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DANCING TO A NEW BEAT: SHIFTING THE DIALOGUE IN MENTORING TO A MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH IN THE CARIBBEAN

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Abstract: *The purpose of this research is to reflect on the importance of a whole-body, holistic approach to the act of mentoring. In addressing what makes a good mentor and/or what are some best practices and strategies of mentoring, the author makes a connection between what we can learn from dance pedagogy in order to shift understandings of mentoring within a Caribbean context. The techniques and benefits of dance might offer ways to approach mentoring that take into consideration bodily effects and mind, body, and spirit connection. Dance, in particular somatics, can be used as a tool for creative expression and healing, in which the practices of both can assist in pursuing mentorship more holistically.*

Keywords: *dance; mentoring; holistic; somatics; Caribbean*

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INTRODUCTION

Typically, mentorship is defined by the level of support given through "a multi-phase process of contribution and benefit for the mentor and protégé in activities that enhance educational, social, and psychological dimensions of their experiences" (Reed-Hendon 2013, p. 16). However, in the Caribbean, there has been a significant gap in the research and techniques to address a more holistic approach to mentoring with knowledge expertise from disciplines that addresses the whole body – dance and dance education. The studies addressing mentorship with a holistic approach mostly come from the United States, but are still quite limited (Nora & Crisp, 2007; Cramer & Prentice-Dunn, 2007; Ward et al., 2014). In earlier contributions, Nora and Crisp (2007) created four dimensions fundamental to a holistic foundation of mentoring through their research at a community college, where the population was mostly Hispanic students. For effective mentoring, they advocate "educational/career goal setting and appraisal; emotional and psychological support; academic subject knowledge support; and existence of a role model" (Ward et al., 2014, p. 564). Influenced by these earlier studies, Ward et al. (2014) understand holistic mentoring as a caring relationship. They expand on this notion of holistic mentoring to include responding to a variety of student needs, from career support to academic guidance to psychosocial support. There is also a focus on and response to "academically underprepared and marginalized students" in their transition to college life (p. 577). In the Caribbean, students are generally underprepared in their transition to college life and the complexities vary tremendously in terms of the type of support they might need. The need to switch to a more holistic approach is evident in order to address the multidimensionality of mentor service activity.

This paper addresses specifically what dance education and additional interdisciplinary thought can bring to the practice of mentoring in the Caribbean. These strategies, from a range of educational and kinaesthetic methodologies, deepen understandings of mentoring in relation to developing identity, awareness, and empathy for both body and mind in student and mentor. Dance education not only embraces the student in a multiplicity of ways (body awareness, health, care, critical thinking, and more), but also combines theory and practice in every moment of production that allows "making meaning, knowledge, and value in our lives" (Garrison, 2013, p. 5). In addressing mentorship through a more holistic approach, the field of dance offers the expertise of knowledge about the whole body through embodiment and the mind-body connection. Historically, from Greek philosophy to

Cartesian dualisms, Western thought split the mind-body connection into a hierarchy, promoting the notion that the "mind provides the only valid content for experience" above the knowledge formed by the body (Batson 2009, p. 1). Western thought, highly embedded in colonial contexts, continually upheld these Cartesian dualisms. In contrast, most indigenous and Eastern-based practices, and eventually Western somatic practitioners in the early 20th century, emphasized a unity of mind, body and spirit as "fundamental to the human organism and one's inner, personal narrative, and experience as a guide for living" (Batson, 2009, p.1). The Caribbean sits in the balance between the negotiation of their colonial past and of their history of indigenous and other forms of knowledge from the forced migration of African slaves, indentured Asian labourers, and other migratory forces of people of diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. A holistic approach to mentoring must consider the human experience as being a collection of thoughts and experiences through the unity of the whole body. Therefore, this paper addresses the definition and types of mentorship, the practice of mentorship in the Caribbean, prominent educational theories of mentorship, and holistic approaches that include addressing emotions, the body, and other somatic strategies.

