative impact of diagnoses to individuals who are at the margins & implications for DMT.
  - Articulate what DMTs are assessing & for what purposes.
  - Use strengths-based lens.

### **E.3. Movement Observation Systems, Frameworks, and Instruments in DMT**

Following is a baseline list of movement observation systems and frameworks (originally shared by Beardall and Blanc but expanded on by this working group) that are taught or used in DMT to varying degrees. It is NOT an exhaustive list, but one that will continue to evolve as members of the DMT

community contribute to the on-going discussions and scholarship around movement observation teachings and practices.

Some are taught in depth at DMT degree granting education programs or as intensives or workshops in alternate route courses. Others are merely introduced to the students. The listing ranges from comprehensive movement observation systems, frameworks, and tools that have come up in discussions to date.

The names in parenthesis are the individuals who originated, developed, or are developing the movement observation system or framework. Using these approaches or assessments vary greatly. Some are widely distributed and published, some are available through webinars or workshops, and some are in development. This is not an exhaustive list. If there are frameworks you would like to add, please contact: **Movement.Observation@gmail.com**.

- Africanist aesthetics in movement observation (Nichols)
- Africanist presence in American performance (Dixon Gottschild)
- Bartenieff Fundamentals (Bartenieff and others)
- Behavior Rating Instrument for Autistic & Other Atypical Children (Ruttenberg, Kalish, Wenar, & Wolf)
- Body Mind Centering (Bainbridge Cohen)
- DMT Outcomes Framework (Dunphy and colleagues)
- Emotorics (Shahar-Levy)
- Four Levels of Empowerment (Rivera)
- Greenotation (Green)
- Kestenberg Movement Profile (Kestenberg and colleagues)
- Laban/Bartenieff Movement System (many contributors)
- Mental Health Assessment through Movement (Kornblum)
- Movement Assessment and Reporting App (Dunphy, Mullane, et al.)
- Movement Pattern Analysis/Action Profile (Lamb, Ramsden, Moore, and others)
- Movement Psychodiagnostic Inventory (Davis and colleagues)
- Moving Cycle (Caldwell)
- Polyvagal informed dance/movement therapy (Gray)
- Ways of Seeing (Tortora)

One of the challenges in DMT educators' efforts to expand what is being taught is the need for training by those who have expertise in both movement observation systems and cultural competency/cultural humility.

The frameworks working group identified some factors to consider when introducing movement observation and assessments in clinical practice and in educational programs:

- In what context did this system/framework develop?
- What is the cultural context for this system/framework for which it would be most useful?
- How is this system/framework being used most commonly today?
- Does this system/framework work best with any particular population? Which ones?
- Who are the current experts in this system/framework (so that they can do training)?
- What kind of training is required to develop competence with this system/framework?
- What is the strength of this system/framework?
- What are the limitations of this system/framework?
- Can this system/framework be applied clinically?
- Is this system/framework being utilized to do research on the nonverbal?

## **F. Overall Takeaways and Considerations for the ADTA**

Linking our learning about frameworks and pedagogy, we have relied upon this idea: “Frameworks can dialogue with one another” towards meeting the cultural needs of a client or population (N. Beardall and C. Davis, personal communication, 28 July 2020)

- How does the field reshape movement observation and include/expand on frameworks that have been taught and frameworks that have been under-represented?
- How does the field develop new frameworks?
- How might the ADTA support concerted, inclusive, collaborative efforts towards development and application of newer frameworks that reflect health equity priorities and the diverse society in which DMTs are working?
- Instructors of these courses unanimously expressed a strong need to collaborate with each other. Recommendation that ADTA create regular spaces for the people teaching to these competencies a place to discuss and share ideas and strategies.
- There is a need for diversity of identities in race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and religion among DMT educators who teach movement observation.

## **G. Final Notes**

The effort to be more diverse and inclusive in how and what is taught in DMT movement observation is on-going and engaging critical consciousness is essential. Decentering Whiteness and eliminating systemic oppression within DMT movement observation also require input from the larger DMT community. As such, the Movement Observation Pedagogy Group and the Frameworks Group have presented what is on these pages at the 56<sup>th</sup> ADTA conference *as a work in progress*. The conference provided an opportunity to reach DMT educators, students, and practitioners who would like to engage in these discussions and be a part of the necessary changes. The ADTA presentation, *Towards*

*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Movement Observation: A call for Diverse Bodies, Movement and Voices.* has been transcribed in this format to reach a larger audience. If you would like to contribute your thoughts and input or be part of future groups, please email:

**Movement.Observation@gmail.com.**

**Course instructors who participated in discussions with us:**

Erin Anderson    Amber Gray  
Karen Bradley    Suzanne Hastie  
Valerie Blanc    Melanie Johnson  
Karolina Bryl    Stacey McGinn Hurst  
Selena Coburn    Barbara Nordstrom-Loeb  
Susan Deutsch    Susan Orkand  
Ted Erhardt

*\*In alphabetical order by last name, credentials omitted. All gave their permission for theme level summaries from their discussion to be shared here and in the conference presentation.*

**Dance/movement therapists whose recent scholarship has inspired emerging thought and contributions to movement observation & assessment:**

Nancy Herard-Marshall  
Erin Holmes  
Ebony Nichols  
Maria Rivera  
...and a growing list of others

**References**

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