AFRICAN DANCE IN DIVERSE HIGHER EDUCATION SETTINGS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PRACTICES OF FIVE EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS

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DEDICATION

For my awesomely supportive parents, Clarence and Alice Dalton;
my dear sister, Natalya; and the sweetest dog ever, Lindy.
Thank you for your unconditional love and patience.

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ABSTRACT

MELANIE L. DALTON

AFRICAN DANCE IN DIVERSE HIGHER EDUCATION SETTINGS:
PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PRACTICES OF
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This dissertation research explored issues concerning the integration of African dance techniques in higher education. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences *of* and intended objectives *for* teaching African dance forms to a diverse population of American college students through the insights of five individuals who teach African dance techniques courses in five different American universities. The participants selected were currently teaching within dance programs offering African dance study in differing curricular formats at universities in southern and midwestern states. Each participant was an experienced dancer, performer, and teacher of traditional African dance forms.

Working within a qualitative research methodology, themes and conclusions emerged directly from data collected from in-depth, face-to-face interviews. Each participant was treated as a case study. Within these case studies, the lived experiences of the participants were investigated through their descriptions of teaching African dance forms, thus creating a portrait of the complexities of each separate case. The study concluded with a statement of objectives emphasized by the participants as important for

enabling students to learn more about themselves in order to then sense how they might navigate and adapt to communities in which they are both familiar and unfamiliar.

Internet research into curricular offerings of several American colleges and universities with dance programs having courses in African dance forms broadened this study by offering an overview of how African dance study is currently being implemented in dance programs across the nation. The Internet research examined who was teaching African dance forms in selected American universities, where the courses were placed within the curriculum, and the levels of African dance techniques courses offered.

Since the research participants in this dissertation offered possible ways for American dance curricula in higher education to be reshaped, redefined, and reimagined, this research is particularly important to the future field of dance education as the backgrounds and needs of students entering higher education become more diverse.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Researcher's Path

My experience with African and African diaspora dance forms has come full circle in the 23 years I have danced as a student and teacher.[1] I first began dancing when I was a sophomore elementary education student on the campus of an HBCU (historically black college and university), and I now teach daily at that same university in the very same dance studio where I began. I was first introduced to modern dance, Dunham Technique,[2] and African and Caribbean dance forms while taking a required *Movement and Dance* course. Later, I continued dancing as a member of The E. Gwynn Dance Company of N.C. A&T.[3] Though this student company existed decades before dance was a formal academic program at the university, through my participation in the company I was among scores of students educated in several world dance forms via study with international guest artists, international travel and study, and performance experiences. I have now been on the dance faculty since 2003, but I have been affiliated with the dance

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1. Throughout most of this dissertation, I use the terms *African* and *African diaspora dance forms* (or *techniques*) as opposed to *African dance*. As one of my participants expressed it, the broad term *African dance* implies that all dance from African countries and ethnic groups are alike. In the few cases I use *African dance*, I do so simply to smooth sentence flow.

2. A dance technique created by Katherine Dunham (1909-2006), which integrates various African and Afro-Caribbean movement styles, modern dance, and elements of ballet.

3. N.C. A&T is the abbreviation for North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. The company's official name includes the abbreviation.

company since 1993. In that time, I assisted the program director, Eleanor Gwynn,[4] with several study and dance tours in African and Caribbean countries prior to the formalization of N.C. A&T's dance program as well as several other study abroad experiences since the program's formation.

As a graduate student in dance at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, I conducted several informal, unpublished qualitative studies regarding how students described their participation in A&T's dance company and their learning of world dance, particularly African and Afro-Caribbean dance forms. Previous research inquiries also informed my notion of how and what students sense they are learning from the study of dance forms connected to their ancestry (e.g., African American students learning African and African diaspora dance). My master's thesis research in 2002, *Students' Experiences with African and African-derived Dance: Stages of Awareness,* suggested that the more time spent studying African dance forms, the deeper the students' spiritual