The objectives of this paper are therefore to deepen understandings of holistic mentoring for the overall aim of enhancing the student's growth and experience inside and outside the classroom in the context of the Caribbean. This is not a particular study comprising surveys and interviews, but instead a meta-analysis of what mentorship is, the strategies for mentoring students, and the ways in which faculty members, in particular, can support the holistic development of mentees. Particular to The University of West Indies, it is difficult to find resources for faculty to become better mentors and advisors and, at the same time, difficult for students to find mentors and/or supervisors within the full-time faculty staff. In the role as a dance practitioner, educator, and supervisor, I am advocating the need to acknowledge and strategically employ more kinaesthetic awareness in the art of mentoring and to create more opportunities for this to occur, particularly within the Caribbean. Additionally, I offer some suggestions to reflect on mentorship as a practice and other avenues to be explored more succinctly in conjunction with mentoring.

What is mentorship?

So, what is mentorship? This is a very broad term that has been defined extensively in the fields of psychology, sociology, business and education since the 1970s. Due to the large number of disciplines interested in the work of mentoring, there are no consistent definitions. Hence, great debates occur concerning the level of emotional depth in the mentorship relationship (Jacobi, 1991; Hall, 2003; Phillips-Jones, 1982). Despite contrasting views and inconsistent definitions, there are four specific attributes that can provide a common frame in understanding the mentor-mentee relationship (Austin, 2002; Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985). Firstly, mentorship is a unique relationship, meaning that each dynamic is distinct, spurred by different personalities, exchanges and patterns that can occur positively or negatively. Secondly, mentoring encourages a learning and evolving partnership in which the procurement of knowledge is achieved by all parties. Thirdly, "mentoring is a process" determined by its ultimate function as either "emotional or psychosocial" or "instrumental and career-related" (Eby et al., 2007, p. 10). Finally, although a mentorship relationship can be reciprocal, the ultimate aim is to enhance the growth and development of the mentee. There are many factors that complicate these dynamics, including power structures, age disparities, duration of relationship, cultural context, requirements, and more. But, overall, these four attributes give us an idea of how the practice of mentoring exists and continues forward.

Additionally, the type of mentoring is very important in how we address and mould the practice. Unfortunately, the literature regarding the distinctions between formal and informal mentoring remains less defined. Within the fields of youth and workplace mentoring, the distinction between formal and informal is more clearly defined than within the academy. Formal mentoring occurs when a mentor and mentee are matched by a third party and are part of an official mentoring programme. Informal mentoring occurs when a relationship develops "naturally or spontaneously without outside assistance" (Eby et al., 2007,p. 12). In academia, student-faculty relationships can start out being more formal, as with academic advisors or supervisors, but the research on academic mentorship tends to assume "that mentorships develop informally or does not specify the context of the relationship" (Eby et al., 2007, p. 12).

Within the realm of mentoring initiatives in educational, business and community settings, there are three commonly found interpersonal relationships, including youth mentoring, student-faculty mentoring and workplace mentoring (Eby et al., 2007). The focus of this paper is the development of the relationship between the student and faculty member. The

student-faculty mentoring model (Jacobi, 1991; Chickering, 1969; Johnson, 2007) is an essential component of the student's educational experience in and out of the classroom. Some of the responsibilities of faculty as mentors are to "impart knowledge, provide support, and offer guidance on academic (e.g., classroom, performance, skill-building) as well as non-academic (e.g., personal and social problems, identity issues, and more)" (Eby et al. 2007, p. 15). The student-faculty mentoring relationship can occur between undergraduate or graduate students and faculty members.

The student-faculty mentorship relationship can either be formal or informal, with either planned or unplanned interactions. Particularly in respect of graduate student development, mentoring is viewed as an essential component to aid in developing the student's professional identity and career plans. Although this is a very important relationship, "graduate school mentoring experiences are highly idiosyncratic since guidelines do not typically exist for mentoring relationships and faculty have substantial latitude in how they interact with their students" (Eby et al. 2007, p. 16). In addition to problems of lack of guidelines or formality in the mentorship relationship, faculty members are stretched thin due to their responsibilities to teach a certain number of courses, conduct research and publish, as well as serve on committees, attend conferences, and do more in order to promote the university.

