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Embodying Bicultural Resistance and Liberation: Transformative Multicultural Approaches to Dance/Movement Therapy

Grace Castillo
Sarah Lawrence College

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Grace L. Castillo

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Abstract

Bicultural individuals often navigate complex cultural landscapes that shape their identities, experiences, and psychological well-being. This thesis explores the embodiment of culture and the influential dynamics on bicultural identity, molding both the perception and expression of the self. By integrating the frameworks of liberation psychology, body story, embodied activism, and liberating movement, dance/movement therapy offers a multicultural-competent approach for addressing the complexities of bicultural identity. This integration enhances the therapeutic process by aligning with the social justice goals of the field, facilitating transformative restoration from oppression through personal and cultural narratives of individuals. Furthermore, this approach empowers those marginalized within their cultural contexts to promote an enriched sense of autonomy and resilience. With cultural identity as the priority, this enhanced approach respects and honors the rich tapestry of experiences that bicultural individuals bring into therapy, nonverbally and verbally, making it a powerful modality for addressing the specific needs and challenges of this population.

Keywords: bicultural, multicultural competence, dance/movement therapy, liberation, cultural identity, embodied activism

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Biculturalism represents a cultural identity that allows individuals to appreciate and embrace the traditions and customs of both of their cultural heritages. Research on the embodiment of culture, particularly among bicultural individuals, is relatively uncharted territory, yet it holds profound implications for understanding identity and psychological well-being. While the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology have laid a solid foundation on biculturalism, studies explicitly exploring how bicultural individuals embody and navigate their dual cultural identities are few and far between. This gap is striking in consideration to the growing recognition of how embodied experiences shape cultural identity and psychological landscape.

This thesis aims to fill this gap by synthesizing the existing research on biculturalism from various disciplines, with a particular focus on the embodied aspects of cultural identity. Dance/movement therapy, with its unique emphasis on the mind-body connection, offers a distinct perspective to examine these phenomena. By incorporating frameworks such as liberation psychology, embodied activism, and liberating movement, the modality presents powerful therapeutic approaches to address the complexities of bicultural identity.

Through a comprehensive review and discussion, this thesis aims to explore the way in which bicultural individuals embody two cultures and propose how dance/movement therapy can effectively assist them in reclaiming and integrating their cultural identities. This approach holds the promise of broadening the current understanding of multicultural competence in therapeutic practices and underlining the significance of culturally attuned therapeutic interventions. By contributing to the academic discourse, this thesis offers practical insights for therapists working with bicultural individuals.

Culture

Culture embodies a system of meanings acquired through learning, encompassing an array of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and interpretations inherited from one generation to another (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). Those belonging to the same cultural milieu are united by a shared appreciation of their heritage, perspectives, values, and the distinctive rhythms and patterns that define their way of life (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). Ingrained cultural beliefs and values in everyday experience fundamentally influence behaviors, reactions, and thought processes (Kleinman, 1996).

According to Ting-Toomey and Chung (2022), there are three levels of understanding a culture: surface-level, intermediate-level, and deep-level culture. On the surface level, culture is often associated with popular culture, which includes widely consumed cultural artifacts and systems like television, film, advertising, and pop music. However, popular culture represents only a small portion of a culture's richness and complexity. Intermediate-level culture is characterized by symbols, meanings, and norms that represent the expectations and behaviors of a collective group. Deep-level culture is defined by traditions, beliefs, and values, which develop cultural norms on a communal level (normative culture) and can vary in importance on an individual level (subjective culture). While cultural diversity presents numerous distinctions among people, there is a commonality in the basic human needs of the pursuit of safety, belonging, affection/connections, esteem, control, and meaning-making (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022).

Embodiment in cognitive science is defined as the idea that cognition arises from bodily interactions with the world, meaning mental processes are directly shaped by physical and sensorimotor experiences (Leung et al., 2011). Thus, people have the ability to embody culture

through a variety of these means (Leung et al., 2011; Menakem, 2017). Leung et al. (2011) expand on the current dialogue on embodied cognition to provide a deeper understanding of how it applies within cultural contexts. By integrating theories and research from various sub-disciplines of psychology into cultural studies, the body-mind connection is evident in the perception of emotions, time, individuals, social power, and moral reasoning (Leung et al., 2011). Culture shapes individuals both psychologically, soft embodiment, and physically, hard embodiment, allowing abstract concepts like power to be represented in bodily states, such as spatial positions indicating high and low power (Leung et al., 2011). Given that embodiment is driven by cultural assumptions and norms, it logically follows that embodied cultural cognition is a dynamic process (Leun et al., 2011). Additionally, historical cultural patterns and rhythms are reflected in the body through food choices, shared stories, meaningful objects, impactful images, and sensory experiences (Menakem, 2017).

The embodiment of culture precedes cognitive constructs such as ideas, philosophies, convictions, principles, and laws, and can even override human desires and needs (Menakem, 2017). The worldviews and other norms of a particular culture can provide a sense of comfort and harmony to the human body (Menakem, 2017). Being part of a group that shares cultural traditions and norms can immediately offer powerful sensations and experiences to those who adhere to its structure (Menakem, 2017). Culture fosters a sense of community and acceptance, providing a safe connection within the group (Menakem, 2017). This profound connection to culture is rooted in the intrinsic need for inclusion, which is felt viscerally (Menakem, 2017). Feeling a part of something gives significance and purpose to life (Menakem, 2017).

Membership in cultural groups during formative years shapes one's cultural identity, which is the emotional significance of belonging to a larger culture (Ting-Toomey & Chung,

2022). Cultural membership is established by the common practices and beliefs that are passed down from one generation to another, across different time periods and geographical locations (Castañeda-Sound et al., 2020). Sharing and creating culture is a fundamental aspect of our human nature and has given the human species a significant evolutionary advantage (Markus & Hamedani, 2007).

Kleinman (1996) examines culture from an anthropological perspective, proposing that people's everyday surroundings shape cultural norms and are, in turn, shaped by them. This includes interactions with others, daily routines, and communal rituals (Kleinman, 1996). Therefore, experience is shaped by interpersonal communication, interaction, and negotiation among cultural communities (Kleinman, 1996). Interactions center around determining priorities and strategies, resulting in shared symbolic tools conveyed through master metaphors that pattern social relationships (Kleinman, 1996). Factors such as gender, age, social role, and personal desires all impact and justify practices, resulting in the creation of culture (Kleinman, 1996). Overall, the locus of culture is not the mind of an isolated individual but rather the interconnected body/self of groups such as families, work settings, networks, and whole communities (Kleinman, 1996).

An individual's behavior, cognition, and actions are subject to the influence of their cultural milieu, which entails a continuous interaction between cultural structures, personal cognitive and affective processes, biology, and social environment (LaFromboise et al., 1993). In order to be culturally competent, an individual must have a strong personal identity and possess the ability to comprehend and utilize the beliefs and values of a culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Additionally, an individual must be mindful of the culture's emotional aspects, communicate effectively in its language, engage in socially acceptable behaviors, maintain active

social connections within the cultural group, and skillfully navigate the institutional structures of the culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

Ting-Toomey and Chung (2022) identified the strength of affiliation an individual holds with the culture as cultural identity salience. Individuals with strong membership affiliations exhibit high cultural identity salience, while those with weak associations demonstrate low cultural identity salience (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). The salience of cultural identity can manifest itself both consciously and unconsciously (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). The extent to which the wider cultural values influence an individual's self-image positively correlates with their adherence to the norms and communication patterns of the dominant mainstream culture (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022).

Every aspect of human experience is related, shaped, and influenced by culture (Pallaro, 1993). Those with marginalized identities can develop a healthy cultural identity, acquire a cultural frame of reference, learn culturally appropriate social skills, and form strong emotional attachments in local communities, which can be defined as a cultural home (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). A cultural home provides consistent socialization themes and traditions, helping members understand their roles and behaviors within a clear in-group and out-group structure, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and identity (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). It offers a set of shared values, beliefs, and norms that not only provide a meaningful personal identity within a sociocultural framework but also promote individual and collective growth and fulfillment (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999).

Human bodies are designed to function within our socio-cultural environment (Leung et al., 2011). The cultural background of an individual influences the way one perceives and interacts with the world around them, shaping the bodily interface known as the body-mind

connection (Leung et al., 2011). This interface is a guide to better understand the surroundings, facilitates daily interactions, and improves the ability to adapt and survive within a cultural context (Leung et al., 2011).

Second-Culture Acquisition Model

According to LaFromboise et al. (1993), an individual who is a member of one culture and develops competence in another culture may experience a range of psychological impacts based on different models of second-culture acquisition. These models included assimilation, acculturation, alternation, multiculturalism, and fusion (LaFromboise et al., 1993). In the assimilation model, an individual adopts a culture that is perceived as dominant, forms a new cultural identity, and loses their original cultural identity (LaFromboise et al., 1993). LaFromboise et al. (1993) emphasize the instability inherent in assimilation, including the potential rejection of the dominant culture, rejection by members of the original culture, and high stress levels when learning new behaviors of the dominant culture while neglecting those of the original culture. This can cause feelings of alienation, stress, and anxiety until the individual experiences acceptance within the new culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The acculturation and assimilation models share commonalities in their emphasis on minority groups adopting the cultural traits of the majority, featuring a one-way cultural influence, and presupposing a power imbalance favoring the majority culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Nonetheless, they diverge in their respective outcomes: assimilation advocates for complete integration into the majority culture and abandoning the original cultural identity, whereas acculturation promotes maintaining identification with the minority culture while competently engaging with the majority culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). In acculturation, an

individual does not lose their original cultural identity as they acclimate to a new culture, resulting in varying stress levels (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The alternation model of second-culture acquisition differs from the assimilation and acculturation models in two pivotal ways (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Firstly, it views the relationship between an individual's original and new cultures as two-way and autonomous rather than one-way and linear (LaFromboise et al., 1993). This model allows for maintaining a positive connection with both cultures simultaneously, without choosing one over the other (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Secondly, it avoids any notion of cultural superiority, enabling the individual to value both cultures equally, irrespective of personal preference (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Individuals who adapt and alternate their behavior to fit into different cultures experience less stress and anxiety than those who undergo acculturation and assimilation (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The multicultural model presents an inclusive approach that acknowledges the intricate interplay between diverse cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Its objective is to uphold the distinctive identity of each culture while striving towards shared objectives, underscoring that cultural diversity is not solely maintained through physical or societal separation but also through intricate cultural exchanges (LaFromboise et al., 1993). It fosters an environment where cultural groups can embrace and respect one another, learn different languages, and engage in cross-cultural interactions while retaining their cultural identities (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Furthermore, it postulates that managing bicultural stress can lead to personal and emotional growth rather than adverse psychological outcomes (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

The fusion model is a theory that explores the concept of a melting pot, where different cultures come together in a shared economic, political, or geographic space to form a new,

unified culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993). This model emphasizes the importance of equal partnership and mutual respect among cultures, where each contributes their unique strengths and weaknesses (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Unlike the assimilation and acculturation models, the fusion model does not promote cultural superiority (LaFromboise et al., 1993). In some cases, minority groups may lose their ethnic identity in the process, similar to assimilation (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Once fused, individuals may experience psychological alignment with the majority group (LaFromboise et al., 1993). However, the psychological effects of this model remain uncertain, as there are few successful examples (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

Biculturalism

Biculturalism involves the process by which individuals navigate and incorporate two distinct cultural contexts, requiring the development of specific competencies and a complex understanding of cultural nuances (Hong et al., 2000; Berry, 2003). While there is limited research on the embodiment of bicultural individuals, Leung et al. (2011) suggest that an individual can integrate more than one embodied cultural cognition frame because embodiment is motivated by cultural presuppositions and conventions. Biculturalism is a topic with a dynamic and evolving literature that covers multiple areas such as cultural, cognitive, and identity studies (Amiot et al., 2007; Berry, 2003; Hong et al., 2000; Ward, 2008).

At first, biculturalism was conceived as one of four possible acculturation strategies: integration (involvement in both cultures), assimilation (involvement in dominant culture only), separation (involvement in ethnic culture only), and marginalization (no involvement in either culture) (Berry, 2003). It has been observed that many individuals who undergo acculturation strategies are bicultural (Berry, 2003). As a result, developing research focuses on investigating

the differences among bicultural individuals instead of between bicultural individuals and other acculturating individuals (Huynh et al., 2011).

Under LaFromboise et al.'s (1993) second-culture acquisition model, biculturals are proposed in alternation and fusion modes. Alternating biculturals shift between their two cultures based on the situation, while fused biculturals create a third culture that emerges from combining and recombining their two cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993). There were inconsistencies between the cultural behavioral repertoires and the types of bicultural individuals in the biculturalism literature; therefore, Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) introduced the construct of bicultural identity integration (BII) to address these shortcomings (Huynh et al., 2011). This construct measures the experience of managing dual cultural identities (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002).

Furthermore, Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) found that the concept of biculturalism involves two psychometrically independent components: blendedness versus compartmentalization and harmony versus conflict. Cultural blendedness refers to the extent of overlap or separation between two cultural orientations (subjective distance), while cultural harmony refers to the degree of tension or compatibility perceived between the two cultures (objective distance) (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). These components are connected to contextual and personality factors, such as lower blendedness being associated with personality and performance-related difficulties (lower openness to new experiences, greater language barriers, and living in more culturally isolated environments), as well as lower harmony arising from other personality traits and tensions that are primarily interpersonal in nature (greater perceived discrimination, more strained intercultural relations, and greater language barriers) (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). The bicultural identity integration framework emphasizes

the subjective perception of blendedness and harmony between the two cultures of a bicultural individual (Huynh et al., 2011).

Expanding on the idea that blendedness represents behavioral or performance-related traits, Huynh (2009, as cited in Huynh et al., 2011) discovered a correlation between blendedness and several factors, such as the number of years lived in the United States, proficiency in using the English language, identification with the United States culture, and orientation to American culture. This study suggests that exposure to American culture is related to perceiving one's heritage and adopted cultures as more similar and that this exposure plays a crucial role in forming a combined identity (Huynh, 2009, as cited in Huynh et al., 2011). Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) discovered correlations between blendedness and stronger integration attitudes, as well as weaker separation attitudes, suggesting that individuals with bicultural identities who wish to integrate their two cultures and do not support separation from the mainstream culture are more likely to find it easy to combine their two cultural identities. Blendedness was weakly associated with acculturation stressors, such as perceived discrimination, and mental well-being, suggesting that it is the least emotionally charged aspect of bicultural identity integration (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). It is argued that cultural compartmentalization is not caused by contextual pressures or psychological adjustment but rather by conflict (Huynh et al., 2011).

Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) found moderate positive correlations between harmony and affirmation of ethnic identity, which emphasizes positive attitudes towards one's ethnic group. In accordance with contextual acculturation stressors and neuroticism, harmony was found to have a moderate negative correlation with them (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). These findings support the claim that harmony is more driven by contextual pressures than blendedness and involves affective elements of bicultural identity (Benet-Martínez &

Haritatos, 2005). Chen et al. (2008) also suggest a link between cultural conflict and higher psychological distress. Harmony has only minimal connections to conventional acculturation factors such as the duration of stay in the United States, language fluency, and cultural identity, demonstrating that the two components of the bicultural identity integration framework are independent and separate from each other (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Huynh et al., 2011).

Bicultural Identity Integration

The factors determining an individual's bicultural identity integration range from their immediate social environment to their cultural group's broader historical, political, and economic context (Huynh et al., 2011). The level of bicultural identity integration can be influenced by the history and current status of one's cultural group within the dominant culture (Huynh et al., 2011). For instance, African American adolescents were more likely to have a blended bicultural identity (high bicultural identity integration), while Mexican American adolescents tended to have an alternating bicultural identity (low bicultural identity integration) (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). The enduring and established presence of African Americans in the United States, which has led to the formation of a distinct African American culture, might contribute to their ability to integrate cultures smoothly (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). On the other hand, Mexican Americans, despite their lengthy history in the United States, frequently find themselves at the heart of contentious immigration discussions (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). This situation continuously labels them with an immigrant identity, even for those who are not immigrants, potentially leading them towards a pattern of alternating between their bicultural identities (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997).

Bicultural identity integration varies based on a bicultural individual's experiences and social environment (Huynh et al., 2011). Discrimination, interpersonal conflicts with culturally diverse individuals, and language barriers can result in lower harmony between the two cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Additionally, Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) studied that language barriers and isolated cultural communities were linked to bicultural individuals claiming lower blendedness between their two cultures.