4. Dr. Eleanor Gwynn very recently retired from decades of teaching at N.C. A&T. She is founder and artistic director of The E. Gwynn Dancers of N.C. A&T, which evolved from a student dance "club" in the 1970's to a full-fledged university dance company in 1985. Gwynn was teaching a dance course as part of the Health, Physical Fitness and Recreation Department's curriculum when she formed the company in response to the demands of her students who wanted more dance performance opportunities. In the early days, Gwynn choreographed most of the company's repertoire, which was mainly modern dance and jazz, reflecting her early background training in ballet, tap, and jazz. Her interests in African/African diaspora dance developed later, around the time she began conducting research on the works of Katherine Dunham while pursuing a doctorate degree. (Gwynn became a master teacher of Dunham Technique.) Eventually, the company began performing in area public schools with the company now performing for many occasions in differing venues locally, nationally and internationally with the mission to educate audiences about the cultural aspects of the dances presented.

connection to the movement/performance and the more insightful their discussion of the relationship between African dancing and their identities as African Americans.

For doctoral course work, I conducted an informal research project for an unpublished paper involving current dance students taking the *Dance Company and Repertory* course at N.C. A&T. In journal writings and brief interviews about their total experience of the course, including company participation and the learning of world dance forms, the students prioritized discussion of three major themes: 1) the practice of learning and life lessons discovered within that practice, 2) emotions linked to their learning experiences, and 3) ability to identify personal traits emerging within the act of dancing, such as being responsible and disciplined. Both research done at the master's and doctoral levels suggested that dance study for these students shaped how they identified within a culture and what they valued when dancing with others while learning the steps of the differing dances. These research projects further led me to ponder what role world dance study could play for future college students at American universities. I, therefore, began this new inquiry with a cursory look at extant literature on the changing population of the United States and how these changes might affect American college curricula. How might a changing American demographic affect what is taught as an American dance heritage in the future?

Narrowing the Inquiry

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the percentage of White students enrolled in American colleges has decreased from 83 percent to 61 percent, and the percentages that are Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black have each increased to

fill the gap (National 2014). Further, this population trend is noted as continuing exponentially in the future. Additionally, citing the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, African American filmmaker Janks Morton reports in his web series "Truths You Won't Believe" (Tyler 2014) that black women based upon race and gender are leading all groups in college enrollment percentages. Broader demographics of the future American landscape further show that not only are students encountering more diversity in their college classrooms, but this diversity can also be further experienced in a future American society as a whole.

According to differing issues now being raised in various dance organizations, to include Dance 2050[5] and the National Association for Schools of Dance (NASD),[6] these noted demographic changes in the racial and cultural populations of students taking dance courses in American higher education are now encouraging educators to reimagine how future dance curricula can become significant for these shifting and diverse populations. Thus, attitudes and perspectives on world dance and its place in higher education curricula are currently poised for change. (Chapter IV will discuss the current conversations surrounding this issue.) The possibilities for how these conversations might affect the teaching and place of world dance forms within future dance curricula, therefore, became the impetus for this dissertation research.

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5. A National Dance Education Organization initiative formed in 2011 entitled "DANCE 2050: What is the Future of Dance in Higher Education?" See Chapter III for a more detailed description of its purpose.

6. NASD is the "national accrediting agency for dance and dance-related disciplines" (National 2016).

With the preceding insights in mind, I narrowed my broader interest in world dance curricular issues to further focus on the current scholarly discussions concerning the integration of African dance techniques in higher education. I chose these specific cultural dance forms since the role of African people and influence of African aesthetics in dance is often left out of the mainstream of American dance history. Instead, how African culture has influenced American popular culture, dance history, and dance performance is relegated to the margins rather than interwoven throughout an American cultural landscape. In the following, dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996) reminds us all about this exclusion when she states in *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*:

> Of course, American culture includes important, significant influences from many other cultures as well. But it is rooted in and defined by the pervasive cultural manifestations of peoples of (Central and West) African and European lineage. The cultural constructs of these broad but divergent groupings form the matrix, the scaffolding of American culture. (4)

I hoped, then, that my research would begin to correct this historical omission by positing important discussions about how to incorporate African cultures in future higher education dance curricula to broaden an understanding of an American heritage.