Not all faculty members, even in the role of supervisor, are in a mentoring relationship with students. Although most undergraduate and graduate programmes require faculty members to advise students and to provide guidance and support, the engagement beyond these responsibilities need not exist. An advising relationship becomes a mentorship when an "adviser-advisee relationship evolves into a more connected, active, and reciprocal relationship and when the advisor begins to offer a range of both career-enhancing and emotional or psychosocial functions" (Johnson, 2007, p. 190). Unfortunately, the research on the proportion of students who are mentored by a faculty member, whether that relationship is beneficial to the student, and what type of mentorship support for both faculty and student participants is available, is extremely sparse.

Despite the lack of studies on the long-term benefits of mentoring for students, there have been inquiries into how undergraduates might benefit from mentorship from their onset into university programs. Johnson (2007) suggests that "undergraduates' out-of-class

experiences with faculty – including mentoring activities – result in positive correlations on various measures of academic achievement, and that freshman students who have more personal contact with faculty are significantly more likely to return to college for their sophomore year." (p.193). The key is to create strong bonds at the beginning of their academic experience to allow engagement, confidence, and a feeling of support from faculty members and the school at large. As Founding Director of Diversity & Inclusion at Oakland University, Dr. Caryn Reed-Hendon in her PhD dissertation entitled, "Mentoring and Academic Resilience: Academic Progress in A Predominantly White Institution as a Historically Marginalized Student" states, "engagement in a structured mentoring program could be the missing link in increasing retention rates and levelling attrition for historically marginalized students" (Reed-Henton, 2013, p .8). Given the paucity of information on mentoring in the Caribbean, it is important to examine existing institutional practices and the potential of mentoring for student development within the region. The following subsection addresses this issue.

The Case of The University of the West Indies

The paper centres the meta-analysis on the academic advising practices and experiences of The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus. The University of West Indies at the St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago comprises eight faculties (each with several departments) with undergraduate degree programmes: Humanities and Education, Law, Medical Sciences, Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Food and Agriculture, Engineering, and Sport. All the departments, except the Department of Sport, offer graduate degrees. I speak directly to my experience as a faculty member in Humanities and Education, particularly of the Department of Creative and Festival Arts and the Department of Literary, Cultural, and Communication Studies. In this capacity, I have supervised and mentored dance unit students, multiple undergraduate students in either their theoretical or practical capstone projects, Master's Degree students in Human Communication Studies, and both Master's and PhD students in Cultural Studies.

At The University of West Indies (UWI), there are some programmes designed to help in mentoring undergraduates, and faculty members academically advise students every year. There are no clear mentorship responsibilities for faculty members towards specific students besides undergraduate capstone projects and postgraduate supervision. There

should be a mentorship programme offered at the onset of academic life for first year students with specific faculty members to guide them through their journey. The formality of academic supervision could be altered for faculty members to supervise specific students for the duration of their sojourn at university and this could lead to more mentorship possibilities. However, undergraduate students are not necessarily assigned supervisors, nor do they have a specific choice in the matter. Such a mentorship relationship can start as a formal one, but can also become more informal depending on the needs of the student. Additionally, there are some mentorship programmes for undergraduates, separate from supervision. But there are no clear guidelines for faculty members to receive training in mentoring or supervising students in a formal capacity. In terms of the relationship structure, any predetermined guidelines for either participant's role in mentorship are grossly underdeveloped, and there is no consistency amongst the different departments.

In researching the mentorship availability within various programmes at The UWI, I found that there are not many available for either faculty members to receive training in mentoring, or for students to take part in a particular mentorship programme. The UWI Alumni Association offers a mentorship programme for undergraduate students to link and interact with experienced alumni. This programme has existed for over twenty-five years. The Association also offers a "First Year Experience" programme for both first year undergraduate and postgraduate students that offers orientation activities, events, and initiatives to assist and support the transition to campus life. This is a new initiative that began in 2019 which is "inclusive and provides a holistic orientation process that addresses the specific needs of all subgroups within the student population" (*About FYE* 2021, p.1). Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, there is a lack of research on the impact of these virtual sessions for students. Additionally, this is for assistance only in the first year. I do believe, however, that it would be more beneficial for a programme like this to also initiate a direct mentorship relationship with faculty so that there is more continuity throughout the students' whole journey. Such a relationship should exist with academic advising, as this would create more comfort and support for students who experience problems, especially due to the move to online learning. But there still is not a person directly appointed to a student.