Huynh et al. (2011) suggest that blendedness may precede harmony in bicultural identity integration despite these components being theoretically independent. Researchers have proposed that bicultural individuals whose two cultures are markedly distinct tend to have lower identity integration and face greater identity conflict compared to those whose cultures are more alike (Amiot et al., 2007; Ward, 2008). If bicultural individuals keep their two cultures separate, they may not notice or sense conflict at all (Amiot et al., 2007). To address identity conflict, bicultural individuals might choose to blend or integrate different elements of their two identities into a new, combined identity as a way to settle conflicts (Amiot et al., 2007). Alternatively, they might choose to compartmentalize or keep their identities separate as a strategy to evade conflict (Amiot et al., 2007). These findings suggest that maintaining a low level of integration between cultures could be a response to a lack of harmony, or the cultural gap between the two cultures may directly influence the perceived cultural division (Huynh et al., 2011). In simpler terms, individuals who identify with two cultures might feel compelled to keep them separate if the two cultural identities represent fundamentally different ways of life (Huynh et al., 2011).

The blending or compartmentalizing strategies of bicultural individuals may serve as efforts to resolve conflict between two cultures and might only sometimes be successful (Huynh et al., 2011). For instance, merging aspects from two different cultural systems (like dating and

marital preferences) may not be feasible, thus failing to resolve cultural conflicts (Huynh et al., 2011). Consequently, some bicultural individuals might not experience any cultural conflict, regardless of whether their identities are blended or compartmentalized, while others might still perceive conflict irrespective of their strategy (Huynh et al., 2011). The effectiveness of blended or compartmentalized identities in reducing identity conflict depends on various cultural and situational factors, underscoring the complexity of bicultural identity integration (Huynh et al., 2011). This complexity supports the notion that the dimensions of blendedness (the degree to which an individual has merged their two cultures) and harmony (the extent to which an individual perceives their two cultures as conflict-free) are theoretically and empirically distinct (Huynh et al., 2011). Although distinct, the objective difference between the two cultures can impact a bicultural individual's sense of conflict (low harmony) and subsequently influence their approach to blending or compartmentalizing (degree of blendedness or subjective cultural distance) (Huynh et al., 2011).

Bicultural Competence

LaFromboise et al. (1993) proposed a comprehensive model of bicultural competence, integrating affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions to elucidate the intricate process of navigating bicultural environments. To adeptly navigate life within two cultures, a bicultural individual must understand cultural beliefs and values, maintain positive attitudes towards both the majority and minority groups, develop bicultural efficacy, enhance communication skills, establish a varied role repertoire, and nurture a sense of stability and groundedness (LaFromboise et al., 1993). The journey of cultural acquisition is highly individualized, emphasizing that individuals, not groups, achieve bicultural competence (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Consequently,

a bicultural individual may exhibit cross-communication skills and dual cultural role repertoires, contributing to better physical and mental health than those lacking (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

Hong (2010) defines bicultural competence as a dynamic, interacting construct that centers on the proficiency of a bicultural individual in utilizing knowledge and cultural skills—including behavioral adaptability, cross-cultural communication abilities, cultural frame switching, and cultural metacognition (Hong et al., 2000; Thomas et al., 2008).

Culture-specific knowledge reflects the extent to which a bicultural individual is informed and conscious of a culture's history, institutions, rituals, and everyday practices (Hong, 2010). Therefore, culture-specific knowledge is the cornerstone of a bicultural's ability to engage in cultural frame switching, as it is essential for understanding and interpreting the behaviors of others and themselves (Hong, 2010). Biculturals cultivate cognitive complexity by internalizing multiple systems of culture-specific knowledge and frequently switching between them in response to cultural cues (Benet-Martínez et al., 2006). Engaging in this process enhances their cognitive capacity to handle the complexities of cultural frame-switching effectively (Benet-Martínez et al., 2006).

The dimension of cross-cultural abilities expands upon the foundation of culture-specific knowledge, encompassing behavioral adaptability and cross-cultural communication skills (Hong, 2010). Behavioral adaptability is recognizing and responding to culture-specific nuances in social behavior, necessitating a deep understanding of culture-specific knowledge (Hong, 2010). This adaptability enables biculturals to manage and exhibit culturally suitable verbal and nonverbal behaviors in cross-cultural settings (LaFromboise et al., 1993). The related concept of behavioral flexibility involves adjusting and modifying one's behavior in response to individuals from different groups (Pusch, 2009). Achieving this also demands cross-cultural empathy, which

involves intellectually understanding and emotionally engaging with another person's experiences (Pusch, 2009). This empathy extends to connecting emotionally with others, demonstrating compassion, and engaging in active, mindful listening (Pusch, 2009).

Proficiency in cross-cultural communication is the ability of bicultural individuals to effectively communicate using appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues in diverse cultural settings (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Language usage is governed by multilayered rules that vary in relation to culture (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). Language is an arbitrary, symbolic system that labels and categorizes objects, events, groups, people, ideas, feelings, experiences, and other phenomena (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). The characteristics of language, such as its arbitrariness, abstractness, meaning-centeredness, and inherent creativity, differ among these elements while following various rule patterns such as phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic rules (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). Additionally, there are various types of functions and verbal communication styles that vary across cultures (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022).

Nonverbal communication consists of nonlinguistic and paralinguistic cues conveyed and interpreted through various channels in a sociocultural context (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). Nonverbal cues range from body language, voice tone, and time and space arrangement to using objects and building structures (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). Nonlinguistic messages may be facial expressions, gestures, or spatial setups, while paralinguistic features involve voice modulation in tone, inflection, sound, and volume (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). The concept of multiple channels covers using visual, auditory, tactile, kinesics (facial, bodily, and gestural movement), proxemics (spatial relations), and communication devices to construct meaning (Hall, 1969; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022).

Scholars in nonverbal communication recognize the significance of our bodily comportment, specifically how human beings have the capacity to produce nearly three-quarters of a million distinct physical signs, including different bodily postures, hand gestures, and facial expressions (Danesi & Perron, 1999). Additionally, proxemics involves studying how individuals utilize their senses across varying contexts, including different emotional states, activities, relationships, and environments (Hall, 1969). Therefore, the sociocultural setting highlights the role of cultural norms in determining the appropriateness of nonverbal behaviors (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022).

Elevated levels of cross-cultural abilities, encompassing behavioral adaptability and cross-cultural communication skills, are crucially linked to successful cross-cultural interactions (Hong, 2010). For biculturals to achieve this, they must apply their extensive culture-specific knowledge in ways that suit cross-cultural contexts (Hong, 2010). Cultural frame switching involves understanding the necessary actions (culture-specific knowledge) and possessing the behavioral tools to effectively and appropriately manage cross-cultural scenarios (cross-cultural abilities) (Hong, 2010). These prerequisites are vital and interactively support cultural frame switching, establishing the foundational conditions for bicultural competence (Hong, 2010). This relationship suggests a proposition linking culture-specific knowledge, cross-cultural abilities, and cultural frame switching (Hong et al., 2000; Hong, 2010).

Biculturals navigate between interpretive schemas based on their culture-specific knowledge, adjusting to cues within their social environments (Hong et al., 2000; LaFromboise et al., 1993). Hong et al. (2000) described how biculturals transition between their original and adopted cultural schemas, viewing internalized culture as a network of distinct constructs that activate cognition when they arise in an individual's consciousness. Thus, particular elements of

culture-specific knowledge facilitate the construction of meaning, enabling timely and appropriate responses to cultural cues (Hong, 2010).

Cultural frame switching is a crucial link between culture-specific knowledge (cognitive aspect) and cross-cultural abilities (behavioral aspect) within the framework of bicultural competence (Hong, 2010). Benet-Martínez et al. (2006) identified three reasons cultural frame switching effectively bridges culture-specific knowledge and cross-cultural abilities. The first is the accessibility of relevant cultural knowledge, deeply embedded in biculturals' biographical memories due to substantial time spent assimilating into their current societies (Benet-Martínez et al., 2006). Cultural frame switching enables biculturals to aptly adjust their behavior and communication in culturally specific contexts, necessitating a profound understanding of culture-specific knowledge for effective cross-cultural abilities (Benet-Martínez et al., 2006).

The second reason involves the expertise in dissecting each culture-specific system (Benet-Martínez et al., 2006). This comes from their frequent engagement in cultural frame switching, which makes them aware that cultural norms and values can vary depending on the context, enhancing their understanding of each culture's relativity and multidimensionality (Gutierrez & Sameroff, 1990). This awareness facilitates appropriately adjusting their verbal and nonverbal behaviors during interactions with culturally different individuals (Hong, 2010).

The third aspect is a control process that applies culture-specific knowledge to cross-cultural abilities where biculturals manage their cultural schemas—including languages and social scripts—through a “supervisory attention system” that dictates which schemas to apply and when (Rubinstein et al., 2001; Benet-Martinez et al., 2006, p. 388). This strategic management is underpinned by their cross-cultural analytical skills, deciding which cultural norms and values to adopt based on the cross-cultural context (Benet-Martinez et al., 2006). This

higher-order cognitive process, cultural metacognition, explains how cultural frame switching integrates culture-specific knowledge and cross-cultural abilities, enhancing biculturals' competence in effectively navigating cultural frames (Hong, 2010).

Thomas et al. (2008) understand cultural intelligence as a combination of knowledge and skills cultivated within a specific cultural or cross-cultural context. However, the effectiveness of these attributes in fostering culturally intelligent behavior relies on a process known as cultural metacognition (Thomas et al., 2008). Cultural metacognition involves overseeing and controlling one's cognitive and emotional processes in response to a goal and the ability to reflect on their interactions and adjust their strategies dynamically, enhancing future cross-cultural engagements (Thomas et al., 2008). It is a crucial link that facilitates the emergence of bicultural competence by integrating its various components (Thomas et al., 2008).

Cultural metacognition enhances bicultural competence through active monitoring and strategic regulation, thereby addressing gaps left by cultural frame switching and promoting effective cross-cultural interactions (Thomas et al., 2008). Additionally, it enables the extraction of broader principles (culture-general knowledge) from specific cultural experiences by actively forming new categories and considering new viewpoints related to this knowledge (Thomas et al., 2008). When stored in memory, knowledge becomes adaptable and less tied to specific experiences (Thomas et al., 2008). This element of cultural metacognition clarifies how biculturals, even as they navigate between culture-specific schemas, become adept at recognizing cultural similarities and differences beyond their embodied cultures (Thomas et al., 2008). They are naturally more attuned to new cultural cues, allowing them to respond appropriately during cross-cultural interactions within a multicultural setting rather than merely reacting or following

pre-set patterns (Thomas et al., 2008). Thus, a robust level of cultural metacognition is closely associated with enhanced bicultural competence (Hong, 2010; Thomas et al., 2008).

Cultural Frame Switching

Embodying two sets of cultural norms, values, and expectations has introduced an adaptive construct known as cultural frame switching (Hong et al., 2000; Leung et al., 2011). Leung et al. (2011) suggest that bicultural or multicultural individuals may flexibly switch their cultural mindsets in response to their embodied experiences, which are heavily laden with cultural significance. For example, bicultural individuals could switch their moral frames to react to moral dilemmas differently when they were embodying one moral code or the other (Leung et al., 2011). Therefore, individuals can embody a culturally relevant cognition dynamically, with the situation calling upon a particular bodily state or the other that is meaningful in the given situation (Leung et al., 2011).

Accordingly, both cultures guide biculturals' thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Hong et al., 2000; Hong, 2010; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006). This also applies to self-evaluations and attitudes (Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). Huynh et al. (2011) concluded that cultural frame switching involves changes in cognitive styles, personality, self-identification, cultural values, self-construct, affect, and decision-making. Therefore, this is the ability to adjust behaviors, expressions, perceptions, and even cognitive patterns based on the dominant cultural context (Huynh et al., 2011).

In sociolinguistics, code-switching describes bilingual individuals alternating between languages (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). However, when the shift involves language and cultural behaviors, this phenomenon is known as cultural frame switching (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Hong et al., 2000). Hall (1969) posits that individuals from various cultures not only differ

in their linguistic capabilities but, perhaps more critically, they also experience the world through distinct sensory perceptions. Cultural conditioning selectively screens and processes sensory information, shaping an individual's perceptual reality in fundamentally different ways from those conditioned by other cultural frameworks (Hall, 1969).

Luna et al. (2008) emphasized the role of language in cultural frame switching. Bilingualism, commonly found among biculturals, is the ability to communicate, speak, understand, read, and write in two different languages (Luna et al., 2008). Language acts as a focal point for expressing in-group solidarity and distinctiveness, symbolizing shared identity and cultural or ethnic belonging (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). By using a common language, members simultaneously highlight in-group cohesiveness and outgroup division (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2022). Unlike bilinguals with monocultural backgrounds (those who never internalized the native culture of their second language), biculturals undergo cultural frame switching influenced by language cues (Luna et al., 2008). This suggests that culture-specific mental frames can be activated by the language associated with them (Luna et al., 2008).

Both languages can activate culture-specific identity frames in biculturals, as each language's words connect to a set of conceptual features representing each individual's subjective interpretations of the word (Luna et al., 2008). When unified under a theme or category, these features create a distinct frame (Luna et al., 2008). Hence, biculturals may have two different culture-specific mental frames, each of which is connected, in its respective language, to a translation-equivalent word that appears to be the same in the two different languages (Luna et al., 2008).

Priming conditions in bicultural settings were found to trigger group identities, and the extent of group identification can partially shape individuals' self-perceptions and attitudes

(Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). This highlights the importance of recognizing not just the conflicting cultural values and beliefs, but also how group identities are perceived—whether as oppositional or congruent—and the dynamics of the intergroup context (Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006).

It is crucial for biculturals to understand how their cultural affiliations shape their self-perception, activating diverse self-definitions and behaviors (Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). The mechanism of cultural frame switching is significantly influenced by group identification, pivotal in mediating the effects of various cultural frameworks on individual behaviors and attitudes (Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006). Therefore, social identity and self-categorization theories explain the dynamics of cultural influences and cultural frame switching, while challenging previous approaches that focused solely on cognitive mechanisms (Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006).

Individuals who have internalized more than one culture perceive different levels of tension between the mainstream and ethnic cultures (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). Some bicultural individuals do not view their embodied cultures as mutually exclusive or conflicting, while others do (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). While these individuals may identify with both cultures, they are acutely aware of the differences between the two (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). Biculturals may face internal conflict from the differences between their two cultures and may find it easier to identify with one culture over the other rather than trying to balance the two simultaneously (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). This seems to be a common experience for biculturals who are born in the United States and those who had multiple years of exposure to their acquired culture (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Engaging with two cultures can be

beneficial if bicultural individuals successfully navigate and do not internalize potential conflicts between their intersecting cultural identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Although cultural frame switching is characteristic of bicultural individuals, individuals with high versus low bicultural identity integration respond differently (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). Individuals who view their cultural identities as complementary, indicative of high bicultural identity integration, can fluidly switch between cultural frames, reacting to cultural cues in ways consistent with the respective cultures (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). Conversely, individuals with low bicultural identity integration tend to display a contrast effect, resisting the behaviors suggested by cultural primes and viewing their cultural identities as conflicting (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). This could often result in a chronic polarization of their two cultures, leading to the perception of the cultures as a singular dichotomy, where they are regarded as conceptual or evaluative opposites (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002).

Psychological Well-Being of Biculturals

Biculturals often benefit from their multicultural experiences, exhibiting cognitive flexibility, independent thinking, and diverse problem-solving strategies (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). They are found to be adept at adapting to shifting social contexts and possess sharp social perceptions and skills in social mimicry based on their range of experiences (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Bicultural individuals typically have rich cognitive resources, including creativity, improvisational skills, and a broad knowledge base (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). They are also strong in nonverbal communication, being highly sensitive and attuned to others' expressions and feelings, allowing them to respond quickly and empathetically (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999).