To undertake this task of rectifying an omission in American dance history, which has affected dance curricula for decades, I chose to focus my research on the practices of teachers of African dance forms and the insights these teachers share with their college and university students when imparting cultural values within the form they teach. Therefore, this dissertation includes insights from five experienced teachers of African dance forms in differing university settings as they discuss the following: their teaching

practice, what they value in this practice, and what they hope to pass on to the students taking their classes. My hope is that these insights will provide future dance programs with methods and rationales for incorporating African dance forms in their curricula. This incorporation would then provide a means for students to experience an important aspect of American culture that might not be available to them within many current dance curricula. Therefore, I have written this dissertation with dance instructors in mind; however, I also hope that higher education administrators and others involved in post-secondary curriculum development will also seriously take into account the important issues shared by the dissertation's research participants. I am addressing those in academia who may take on the challenge of reimagining dance curricula to meet the shifting needs of today's and tomorrow's dance students.

To begin my research exploration and to help contextualize my interviews for this study, I first gained a broad overview of scholarly discussions by current and twentieth century scholars struggling with how to define world dance forms in general and then how these definitions might aid in where these dance forms are placed within differing curricula. I chose to use the term *world dance* predominantly throughout this dissertation.[7] By this term, I am referring to dances that have developed over time as shared cultural products of a group of people from certain geographical areas, but which do not emerge from the dominant culture in which the higher education dance curricula

7. I also use the terms *global dance* and *cultural dance* interchangeably with *world dance* throughout the chapters.

lives.[8] Next, I sought to determine how these forms are currently being established within curricular frameworks, specifically as a means for opening new artistic possibilities for students living within ever-growing diverse environments. Finally, by undertaking this research, I hoped to make connections between the perspectives of the dissertation's research participants, the five teachers of African dance techniques, as they were put in conversation with theorists and practitioners working to integrate world dance into diverse educational settings.

The importance of this research is thus twofold: to create a foundation for why world dance forms will be important to the twenty-first century student in general, and, more specifically, to understand more clearly how this foundation might also support the practice of teaching African dance forms within American educational environments. Although experiential data from African dance teachers (and students) is scarce in the current literature, it is extremely important to find and then listen to these dance voices as dance administrators and faculty continue to reimagine and create new curricular designs for the student preparing for life within the twenty-first century (NDEO 2015).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences *of* and intended objectives *for* teaching African dance forms to a diverse population of American college students through the insights of five individuals who teach African dance techniques courses in five

8. I am aware of connotations of "othering" that may be perceived with using the term *world dance* as explicated by Marta Savigliano (2009) in Susan Foster's *Worlding Dance.* At this juncture, I remain in search of a term that better represents these dance forms when cultural specificity is not contextually imperative.

different American universities. Interviews with the individuals were focused on their personal teaching practices and experiences, not on critiques of their university or their university's dance program. Internet research into curricular offerings of several American colleges and universities with dance programs having courses in African dance forms was also conducted to provide context to the interviews. The Internet research included determining who is teaching African dance forms in selected American universities, where the courses were placed within the curriculum, and the levels of African dance technique courses offered.

Since the research participants in this dissertation offer possible ways for American dance curricula in higher education to be reshaped, redefined, and reimagined, this research is particularly important to the future field of dance education as the backgrounds and needs of students entering higher education become more diverse. Further, this dissertation research aims to begin the process of interweaving an African perspective into the record of American history, a perspective that is often missing in past and current curricula. Therefore, this dissertation will add to the rapidly growing conversations concerning differing forms of world dance in general, and African dance forms in particular, as the forms are interwoven within curricular offerings rather than as peripheral electives.

In the following chapters, I will offer insight for addressing the research questions I will put forth in Chapter II and, hopefully, provoke additional questions to advance the field towards a change in the way African and other world dance study exists in post-secondary dance curricula. Also, in Chapter II, I offer an overview of my methodological approach for collecting and analyzing data for this dissertation study. In Chapter III, I

outline the theoretical framework for this inquiry, identifying key concepts discussed by theorists and pedagogues in the extant literature. Chapters IV, V, and VI are the data chapters, in which I present my findings after analyzing data collected from the Internet research of dance programs across the United States and interviews with the research participants. To conclude this study, in Chapter VII, I offer a summary of my findings and make suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

My previous experience with African dance forms and my previous inquiries regarding the teaching and learning of African and African diaspora dance forms (described in Chapter I) informed the creation of research questions addressed in this study. The research questions are designed in order to gain insights into what selected teachers experience in their practice of teaching African dance techniques courses and to explore how these insights might be connected to or disconnected from scholarly conversations concerning the need for world dance in general, and African dance specifically, within American education. The research questions are as follows:

- How do teachers of African dance forms describe their experiences of and objectives for teaching African dance techniques to American college students within diverse settings? How are these conversations shaped by and connected to the context in which these educators are teaching? How are these conversations placed within the values posited by current American dance higher education practices? How do all of these conversations connect to the picture of a changing demographic happening within American higher education?