In a different area on the St. Augustine campus, there was a study published in 2021 on the impact of mentoring for school librarians across the disciplines, focusing on enhancing their ability to research and publish. Some of the results were disappointing, as the findings

indicated that "a significant number of respondents did not receive mentorship support in research and publishing, and that they needed it" (Gill & Gosine-Boodoo, 2021, p. 6). If they did receive mentorship, the respondents did not think that it was very effective. There were two particular general comments on mentorship that are important to this discussion as well. One respondent stated that mentorship should be "deliberate and purposeful, and seen as a means to advancement in the institution, thereby eliminating the notion that knowledge, skill, and expertise are territorial in the workplace" (Gill & Gosine-Boodoo 2021, p. 6). Firstly, this comment stands out as a call to "decolonize" knowledge. When the workplace is an academic institution, knowledge, skill, and expertise should all be accessible and seen as necessary for the development of students' confidence and achievements. Secondly, the view expressed on mentorship has a clear strategic agenda in which part of the future outcomes is to promote the institution. The second comment was that, "a consultation on the practice of mentorship should be arranged for all academic departments annually" (Gill & Gosine-Boodoo, 2021, p. 6). The implication of this response alludes to the concern that there might not be any mentorship training programmes for all the academic departments. It suggests, also, that a standardization programme across the university would be helpful in promoting mentorship for the benefit of the students. Although this study was focused on academic librarians, the findings reveal a need for a more concentrated effort to give appropriate attention to mentorship across all departments for the benefit of the university.

The benefits to students of a positive and fulfilling student-faculty mentorship relationship are clear. These include an increase in scholarly productivity, the adoption of profession-specific skills and demeanour, a feeling of connection and engagement through networking situations at their local institution and their field at large, a possibility for employment after their studies, and a development of professional confidence and identity formation (Johnson, 2007). All of this would certainly benefit some students in their careers outside of academia and encourage students to continue their studies. It could also create more engagement, promotion, and funding for the university.

Further, with regard to The UWI, the humanities programmes are suffering, as more idealized careers of medicine, engineering and law are still regarded as offering greater prestige and stability than fields like cultural studies or dance. In Trinidad and Tobago, the culture is ripe for a revitalization in the arts in which the respective academic programmes can contribute and develop a blossoming creative industry for a global stage. In the newspaper *UWI Today* in March 2019, the then Principal, Professor Brian Copeland,

addressed the need and significance of recognizing the humanities in education and in the larger cultural sector. He stated that "while the role of the science-based disciplines as well as law is clear in the agenda for innovation, it is not as obvious for the humanities… At a time when our regional societies, ecologies, and economies are delicately poised, we need the humanities and the arts as much as we need the sciences to place us on a robust trajectory to sustainable development. It requires a culture change of no small proportion – but change we must" (Copeland, 2019, p. 3). Although there is a strong call to support and uphold the humanities and the arts, there still seems no viable strategy to put this into practice as of yet.

The focus of many university programmes has been on the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields as a way to drive innovation and economic growth, particularly in developing countries. At The University of West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, the enrolment of students within the past five years has undoubtedly favoured STEM. In respect of the arts, because of the overall lack of support and funding, a mentorship programme would greatly benefit students and faculty alike to create more career opportunities, networking and collaborative exchange, as well as prestige and recognition for the arts.

The Dance Between Educational Theories

In order to view mentorship as a more holistic practice, numerous educational theories have been developed to aid in the development of college students. I will briefly synthesize the theories of Andrew Chickering's seven vectors and Dewey through Rodgers' reflective pedagogy. Both theories encourage student-centred learning and enable teachers to become better mentors for educational growth in their students' experiences.