An individual's concept of self is shaped by their cultural upbringing, influencing their expressive behaviors to reflect a culturally contextualized sense of self (Pallaro, 1993). The

integration of bicultural identity can be affected by two factors - low harmony and low blendedness (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Huynh et al., 2011). Low harmony, or cultural conflict, is linked to linguistic acculturation stress, neuroticism, and interpersonal issues such as strained intercultural relations and discrimination (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). On the other hand, low blendedness, also known as cultural distance, is associated with limited bicultural competence, lower openness to experience, cultural isolation, linguistic acculturation stress, and an endorsement of a separation acculturation strategy (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). These findings suggest that the variations in bicultural identity integration are not just subjective identity representations but significant psychological experiences correlated with specific personality traits and perceived environmental pressures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) suggest that perceptions of cultural conflict primarily reflect the affective dimensions of bicultural experiences, significantly shaped by neuroticism and distinct from traditional demographic and acculturation measures. This emotional aspect of biculturalism, often neglected in prior research, is influenced by specific acculturation stressors like discrimination and intercultural strains, leading to significant discrepancies between individuals' explicit and implicit cultural group attitudes (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Consequently, this can result in feelings of confusion and distress, especially among those high in neuroticism (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Ultimately, these pressures may compel biculturals to feel they must choose between their cultural identities, undermining their ability to maintain consistent self-images and group affiliations (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Unlike cultural conflict, cultural distance is found to be linked to learning and performance aspects of acculturation, such as cultural exposure, language proficiency, and identification solely with the dominant culture, similar to traditional acculturation concepts (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Biculturals can emphasize one cultural tie and distance themselves from the dominant culture when they feel a greater cultural distance between their two identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). This involves adopting a separation acculturation strategy and displaying less identification with the dominant culture, as they maintain separate cultural identities to celebrate their cultural minority and differentiate themselves from mainstream culture (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). However, perceptions of cultural distance may decrease as biculturals' exposure to the mainstream culture grows (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Cultural distance is influenced by both dispositional factors (like low openness) and contextual factors (such as cultural isolation and linguistic challenges) (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Low openness might lead individuals to perceive cultural characteristics more rigidly, reinforcing the notion that the two cultural identities must remain separate (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Contextual factors, such as having a noticeable accent or an uncommon cultural background in the local environment, can heighten the awareness of one's distinct cultural traits (historical, ethnic, linguistic), thereby intensifying perceptions of cultural differences (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Developing a cohesive bicultural identity may be complicated by these factors and may reinforce the perception of biculturalism as a dichotomy (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Conversely, higher levels of perceived blendedness and harmony in one's multiple identities are linked to greater interpersonal tolerance (Huff et al., 2017). This occurs when

individuals with different opinions, values, or preferences interact with one another (Huff et al., 2017). Huff et al. (2017) suggest that higher blendedness and harmony facilitate flexible thinking, fostering openness and acceptance of different perspectives. Such flexibility allows individuals to activate disparate knowledge sets and maintain overlapping network connections across various cultural or social groups (Huff et al., 2017). Thus, by promoting positive inferences and reducing negative experiences in interactions with dissimilar individuals, higher blendedness and harmony may improve social harmony and reduce interpersonal and intergroup tensions (Huff et al., 2017).

Biculturals experience a complex identity landscape and often face compounded challenges, including prejudice, misunderstanding, and isolation, as they may feel alienated by both minority and majority groups (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). The diversity of their immediate family, such as among grandparents with distinct cultural traditions, might make forming attachments challenging (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). The geographic mobility of the family may require bicultural individuals to continually adapt to new cultures and learn varying communication styles throughout their formative years (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). These diverse cultural influences can dramatically shape their self-construal and the way they perceive interdependent relationships, leading to a subjective, often contradictory understanding of self and others as they grow up in environments with fluctuating cultural norms and values (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999).

Bicultural individuals may experience cultural homelessness, which is the sensation of not belonging due to integrating multiple cognitive and emotional frameworks shaped by their specific familial and geographic multicultural experiences (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). This results from navigating a life of experiences, feelings, and thoughts that do not align with their cultural

groups (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). The feelings of alienation and non-acceptance render biculturals as perpetual minorities, longing for a cultural home they have never had (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). In contrast, first-generation immigrants clearly know their cultural home despite their dislocation (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Cultural homelessness can lead to feelings of rejection, confusion, and isolation for biculturals as they struggle to find acceptance or identity with one specific cultural group and experience alienation and deficiency (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999).

Bicultural individuals who experience cultural homelessness may engage in hypervigilant efforts to imitate those around them, striving to overcome isolation and gain acceptance and belonging (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Yet, these efforts lead to feelings of frustration and confusion over their continued rejection and perceived personal deficiencies (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). This struggle manifests itself as confusion about appropriate behaviors for belonging and a deep despair from contradictory societal demands, culminating in self-imposed isolation to avoid further distress (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Particularly in childhood, biculturals commonly experience pervasive feelings of loneliness and intense sadness, stemming from a preverbal sense of lacking something subtle and indefinable – a sense of loss that alienates them from others and intensifies their cultural disconnection (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999).

Hence, biculturals may face an array of psychological challenges, including identity confusion, social isolation, pervasive sadness, and a nebulous sense of loss accompanied by feelings of shame and self-blame (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Such individuals may suffer from a treatment-resistant depression that presents as characterological in nature (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). They frequently feel different, describing themselves as “weird” and expressing frustration over their inability to fit in despite their efforts (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999, p. 22).

Additionally, they may struggle to articulate their emotions, finding it difficult to label their feelings accurately, and may have trouble integrating the affective and cognitive aspects of their experiences (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). These challenges may be misdiagnosed as mood or personality disorders and may complicate treatment for existing conditions (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). The effectiveness of therapy can be significantly impacted if the therapist lacks cultural sensitivity and awareness (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999).

Therapeutic Goals for Biculturals

Vivero and Jenkins (1999) suggest that the therapist's role in creating a safe environment that fosters mutual understanding is crucial in therapeutic approaches for bicultural individuals. This environment, facilitated by techniques that encourage the expression of feelings with minimal verbal communication, significantly enhances rapport between the client and therapist (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). This method increases the client's awareness of their feelings, aiding in their ability to label and communicate them more effectively (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Such an approach also allows the therapist to understand the client's nonverbal cues, linking them to their own experiences to deepen the therapeutic connection (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999).

Acknowledging and respecting a client's unique cultural background and differences is vital in therapy (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Such an approach demonstrates empathy and avoids the risks of trying to standardize the client to the dominant culture (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Instead, therapy should focus on utilizing the client's strengths to navigate and overcome their challenges, which promotes a positive outcome (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). It is a transformative journey that validates their unique experiences and emotions by delving into past conflicts, encouraging clients to view differences as sources of strength (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). This process cultivates awareness, self-acceptance, and the capacity to navigate diverse cultural

contexts, empowering clients to consciously shape their cultural identity with confidence (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). Once these goals are achieved, clients can feel safe and connected to others and form secure relationships, allowing them to move freely and comfortably across all cultures, contributing to their self-identity (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999).

Dance/Movement Therapy

The American Dance Therapy Association (2020) defines dance/movement therapy 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, Defining dance/movement therapy (DMT) section, para. 1). The modality employs an embodied, movement-based method for therapeutic outcomes, rooted in the holistic belief that the mind, body, and spirit are interconnected, with changes in one affecting the others (American Dance Therapy Association, 2020).

The core theories are based on fundamental concepts of all human experiences (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015). This includes: (a) human beings are integrations of body and mind, with dance/movement serving as an expression of this unity (body-mind connection); (b) gestures, postures, and movements are reflective of the individual, facilitating self-awareness and psychotherapeutic transformation; (c) the creative process is instrumental in driving therapeutic change; (d) dance and movement are employed as means to access the unconscious and as a facilitator of various aspects of health and well-being; (e) through the therapeutic relationship, dance movement therapists actively establish contact with the individual, assess their needs, create and implement treatment plans, and evaluate outcomes while integrating knowledge from the fields of movement, dance, and psychotherapy (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015).

Dance is defined broadly as any body movement, ranging from a subtle gesture to the full engagement of the self (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015). It can occur over varying durations, from a fleeting moment to a more extended period, and may or may not incorporate rhythms (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015). Movements might extend across physical space or be confined to the body's immediate area (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015). Regardless of its form, dance is always a motor action initiated by an individual in reaction to internal feelings or external stimuli (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015). Even practical motor actions like eating or bathing exhibit qualities that reflect the psychosocial characteristics of the person (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015).

Dance/movement therapy utilizes expressive movement as a means for individuals to pursue personal integration and growth (Payne, 1992). It is based on the concept that movement and emotion are interconnected, referring to the body-mind connection, and that expanding one's movement repertoire can lead to greater emotional stability and adaptability (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015; Payne, 1992). In this therapeutic modality, an individual's internal world is made external, sharing personal symbolism and the visual development of relationships (Payne, 1992). The dance movement therapist facilitates a supportive environment where these expressions and interactions can be safely acknowledged and shared (Payne, 1992).

Dance/movement therapy encompasses several key elements: movement as a reflection of personality, the interpersonal relation between therapist and individual shaped through movement that affects the psychological and physiological states, and the ability of changes in movement patterns to anticipate shifts in personality (Schmais, 1974). Dance therapy is advantageous over verbal treatment since it evaluates both movement and nonverbal body expressions, offering a more holistic and integrated understanding of an individual's therapeutic

needs and options (Levy, 1995). Movement and dance can offer richer insights than verbal communication, as words alone may not adequately convey the entirety of an individual's experiences (Schmais, 1974; Levy, 1995).

Dance/movement therapy employs specific techniques that initiate multiple therapeutic processes (Schmais & White, 1986). These include (a) bodily integration, which develops an understanding of the interconnectivity of body parts and how movements in one area affect the whole body; (b) appropriate affect, which adjusts atypical behavioral responses by utilizing movement to access and modify submerged emotional states, thereby reducing behaviors like repetitive movements; (c) behavioral insight, assisting individuals in recognizing how their movement patterns reflect their current emotional states or evoke past emotional experiences; and (d) social interaction, enhanced through nonverbal engagement during dance/movement therapy sessions (Schmais & White, 1986). The onset and extent of these processes vary among individuals, with some experiencing changes within a few sessions and others over a longer period (Schmais & White, 1986).

The structure behind dance/movement therapy sessions varies; however, most use the structure developed by Marian Chace (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015). These group sessions are divided into three main phases: warm-up, theme development, and closure (Levy, 1988). Derived from the dance forms of various indigenous peoples, participants in the session gather in a formation known as the Chacian circle, which serves to warm up the body and foster group cohesion through rhythmic patterning movements (Levy, 1988; Panagiotopoulou, 2011). In the group circle, individuals take turns leading while the dance/movement therapist intervenes verbally and nonverbally as needed to modify or reinforce the group's movements (Levy, 1988; Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015). This is when the therapeutic effect is monitored, and individual

changes are identified through movement (Levy, 1988). At the session's conclusion, the group moves in a unified, rhythmic movement, which is followed by a discussion enriched with their insights and reflections under the guidance of the dance/movement therapist (Levy, 1988; Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2015).

Mirroring in dance/movement therapy sessions involves the therapist reflecting the movements of the individual, either by exact imitation or by capturing the essence of the individual's movements and emotions (Levy, 1988). The individual may not realize that imitation is happening at the finest level, and on the other hand, movements are directly mimicked or exaggerated at the most apparent level (Levy, 1988). This process utilizes the concept of mirror neurons, which are activated not only when an individual performs an action but also when observing another person recreate the same action (Berrol, 2006; McGarry & Russo, 2011). Mirror neurons activate the neural areas responsible for producing emotional movements, influencing the limbic system and heightening emotional responses to such movements (McGarry & Russo, 2011). Consequently, one gains a deeper understanding of another's intentions by experientially feelings their emotions (McGarry & Russo, 2011). This neural mirroring supports empathetic understanding and emotional connection, fostering a therapeutic bond between the therapist and the individual (Levy, 1988; Berrol, 2006; McGarry & Russo, 2011). Mirroring can help the individual feel understood and validated, enhancing the therapeutic relationship while facilitating emotional expression and self-awareness (Levy, 1988; Berrol, 2006; McGarry & Russo, 2011). Through this empathic engagement, therapists can better understand the individual's nonverbal expressions and internal states, crucial for effective dance/movement therapy (Levy, 1988; McGarry & Russo, 2011).

Kinesthetic empathy is a fundamental element of dance/movement therapy that is crucial for understanding and facilitating the therapeutic process (Fischman, 2015). It involves the dance/movement therapist's ability to resonate with the individual's movements and emotions, which enables a deep form of non-verbal communication and connection (Fischman, 2015). The empathic non-verbal connection involves the therapist comprehending and relating to an individual's movements and emotions, facilitating a therapeutic exchange (Fischman, 2015). The process respects cultural variations and promotes mutual understanding, however, it can be a complex process as some individuals may resist change (Fischman, 2015). In such cases, therapists need to be patient and provide the necessary space for individuals to explore their resistance (Fischman, 2015).

This form of empathy goes beyond simply imitating the individual's actions; it involves a physical and emotional understanding where the therapist engages with the individual's experience (Fischman, 2015). By participating in this shared movement experience, therapists can help individuals become more self-aware and emotionally mature, overcoming personal blocks and integrating their experiences more fully (Fischman, 2015). This interaction not only helps to build a therapeutic relationship but also supports the individual's journey towards psychological integration and personal understanding through the transformative power of movement and emotional resonance (Fischman, 2015).

Authentic movement is a therapeutic practice grounded in the principles of active imagination and body awareness, wherein individuals explore the subconscious through movement (Whitehouse, 1999). Introduced by Mary Starks Whitehouse (1999), it emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between movement and psychological processes, allowing individuals to express their inner experiences authentically without deliberate control (Whitehouse, 1999). In

therapeutic sessions, a dance/movement therapist provides a safe, permissive environment where individuals can move spontaneously, often with closed eyes, to delve deeper into their unconscious (Whitehouse, 1999). This process helps to surface buried emotions and memories, promoting personal integration and psychological growth (Whitehouse, 1999). Authentic movement serves as a form of self-exploration and a profound medium for healing, providing insights that can lead to greater self-understanding and emotional release (Whitehouse, 1999).

Dance/Movement Therapists and Therapeutic Relationship

Dance movement therapists typically have a refined awareness of their own movements and how they utilize them (Schmais & White, 1986). This awareness extends to perceiving and empathizing with the movements of others, enabling them to respond swiftly and effectively in alignment with therapeutic objectives (Schmais & White, 1986). Schmais and White (1986) claim that the fundamental tool for dance therapists is their movement. This allows dance movement therapists to express thoughts, feelings, and emotions creatively, improvisationally, and to develop a deep empathy through visual and kinesthetic awareness (Schmais & White, 1986).

While a dance movement therapist often engages actively with the individual, moving together and observing, it is crucial that they avoid intruding on the individual's movement expressions (Payne, 1992). Dance movement therapists must resist the urge to immediately interpret these movements, as this impulse often stems from their own needs rather than the individual's (Payne, 1992). Dance/movement therapists recognize that movements do not inherently possess meaning but rather gain significance when they are part of a broader behavioral pattern (Hanna, 1990). The dance movement therapist may facilitate deeper exploration and shared dialogue by allowing the individual first to articulate their own

understanding of their movements (Payne, 1992). This approach prevents premature interpretations (Payne, 1992).

Schmais and White (1986) posit that all movement reflects intrapsychic dynamics and social modes of relating, allowing the dance movement therapist to align with the individual's affective state as revealed in their movement, embodying the core qualities of their expressions in their own movements. This alignment fosters rapport and empathy, creating a safe connection for mutual recognition and response (Schmais & White, 1986). Through collaborative movement, the dance movement therapist and individual explore and address feelings and sensations, enhancing the individual's awareness of their emotional states by amplifying their movements to fully express underlying emotions (Schmais & White, 1986).

Cultural Competency in Dance/Movement Therapy

When introduced in America during the 1940s, dance/movement therapy was developed with a focus on the therapeutic properties of dance, particularly the creative dimensions of improvisation within modern dance, and the emphasis on the interpersonal interactions in both group and individual psychotherapy sessions (Schmais & White, 1986). Unlike ballet, folk, and social dances, which were perceived as restrictive due to their structured organization and predefined steps, modern dance's emphasis on self-expression and innovation in movement has been the primary foundation of the development of dance/movement therapy (Schmais & White, 1986).

Sessions are conducted with another individual, or a group of individuals where the dance/movement therapist is an observer and witness to the movement expression considered "authentic" (Whitehouse, 1999, p. 66; Schmais & White, 1986). However, participants in these sessions frequently come from diverse cultural backgrounds, so their varying cultural contexts

are often overlooked (Panagiotopoulou, 2011). Hanna (1990) stresses the need for an anthropological perspective in dance/movement therapy for this, noting that models may be culturally interpreted differently. This underscores the importance of cultural awareness among dance/movement therapists (Hanna, 1990; Pallaro, 1993).