- What do these programs look like? How are they taught? Are they required or considered elective courses outside of the main curriculum? Are the teachers full-time or adjuncts? How do these descriptions and practices relate to the standards discussed within the National Association of Schools of Dance?

- How are dance theorists and pedagogues specifically conversing about the teaching of African dance forms in higher education? How might these conversations connect to or disconnect from the broader conversations about the placement of world dance within curricular offerings in higher education?

- How might the connections and disconnections discovered within the initial research questions help to form future insights about curricular developments within dance programs?

- How might the research suggest the importance of experiencing and valuing African dance forms as an integral aspect of American culture for the twenty-first century American dance student in higher education?

Researcher's Assumptions Exposed

I embarked upon this study as an African American doctoral student who has performed and taught African and African-derived dance techniques (among other dance topics) at a historically black university for 12 years. I am situated as an insider with respect to the participants in my study because they, too, are of African descent and are experienced instructors of African dance techniques at the university level. Since both the interviewees and I have negotiated life within the complex relationship between races in American culture, this complexity will certainly shape how I perceive and interpret the interviewees' responses and how the interviewees perceive me as a researcher.

However, my assumptions also were that each participant would describe his or her teaching experiences differently, as each of them has a unique background and each has distinctly different personalities and life experiences. Based on my personal experience with teaching African dance forms and learning African dance forms from a variety of teachers through the years, I came to believe that African movement styles are rich fodder for cultivating learning that goes far beyond only performing dance steps. In my own experience learning African dance forms, I discovered new values about how one lives life within a social setting; however, I had never articulated how I was experiencing or teaching these values. Thus, my experience with teaching and performing African

dance forms fueled my curiosity about how others might speak about their practices as a way to gain insight into why the addition of African dance forms could be important within a dance program.

Although I assumed I would be able to identify with the experiences of other instructors of African dance techniques in some way, I attempted to bracket my assumptions during the interviewing and data analysis processes. Bracketing is a term used in qualitative research to refer to the researcher's process for separating the influence of the researcher's personal experiences and the participants' described experiences. Bracketing is an effort to prevent the conflation of the researcher's and the participant's experiences throughout the study, including data collection, analysis, and reporting (Creswell 2007; Chan et al. 2013).

To undertake a bracketing process, I employed the use of a researcher's journal to assist me in recording when I sensed I was making assumptions about what I was hearing during the research participant interviews or where I was conflating their descriptions with my own experiences. Therefore, after each interview, I would notate how the interviewees' insights corresponded with my own experiences, thus, clearly noting how I immediately began an interpretive process. During the coding process, then, I would continually refer to my reflections in order to bracket my recorded ideas from the specific ideas posited by the participants. My intent was to develop a method for not "reading into" the words of my participants by sensing them through the lens of my own experiences.

Qualitative Research Data Collection Methods

The research methods for this study emerged in my process of exploring the research questions enumerated in the previous section. In order to reflect my desire to listen to and learn from my participants' descriptions of their experiences, I chose to work within a qualitative research methodology in which my ideas or conclusions would emerge directly from the data collected. Even though I went into the research with a belief that African dance forms were important to experience for the twenty-first century student in higher education, I tried to develop a data collection process in which the participants could speak at length about their individual practices without me, as researcher, relating these practices to my personal beliefs. Therefore, I chose to treat each participant as a case study. Within these case studies, I hoped to investigate the lived experiences of people through their descriptions of teaching African dance forms within specific institutional settings and structures, thus creating a portrait of the complexities of each separate case.