In terms of an informal connection between students and faculty in mentoring, educational researcher Andrew Chickering developed a theory in his pivotal work *The Model of College Impact* in 1969 to aid in the overall identity development of college students. The theory involves seven vectors, or tasks, that support the development of the students' sense of self and direction in life. It was purposeful to use the term vector to refer to a "spiraling progression rather than a linear developmental process consisting of stages," in which the experience should be positive and fulfilling as you continue to gain strengths and skills to "overcome unexpected pitfalls and barriers" (Liversage et al., 2018, p. 64). The theory is

applicable to a diverse student population and this "inclusive focus" emphasizes the "emotional, interpersonal, ethical, and intellectual development" (Liversage et al., 2018, p. 64). The seven vectors emphasize interpersonal relationships and the ability to develop maturity within them, developing autonomy and confidence within oneself and how one is perceived, defining purpose, and managing emotions.

American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer John Dewey (1859-1952) is renowned for his transforming ideas about education and social reform. His pivotal work *How We Think* (1910/1933) articulated his concept about several modes of thought, but he was deeply interested in the mode of reflection. His particular work on reflection is often "scant or missing altogether" as it is often philosophers unpacking this work instead of practitioners actually creating methods to apply it practically (Rodgers, 2002, p. 844). Carol Rodgers' distillation of his six phases of reflection into four was an effort to simplify the application of the theory for teachers. Reflectivity is a "meaning-making process" in which the effectiveness of the method deepens "students' understanding of their work, asking them to evaluate not just what they do, but also why they do it" (Weidmann, 2018, p. 56). The four phases of reflection encourage student-centred learning and enable teachers to become better mentors for educational growth in their students' experiences.

Firstly, the importance lies in being present to an experience. This also requires open acceptance, passion, and energy in order for the students to want to learn about a particular subject, and to also be engaging and free of judgement to build their aptitudes as learners (Rodgers, 2002). In the second phase, students learn to describe through the process of telling the story of an experience. This ties in well with the Caribbean tradition of oral storytelling and with the notion of collaboration. This is a crucial step as it allows students and teachers to become partners in inquiry. The third phase allows growth from the second phase to create meaning and to find a common language. Finally, the fourth phase is experimentation, putting together all the findings from the previous phases to take deliberate actions. All four phases allow for reflection to occur for the student and mentor in order to create more fulfilling and intellectually stimulating experiences. In order to understand the implications of these theories for practice, it is necessary to understand how this can be applied to diverse populations like that of Trinidad and Tobago within the African diaspora. It is also important to understand the cultural context of the values and behaviour that are supported, tolerated, and/or shifting in order to create a successful, holistic approach for the student population.

Importance of Inclusion and Emotion

The elements of nurturing inclusion and emotional intelligence are particularly important in the act of mentorship in the Caribbean. Firstly, the cultural make-up of Trinidad and Tobago is defined by hybridity through the adoption and subversion of their colonial past in which the results have created a society with a multitude of ethnicities and traditions that have created particular movements and artistic textures that comment on contemporary issues concerning race, gender, class, and politics. Even looking at the infamous Trinidad Carnival, there are cultural influences "from the peoples who settled in Trinidad and Tobago and were forcibly brought there as slaves, indentured laborers, and free people, including Europeans, Africans, Amerindians, East Indians, Chinese, and Lebanese, creating a melting pot society (Forbes-Erickson, 2009, p. 240). This does not mean that everyone is tolerant of each other all the time, but multiple cultures do live, work, and prosper together here. As Hérard-Marshall and Rivera state,

> colonization, chattel slavery, genocide, religious, and racial persecution of Africans and their descendants in the Americas by the European empires continue to be ever present in the collective psyche of members of the African Diaspora. Undeniably, these atrocities stripped all peoples of African descent of their history, their culture, and their ways of being, resulting in "a shattered consciousness and a fractured identity" (1).

Mentorship is key in developing student's identity of themselves and their surrounding community.

South African psychologists Lindi Liversage, Luzelle Naudé and Anja Botha conducted a study in 2016 to understand the implications of college students using Chickering's seven vectors theory in regard to black South African first-generation students' experiences during their first year at a higher education institution in order to understand their identity development. As most students were part of the first generation to attend university, it was found that a particular challenge was "to function independently [as] they are dependent on the feedback of important others during decision-making" (Leverage et al., 2018, p. 66). This also occurs at UWI, where first generation students face similar challenges as they leave their homes and families to pursue their studies. A key factor in encouraging greater

independence that comes from dance is the emphasis on collaboration to achieve mature relationships. It is an art form that depends on "social and communicative exchange of working with others"; even in the dance class, "individuals must negotiate the same space and time together" (Reid 2007, p. 52). The type of work and even the space for conducting class all contribute to developing a student's ability to create open and respectful relationships.