Several assessment and analytic tools exist when the dance/movement therapist observes movement, such as the Laban Movement Analysis framework and Irmgard Bartenieff's Fundamentals concepts (Levy, 1988). Despite recommendations against interpreting the movements of the individual, a lack of cultural awareness persists in movement observation, particularly when therapists from Western cultures assess individuals from non-Western or marginalized backgrounds (Payne, 1992; Hanna, 1990). To be culturally aware, dance/movement therapists must understand human differences and remain flexible in their practice to adapt to demographically diverse populations (Hanna, 1990).

According to the American Dance Therapy Association and Dance/Movement Therapy Certification Board (2015), the Code of Ethics and Standards emphasizes multicultural competency in various areas, including assessment, treatment planning, therapeutic relationships, training, education, supervision, workplace, research, ethical decision-making, and social justice advocacy. These guidelines urge dance/movement therapists to conduct self-examinations, develop self-awareness, and research societal dynamics related to power, privilege, and oppression (American Dance Therapy Association, 2015).

All counselors in the mental health field can act as activists by adopting a social justice perspective and broadening their theoretical focus to include the environmental contexts influencing both individuals and communities (Sue & Sue, 2013). When dance/movement therapists work with individuals of different backgrounds, movement should be viewed within

the context of an individual's cultural, gender, age, and social class influences (Hanna, 1990). While analyzing individual movement components for clarity might be useful, the true meaning of body language emerges from understanding the entire pattern, considering the individual's personal, cultural, and environmental experiences (Hanna, 1990). Additionally, integrating movement with verbal communication is crucial, as each form of language contributes uniquely to the overall message (Hanna, 1990).

Hanna (1990) posits that dance/movement therapists work with biologically, socially, and culturally influenced individuals functioning within complex sociocultural systems. For example, Hall (1969) posits human interaction with space is informed by a complex interplay of sensory inputs—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, and thermal. Each sensory system is intricate in itself and significantly influenced by cultural norms (Hall, 1969). This cultural shaping of sensory systems necessitates recognizing that individuals from different cultural backgrounds inhabit unique sensory worlds (Hall, 1969).

Urban settings frequently showcase the pitfalls of applying a standard middle-class, white verbally oriented model to individuals from diverse backgrounds (Hanna, 1990). This often leads to diagnostic and treatment misunderstandings, particularly when therapists encounter individuals with limited education or from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds, which can exacerbate communication challenges (Hanna, 1990). Therefore, therapists must adopt a personalized approach to educate and build rapport with individuals, using language that fosters trust (Hanna, 1990).

Since individuals with diverse backgrounds may hold values adopted from other cultures than their own, or others who have assimilated into dominant cultural norms, may prove the middle-class, Anglo-American model behind dance/movement therapy ineffective or even

detrimental (Hanna, 1990). This calls for creative techniques for an appropriate therapy format, whether individual or group sessions, based on the cultural context (Hanna, 1990). Effective therapy might involve engaging a support network that includes family, friends, and neighbors, recognizing that healing in many cultures involves activating these personal networks (Hanna, 1990).

One example of this is a dance/movement therapy model by Panagiotopoulou (2011) that elucidates the cultural context of the individual. From an anthropological perspective, addressing identity issues is essential for effective dance/movement therapy, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and engaging with individuals' cultural, social, and personal identities to enhance therapeutic outcomes (Panagiotopoulou, 2011). Consequently, Panagiotopoulou (2011) defines dance identity as the personal characteristics, such as structure and style, of each dance deeply rooted in an individual's cultural identity.

Therefore, framing cultural identity as dance identity within dance/movement therapy may eliminate potential barriers between dance/movement therapists and individuals while opening up communication (Panagiotopoulou, 2011). Additionally, the dance/movement therapist must adjust to the cultural needs of the individuals in their sessions in order to facilitate therapeutic outcomes (Panagiotopoulou, 2011). Overlooking an individual's dance identity may result in disengagement and lack of movement rather than promoting curiosity and movement expansion (Panagiotopoulou, 2011). Recognizing and valuing both the individual and therapist's dance identities is crucial for effective dance/movement therapy (Panagiotopoulou, 2011).

Embodied Oppression as Trauma

Oppression can be considered as the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal disempowerment of people based on sociocultural location, working to dehumanize

and undermine groups of people in its manifestations of racism, sexism, ableism, classism, heterosexism, transphobia, and xenophobia (Sue & Sue, 2013; Caldwell & Leighton, 2018). Thus, the social dynamics that suppress one group simultaneously elevate and create opportunities for another, implying that the presence of an oppressed group inherently involves a corresponding privileged group (Caldwell & Leighton, 2018). Other examples of social oppression are the denial of the existence of oppression itself and the denial of White, cis-male supremacy in general (Caldwell & Leighton, 2018).

Oppression is experienced in and through the body (Johnson, 2009). It manifests not only through overt violence but also through subtle, verbal, and nonverbal behaviors that convey derogatory or dismissive messages toward the oppressed groups, known as microaggressions (Pierce et al., 1977; Caldwell & Leighton, 2018). This occurs both interpersonally and socially, evident in the underrepresentation of influential people of color in the curricula of educational institutions (Pierce et al., 1977; Caldwell & Leighton, 2018). Microaggressions are one of the most common ways that those who do not fit the dominant cultural paradigm experience oppression (Caldwell & Leighton, 2018).

The body is the site of oppression (Caldwell & Leighton, 2018; Cantrick et al., 2018; Johnson, 2009). The somatic imprint of oppression mirrors that of episodic trauma, characterized by somatoform dissociation and a heightened restriction of movement (Johnson, 2009). Oppression is now defined as a collective trauma perpetrated between groups, existing on a continuum from microaggressions to macroaggressions (Kira et al., 2013). Trauma itself is recognized as a neurophysiological and psychosocial experience, impacting both the body and mind (O’Shea Brown, 2021). The somatic effects of trauma have been extensively researched and documented, including changes in the brain's activity, size of brain structures, and

functionality of processes such as memory and fear response (van der Kolk, 2014). Trauma can also lead to hyperarousal of the sympathetic nervous system, increased startle response, sleep disturbances, and heightened stress due to increased neurohormonal changes, which can result in depression (van der Kolk, 2014).

Menakem (2017) describes unhealed trauma behaving like a stone thrown into a pond, creating ripples that extend outward, initially affecting individuals and eventually influencing family and cultural norms. Over time, what may appear as individual character flaws, family dysfunction, or cultural abnormalities may in fact be manifestations of historical trauma (Menakem, 2017). These patterns of behavior may have once been adaptive, offering protection or hope, but when they persist in situations where they are no longer beneficial, they manifest as dysfunctional behavior at the individual, familial, or cultural levels (Menakem, 2017).

Oppressed individuals may adopt the trauma-based values and strategies of their oppressors, which need to be recognized and labeled as traumatic retentions, and actively challenged within their communities (Menakem, 2017). These harmful values and strategies must be unlearned through the body and its interactions with other healing bodies, not solely through cognitive processes (Menakem, 2017). For example, Menakem (2017) discusses how historically, divisive tactics were used to separate working-class Black and White Americans, as well as later European immigrants, by integrating them into a constructed identity of Whiteness. This false unity was used to redirect their unresolved trauma towards other marginalized groups, particularly Black Americans, offering only temporary relief from their pain and perpetuating a cycle of trauma and oppression (Menakem, 2017). This ongoing cycle has contributed to the institutionalization of White-body supremacy across various American systems and institutions (Menakem, 2017).

Upon first encountering each other, bodies instinctively either relax or tighten up as a self-protective measure, a process driven largely by the subconscious and rapid assessments of the "lizard brain" (Menakem, 2017, p. 92). This part of the brain swiftly evaluates numerous cues such as appearance, expressions, and behavior to determine if another person is safe (Menakem, 2017). Heuristically, it employs the similarity of the new individual to oneself, such as body size, clothing, and posture, leading to comfort among similar individuals and tension with those who are different (Menakem, 2017). This response is evident when White individuals often feel at ease around other White strangers but may feel uneasy around Black individuals, and vice versa for Black individuals (Menakem, 2017). However, unlike White Americans, Black Americans lack extensive, formal institutions that mitigate this discomfort (Menakem, 2017).

White fragility is described as a state where even minimal racial stress is intolerable for White individuals, leading to defensive behaviors such as anger, argumentation, or withdrawal (DiAngelo, 2011). This concept emerges because White people in North America are raised in an environment that insulates them from race-based stress, fostering expectations for racial comfort while diminishing their tolerance for racial stress (DiAngelo, 2011). During therapeutic sessions and racial dialogues, when White fragility is triggered, it results in efforts to restore racial equilibrium, often disrupting productive engagement on issues of race and perpetuating racial tensions (DiAngelo, 2011). The inability of White individuals to handle racial stress without resorting to defensive mechanisms illustrates a fundamental lack of resilience and understanding regarding racial realities, which hampers progress in addressing systemic racism (DiAngelo, 2011).

Menakem (2017) notes that White fragility triggers a range of defensive mechanisms among White Americans when challenged on issues of race and equity, such as diverting to

statistics, invoking legalism, assigning blame to Black individuals, expressing White guilt, or showing defensive association. These behaviors, supported and normalized by various institutions, like news corporations, are not just cultural artifacts but trauma responses manifesting as avoidance and gaslighting (Menakem, 2017). Additionally, Menakem (2017) describes the secondary trauma experienced by White Americans over centuries through their participation in, or failure to stop, the brutalization of Black individuals, compounded over generations and embedded culturally and genetically. This unprocessed trauma manifests in societal norms and personal behaviors, with White fragility serving as a protective mechanism to avoid confronting this trauma, embodying what Menakem calls "dirty pain" (Menakem, 2017, p. 102).

Furthermore, Menakem (2017) discusses the habitual strategies Black Americans adopt in the presence of White individuals to mitigate potential discomfort or threat, such as altering appearance, speech, and behavior—referred to as "de-blackening"—to avoid triggering White defensiveness (Menakem, 2017, p.102). This adaptive behavior, deeply ingrained in the African American experience, contrasts sharply with the immediate self-protective responses triggered in White individuals, highlighting a profound difference in racial experiences and responses within American society (Menakem, 2017).

Embodied Activism and Body Story

Activism, a powerful tool, challenges social norms that are perceived as harmful or unfair (Johnson, 2023a). The impact of these actions is not limited to a specific space, but rather, it depends on the focus of these actions (Johnson, 2023a). At the microsociological level, often overlooked, microactivism empowers each individual to effect social change in their lives, amplifying their leadership capabilities on crucial issues (Johnson, 2023a). This approach

provides a platform for anti-oppression work and democratizes activism, making it more accessible, immediate, and sustainable (Johnson, 2023a).

Microactivism fosters change within the relational dynamics of society, aligning structural changes with authentic shifts in attitudes and behaviors, ensuring that fundamental rights and responsibilities are deeply felt and expressed in everyday interpersonal interactions (Johnson, 2023a). Therefore, both nonverbal and verbal interactions underscore as dominant forms of social control (Johnson, 2023a). The embodied nature of individuals is crucial in navigating social power dynamics and fostering new ways of relating to each other (Johnson, 2023a).

Since much harm is inflicted at the bodily level, incorporating the body into activism, especially within the microsociological context, is essential (Johnson, 2023a). Embodied oppression also manifests in relationships, stressing the importance of connections in combating oppressive systems (Johnson, 2023a). Oppression works by fostering disconnection, not only between people but also between the mind and body, perpetuating relational strains that are always present, not just historical (Caldwell & Leighton, 2018; Cantrick et al., 2018; Johnson, 2009; Johnson, 2023a).

The human body is a battleground for both oppression and resistance, rich with knowledge, creativity, and connectivity (Johnson, 2023a). Hence, Johnson (2023a) states that perceptiveness and responsiveness are vital for social change. Perceptiveness involves understanding underlying motives and unconscious biases, requiring introspection and a broad perspective (Johnson, 2023a). Responsiveness involves tuning into complex bodily sensations and impulses to inform, rather than control, actions (Johnson, 2023a). This can lead to a more measured approach, promoting integrity and transforming interactions (Johnson, 2023a).

By nurturing perceptiveness and responsiveness, individuals can disrupt entrenched relational patterns, allowing new forms of interaction and activism to blossom (Johnson, 2023a). These changes might be subtle, like a slight lift of the chin or a soft breath, or more overt, like resisting authority by maintaining one's physical space (Johnson, 2023a). Ultimately, these tools bring the body into activism in transformative ways, impacting both the individual and the broader world, sparking a beacon of hope for a more just and equitable society (Johnson, 2023a).

The concept of a body story is introduced as a central element in understanding and addressing the embodied experience of oppression (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). The term refers to narratives that encapsulate the lived, bodily experiences of individuals who navigate daily life under oppressive systems (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). These body stories serve as a powerful tool in therapeutic sessions by enabling both therapists and individuals to explore the somatic dimensions of oppression (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). By focusing on the physical embodiment of individual experiences, body stories facilitate a deeper understanding of how oppressive dynamics manifest physically and psychologically (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). They provide a framework that can lead to strategies for embodied social change, making them a valuable resource for practitioners seeking to address and dismantle systemic inequalities in a therapeutic context (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b).

Body story is a concept that highlights the nuanced way the body communicates through sensations rather than words, capturing experiences that are often deeply entwined with oppressive social systems (Johnson, 2023a). These systems frequently exert power to control and dominate, leading to experiences that individuals may subconsciously suppress or struggle to articulate (Johnson, 2023a). This repression can stem from various motives, including the desire

to forget painful experiences, denial of one's complicity in others' harm, or minimization that perpetuates abusive structures (Johnson, 2023a).

However, integral to these body stories is not just the narrative of oppression but also a counternarrative of resistance (Johnson, 2023a). Despite the pressures to remain unseen and unheard, these stories reveal how individuals resist erasure, asserting their presence and impact through visceral and enduring experiences (Johnson, 2023a). In therapeutic contexts, body stories serve as crucial tools for recognizing and addressing these embedded traumas, facilitating a journey towards healing and acknowledgment in individuals' lives (Johnson, 2023a). They not only reflect the somatic imprint of relational harm but also embody the resilience and insistence on visibility and acknowledgment, challenging oppressive narratives and fostering an environment of recovery and resistance (Johnson, 2023a)

Crafting a body story is a meticulous and reflective practice designed to uncover deeper layers of embodied experience, particularly those related to oppression (Johnson, 2023a). This method relies on a combination of experiential anatomy and sensory awareness, which are grounded in Eastern and Indigenous traditions, emphasizing the understanding of the body through reflection and expression (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). The process involves a set of carefully designed catalyst questions and experiential prompts, which are best approached with curiosity, self-compassion, and patience (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). The tools aim to gradually peel back the layers of an individual's experiences, similar to somatic archaeology, requiring careful examination and reflection through each layer (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b).

Some example questions that can act as a catalyst for introspection are as follows: one can reflect on their experiences of oppression and ponder how their physical appearance or body

functionality has played a role in such experiences (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). In addition, one can consider how these experiences of oppression affect their relationship with their own body, including the level of connection they feel (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). It is also useful to question in what ways their body holds privilege and how oppression has impacted their body (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). Authentic movement and sensory awareness are experiential catalysts that can uncover implicit memories, sensations, and insights that may otherwise be difficult to access (Johnson, 2023a).

Crafting a body story is not straightforward but a complex, ongoing journey that requires pauses for re-evaluation and reflection to avoid re-traumatization (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b). Support systems, both internal and external, are crucial to safely navigate and process past traumas embedded within the body to ensure that the process is healing rather than harmful (Johnson, 2023a; Johnson, 2023b).

Embodied Code-Switching Feedback Loop

Warren (2018) introduces the Embodied Code-Switching Feedback Loop, a theoretical framework exploring the nuanced dynamics of cultural frame-switching among bicultural and multicultural individuals. The framework delineates three pivotal entry points—sensation, interpretation, and action—that collectively facilitate the process of navigating between cultural contexts (Warren, 2018). Multiple primary entry points accommodate each individual's switching experiences between cultural environments (Warren, 2018).

