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Research Article

New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development Performative Arts and Racial Prejudice

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Abstract
The segregation index revealed that racial/ethnic and economic school segregation between schools has increased over the past three decades in large districts. Studies have highlighted the potential of performing arts to facilitate positive social and emotional development. However, they all had a gap in directly associating the performing arts with a decrease in racial prejudice. Therefore, this study's primary motivation was to address this gap, offering a clearer understanding of the relationship between engagement in the performing arts and the attenuation of racial biases. This study investigated the influence of performing arts on emerging adults' racial attitudes using the Quick Discrimination Index (QDI) as a measurement tool for racial prejudice. Recognizing the unique developmental stage of emerging adulthood, which is characterized by significant cognitive and emotional growth, this study probes how engagement in the performing arts impacts this demographic's racial biases. Adopting a quantitative approach, the study surveyed 44 college students from diverse backgrounds, focusing on their involvement in performing arts and their QDI scores. The QDI's Likert-type scale format provides a nuanced understanding of students' attitudes toward racial diversity and multiculturalism. Our findings revealed a statistically significant correlation between participation in performing arts classes and lower QDI scores, indicating reduced racial prejudice. This supports the hypothesis that performing arts can be an effective tool for promoting more empathetic and inclusive mindsets during the formative college years. The study acknowledges its limitations, including its reliance on self-reported data and initial demographic focus adjustments. These insights pave the way for designing educational and social interventions that leverage the power of performing arts to combat racial prejudice. This study contributes to the discourse on inclusive education and suggests the integration of performative arts and empathy education in school curricula as an effective strategy for fostering racial awareness and sensitivity.
Keywords: Performing Arts, Racial Prejudice, Quick Discrimination Index, Emerging Adults.

Introduction

Although it has been almost 70 years since the Brown v. Board of Education decision by the United States Supreme Court (U.S.), the segregation index studied by Stanford and the U.S. reveals that "racial/ethnic and economic school segregation between schools, within the same school districts has also increased over the past three decades in large districts" [1]. Between 1991 and 2020, White–Asian segregation doubled, White–Black segregation increased by 35%, and White–Hispanic segregation increased in large school districts.

College students, commonly referred to as emerging adults, are largely affected by this gap in education and racial segregation. Emerging adults are characterized by significant cognitive and emotional development, making them especially receptive to empathy-enhancing experiences. "They are poised to benefit from social empathy training, stretch their cognitive structures of 'in-group,' and yield potentially long-lasting decreases in their implicit and explicit biases toward diverse others" [2]. These emerging adults in college also undergo a transformative journey through the performing arts, where they find a rich tapestry of cultural expression that profoundly influences their personal and social development.

Recent studies have highlighted the potential of performing arts in schools to facilitate positive social and emotional development in young adults. The U.S. Department of Education has recognized the value of the arts in developing critical thinking and interpersonal skills [3], and the American Psychological Association

has reported that engagement in arts-related activities enhances empathy and reduces stereotypes [4]. Moreover, exposure to different cultural narratives through performing arts has been shown to challenge preconceived notions and biases. Thompson et al. found that students who participated in multicultural theater projects exhibited less racial bias and greater empathy toward peers from different backgrounds [5]. There are several methodologies for assessing racial prejudice and bias, such as Brief Implicit Association Test (BIAT), Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP), and Perceived Racism Scale (PRS). The BIAT measures automatic associations between concepts in memory, revealing unconscious biases that individuals may not consciously acknowledge. Another approach is the AMP, which assesses implicit biases by examining how individuals attribute positive or negative feelings to neutral stimuli after exposure to target stimuli [6].

The PRS was specifically designed to gauge personal experiences and perceptions of racism and discrimination. The PRS measures racism defined as "a belief or attitude that some races are superior to others and discrimination based on such a belief … attitudinal and behavioral manifestations of the belief in the inherent inferiority of individuals of certain ethnicities" [7]. Although these methods offer insightful perspectives for measuring racial prejudice, they have certain limitations in the context of this study. The BIAT, AMP, and PRS have been subject to limited research in specific applications, particularly in the domain of performative arts, and their impact on racial attitudes. Moreover, the complex nature and requirement for more than a simple survey administration do not align with the logistical constraints of this study.

Given the nuances and specific needs of this study, alternative methods such as the BIAT, AMP, and PRS offer valuable insights into understanding racial prejudice, but they are not ideally suited for our study's framework. The Quick Discrimination Index (QDI) was therefore employed as a novel contribution to our study to survey college students across the United States. The QDI, developed by Ponterotto et al., is a widely used tool to measure attitudes toward racial diversity and inclusivity [8]. The QDI is specifically tailored to survey formats, making it a practical choice for efficient data recording. This study consequently aims to provide empirical evidence on the role of the performing arts in shaping college students' attitudes toward racial and ethnic diversity, contributing to the broad discourse on the importance of inclusive education.