The term *lived experience* refers to how the participant describes a conscious understanding of what is happening as it is happening. According to John Creswell, author of *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (2007), upon ending this type of phenomenological inquiry, researchers should be able to say, "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (62). Further, according to Robert Stake in *Multiple Case Study Analysis*, "A case is a noun, a thing, an entity; it is seldom a verb, a participle, a functioning" (quoted in Merriam 2009, 41). Therefore in this study, since my approach is similar to that of a *collective* or *multisite*

case study, I treated each dance instructor as a case or study, meaning each instructor was a unit of analysis (Merriam 2009; Stake 1995). The phenomenon of inquiry, what each participant was asked to describe, was his or her teaching of African dance forms within a particular American higher education setting.

Since, "Two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others" (Stake 1995, 64), I employed the use of interviewing to accomplish this charge. It was important for me to design the study in a manner enabling the voices of each instructor of African dance forms to be clearly heard. Even though I may assume similarities between my own experiences and those of my interviewees, using a qualitative approach to case studies allowed me to listen to the specific descriptions of the interviewees while bracketing my assumptions. Further, the descriptions of each participant added complexity to the research as each instructor experienced the phenomenon differently, highlighting Stake's claim that, "The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization" (Stake 1995, 8).

Following Stake's insights into case studies, even when there were commonalities apparent in the descriptions, the details of each participant's descriptions differed, which added to the complexity of the research and the themes generated during data analysis. However, also according to Stake, even though "we do not choose case study designs to optimize production of generalizations . . . valid modification of generalization can occur in case study" (1995, 8). Therefore, in the data analysis process, I did look for places in which overlaps, connections between ideas, and some sense of generalized ideas might emerge. This process of placing my experiences in relation to the interviewees and their

experiences in relation to each other in order to find possible connections or "modified generalizations" was the basis of my data analysis process discussed later in this chapter.

Participant Selection

Since the aim of my study was to provide rich description rather than create overly generalizable results, my goal was to include five participants with whom I could speak in depth. I felt that number would provide a sufficient and manageable amount of data for highlighting and analyzing important contrasts and similarities between the participants. Within these connections and disconnections, I hoped to present the data as complex, changing, and specific to differing settings. Therefore, my process for selecting the participants was based on criteria for selecting a diverse sample.

My sample selection was further based on *unique sampling* and *convenience sampling* (Merriam 2009). Unique sampling assures that the participants meet specific and pre-determined criteria. Convenience sampling allowed me as researcher to make sure I could meet my personal needs as well as those of the participants based on "time, money, location, availability of sites, or respondents, and so on" (79). Though convenience was not the first consideration when choosing possible participants, it was a factor when selecting participants since I was willing to travel to meet the participants for interviews but still had financial and time limitations to consider.

The pre-determined criteria for each participant included my knowledge of those professionals in the field who have taught traditional African dance forms within higher education dance programs for at least five years. I felt five or more years of teaching experience afforded them time to teach their courses more than once: thereby also giving

them time to develop courses and acquire teaching experiences they could describe with familiarity. In order to find participants with whom I was not acquainted, I polled faculty at my university as well as a few percussionists who had worked in diverse settings with experienced teachers. In each case, I asked for names of teachers having extensive performance experiences with multiple African dance forms, teachers committed to educating others, and teachers who were well educated in different African traditions.

It should be noted that some of the instructors suggested by my colleagues did not meet my criteria because they primarily taught contemporary dance techniques such as Umfundalai Technique, or they taught mainly Brazilian or Afro-Caribbean dance forms. I ruled out these teachers of contemporary African dance forms and those concentrating on forms within the Diaspora since I was more interested in hearing how the research participants imparted information and practiced dances specifically emerging from African culture. (It should be noted that some of the participants selected do teach dance forms of the African Diaspora or do work in contemporary dance; however, their training and primary focus was in traditional African forms from the African continent.) I further ruled out some participants because they did not hold teaching positions at a university since my dissertation focus is on how African dance forms currently exist within American higher education settings. Finally, I chose research participants with whom I could easily travel to interview, allowing me to stay within the budget allotted for my research.

Therefore, the participants that I selected were currently teaching at universities in southern and midwestern states. They were all experienced dancers, performers, and teachers of traditional African dance forms. However, each was chosen because he or she

worked in dance programs or departments offering African dance in differing curricular formats. Interestingly, though I did not have a close personal relationship with any of the participants selected, I was acquainted with each. Beatrice Ayi and I became acquainted over the past several years as classmates in the same doctoral cohort at Texas Woman's University. Stafford Berry, Jr. and Ava Vinesett both were once guest artists at the university where I teach. Robin Gee and I were briefly introduced several years ago when she moved to Greensboro, NC; however, we only had our first conversation when we sat down for the interview for this project. I have known Sherone Price for the longest period of time since he has been a repeat guest artist during my time as a student and now instructor dancing with the E. Gwynn Dance Company at N.C. A&T.