The Sensation entry point focuses on internal and external sensory inputs, such as physiological reactions, environmental stimuli, and interpersonal relationships, initiating code-switching (Warren, 2018). This could be the first place where individuals experience code-switching, both from external factors and the impact it can have on their physical

well-being (Warren, 2018). The human body is shaped by cultural and societal standards, expectations, and the trauma that has been passed down through generations (Warren, 2018). It carries unspoken messages of power, oppression, and privilege (Warren, 2018). When one tries to be more in tune with their body's sensations, it is important to approach it with care and respect, taking into account these deeply ingrained legacies and the delicate balance between safety and risk while exploring the language of their own body (Warren, 2018).

Sensory awareness activities are emphasized to enhance the understanding of how cultural and societal influences impact bodily responses, such as Hall's (1969) pedagogical tool called "inventory of sensing" to help one more aware of their sensory perceptions (Hall, 1969, p. 171; Warren, 2018). This method involves rating one's sensitivity to the five primary senses, including sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, as well as additional sensations like temperature and spatial awareness (Hall, 1969, p. 171). This exercise aims to deepen understanding of how cultural backgrounds and personal history shape one's sensory experiences (Hall, 1969).

The Interpretation entry point involves the internalization and cognitive processing of sensory data into beliefs, emotions, and thoughts about one's cultural identity (Warren, 2018). It is often where questions of identity arise, such as feeling comfortable or conflicted and ability versus lack of knowledge (Warren, 2018). This entry point provides a space for individuals to reflect on personal and familial narratives, thus deepening their understanding of how cultural backgrounds shape their self-concept and worldviews (Warren, 2018).

Lastly, the Action entry point examines individuals' behavioral adaptations in varying cultural settings (Warren, 2018). It focuses on nonverbal communication adjustments, such as gestures, expressions, and use of space, and explores how these changes express and affect one's cultural identity (Warren, 2018). Individuals' choices in different cultural environments are

influenced by their prior sensory and interpretative experiences, both conscious and unconscious (Warren, 2018). Through the practice of journaling or engaging in discussions, individuals can take a closer look at moments when their communication patterns have shifted (Warren, 2018). This approach allows them to understand how these changes affect their cultural identity expression (Warren, 2018). By reflecting on these experiences, people can improve their ability to interact more authentically and comfortably across cultures (Warren, 2018). Ultimately, this enriches their ability to navigate and blend multiple cultural identities (Warren, 2018).

Warren (2018) offers an exercise designed to help individuals understand the effect of personal space boundaries on physiological responses and perceptions. In this exercise, participants pair up, and one person walks towards the other until the standing partner signals that they have reached their personal boundary (Warren, 2018). This moment triggers awareness of internal sensations and emotional reactions (Warren, 2018). After discussing their experiences, the participants switch roles (Warren, 2018). The exercise aims to connect physiological responses, such as muscle tension or breath-holding, with personal space preferences and introduces a cultural perspective while revealing how these dynamics can lead to misunderstandings or stereotypes between different races, cultures, or genders (Warren, 2018). By analyzing nonverbal cues and reactions, such as a person moving away or avoiding eye contact, participants explore how these interactions might generalize into stereotypes, impacting broader social dynamics and perpetuating cultural discord (Warren, 2018).

The embodied code-switching feedback loop model underscores the complexity of holding multiple cultural frames and the importance of a thoughtful, introspective approach to integrating and expressing cultural identities through bodily experiences (Warren, 2018). By examining bodily experiences, the model provides a comprehension of the dynamic and

multifaceted nature of individuals with many cultural backgrounds (Warren, 2018). It highlights the significance of curiosity, self-compassion, and patience while navigating the complexities of cultural integration and expression (Warren, 2018).

Identity Expression Infinity Loop

Warren (2018) introduces the Identity Expression Infinity Loop, a conceptual framework that illustrates the fluid identity shifts individuals with multiple cultural backgrounds experience as they navigate different social and cultural environments. This model visually represents transitions among three distinct identities in response to two contrasting cultural contexts (Warren, 2018). Warren (2018) exemplifies this by discussing how her multicultural identity is more pronounced in her current town, while her Santa Clara Pueblo identity becomes prominent during her visits to the Pueblo. Although typically less active, her Brazilian identity occasionally emerges in specific emotional expressions (Warren, 2018). Central to the model is the moment of cultural transition, where activating the Embodied Code-Switching Feedback Loop facilitates adaptation to the prevailing cultural environment (Warren, 2018). This is exemplified when Warren (2018) describes entering Santa Clara Pueblo and experiencing shifts in physical posture, conversation style, and temporal perception due to new sensory inputs and cognitive interpretations.

Warren (2018) emphasizes that code-switching often occurs so rapidly that individuals seldom have the opportunity for conscious adjustment. Thus, she advocates deliberately slowing down the process to understand the internal sensations and external stimuli that trigger these identity shifts (Warren, 2018). Reflecting on these transitions helps recognize what is gained or lost during each and enables the development of strategies that enhance the regulation and

expression of the relevant identity, thereby fostering better adaptation and deeper connections within diverse cultural settings (Warren, 2018).

Warren (2018) believes that comprehending and embracing one's own diversity is crucial before appreciating the diversity of others. Both models aim to empower people from multicultural backgrounds by helping them turn perceived obstacles into strengths while giving recognition to all aspects of their experiences (Warren, 2018). By involving their bodies as active contributors in defining their identities, individuals with multiple cultural backgrounds can create a cultural home that not only promotes authenticity but deepens their connections with the cultures and relationships that shape and enrich their lives, fostering a sense of belonging and community (Warren, 2018).

Liberating Movement

In an interview between Rae Johnson (2023a) and Christine Caldwell, liberating movement is described as the ability to navigate between various levels of movement, from subtle, micro-movements at the cellular level to expansive, whole-body movements that engage in broader social interactions. Liberating movement emphasizes a spectrum of freedom, ranging from constrained movements, which are often automatic or involuntary, to free and unconstrained movements that are fully within an individual's control (Johnson, 2023a). The essence of liberating movement lies in its focus on maintaining bodily integrity and authority, ensuring that individuals have the autonomy to move freely and adaptively across different contexts (Johnson, 2023a). This concept extends beyond mere physical freedom; it incorporates an understanding of movement as a form of expression and communication, emphasizing the individual's right to express themselves authentically through their movements without external limitations (Johnson, 2023a).

The concept of "exterminated" movement refers to the loss or suppression of authentic cultural expressions through oppressive systems, particularly in marginalized and colonized groups (Johnson, 2023a, p. 79). This phenomenon occurs when dominant cultural forces systematically eradicate the native or inherent movement styles and body languages of subordinated groups (Johnson, 2023a). Johnson (2023a) and Caldwell draw a parallel to the historical suppression of native languages, highlighting how colonial powers often deliberately extinguished indigenous languages and suppressed native cultural expressions, including those manifested through movement. This loss is significant, not only for cultural heritage but also for personal and communal identity expressed through the body (Johnson, 2023a). Cultural body languages can be so thoroughly colonized or modified that individuals may not even have a clear sense of their authentic movement repertoire to return to, as their original modes of expression were not permitted to survive or develop naturally within an oppressive framework (Johnson, 2023a). The idea here is that the authentic expressions of these groups are either appropriated or completely obliterated, leaving a vacuum where genuine, culturally specific movements once existed (Johnson, 2023a).

Sedimentation is another concept that refers to how past trauma and oppressive social forces can impact the body, shaping movements and expressions in ways that individuals may not be fully aware of (Johnson, 2023a). This term is used to describe how these experiences can become deeply embedded or "sedimented" into the body, affecting how a person moves and even how they perceive their own identity (Johnson, 2023a, p. 82). Sedimentation is a form of internalization of external constraints and traumas and how these sedimented movements become habitual over time, forming a part of the individual's identity to the extent that they are perceived as natural or inherent (Johnson, 2023a). However, these movements often carry the

weight of oppression and trauma, subtly influencing the individual's behavior and interactions (Johnson, 2023a).

Thus, addressing sedimentation involves recognizing these ingrained patterns and critically examining them (Johnson, 2023a). The process of liberating movement seeks to help individuals feel and understand the depth of this sedimentation, allowing them to question whether these ingrained movements and postures truly serve their well-being or if they are merely relics of past constraints (Johnson, 2023a). By paying close attention to habitual movements, individuals can analyze and breakdown these patterns, and explore their origins (Johnson, 2023a). This is a critical step towards movement liberation, as it involves not just changing physical movements, but also gaining a deep understanding of why one moves in a certain way (Johnson, 2023a). Individuals can make a more conscious and empowered decision to continue with or alter these patterns, based on their own personal needs and choices (Johnson, 2023a).

The idea of a liberating movement emphasizes the freedom for individuals to be creative and evolve new forms of movement without fear of criticism for deviating from traditional or what is considered as authentic expressions (Johnson, 2023a). This means that while it is valuable to preserve and recreate historical movement forms, it is equally important to create an environment where individuals can innovate and create new forms of expression that reflect their current experiences and identities (Johnson, 2023a). This perspective on movement frees individuals from the constraints of strictly adhering to traditional cultural norms and allows them to explore and develop new ways of moving that can be equally legitimate and expressive (Johnson, 2023a). Johnson (2023a) and Caldwell highlight that evolving new movements is a dynamic process, one that should be embraced as part of the broader spectrum of cultural

expression. They argue against the view that only traditional forms of movement are valid, instead advocating for a more inclusive understanding of cultural expression that values innovation and personal creativity (Johnson, 2023a). This approach helps to broaden the scope of what is considered acceptable or legitimate in cultural and movement practices, encouraging a more fluid and evolving interpretation of cultural identity (Johnson, 2023a).

The process of liberating one's movement is detailed through several progressive phases (Johnson, 2023a). Initially, individuals are encouraged to recognize and become aware of their sedimented movement patterns—deeply ingrained behaviors shaped by past traumas and societal norms (Johnson, 2023a). Following this awareness, the next step involves mindful observation, where these patterns are attentively observed without judgment or immediate intent to change (Johnson, 2023a).

This leads to a phase of conscious engagement, in which individuals deliberately continue these patterns to deepen their understanding (Johnson, 2023a). As familiarity increases, the process allows for the exploration of associations, where emotions, images, and alternative movements naturally emerge (Johnson, 2023a). For instance, instead of walking in a straight line, one might start to move in a zigzag pattern (Johnson, 2023a). Experimentation with these new movements is then encouraged, fostering a playful exploration that challenges old patterns (Johnson, 2023a).

The final phase is integration and transformation, where these new movements are incorporated into daily life, replacing the old patterns with more authentic expressions of self (Johnson, 2023a). This approach is designed to transition individuals from restricted movements to a more liberated and expressive state, facilitating a profound transformation in how they move and interact with their environment (Johnson, 2023a).

Liberation Psychology and Concepts

Liberation psychology employs interdisciplinary, culturally informed practices that respect and honor the spiritual and cultural traditions of oppressed groups, facilitating healing, resilience, and social justice (Comas-Díaz, 2020). Individuals are empowered to redefine oppressive narratives while asserting their identities and agencies by constructing new liberation frameworks to reject the internalization of oppression (Comas-Díaz, 2007; Comas-Díaz, 2020). When working with individuals to achieve liberation, it is believed that their liberation could inspire others (Freire, 2000).

Liberation psychology tackles the enduring psychological impacts of oppression, addressing historical, socioeconomic, and geopolitical influences without pathologizing the responses of affected individuals (Comas-Díaz, 2007; Comas-Díaz, 2020). Unlike the singular incidents that characterize post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), oppression trauma affects self-esteem, agency, and overall well-being on a continuous basis, impacting emotional, physical, and spiritual health (Comas-Díaz, 2007; Comas-Díaz, 2020). This requires a culturally and historically informed therapeutic approach, particularly for those in poverty facing multiple stressors (Comas-Díaz, 2020). As oppression is a global issue, so too are the concepts of liberation and its psychological practices (Burton & Guzzo, 2020).

An illustrative example is the re-appropriation of the Virgin Mary into la Virgen de Guadalupe by Latinx communities, particularly Mexicans and Mexican Americans, reflecting their aspirations for liberation (Castillo, 1996). La Virgen de Guadalupe, derived from the syncretization of the Aztec goddess Tonantzin, has become an emblem of resistance, empowerment, and cultural pride (Castillo, 1996).

The principles of liberation psychology have developed into a modern, constantly evolving, anti-oppressive theory intended to counteract oppression and marginalization (Rivera, 2020). Knowledge is recognized as a social and political construct, requiring a subjective understanding of social realities that acknowledge oppression's intersectional, fluid nature (Montero, 2016; Rivera, 2020). This allows individual and collective experiences of oppression to complement each other instead of dominating each other (Rivera, 2020).

The initial step is to seek new or past knowledge, including indigenous ways of knowing and historical analysis of the historical, socio-economic, and political contexts that shape the psychological experiences of oppressed groups (Comas-Díaz, 2020; Rivera, 2020). Societal structures and historical memory recovery must be investigated in partnership with oppressed communities, social scientists, and practitioners (Rivera, 2020). Understanding historical memory provides essential information about values, fears, and beliefs to guide interventions toward freedom and healing from a cultural standpoint (Rivera, 2020).

Analyzing dominant societal messages from marginalized experiences challenges the dominant cultural narratives perpetuated by social scientists within the United States (Martín-Baró, 1998, as cited in Rivera, 2020). Maritza Montero (2009) developed this method further as an intentional, engaged process to rebuild worldviews by integrating personal experiences within a larger societal framework and the interdependence of various influences. This approach empowers clients to engage with their cultural and social realities actively, transforming them from passive observers to active participants in their therapeutic journey (Comas-Díaz, 2020). This de-ideologizing process involves a collaboration with oppressed communities to question and reflect on the realities imposed on them by dominant societal narratives (Rivera, 2020). In examining beliefs and assumptions, denaturalization exposes and

refuses to normalize the underlying power dynamics, discrimination, and oppression (Rivera, 2020).

Both de-ideologizing and denaturalization involve problematization, a critical process of analyzing life circumstances and their roles in shaping the experiences of an individual (Rivera, 2020). Questioning explanations and assumptions helps gain insight into the issues faced by the oppressed populations from the perspective of the oppressed (Rivera, 2020). Liberation psychologists must, therefore, aim to identify problems related to the inconsistencies between the lived experiences of these individuals and their beliefs about how things should be (Rivera, 2020). It is a crucial process of discussion, questioning, and reflection to create critical thinking and change, emphasizing people's strengths related to a particular issue that a group of oppressed individuals is experiencing in a specific context or circumstance (Rivera, 2020).

Continuing with a strengths-based approach, it is imperative to utilize the virtues of oppressed communities when working towards improving their quality of life (Rivera, 2020). These virtues have helped them be strong and resilient in the face of difficult circumstances (Rivera, 2020). By focusing on the people's virtues, the tools passed down through generations could be transformed into important tools for liberation (Rivera, 2020).

Promoting critical consciousness, or conscientization, in individuals and groups is another crucial component of liberation psychology (Rivera, 2020). Conscientization refers to the continuous process of raising awareness and mobilizing consciousness, enabling individuals to free themselves from situations, facts, or relationships they may have previously ignored or been unaware of (Rivera, 2020). Becoming aware can inspire action and a shift towards possibility, regardless of the nature of the situation (Montero, 2016). The term is intentionally broad because the ultimate goal is to expand, rather than limit, one's understanding and

perception of the world (Rivera, 2020). Cumulatively, rediscovering historical memory, de-ideologizing cultural truths, nurturing people's virtues, and applying this knowledge to specific contexts and lived experiences through problematization is when the process of critical consciousness emerges and is maintained (Rivera, 2020).

Liberation through conscientization is a process that aims to transform institutions and practices that produce inequality and oppression, beginning with the conscientization of participants who become aware of their rights and responsibilities within society (Montero & Sonn, 2009; Rivera, 2020). By doing so, individuals and groups are empowered and transformed, enabling them to develop new forms of social identity (Montero & Sonn, 2009; Rivera, 2020). Conscientization is a continuous process that enables new forms of consciousness and liberatory praxis by bridging theory and action (Martín-Baró, 1998, as cited in Rivera, 2020).