In terms of strategies to become more aware of one's emotional states, somatic practices offer fruitful guidance as one turns inwards to the body to feel what is happening. Additionally, dance and any other art practice offer an outlet for emotional release by creative expression. As Trinidadian educator, journalist and author Dr. Glenville Ashby states, "I have always felt that dance exteriorizes one's inner landscape. As an experiential art it ignites every sense in opposite and complementary ways: explosive, subtle, loud and tranquil, iridescent and dull, fiery and watery, and so much more comes to mind" (Ashby 2018, p. 1). Additionally, the practice from theatre and dance entitled "The Viewpoints '' offers pragmatic exercises in developing emotional maturity. This was a practice fuelled by postmodern dance compositional techniques by theatre practitioners Anne Bogart and Tina Landau at NYU in the 1970s. The six viewpoints are exploration into space, shape, time, emotion, movement, and story. With respect to emotion in particular, even just asking students through any discussion of their issues, "What emotional satisfaction does it provide?" could be a fruitful entry point in creating better solutions for them (Bogart & Landau 2005, p. 190). Furthermore, breathing, as discussed more thoroughly later, is an extremely important strategy to connect to your parasympathetic response in order to calm yourself down in difficult situations.

Somatic Practices and Mentorship

The discipline of dance, in terms of somatic practices, can offer substantial wisdom to strategies and techniques that can benefit mentoring within the student-faculty relationship. I am not advocating that mentors or faculty members should become experts in the field of dance, but that they create more standardized programmes and add components from dance as particular methods of mentoring. Within the discipline of dance, somatics, a mind-body

technique, has greatly enhanced student's efficiency, confidence and ways of handling stress and anxiety. In comparison with more codified and/or folk-dance techniques, somatics offers movement awareness from internal experiences instead of the external appearance or outcome of a movement.

Somatics is a term coined by American philosopher and movement therapist Thomas Louis Hanna in 1976, from the Greek word "somatiko", "soma", or "somat" that means "living body". Hanna refers to the "soma" as "the biological body of functions by which and through which awareness and environment are mediated" (1983, p. 1). Hanna (1986) also defines somatics as a field of study dealing with the concept of the human being experiencing himself from inside. The particular beauty of this field is the refusal to uphold the Euro-centric mind/body dichotomy and to recognize the "embodied self in its wholeness" (Greene 1995, p. 4). This is also already done in the Caribbean. As stated by Patsy Sutherland et al., this dichotomy is already in "sharp contrast to the Caribbean worldview which is based on holism, collectivism, and spirituality" (Greene, 2014, p. 3). The problems of categorization and dividing do not assist when trying to heal and to develop.

Somatic practices already existed outside of the western context. As activist and embodiment coach, Prentis Hemphill (2021, p.1) firmly states,

> The western world puts a name on things, often a white guy's name on things, and pretends it's new. But all of our cultures have practices. Most cultures are practices around embodiment. Our dancing, our singing, our relationship to land, the places where we make contact, the stories we create to make meaning of our lives, all of that to me is somatics.

This is particularly important in Caribbean culture, although it might not necessarily be seen, recognized, or celebrated as such. Somatics is a practice of embodied cultures.

Somatic practices aim to improve human function and to create body-mind integration through mindful and restorative movement. There are many different styles of somatic practices, each with its own education or therapeutic emphasis, principles, techniques and methods. In addition to kinaesthetic awareness and bodily movements, somatic processes

can include sound, breath, touch and imagery. The attention to bodily awareness and integration of body, mind and spirit are crucial elements that can improve how we address mentoring within the student-faculty mentorship relationship.