Following are brief biographical descriptions for each of the participants selected. In these bios, I highlight their differing teaching positions, the variety in their backgrounds, their school locations, and the diverse university dance programs within which the participants teach. The participants' own descriptions of courses and the student populations for classes they teach are continued in more detail in Chapter IV.

The Participants

Sherone Price has taught in higher education for over 25 years. He is currently an associate professor in Dance Studies at Appalachian State University (ASU) in Boone, NC. The dance program at ASU is modern-based and includes one course in traditional African dance techniques as an elective. In addition to the *African Dance* course,

Sherone[9] teaches courses such as *Jazz, Modern, Choreography,* and *Dance History*. Sherone has also been on faculty at American Dance Festival, a major summer dance festival drawing students from across the globe, since 1995. He continues to perform and choreograph West African as well as contemporary dance works for several dance companies.

Ava Vinesett began her professional dance career as a founding member of Chuck Davis's North Carolina-based African American Dance Ensemble in 1983. She is currently an associate professor of the practice of dance at Duke University in Durham, NC, where she has been teaching at least 15 years. Duke's dance program has four major emphases for technique: ballet, modern, jazz, and African dance forms. Ava teaches *African Dance Technique, Dance/Religion in Asia/Africa,* and *Repertory: African Dance*, as well as the course *Society, Self, Natural World* in Duke's Sociology department. She is also artistic director of Duke's African Repertory Ensemble. Through her extensive research of African and African-derived dance, Ava developed expertise in West African dance cultures and religious initiations in Cuba and Brazil.

Stafford Berry, Jr. has been an assistant professor in the Dance Division of Fine Arts and the Black Studies Interdisciplinary Program at Denison University in Granville, OH since 2010. However, he has been teaching, choreographing, and performing African dance styles for many years. At Denison, both *African/Diasporan Dance* and

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9. I respectfully refer to the participants by first name throughout the rest of the dissertation, as it is common practice within dance education culture once a working relationship is established between two colleagues and often times between students and dance professors.

Modern/Postmodern Dance are required for dance majors. Currently, Stafford is teaching *African/Diasporan Dance I* and *II* and *Text/Voice-based Composition*. Stafford became an established expert in the field via his professional dance career and research in African dance forms. He served as associate artistic director of the African American Dance Ensemble where he toured for several years, and he is also on faculty at American Dance Festival. Additionally, he works in contemporary and neo-traditional dance and choreography as co-founder and managing director of the Berry & Nance Dance Project.

Robin Gee is an associate professor of dance at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G). The UNC-G dance program requires majors to take contemporary, ballet, and African dance courses. Qualified to teach contemporary, African, and Caribbean dance forms, Robin currently teaches *African Dance I, II,* and *III; Practicum in Teaching Dance; Master's Production Project; Movement for Dance; Faculty Creative Research Project;* and *Independent Study*. Robin has been teaching dance in higher education for many years, and she has conducted extensive research in African dance styles with a special interest in documenting West African dance forms. Further, she served as choreographer and artistic director of Cinque Folkloric Dance Company based in New York for 15 years, and has formed her own dance company, Sugarfoote Productions, dedicated to African and African Diaspora traditions.

Beatrice Ayi, a native of Ghana, West Africa, has been teaching in higher education for over 10 years with a specialization in traditional Ghanaian movement forms. She has a master's degree in Labanotation (a form of dance notation) from The Ohio State University, and her research interests include teacher training of Ghanaians to

teach Ghanaian dance forms at the primary and secondary levels. At the time of this research, she was a doctoral candidate and graduate teaching assistant at Texas Woman's University (TWU) in Denton, TX. She was on study-leave from her faculty position at the University of Ghana at Legon. At TWU for six years, Bea taught *Dance and Globalization* (title changed in 2014 from *World Dance Forms*), a required course for dance majors that shifts its cultural emphasis depending on the available talents of adjuncts or graduate teaching assistants to the Denton campus. During Bea's residency as a doctoral student, the TWU Department of Dance benefited from her professional expertise in teaching the Ghanaian dance forms.