Liberation psychology challenges power dynamics in research and practice by addressing how power imbalances affect marginalized and excluded groups (Montero et al., 2017). Understanding power is essential for achieving wellness, promoting liberation, and resisting oppression, specifically that it is both political and psychological, just as wellness, liberation, and oppression are (Rivera, 2020). Hence, when working with clients, liberation psychology requires considering power in every aspect (Rivera, 2020). Power is defined by Martín-Baró (1998, as cited in Rivera, 2020) as the imposition of one person's will over another's, with a focus on the social system. It also includes the probability of one's will being enforced, even in the face of resistance, and the inconsistency between experiences and consciousness (Martín-Baró, 1998, as cited in Rivera, 2020). However, a practical approach involving the community is necessary to effect change (Rivera, 2020).

Praxis is integral to liberation psychology, where theory and practice are interconnected because theory is rendered ineffective without application (Rivera, 2020). The result of reclaiming one's history, unlearning cultural biases, discovering people's virtues, and making sense of oppressive situations is critical consciousness, becoming aware of one's own reality (Rivera, 2020). Additionally, this involves examining the past critically and looking forward with creativity and imagination (Rivera, 2020). This creates a tension between looking backward and moving forward, known as praxis, and ignites reflection and action (Rivera, 2020). Ultimately, praxis is a way to describe the truth that exists in the present moment within a person (Rivera, 2020).

Martín-Baró noted that psychologists must liberate themselves personally before they can liberate others (Rivera, 2020). Liberation psychology requires psychologists to take a praxis-based approach that aligns with their clients, acting as a witness, partner, mirror, and vessel of faith (Rivera, 2020). The aim is to assist individuals who have been marginalized to achieve their complete potential by recollecting their historical memory, engaging in critical analysis, and working towards social action and change (Rivera, 2020). Every social science research and practice should strive towards the same objective, and this progress should be steered by the individuals' experiences, perceptions, and actions (Rivera, 2020).

Liberation psychology addresses how systems of domination contribute to the internalization of oppression and the psychological impacts of colonization, such as postcolonization stress disorder, particularly among people of color affected by racial victimization and cultural imperialism (Quiñones-Rosado, 2020; Comas-Díaz, 2000; Comas-Díaz, 2007). Liberation psychologists are urged to use decolonial and postcolonial strategies to challenge Eurocentric ideals and power structures, helping clients deconstruct

oppressive narratives, reformulate identities, and develop sociopolitical awareness to drive transformative changes (Comas-Díaz, 2007; Comas-Díaz, 2020).

Liberation Psychotherapeutic Relationship

The liberation psychotherapeutic relationship shares foundational elements with mainstream therapy, such as establishing trust and a positive working alliance, yet it diverges by addressing the unique needs of socially oppressed groups through practices rooted in radical humility, accompaniment, psychospiritual development, and activism (Comas-Díaz, 2020).

Liberation therapists prioritize a human connection with radical humility, embracing the humanity of the individual with radical empathy, and engaging in empathetic reflection in a mirroring process (Afuape, 2011; Comas-Díaz, 2020). Comas-Díaz (2014) referred to this process as multicultural mirroring, which involves the therapist empathizing with the experiences of the individual to show that they can feel and embody their emotional state with sensorial modes of connection (Comas-Díaz, 2020). This therapeutic approach emphasizes genuine human interactions, rejecting the role of a detached expert for the therapist (Comas-Díaz, 2020). The therapists are dedicated to mirroring the experiences of individuals, promoting mutual healing, and embracing interconnectedness (Comas-Díaz, 2020). They embody the philosophy of the phrase, "*Tú eres mi otro yo*," meaning you are my other me, which emphasizes the shared journey of healing, empowerment, and togetherness (Comas-Díaz, 2020).

Liberation therapists actively work to create a safe, sacred, and co-created therapeutic space with individuals, moving away from a prescriptive approach to one that values the narratives and perspectives of individuals on healing (Comas-Díaz, 2020). Therapists incorporate the stories and insights of individuals into their own healing process to understand their views on

emotional challenges, which is parallel to the anthropological-mental health tool called the explanatory model of distress (Kleinman, 1980; Comas-Díaz, 2020).

Therapists take on flexible roles to accommodate the needs of individuals, such as serving as advocates or mentors, while acknowledging the present power dynamics in the therapeutic relationship and any positions of privilege or oppression they may hold (Comas-Díaz, 2020; Rivera, 2020). This openness extends to appropriate self-disclosure to strengthen the therapeutic alliance, informed by an understanding of positionality and its impact on the therapeutic process (Comas-Díaz, 2020).

A key aspect of this approach is *acompañamiento*, or accompaniment, where therapists stand alongside individuals to offer support through listening, witnessing, and advocating; fostering critical consciousness and collaborative relationships (Comas-Díaz, 2000; Comas-Díaz, 2020). Dialoguing is central to this process, aimed at de-ideologizing oppressive narratives and promoting critical consciousness and liberation (Comas-Díaz, 2020; Rivera, 2020). Decolonization and creativity are also vital to challenge dominant cultural narratives and to encourage individuals to express their resilience and narratives of liberation through creative means, such as artivism (Comas-Díaz, 2020; Rivera, 2020). This process includes nurturing the spiritual development and activism of the individual and recognizing spirituality as a powerful source of resilience, inspiration, and hope (Comas-Díaz, 2020). Therefore, liberation psychology represents a holistic, empathetic, and justice-oriented approach that values the mutual healing of therapist and individual, honors the narratives and cultural backgrounds of the individual, and actively engages in the broader struggle for social justice and personal liberation (Comas-Díaz, 2012; Comas-Díaz, 2020).

Overall, liberation psychotherapists guide individuals towards reclaiming their cultural heritage, recognizing their ancestral roots, enhancing their critical consciousness, transforming detrimental thoughts, feelings, and actions, and nurturing a commitment to social justice endeavors (Comas-Díaz, 2020). They assist individuals in developing sociopolitical consciousness with supportive accompaniment in the journey toward recovery, healing, and personal growth (Comas-Díaz, 2020). Embracing their shared humanity, liberation therapists aim for both individual and communal emancipation, building connections with other marginalized groups and participating in movements for social justice and spiritual advocacy (Comas-Díaz, 2020). Their ultimate objective is to contribute towards creating an equitable society marked by harmonious living, mutual respect, and the principle of buen vivir (Comas-Díaz, 2020).

Liberation Psychology Origins and Evolution

Liberation psychology, founded in 1986 by Ignacio Martín-Baró (1986, as cited in Burton & Guzzo, 2020) in El Salvador, is a psychological theory developed to serve the poor and oppressed majorities on the continent (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). Influenced by critical pedagogy, participative action research, and liberation theology, liberation psychology seeks to address the psychological impacts of oppression and advocate for social change by transforming the traditional roles of psychology towards one that resists and dismantles oppressive structures (Burton & Guzzo, 2020).

Before liberation psychology was established, similar developments emerged globally (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). In the early 1900s, W. E. B. Du Bois (1994) in the United States introduced themes of the transformative power of education and “double-consciousness” as necessary tools for restoring justice and acknowledging the fatalistic consequences of structural and institutional racism (Du Bois, 1994, p. 2). In the late 1960s, thinkers like Frantz Fanon

(1967, as cited in Burton & Guzzo, 2020), Albert Memmi (1969, as cited in Burton & Guzzo, 2020), and Syed Hussein Alatas (1972, as cited in Burton & Guzzo, 2020) examined how colonized people might emulate their oppressors, but could reject this through collective efforts for liberation. Concurrently, Latin American decolonial praxis developed in response to oppressive regimes, incorporating diverse theories to overcome colonial legacies and promote social liberation (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). Collectively, these movements foreshadowed the decolonial framework of liberation psychology, which critically addresses the impact of Western European colonization, such as the imposition of Western values and ideology (Burton & Guzzo, 2020).

One of the goals of liberation psychology is to stress education as a means of achieving liberation and social justice, with critical pedagogy being a foundational element for the field (Burton & Guzzo, 2020; Freire, 2000). By transforming education into a tool for critical consciousness, critical pedagogy encourages learners to question and challenge dominant beliefs and practices (Burton & Guzzo, 2020; Freire, 2000). Paulo Freire (2000) advanced critical pedagogy in Brazil during the 19070s, highlighting the importance of conscientization and empowering marginalized communities with culture-awareness-freedom triad to eliminate illiteracy, freeing them from oppression with a “pedagogy of the oppressed” (Freire, 2000, p. 3).

Liberation theology emerged in the marginalized communities of Latin America as a response to systemic poverty and social injustices, advocating for social change by integrating Marxist concepts and social scientific methods into Catholic doctrine (de la Corte Ibañez, 2001, as cited in Burton & Guzzo, 2020). Influential figures like Gustavo Gutierrez and Ignacio Ellacuria promoted this theology, which, coupled with the 1968 Medellín conference, sparked

the rise of social movements and increased political consciousness in Latin American countries (Burton & Guzzo, 2020).

Participative action research is a transformative, collaborative approach that challenges and reshapes traditional academic practices and has played a pivotal role in the emergence and evolution of liberation psychology (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). In the 1970s, social scientists from Tanzania, Mexico, India, Brazil, and Colombia joined with community actors themselves to reevaluate social theory and practice radically, focusing on community-driven social transformation (Fals Borda, 2001). Fals Borda and Rahman (1991) further developed this in their idealized model of participative action research, encompassing research on lived experience with adult education and sociopolitical action to generate reliable, empowering, and liberating knowledge. Central to this method is a commitment to challenging traditional research-subject dynamics and emphasizing the intrinsic value of local sociocultural practices and experiences, often diminished by historical conquests and colonial legacies (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991).

Fals Borda and Rahman (1991) outlined four key methodological elements of participative action research to construct neutral power relations: collective research, critical recovery of history, valuing and applying folk culture, and disseminating new knowledge. These aspects shaped liberation psychology, emphasizing collaborative community engagement, recognizing local knowledge and experiences, and dedication to social change and empowerment (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). The influence of critical pedagogy, liberation theology, and participative action research underscores the interdisciplinary and activist roots of liberation psychology (Burton & Guzzo, 2020).

Liberation psychology reinvigorated after a ten-year period of stagnation following the murder of Martín-Baró in 1989, saw renewed interest at the turn of the century, highlighted by

the first International Congress of Liberation Psychology in Mexico City, Mexico, and subsequent conferences across Latin America that deepened the scientific discourse on social issues like violence and inequality (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). Despite limited theoretical innovation outside of Colombia, Brazil, and Guatemala, the field gained traction globally and influenced movements in regions experiencing systemic oppression, including South Africa, the Philippines, and Ireland, and parallel developments in Palestine, Italy, and beyond (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). While sometimes independent, these developments share core characteristics with liberation psychology, such as the emphasis on indigenous knowledge, historical memory, and a focus on liberation from oppression (Burton & Guzzo, 2020).

Applying liberation psychology principles in Palestine highlights the importance of cultural and contextual relevance in psychological practices (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). Characterized by oppression and resistance against the settler State of Israel, Palestinians have demonstrated a variety of nonviolent collective practices influenced by the arts and drama (Silwadi & Mayo, 2014). In contrast to the usual postcolonial environments where liberation psychology was implemented, Palestine presents a unique case where modern community psychological concepts, such as the sense of community through collective resistance, identity, and solidarity against the continuous encroachment of Palestinian territories (Silwadi & Mayo, 2014). *Sumud*, meaning steadfastness, reflects the Palestinian resistance to colonial violence while highlighting active resistance and collective struggle (Burton & Guzzo, 2020; Silwadi & Mayo, 2014). The term provides a culturally relevant framework to address the psychological effects of colonial violence, similar to the approach of Martín-Baró in reconstructing psychological constructs based on the experience of the oppressed majority in the specific context of the application (Meari, 2015; Burton & Guzzo, 2020). Western frameworks on trauma

are associated with individualism and inadequately capture the collective resilience of those oppressed by colonialism, underscoring the need for context-specific psychological approaches that acknowledge active forms of coping (Meari, 2015; Burton & Guzzo, 2020).

The broader implication of liberation psychology is that its principles can be applied to different socio-political contexts, as demonstrated by Palestine's example (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). Such adaptation underscores the importance of integrating psychological practice with local cultures, histories, and collective struggles (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). This approach differs from traditional schools of psychology or subdisciplines by introducing innovative reconstructions of psychological concepts and practices prioritizing the perspectives of oppressed and excluded individuals (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). The field of liberation psychology is more relevant now than ever due to the rising global challenges in ecological crises, fascism, displacement, abuse, disability, and genocidal State crimes (Burton & Guzzo, 2020).

Liberation psychology must actively engage with global social movements, reevaluate psychological concepts from the perspective of the oppressed, and adapt practices to remain relevant and not merely rhetorical (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). It is important to continuously examine the economic, political, and social contexts to recognize the role of psychology in upholding dominant ideologies (Burton & Guzzo, 2020). Each liberation psychologist must recognize their influence on psychological knowledge and its impact on society, advocating these principles through activism in all regions (Burton & Guzzo, 2020).

Discussion

Human beings have inherent needs for safety, belonging, esteem, affection, and connection, as well as a desire for control and creating meaning. These needs shape culture, which varies among different groups. Humans also have the capacity to produce nearly

three-quarters of a million distinct physical signs, such as specific hand gestures, facial expressions, and bodily postures unique to each culture. As needs shape culture, culture shapes the needs deeply in the human mind, body, and relationships. From the lens of dance/movement therapy, culture is not merely a backdrop to human lives but a vibrant force that shapes an individual's very being, the integrated embodiment of the mind-body connection–the physical and mental manifestation of identity.

Embedded within every gesture, word, and thought of an individual is the living embodiment of historical, interpersonal, and communal bonds that define their cultural identity. Physical and sensorimotor experiences shape both mental processes, such as perception of emotions and time, and movement among relationships, such as interpersonal spatial distancing. Soft and hard embodiment are concepts that organize the psychological and physical transformations driven by culture with other contextual factors such as, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and more. Thus, embodied interactions with others are further enriched by cultural contexts, consciously and unconsciously, implying that cultural norms and values can be embodied relationally.

The complex relationship between physical experiences, social interactions, and human behavior can be viewed as a series of interconnected, relational patterns–a cultural tapestry–within an individual's mind-body connection. These patterns are shaped and reshaped by the individual's personal experiences within their culture, continuously evolving and adapting. Culture is an integration of the mind and body that shapes individuals from the inside out, thereby influencing human existence.

Cultural patterns and rhythms deeply reflect a cultural group’s historical context and are lived and felt within the bodies of its members. From childhood, interpersonal and intergroup

relationships in cultural practices and beliefs nurture a profound sense of belonging, significance, and purpose, critically molding the embodiment of one's cultural identity. This embodiment transcends physical expressions to verbal language, nonverbal formalities, and deeply ingrained thoughts.

The associated movement profile of cultural identity is perhaps the result of the concept of a cultural home—an environment rich with consistent socialization patterns and traditions that help define roles and delineate between in-group and out-group dynamics. To reach cultural salience involves embodying the culture's values and beliefs, communicating effectively (verbally and nonverbally), and maintaining interpersonal/intergroup connections while engaging in expected behaviors within paralinguistics, kinesics, and proxemics. These are dynamically interactive, with each behavior constantly shaping and reshaping the other, and are fundamental to embodiment. Consequently, the embodiment of culture emerges from a rich tapestry of a shared human experience in the interconnected activities of families, workplaces, networks, and communities, manifesting as a cultural identity.

This paper presents additional evidence to support the growing body of research that individuals who are bicultural, immersed in two sets of cultural tapestries, not only adopt but embody both sets of cultural relationships and experiences. The research on biculturals spans several fields and areas of study, including cultural psychology, cognitive frameworks, cross-cultural psychology, identity studies, acculturation studies, and psychological well-being. The research extensively covers concepts of bicultural identity integration, which is the developmental relationship of integrating cultures, and cultural frame switching, which is the switching of cultural frame sets across the domains of mind and body. However, a significant gap is a lack of extensive research connecting these elements to the embodiment process in bicultural

individuals. This research is not just important; it's crucial. The experience of embodying two cultures introduces another layer, the relationship between potentially disparate cultures within one body, whether it's a subjective or objective perception.

Acculturation studies have traditionally concentrated on bicultural individuals and their techniques for incorporating a second culture into their lives. These studies have suggested that managing a second culture can be achieved by means of alternation and fusion modes. Then, researchers introduced the construct of bicultural identity integration to measure the experience of managing dual cultural identities because there were inconsistencies behind the given cultural behavioral repertoires. Furthermore, it was found that this ongoing dynamic is comprised of two distinct yet interconnected dimensions: blendedness versus compartmentalization and harmony versus conflict.