Materials and Methods

The QDI consists of 30 items rated on a Likert-type scale designed to assess attitudes toward race and sex. A Likert-type scale is a widely adopted survey tool used to measure attitudes or opinions, offering a range of response options from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," to quantify the intensity of respondents' feelings about a statement. To minimize certain types of response bias, it was presented under the name "Social Attitude Survey." There are two scoring approaches for the QDI. The first approach totals the overall score, reflecting general sensitivity, awareness, openness to cultural diversity, and gender equality. The second, and currently preferred approach scores three distinct subscales (factors) of the QDI. This method was favored because both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses affirmed the construct validity of the three-factor model [8]. The three subscales are general (cognitive) attitudes toward racial diversity/multiculturalism, affective attitudes toward more personal contact (closeness) with racial diversity, and attitudes toward women's equity. As our study only focused on racial prejudice, we conducted the first two of the three subscales in the second scoring procedure.

The internet-based survey program Google Forms was adapted to design and conduct online survey. A self-administered survey questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire comprised six personal information questions that established age, residency, sex, race, grade, and school; two questions about their involvement in performative arts; and 16 QDI questions (nine subscale 1 questions and seven subscale 2 questions). These questionnaires were disseminated via UC San Diego-focused social media platforms, such as the UCSD 2027 Snapchat story page and the r/UCSD Reddit page, for completion. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to receive one out of five $20 gift cards from either Target or Starbucks as incentive. Participation was voluntary and all principles of the Declaration of Helsinki were followed, including confidentiality and informed consent. The final sample comprised 44 college students (27 students have taken a performing arts class and 17 have not; 32 female and 12 male participants; 20 Asians, 2 Blacks, 12 Whites, and 10 others).

We faced challenges while conducting the survey, particularly in our initial focus on White participants, who are reflective of America's majority population. Owing to the lower-than-expected response rate from this group, we expanded our study to include all racial backgrounds, thereby expanding the relevance and applicability of our findings to a more diverse demographic. This modification also necessitated updates to our background research to reflect the revised sample composition accurately.

Table 1. Summary of the quick discrimination index.

Variable	Observation	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
QDI	44	62.81818	8.130542	42	77

See Table 1 for a summary of the QDI. Following data collection, descriptive statistics and regression analysis were performed to analyze the data using STATA. When conducting data analysis, "race" was included as a controlling variable in addition to sex, since the dependent/response variable QDI pertained to race as an indicator of one's racial bias and therefore was likely to be affected by which race the participants of the survey belonged to (or identified themselves as).

Results

Table 2. Variable and its 't' statistics.

Performative arts	6.494 (2.83**)
Constant	56.11 (9.58***)
R-squared (*N*)	0.335 (44)

See Table 2 for the table that represents the variable and its t-statistics. The t-statistics are in parentheses, and the asterisks are used to flag a specific *p* value (*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$).