There are multiple ways that incorporating some elements from somatics can provide an efficient and beneficial way of viewing the relationship between mentor and mentee. In general, the basic tenets of somatics include "awareness, efficiency, exploration, rest and non judgment" (Wozny, 2021, p.1). These are not only good qualities for a mentor to embody in order to have a positive outlook and to create an open, safe space, but also qualities to develop within their mentee. Additionally, a heightened sense of kinaesthetic awareness in both the mentor and mentee can assist in developing socioemotional support and strategies to cope with difficult matters and bodily responses to trauma, stress and anxiety. Pioneering dance movement therapist Mary Whitehouse eloquently describes two striking things about movement that we should be aware of: 1) "movement is non-verbal and yet it communicates, that is, says something. Our impressions of people are gathered fully as much from physical attributes and gestures as from words and clothes" and 2) "the body does not…cannot lie…the physical condition is in some way also the psychological one. We do not know in what way the psyche is the body and the body is the psyche, but we do know that one does not exist without the other" (Whitehouse, 1995, p. 242). The body reveals visible clues about our emotional state. For instance, if we are very tense, our shoulders might be raised up to our earlobes; if we are nervous, there might be extra movement in our hands shaking, feet shaking, and eye blinking; and if we are fearful, our movements might become limited and controlled. These are all visible signs that as mentors we can take note of, digest, and act accordingly to support the student for the best ultimate outcome.

In the area of somatic dance, Judith Aston, founder of Aston-Patterning, a verbal instructional method of movement education, bodywork, ergonomic adjustments and fitness training, reflects on the importance of mentorship to her career goals and style of teaching. Her thoughts highlight the importance of mentors developing self-expression and confidence and developing trust in their mentees' internal, emotional gut reactions. For example, as a dance educator at a community college, she taught ballroom dance classes and had a male track athlete attend her class that could not grasp any of the combinations. She met him on the track one day to assess his running and taught him the same pattern used in ballroom dance as a slow running exercise and he then succeeded at both: running and the foxtrot step. She noticed that when you meet people where they are already successful, you can

begin to transition into new material (p. 209). Mentors should build on their students' strengths in order to find solutions and achieve ongoing success in their adventures.

Furthermore, stemming from somatic techniques, the focus on breath is crucial as a technique and practice to teach and follow for better health and longevity. Breath is always the focus of every initial somatic movement, particularly where breathing serves a critical role in communication (Greene, 1995). This applies to the actual act of speaking, which is activated by breath, but also in terms of tapping into our awareness of self. Breath can indicate our emotional states and alter them as well. For example, breath can reveal "our level of anxiety or somatic activation; shallow breathing shows evidence of stress, while deep breathing is associated with relaxation and sacrality" (Greene, 1995, p. 255). If we consciously alter our breathing, we can tap into our parasympathetic response through long, slow exhalations in order to calm and focus ourselves in tense situations. All mentors should learn simple breathing exercises to pass on to their students to utilize in particularly difficult moments in order to reduce stress and anxiety.

In an extensive study of breath, journalist James Nestor explores ancient breathing practices to more modern scientific research to understand the impact of breath on health and well-being. One such breathing exercise utilized by navy seals to stay calm and focused is called "box breathing", in which you inhale to a count of 4, hold, 4, exhale 4, hold 4 and repeat. This can be done with an even larger exhale to more deeply relax the body, especially before sleep (Nestor, 2020). There are multiple breathing exercises from somatic techniques and other forms of bodily practices that can greatly assist both mentors and students in their educational journey. In both the certificate and degree programmes in dance at The University of West Indies, students learn somatic practices through courses on movement analysis and dance injuries and conditioning. Breath and movement are deeply interlinked and learning the importance of breath leads to more focused, calm, and expressive dancers. The connection of breath and movement is taught within all movement technique courses that include Caribbean, modern, and ballet techniques. Deep breathing techniques can also be taught to mentors to share amongst their students in order to provide more focus, relaxation, and reflection. As one ballet student in her journal stated, "Ballet gave me confidence, a dance family full of confident and empowering women, and helped me feel happy again!" (Anonymous 2019, p.18). It is no coincidence that in studying dance, a student can feel more confident, empowered, and happy, all notions that should come forth through mentoring in which learning how to breath is the first fundamental lesson.