Cultural blendedness is the degree of overlap or separation between two cultural orientations, perceived as a subjective distance between them. The degree of blendedness is influenced by numerous factors, including the number of years a bicultural individual has lived in a new cultural environment, their proficiency in the language of that culture, and their overall orientation and identification with the culture. Researchers state that higher blendedness suggests a smoother integration of the two cultures. Conversely, lower blendedness, often resulting from factors like language barriers and culturally isolated environments, indicates a clearer compartmentalization of the two cultures. Therefore, blendedness is linked to the experienced acculturation stressors in biculturals. Studies show that the degree of blendedness affects the social interactions and personal identity of a bicultural individual.

Cultural harmony measures the degree of tension or compatibility perceived between the two cultures, representing an objective distance. Cultural harmony is influenced by contextual

pressures such as interpersonal conflicts, perceived discrimination, and language barriers. Studies show that higher harmony correlates positively with the affirmation of ethnic identity and negatively with contextual acculturation stressors. This suggests that greater harmony between cultures can lead to more positive affective experiences and less psychological distress. Harmony is critical in how bicultural individuals manage their dual identities, especially in minimizing conflicts between their cultural worlds. Thus, harmony addresses the affective elements of integrating two cultures with social functioning.

These dimensions are pivotal in understanding bicultural individuals' internal complex dynamics and shape how they integrate, navigate, and reconcile their cultural identities. These dimensions can fluctuate depending on various contextual factors in the cultural tapestry, including thoughts and interpersonal interactions. This means that an individual's level of bicultural identity integration can be high in one interaction, but then fluctuate in the next interaction. The interplay between blendedness and harmony can determine the ease or difficulty with which biculturals embody and integrate aspects of both cultures into their daily lives. This dimensional relationship affects their social interactions, personal identity, and psychological health. Thus, the amorphous nature of integrating bicultural identity through the body is unique for each individual, resulting in varying degrees of these dimensions when cultural cues are perceived.

This research has practical implications, linking bicultural identity integration and cultural frame switching. It suggests that the ability to adjust behaviors and cognitive patterns based on the cultural context is not only a theoretical concept, but a practical skill that can be experienced within the body. This may also suggest that embodying two cultures results in the skill of cultural frame switching with influence by the degrees of cultural blendedness and

harmony. This relationship is further enhanced by the factors of bicultural competence, which encompass other resulting abilities such as culture-specific knowledge, behavioral adaptability, cross-cultural communication skills, cultural intelligence, and cultural metacognition.

Understanding and developing these components may explain the nature of a bicultural embodiment. Therefore, it is important to have a deep understanding of the cultural histories, rituals, and practices in one's mind-body connection, along with a visceral sense of the contextual factors of that cultural tapestry. A higher-order cognitive process also allows one to control cognitive and emotional responses, particularly when navigating between two cultures. Lastly, adjusting and modifying the body through gestures, spacing, and language in response to cultural groups is essential.

These skills are associated with cultural frame switching and cross-cultural empathy, which may suggest the presence of kinesthetic empathy and mirroring. Kinesthetic empathy entails one's capacity to resonate with another individual's movements and emotions, facilitating deep non-verbal communication and connection. This form of empathy is not limited to merely imitating actions; it involves a profound physical and emotional understanding that enables one to engage with and support others effectively. Perhaps a bicultural individual practices kinesthetic empathy throughout their relational interactions, fostering human connection within cultural contexts and mirroring the appropriate nonverbal and verbal expressions. Mirroring can involve exact imitation or capturing the essence of another individual's movements, emotions, and paralinguistics. This occurs not only when the individual performs an action but also when they observe someone else performing the same action. It is probable that a bicultural individual also utilizes the activation of mirror neurons during cultural frame switching. Both are practices in dance/movement therapy that are known to build rapport and support empathetic

understanding in an interpersonal relationship. Without kinesthetic empathy and the practice of mirroring, a bicultural individual probably would not be able to embody their mind-body connection and integrate two sets of cultural tapestries through cultural frame switching.

Cultural frame switching is influenced by cues and contexts that prompt individuals to switch between different cultural tapestries. Key cues for cultural frame switching include language, cultural symbols, and social settings that resonate with a particular culture. Language is a significant trigger, as it not only communicates direct information but also carries deep cultural connotations that can invoke specific cultural frameworks. For bicultural individuals, switching between languages can automatically trigger the associated cultural norms and values. This means it is not simply code-switching but a whole embodied switch of mind and body and associated cultural influences.

Cultural symbols and rituals also play a crucial role, ranging from specific attire and traditional practices to more subtle forms of cultural expression, such as artwork or music. These elements can evoke a particular embodied cultural identity and influence one’s thoughts and behaviors accordingly. Lastly, social settings and contexts where cultural norms are prominent also act as cues. These settings could be family gatherings, cultural festivals, or even specific interactions that follow cultural scripts. Overall, these cues interact with the individual's embodiment of their cultural tapestries, enabling them to navigate and adapt their behavior and mindset according to the demands of the cultural context they are engaged with at any moment. This further demonstrates how bicultural identity integration is constantly fluctuating due to cultural cues.

The literature reveals how bicultural individuals navigate complex cultural dynamics, often experiencing shifts in cognitive styles, personality, self-identification, cultural values,

self-concept, affect, and decision-making. Researchers in cultural psychology agree that these shifts are influenced by their dual embodiment of culture and the ongoing need to reconcile potentially conflicting cultural norms and values. Among studies in social identity theories and intergroup relations, researchers argue that the bicultural experience is shaped by one's identification with cultural groups that affect one's self-perception and behavior. This study area looks at how biculturals manage their identity within and between their cultures, often negotiating a space where their cultural identities may be seen as conflicting or complementary.

A common distressing phenomenon among bicultural individuals is cultural homelessness. The literature describes it as a nebulous feeling of not belonging that arises from integrating multiple cognitive and emotional frameworks and navigating a life filled with experiences, feelings, and thoughts that do not align with their cultural groups. Additionally, feelings of alienation and non-acceptance can arise when cultural integration does not yield a harmonious or satisfying blend of identities. Biculturals experiencing cultural homelessness are depicted as perpetual minorities, longing for a cultural home they have never had. This is in contrast to first-generation immigrants who may have a clear sense of their cultural home, whether in another country or a small local community that reminds them of their home country.

The literature also details feelings of rejection, confusion, isolation, and the struggle to find acceptance or identity within a specific cultural group. Biculturals who face cultural homelessness may use hypervigilant efforts to imitate those around them to gain acceptance and belonging. However, these efforts often lead to frustration and confusion due to continual rejection and perceived personal deficiencies. The struggle is compounded by confusion about appropriate behaviors for belonging, leading to self-imposed isolation to avoid further distress. In childhood, biculturals experiencing cultural homelessness may face pervasive feelings of

loneliness and sadness stemming from a preverbal sense of lacking something subtle and indefinable—a sense that alienates them from others and intensifies their cultural disconnection.

This could be a situation where the mind and body are completely disconnected, causing a sense of disembodiment on the body level. The resulting disconnection in the cultural embodiment process may lead to feelings of isolation, confusion, rejection, and struggles with identity. Furthermore, it is possible that bicultural individuals have not developed the necessary skills in culture-specific knowledge, behavioral adaptability, cross-cultural communication, cultural intelligence, and cultural metacognition. These skills may enable them to better navigate between cultures and reconnect the mind and body with the influence of cultural tapestries.

Nonetheless, the literature outlines therapeutic goals specifically designed for bicultural individuals. It emphasizes creating a safe environment that fosters mutual understanding and utilizing methods designed to encourage the expression of feelings with minimal verbal communication. This approach is believed to be beneficial as it increases the individual's awareness of their feelings and aids in their ability to label and communicate them more effectively. This situation highlights the need for dance/movement therapy, seemingly the most effective method to provide a therapeutic outlet for biculturals to explore their embodied cultural identities with the goals of developing body awareness, bodily integration, self-awareness, and exploring the unconscious as the individual’s internal world is made external nonverbally. These goals may help to reduce the psychological distress associated with feeling like they don't belong to any one culture. By focusing on the nonverbal aspects of human experience, dance/movement therapy may serve biculturals and their dual embodiment in ways that words cannot express.

However, the literature on therapeutic goals for bicultural individuals also states that the therapeutic approach must respect and acknowledge the dual cultural background and

differences. This is deemed vital as it shows empathy and avoids the risks associated with standardizing the client to the dominant culture. In fact, the literature encourages that the sessions focus on utilizing the individual's strengths to navigate and overcome their challenges to promote a positive outcome. This transformative process may validate the unique experiences and emotions of the individual by delving into past conflicts, encouraging them to view differences as sources of strength. This approach may not only cultivate awareness and self-acceptance but may also empower individuals to navigate diverse cultural contexts with confidence. Lastly, the literature states that achieving these goals enables individuals to feel safe and connected to others, forming secure relationships that allow them to move freely and comfortably across all cultures, contributing positively to their self-identity.

Accordingly, enhancing multicultural competence in the practice of dance/movement therapy is of utmost importance. Multicultural competence ensures that the interventions utilized are attuned to the specific needs of bicultural individuals and help them navigate their identities more effectively and authentically. Today, there are various ethical standards and guidelines that emphasize multicultural competency in different aspects of dance/movement therapy, such as assessment, treatment planning, therapeutic relationships, education, and research. The Code of Ethics highlights for therapists the importance of self-examination, developing self-awareness, and understanding societal dynamics related to power, privilege, and oppression. During sessions, dance/movement therapists are urged to view movement within the context of an individual’s cultural, gender, age, and social class influences to recognize the personal, cultural, and environmental experiences that shape body language and movement. Lastly, in order to establish a therapeutic relationship with a deep and visceral connection, dance/movement therapists utilize various practices, such as kinesthetic empathy, mirroring, and Authentic

Movement. These practices involve witnessing an individual's movements while reflecting on internal responses and waiting for the individual to interpret the meaning of their own movement. Although these practices effectively develop a therapeutic relationship regardless of cultural differences, the field falls short in other realms that may support multicultural competence.

While the existing Code of Ethics for dance/movement therapists may be comprehensive in many aspects, it falls short in addressing some crucial issues. It fails to address how an individual's cultural background is reflected in their mind-body connection, a significant oversight in the ever-growing diverse society of the United States. The field's Western, American cultural origins, with modern dance as the foundational backbone, may have led to implicit biases in the perception of different dance styles. Despite calling therapists to be advocates of social justice, The Code of Ethics also lacks a framework for increasing awareness of how power, privilege, and oppression are embodied and manifested in all bodies, including the therapists themselves. This is a critical gap that needs to be filled to ensure the ethical practice of dance therapy.

Firstly, dance/movement therapists must have an in-depth comprehension of how cultural backgrounds influence the connection between the mind and body, leading to an embodied experience of one's cultural identity. While there is not much research on the embodiment of bicultural individuals, there is a fair amount of research on cultural embodiment. In this paper, the author has provided in-depth literature on cultural and bicultural identities. This has been done to establish a connection between the literature on the embodiment of a single culture and the extensive literature available on biculturalism. Therefore, the paper demonstrates the

possibility of embodying two, even multiple, cultures and the potential for further investigation to develop body integration and body awareness methods.

To effectively serve individuals and promote social justice, therapists should prioritize cultural identity. To serve bicultural individuals means understanding the complexity of bicultural identity, the skills and abilities that come with it, and the way in which the mind and body are connected. It is important to remember that while cultural identity is an embodied experience, it may not always be fully integrated with other cultural identities. Therefore, it is crucial for therapists to be aware of the nuances of bicultural identity integration and cultural frame switching to provide the best possible interventions.

As for the cultural origins of dance/movement therapy, the field was developed in America during the 1940s with a focus on the therapeutic properties of dance, particularly in modern dance. This therapeutic approach emphasized modern dance's elements of self-expression and innovation, breaking away from the structured steps of ballet, folk, and social dances. However, this approach disregarded the cultural significance of traditional dance forms potentially passed down for generations in many communities. For instance, an individual who grew up with only folk dance may not be familiar with the elements of modern dance, which may impact the therapeutic process in sessions. Thus, it is crucial for a dance/movement therapist to encourage and observe individuals dance in whatever form they have embodied or feel comfortable in. Outside of the structured steps and formations of other dance styles, there may be some subtle or clear movement that the therapist can observe to understand the individual's movement profile. Allowing an individual to dance in their culturally significant form of dance can help build a therapeutic relationship based on rapport and empathy. Therefore, it is important

to recognize the implicit bias in the field due to its modern dance origins and understand that there are other ways to observe and approach therapeutic goals.

Integrating social justice principles into the field of dance/movement therapy is not just a suggestion but a necessity. It is imperative to remember that the field, in its very essence, embodies Western ideologies in both the psychotherapeutic and movement frameworks. This acknowledgment should be part of the process of embodying social justice. While the field encourages its therapists to become advocates for the people they serve, in and out of practice, there is a focus on research and self-examination without fully acknowledging that oppression is embodied in all bodies. Oppression is experienced through the body, manifesting in both overt violence and subtler forms, such as microaggressions. These experiences of oppression affect the physical and psychological state of an individual as trauma on the body, thereby shaping movements and expressions in ways that may not be fully conscious or understood by the individuals themselves. Embodied oppression is also expressed in and impacts relationships. By understanding and addressing the impacts of oppression, privilege, and power on the bodies of the therapist and individual, the field of dance/movement therapy can provide more culturally sensitive and ethically sound interventions that respect the experiences of bicultural individuals and others with multicultural backgrounds.

Incorporating the frameworks of liberation psychology, body story, embodied activism, and liberating movement into dance/movement therapy is not just a theoretical exercise but a practical tool for profound healing and empowerment. Due to their interconnected and complementary nature, these enhancements shape a comprehensive approach to improving the multicultural competency of the practice in dance/movement therapy.

At the root of this enhanced framework is liberation psychology, an anti-oppressive theory challenges the traditional power dynamics by promoting a more balanced approach where both therapist and individual actively participate and collaborate in the therapeutic process. This entails both parties disclosing their positions of privilege and oppression at the first session, encouraging mutual empathy, kinesthetic empathy, authenticity, and a justice-oriented approach. Followed by the process of liberation through conscientization, the therapeutic relationship is based on a human connection with radical humility and multicultural mirroring. The therapist, in particular, is deeply aware of the cultural, historical, and socio-political contexts that shape the individual's life, demonstrating a profound respect and value for the individual's experiences. This enriches the therapeutic relationship and rapport. To move away from the conventional, Western ideology of American psychology, the therapeutic space allows the individual to claim the narrative of the story of their life by redefining and reappropriating terms that highlights their skills in resiliency. Similar to how Mexicans and Mexican Americans reclaimed La Virgen de Guadalupe and how Palestinians use *sumud* to describe their resilience, individuals can become the protagonist of their own story by connecting with their embodied culture that is enriched with their personal experiences and historical knowledge. The therapist then empowers individuals by emphasizing their strengths and resiliency and encouraging them to become advocates for their own well-being and that of their communities. A distinctive aspect of liberation psychology is its explicit commitment to social justice, meaning that the therapeutic relationship links individual healing to collective well-being and encourages individuals to transform the unjust structures that impact their lives. Altogether, individuals are empowered through critical consciousness and transformative action by co-creating this safe, sacred, and collaborative therapeutic space that addresses the psychological effects of oppression and social change.

Correspondingly, the concept of a body story refers to the narratives our bodies express through personal movement profiles and repressed movement patterns. This concept allows therapists and individuals to explore how cultural identities and experiences of oppression are physically and emotionally manifested. With the support of the dance/movement therapist, this exploration can reveal underlying traumas and conflicts related to cultural intersections and oppressions in an individual's life. Alongside this, the exploration of the body story explores a counternarrative of resistance. This narrative can reveal how individuals resisted erasure and asserted their presence despite the oppressive pressures that tried to keep them unseen and unheard. The practice of being meticulous and reflective allows individuals to build their sensory awareness through experiential movement. This journey continues through the therapeutic process.

Embodied activism, a concept that underscores the transformative potential of individuals challenging societal and personal constraints through their own bodies, is particularly potent in the realm of liberation psychology. Here, therapy is not just a passive tool but an active space for advocating social change. The interplay of perceptiveness and responsiveness mirrors the conscientization process on a somatic level. By tuning into internal bodily sensations and unearthing unconscious bias, entrenched relational patterns are disrupted, offering the individual the opportunity to shape them into new, holistic patterns of interaction. This approach is particularly effective in countering oppression, which thrives on disconnection among people and the mind-body connection. Both the therapist, who guides the process, and the individual, who actively engages in it, must practice embodied activism to enrich the human connection nature of their relationship. In doing so, their relationship becomes a model of how both parties can continue transforming societal change in interpersonal connections elsewhere.