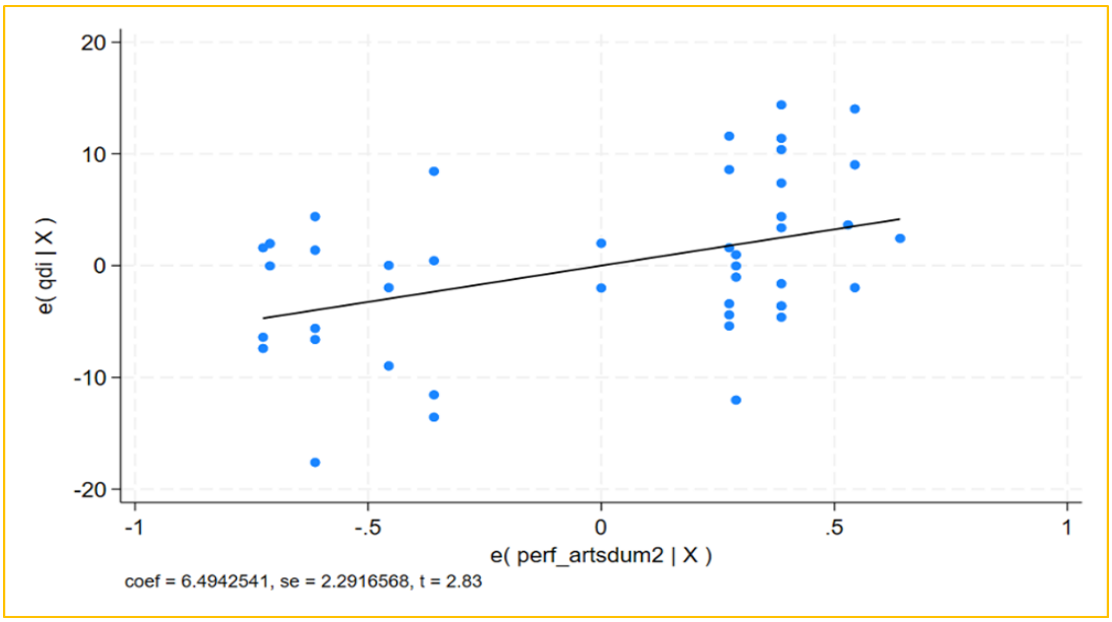


Figure 1. Added variable plot.

See Figure 1 for the linear regression model graph, which illustrates the statistical significance of the impact of performing arts classes on college students' QDI scores, with race and sex as control variables. ($p = 0.007$, so our coefficient is significant at the 99+% level).

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the role of performing arts in influencing college students' racial attitudes by measuring their racial prejudice using the QDI. The results of this study yielded several key insights, elaborating on existing research in this field. Prior research has frequently connected the performing arts with the enhancement of empathy [14, 15] and similarly linked empathy with reduced racial prejudice [11–13]. However, many failed to provide convincing results owing to sample size, and all had a gap in directly associating the performing arts with a decrease in racial prejudice. Therefore, this study's primary motivation was to address this gap, offering a clearer understanding of the relationship between engagement in the performing arts and the attenuation of racial biases.

Linear regression analysis, incorporating race and gender as control variables, revealed a statistically significant relationship between participation in the performing arts and shifts in QDI scores. This suggests that the performing arts can indeed play a crucial role in fostering a more empathetic and inclusive mindset among young adults. The data suggest that the performing arts can serve as an effective tool to foster these

perspectives, especially during the formative college years, which are crucial for developing long-term social attitudes [1].

A key factor that may have contributed to this statistically significant result is the input of empathy. Empathy, as a psychological construct, is not just an emotional response but also a cognitive ability to perceive and relate to the experiences of others [9]. By nature, performative arts offer a window into different cultural narratives, fostering empathy among participants. This empathy is not a finite resource but can be expanded and deepened through exposure to diverse experiences [10]. Kendra D. Nesbitt provided empirical evidence of the relationship between empathy and prejudice in this regard. She posited, "Empathy, especially when directed toward members of outgroups, has the potential to significantly reduce prejudicial attitudes" [11]. This finding is instrumental in understanding the mechanism through which the performing arts impact racial attitudes, since by fostering empathy, these arts may significantly contribute to diminishing prejudicial thoughts and stereotypes.

This study has some limitations. The initial focus on a predominantly White demographic, followed by an expansion to include all racial backgrounds owing to low response rates while increasing the diversity of the sample, introduced a layer of complexity into the data analysis. This adaptation to include a wider range of racial backgrounds, while posing challenges to its specificity, offers a richer understanding of the nuanced ways in which different demographic groups engage with and are affected by the arts. In this respect, we made sure to control "race" in our statistical analysis.

Furthermore, the study's reliance on a self-reported survey introduces the possibility of response bias despite the precautions taken. Future research could look into more comprehensive methods of assessing the impact of the performing arts on racial attitudes, perhaps through the inclusion of various other quantitative and qualitative analytical frameworks and increase external validity by incorporating more diverse and larger sample sizes. Future studies should also include empathy as an intermediate variable between performative arts and racial prejudice, as this would provide invaluable insight into the underlying mechanisms through which performing arts influence racial attitudes.

Conclusions

This study embarked on an important exploration of the role of the performing arts in shaping college students' racial attitudes by employing the QDI as a measure of racial prejudice. It also aimed to shed more light on the importance of performative arts education, inviting educators to incorporate performative arts and empathy education as tools for improving racial awareness in school curricula. The results not only contribute to the growing body of literature on the subject, but also offer practical insights for the educational and cultural sectors.

With a statistically significant result when comparing one's participation in performing arts class to their QDI score, this result underscores the transformative potential of performing arts in fostering empathy and understanding among young adults during a pivotal phase of their social development. By immersing students in diverse cultural narratives, performing arts serve as a powerful medium for challenging and reshaping preconceived notions and biases. Overall, this research opens new opportunities for designing educational and social interventions that leverage the transformative power of the performing arts to prevent racial prejudice.

Declarations

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