Somatic techniques are Caribbean cultural techniques that implement practices to unite the whole body (body-mind-spirit). As Jamaican dancer, choreographer and author L'Antoinette Stines (2005, p. 35) notes:

> Caribbean Dance begins from a spiritual space, the ancestral groundation of the blood sweat and tears of the millions of Africans deposited on these shores with a dash of China, India, and Europe…An explosion of move evo/nevo synergies through time, exposure and experiences. The ritual celebrations of life bathed in the Caribbean oceans, rivers, sunshine and moonlight.

Somatic practices are in sync with wanting to preserve spirituality in order to attain self-growth. Somatic pedagogy is concerned with "educating the whole person, who embodies the diverse interrelationships, contexts, and systems….by sensitive attention to the multidimensions of human beingness—physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, Self, and other…in order to facilitate harmonious balance and integration" (Greene 1995, p. 243). When mentoring in a Caribbean context, it is vital that we be in tune with the cultural traditions, rituals, beliefs and systems in play that affect the student body. This means being more attuned to the importance of movement and dance within this culture. Historically, "dancing traditions in the Caribbean have been the force behind the emotional and spiritual nourishment for the enslaved Africans to fight for their freedom" (Hérard-Marshall & Rivera 2019, p.1). As mentors, we want to arm ourselves with all the resources necessary to productively assist our students. Dance is part of that.

Unfortunately, a lot of students who follow their passion into the arts are not always supported by their parents at UWI or in the wider cultural context. The prevalence of dance in society is part of the culture, part of the upbringing, and part of people's souls, but it is not respected as a career path. Locally here in Trinidad, dance is not viewed or valued as a professional course of study or career. One dance student expressed the hope that in the future there would be greater appreciation and acceptance of the arts and of culture as a whole and a recognition that dance is more than a hobby. This might relate back to the South African study in which it was found that "parents of first-generation students do not possess useful career-related resources and are not able to provide meaningful assistance in their children's academic career choices" (Bui, 2005). Consequently, choices are made based on the amount of money or status the career will provide for the child and the family (Ayala &

Striplen, 2002; Bui, 2002; Stephens et al., 2012). Hopefully, as a result of the pandemic, students and their parents will be encouraged to follow their passions and interests wholeheartedly.

CONCLUSION

For Caribbean people, dance is part of the essence of their being. In particular, with respect to Afro-Caribbean dance, the form was "born out of the Atlantic Slave Trade, was a way for the enslaved of different nations and tribes to communicate with each other, to communicate in code against the slave-masters, to fight oppression, and to be in community for support and celebration" (Hérard-Marshall & Rivera, 2019, p. 1). Even as mentors, we can learn from the power of dance to heal, to strengthen, and to support our fellow beings. This also means we have to be willing to change. Change is not easy, as it can challenge our values and beliefs systems. But sometimes it is necessary:

> The mere dynamics of change can either pull an institution together, moving forward for the betterment of all members of its community, or it can divide the institution, placing more stress on what is already a fragile network until it is broken and the rebuilding is inevitable. Implementing policy must be institutionally supported, have buy-in and involvement from all faculty and staff, meet the needs of the body it is expected to serve, and become institutionalized. Giving anything less is throwing caution to the wind and allowing the surrounding environment to be the cause rather than the effect of change. (Reed-Hendon, 2013, p. 81).

We do need to change how mentorship is nurtured within the university structure and more research needs to be conducted on what the best way forward should be. In the Caribbean, mentorship needs to take a more holistic approach that considers findings in the United States (Nora & Crisp, 2007; Ward et al., 2014) and in South Africa (Liversage et al., 2018) that adapt theories from Chickering (1969) and from a reworking of Dewey's theory of reflectivity (Rodgers, 2002) through studying predominantly underprivileged and first-generation college students. Additionally, a more holistic approach should consider findings from a whole-body approach through the lens of dance shown through indigenous practices and somatic approaches (Hérard-Marshall & Rivera, 2019; Stines, 2005; Sutherland, 2014; Whitehouse, 1995; Wozny, 2021). Given the absence of research in this area, more empirical

work is needed to both explore and assess the effectiveness of dance as a method for mentoring within institutions of higher education.

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