The practice of liberating movement allows individuals to restore their sense of agency to reclaim their bodies from the grips of oppression. This process involves recognizing and feeling the various movement patterns, from the subtle micro-movements at the cellular level to the expansive, whole-body movements, allowing individuals to recognize their movement profile and feel sedimented movement patterns. Following this, individuals are encouraged to mindfully observe their movements without judgment or intention to change. Conscious engagement with their movement patterns allows an individual to deepen their understanding of their movement patterns by deliberately continuing the patterns. This leads to the emergence of associations with emotions, images, and alternative movements that allow individuals to experiment and challenge their old patterns. Naturally, a playful exploration period arises that challenges old patterns. During the final stage of integration and transformation, the uncovered movement patterns are incorporated into daily life. Through this process, individuals can experience a profound transformation that leads to greater awareness, liberation, and knowledge. This transformation is evident in their movement patterns and interactions with others. As a result, individuals can make more informed and empowered decisions about their movement, recognizing that creativity and innovation are essential for maintaining bodily integrity and authority. They can move more freely and adaptively in various contexts, using movement as a means of expression and communication without external constraints. Collectively, this enhanced framework and its practices allow dance/movement therapists and individuals to reclaim their movements and whole selves within the existing oppressive social systems. Promoting self-agency, self-expression, and self-efficacy empowers individuals to challenge internalized oppression and move with resilience, ultimately supporting their identity and self-worth.

By deeply integrating these concepts, this holistic and embodied approach ensures that dance/movement therapy is designed for personal healing with personal and societal reflection and transformation. The synthesis of these elements fosters a therapeutic relationship attuned to the complexities of cultural identity, systemic inequality, and personal agency, thereby promoting a more inclusive, responsive, and justice-oriented practice. In doing so, dance/movement therapy can profoundly impact the broader social fabric, advocating for and embodying a more empathetic and transformed world.

These enhancements for multicultural diversity discussed are practical tools to improve the field and its multicultural competence. This integrated framework can serve as a foundation to deliver interventions that address the complexities of cultural embodiment, systemic oppression, and personal agency for individuals with diverse backgrounds. Accordingly with the principles of liberation psychology, this framework is not a concrete construct, but rather a baseline that can be altered or changed depending on the individual's needs. Nevertheless, therapists should follow these guidelines to promote a more culturally inclusive, responsive, and justice-oriented practice. In order to achieve this goal, therapists must personally experience these practices in their bodies before implementing them. Ignacio Martín-Baró, who spearheaded liberation psychology, believed that therapists should focus on their own liberation before attempting to liberate others. Developing awareness and knowledge of how oppression and resistance can manifest on a body level is essential for empowerment and liberation. By following these practices, therapists can become familiar with them on a mind-body level and eventually integrate them into their lives. As they progress, they can extend the use of this framework beyond their practice and apply it to interpersonal activism.

By implementing this improved framework for dance/movement therapy, it provides individuals with a bicultural background an opportunity to recognize their dual embodiment within the context of oppressive social systems. Through this process, individuals are empowered by recognizing their resilient qualities, which can then encourage personal growth and communal transformations. Although goals are customized for each person, this paper will utilize the framework's presented goals of promoting self-agency, self-expression, and self-efficacy. Finally, it is important to note that the length of the therapeutic process can vary depending on the needs of the individual. Addressing past traumas and repressed movement may trigger a release of emotions that demands empathy, validation, and accompaniment. As a result, there is no set timeline for therapy, as it is tailored to meet each person and not rush them to the set goals. It i's important to remember that therapy is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

In practice, the therapist and bicultural would begin the therapeutic process by disclosing the positions of privilege and oppression in both parties. This can be aligned with or transitioned into the individual developing their body story with their redefinitions. For this paper, existing literature can be used to outline the layers of oppression faced by bicultural individuals to highlight how these levels significantly impact their daily lives and well-being. Nevertheless, this does not serve to be a generalization or to represent all bicultural individuals. As previously stated, each bicultural individual experiences their own version of biculturalism due to the limitless combinations their cultural tapestries shape and continuously reshape. There may be bicultural individuals who are not aware they possess the ability to switch between embodiments, others who may not have the privilege to switch, and others who may choose to not switch. There may be other reasons, but the point is is that they are all valid experiences and it is not the the therapist's job to tell them that they should learn how to frame switch.

At the individual and interpersonal level, they may encounter direct discrimination or microaggressions, including stereotypes about their cultural backgrounds or societal pressures to conform to one cultural norm over another. These experiences may lead to internal conflicts as they struggle to balance their dual embodiment of cultural tapestries, often feeling pressured to choose one over the other to gain acceptance. Institutionally, bicultural individuals may encounter systemic barriers in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare, which may arise from language differences, cultural misunderstandings, or overt racial and ethnic discrimination. These institutions often overlook the unique needs of those who are not White, such as the necessity for language services or culturally appropriate healthcare. Understanding and addressing these unique needs is crucial to ensure their well-being and full participation in society, including the enhancements to increase multicultural competency in dance/movement therapy. Additionally, at the cultural level, they frequently navigate environments where dominant cultural narratives fail to reflect their lived experiences. Media often stereotypes or entirely omits their cultural expressions, contributing to a sense of invisibility or misrepresentation and further perpetuating the undervaluation of their native languages and traditions in favor of dominant cultural norms. These layers of oppression underscore the complex challenges faced by bicultural individuals, significantly affecting their ability to express, embrace, and embody their identities.

Bicultural individuals may find themselves in a constant struggle, torn between their cultural identities and unclear about which is their cultural home. This struggle is often intensified by societal structures that, implicitly or explicitly, promote the dominance of one culture over others. In the context of the United States, the majority or dominant culture is historically white supremacy. This societal preference can lead to the embodiment of the

dominant cultural tapestry as individuals navigate their social environment, including aspects of white supremacy. Hence, bicultural individuals might internalize and embody the dominant culture as a survival strategy at the expense of their own cultural tapestries. As one embodies the dominant culture, one embodies how its cultural tapestry prioritizes certain cultural attributes and marginalizes others, making it challenging for bicultural individuals to maintain a blended or harmonious bicultural identity. This highlights how oppression affects bicultural identity integration, which can lead to a sense of cultural homelessness.

Embodying oppression may impact the embodiment and integration of biculturalism, potentially manifesting in various aspects of daily life, affecting personal identity, social interactions, and even professional opportunities. By embodying the dominant cultural norms, bicultural individuals may gain certain societal benefits but at the cost of cultural alienation and movement extermination. This dynamic underscores the oppressive mechanisms that perpetuate the dominance of one culture over others, highlighting the complex interplay between cultural identity embodiment and systemic oppression in the lives of bicultural individuals. However, it's important to note that bicultural individuals can employ strategies such as behavioral adaptability, cultural intelligence, or cultural metacognition to navigate these challenges and maintain a sense of cultural identity.

Bicultural individuals may develop and embody robust resilience strategies to navigate and cope with various layers of oppression. One key strategy is cultural frame switching, where they fluidly adapt and navigate between different cultural expectations. This ability enables them to switch cultural behaviors and norms based on the context, serving as a vital resilience factor in managing diverse social settings. Another significant aspect of their resilience is the development of a strong bicultural identity. By embracing both cultures as integral parts of their

identity, bicultural individuals may experience enhanced psychological well-being, viewing their biculturalism as an asset that boosts confidence and self-acceptance. Additionally, strong ties to communities from both cultural backgrounds may provide essential support. These cultural homes offer emotional backing, cultural understanding, and resources that help mitigate the effects of oppressive social systems and cultural isolation. Bicultural individuals may also engage in advocacy and activism, combating oppression by advocating for policies that support cultural diversity and participating in community organizing to address social injustices impacting their communities.

Beyond these strategies, bicultural individuals may exhibit behavioral adaptability, allowing them to modify, learn, and reshape their behavior across different cultural contexts. They may also possess cultural intelligence, enabling them to effectively interact with people from various cultural backgrounds. Cultural metacognition, the awareness of one’s and others' cultural tapestries, may further enhance their ability to manage cross-cultural interactions thoughtfully. Finally, they may exhibit cross-cultural communication skills to ensure effective exchanges across diverse cultural divides. These additional resilient skills and abilities collectively empower bicultural individuals to thrive despite the challenges posed by cultural conflicts and systemic oppression.

After understanding the layers of oppression and resiliency in the bicultural individual they serve, the therapist must conduct their own research to understand the resiliency of dual embodiment by biculturals for biculturals. Additionally, comprehending how oppression may impact the embodiment or integration process is crucial. This paper is one such resource. The author's research found two helpful models for bicultural individuals: the embodied code-switching and the identity expression infinity loop theory models. The matter in which

oppression impacts the experience of embodying cultural tapestries is evident, as it is embedded in the physiological, emotional, and behavioral aspects of their lives.

Embodied code-switching provides a flexible and accessible framework to understand cultural identity through three entry points. Similarly to the cultural cues for cultural frame switching, the sensation entry point refers to both internal and external sensory inputs that are either physiological reactions or environmental stimuli. Oppression can manifest through both sensory inputs, such as physiological reactions to stress, cultural exclusion, and microaggressions or other forms of discrimination. These traumatic experiences may trigger embodied code-switching as a defensive or coping mechanism, influencing how individuals perceive and react to their environment. The body, molded by cultural tapestries, societal expectations, and intergenerational trauma, becomes a vessel carrying the weight of oppression. Activities that increase sensory awareness, like Hall's "inventory of sensing," can be used to enhance how oppression affects their bodily responses and how cultural embodiment shapes bodily responses and perceptions. Overall, this stage may deepen the individual’s sensory awareness.

At the interpretation point, the sensory data are processed into beliefs, emotions, and thoughts about one's cultural identity. This stage encourages reflection on personal, historical, and oppressive narratives to help individuals explore deep-seated feelings about their identity conflicts. This is parallel to the body story process. The embodiment of cultural and societal pressures can skew beliefs, emotions, and thoughts regarding one’s cultural identity. This often leads to identity conflicts, feelings of inadequacy, or alienation from one's cultural roots. Dance/movement therapy may provide a reflective space during the body story development for individuals to explore these influences, allowing them to deconstruct how oppression has shaped

their self-concept and worldviews. By understanding these dynamics, individuals can begin to reclaim their narrative and foster a healthier cultural identity.

In the action entry point, influenced by the prior stages of sensation and interpretation, individuals adjust their behaviors in various cultural settings, focusing on nonverbal communication such as gestures and spatial use. Paired with behavioral adaptability, cultural knowledge, and cultural metacognition, these adjustments are informed by prior sensory and interpretive experiences. The way individuals adapt their nonverbal communication can be in result of earlier experiences within oppressive social systems. Thus, encouraging individuals to reflect on these adaptations can enhance their self-agency. This therapeutic process aids in realigning their cultural expressions with their true selves, promoting resiliency in contrast to potential sedimentation or extermination of movement. The action stage may empower individuals to express and integrate their embodied cultural identities more effectively, enhancing their ability to navigate multiple cultural environments.

The identity expression infinity loop is a conceptual framework designed to illustrate the dynamic transitioning proccess through which individuals with multiple cultural backgrounds express and modify their identities across different social and cultural environments. This model portrays identity as fluid rather than fixed, allowing individuals to switch between different cultural behaviors, languages, customs, and non-verbal cues to align with the prevailing cultural norms of their environment. Thus, the infinite loop represents this process and emphasizes the non-linear and recurrent nature of identity expression. The internal, such as psychological shifts in self-perception, and external stimuli, such as exposure to a dominant culture in a particular location, occur at moments of cultural transition. However, oppression can hinder or force rapid, uncomfortable shifts in cultural frame activation, requiring individuals to frequently adapt to

avoid social exclusion or discrimination. Supporting individuals in managing these transitions with the practices of body story and liberating move may foster a sense of empowerment and transformation in their cultural expressions continuity.

As individuals navigate their environments, they receive and integrate feedback from their social interactions. As previously discussed, these interactions influence how they adapt or maintain their identity expressions. This feedback and adaptation process fosters continuous learning and allows identity expression and integration to be a dynamic and evolving aspect of their lives. Therefore, addressing the embedded nature of oppression in the sensory, interpretative, and behavioral aspects of identity is crucial, underlining why cultural identity must be the priority in therapeutic interventions. With the enhanced framework and its practices, dance/movement therapy provides individuals a safe environment to explore these. By integrating a deep understanding of these dynamics, the therapeutic modality can effectively support individuals in overcoming the impacts of cultural oppression. This therapeutic focus is essential for promoting genuine self-expression, enhancing personal growth, and ultimately contributing to the dismantling of oppressive structures within society. The enhanced framework in dance/movement therapy would be an ideal approach to support the ongoing changes and transformation seen in both bicultural individuals and the infinity loop symbol.

These models can be adjusted and tailored to the bicultural individual to assist them in navigating between cultural backgrounds and addressed the embeddedness of oppression. This may be done simultaneously or non-linearly, depending on the collaborative decision of the therapeutic relationship. It is possible that there are bicultural individuals who are unaware of their ability to switch between different cultural embodiments. However, it is also possible that some individuals may not have the privilege of switching, while others may choose not to switch

for various reasons. All of these experiences are valid, and it is not the role of a therapist to tell individuals that they should learn how to frame switch. Instead, their role is accompany the individual in their developing connection with the mind-body, integrating sensory awareness, exploring their movement patterns with curiosity, renarrate their body stories, and empower them to become advocates for themselves and their communities.

In closing this paper, integrating liberation psychology in dance/movement therapy aligns the therapy with broader social justice goals by emphasizing the interconnectedness of personal liberation with societal transformation. The holistic, therapeutic relationship fosters a proactive stance among individuals and therapists. Additionally, the modality can serve as a powerful platform for expressing and addressing cultural tensions and oppressions, contributing significantly to the construction of more resilient and aware communities. This community-oriented focus, a core aspect of liberation psychology, greatly amplifies the impact of therapy, extending its benefits from the individual to broader societal scales. Such efforts not only help individuals cope with and overcome personal challenges but also strengthen community ties and collective resilience against societal oppressions. By leveraging the principles of liberation psychology, dance/movement therapy serves as a catalyst for social change, promoting mutual empathy and understanding through active participation in social justice efforts.

The integration of embodied activism and liberating movement practices within sessions mark a significant evolution in therapeutic practices, particularly in empowering clients to assert autonomy over their bodies and narratives. This mind-body empowerment is vitally important for individuals who may feel marginalized within their cultural tapestries, providing them with a renewed sense of hope and inspiration. Through these practices, individuals are inspired by their

own stories of resilience and transform themselves in order to consciously navigate the complex dynamics of their environments.

To support these advanced therapeutic aims, it is crucial for the field to continually enhance its multicultural competence. This can be achieved through training and awareness programs for therapists, which include comprehensive learning on embodied activism, body stories, liberating movements, and liberation psychology. Furthermore, integrating these critical concepts into the educational curricula of programs in dance/movement therapy prepares new therapists to approach therapy with an anti-oppressive mindset, well-equipped to handle diverse cultural expressions and sensitive to the unique needs of the diversity of whichever population they serve.

Although this paper demonstrates how bicultural individuals embody two cultures, the most important contribution is that it raises a variety of intriguing questions for future study. Much work remains to be done before a full understanding of the embodiment of biculturalism is established. Additionally, further research development is essential to refine techniques and methods that cater to the diverse needs of diverse populations. This research could inform clinical practices and supports the advocacy for policy changes that make mental health services more accessible and culturally relevant. Such policy advocacy, guided by the principles of liberation psychology, aims to dismantle barriers to mental health care and ensures that dance/movement therapy remains at the forefront of culturally competent healthcare practices.

In conclusion, by embracing these enhancements, dance/movement therapy can improve its therapeutic effectiveness and position itself as a leader in culturally competent therapy that challenges the conventional, Western ideologies in psychology. By embodying and advocating principles of equity, understanding, and social justice, this informed approach offers therapists an

essential tool for individual and societal transformation. Through these efforts, dance/movement therapy continues to evolve as a dynamic and responsive field, capable of addressing the complexities of human experience in a diverse world.

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