Interview Procedures and Practices

Although I did not have a close personal relationship with any of the participants that I chose to approach, I had met each of them through the years in a professional capacity. I contacted the five potential participants by e-mail using an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved initial contact script to re-introduce myself, briefly describe my research project, and request voluntary participation. Once receiving their consent to participate, I distributed official informed consent forms for each to sign. The informed consent statements described the research purposes, the background of the researcher, the degree of confidentiality of the findings, and the possible risks that may be involved with participating in the study (Rubin and Rubin 2005). At all times, participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary. Even though participants signed the consent agreeing to be part of the study, they were also assured they could opt out of the study at any time. All five participants responded positively to my initial request and

agreed to sign the consent form, which described the project and their participation in detail.

To schedule the interviews, once I received a signed consent form from the participants, I arranged by telephone or by e-mail to meet each participant separately at an agreed upon date, time, and location for the first in-depth interview. The first interview locations were in different places including my office on campus, the participants' offices on campus, a local eatery, and the participant's home. I chose to audio record and video record each interview. The video recording allowed me to capture nonverbal responses given by the participants to help communicate meaning and emphasis. Each initial interview lasted no more than two hours.

In-depth interviewing techniques were used with my participants. Although researchers cannot possibly *fully* understand the experience of another person without being that person, interviewing is a technique that allows participants to use language to describe their experiences, thus helping researchers interpret the meaning that the participants assign to their experiences. Furthermore, I. E. Seidman (1991) concludes,

> Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience. (4)

Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin (2005) further suggest that interviews are structured conversations. Organizing an interview to consist of a combination of main questions, follow-up questions, and probes ensure that the interviewee stays on topic and that the researcher gets data with "depth, detail, vividness, richness, and nuance" (129).

Therefore, the in-depth interviews for this research employed structured but open-ended questions, thus allowing participants freedom to place emphasis on what might be most significant to them at the time of the interview. However, when constructing the interview questions, I not only worked carefully to keep questions structured and open-ended but also to keep my questions somewhat improvisational. These open-ended and improvisational tactics allowed me to follow the interviewees' interests and trajectories rather then impose my own interests on their interview. Therefore, my interview questions were structured enough to direct the focus of the interview and flexible enough for participants to talk about what they found important.

After the one- to two-hour long initial interviews with each participant, I then arranged follow-up interviews in order to delve more deeply into areas that were either unclear or in which I sensed important issues emerging that might be important in the final data analysis process. Scheduling multiple interviews provides opportunity for the researcher to focus subsequent interviews on responses to emerging patterns and themes (Merriam 2002). These second interviews rarely took longer than one hour.

The first few questions of the initial interviews were designed to address background information and context in order to obtain the participants' description of the positions each currently held at the university, the courses taught, where in the curriculum the courses were situated, and a general description of their class populations. To provide a description of how each instructor usually teaches a class based in an African technique, I asked each to talk me through a typical class. Because my research questions prioritized the teaching of African dance forms in American university settings,

I then posed a couple questions requiring the participants to reflect on their teaching practices *outside* of the university. The strategy was to encourage participants to compare and contrast their practices in these differing settings in order to provide insight about what participants sensed was important and specific to their teaching practices in higher education. Next, since I wanted to know the participants' objectives for teaching African dance forms to American college students, I asked them what they wanted college students to learn in their classes and how students indicated to them that they were learning. Finally, I asked participants to discuss any past influences informing their current practice, to include reflections on their training in African dance forms and any insights on how this past training is similar to or different from their current teaching practice.

After conducting interviews, I began the transcription process. I personally transcribed four of the initial interviews before deciding to use an online transcription service to save time.[10] Upon receiving the remaining transcriptions from the outside service, I listened to the audio of each interview again and made corrections I deemed important based on my notes and the video recording of each interview. After I was satisfied that the transcripts were accurate, I submitted a copy of the completed transcript to the participants for their review and approval. To minimize risks such as possibility of embarrassment, the participants were allowed to edit their responses if they so chose. Most of the participants did not submit changes, but one person exercised the option to edit the

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10. I followed IRB protocol to amend my IRB application for permission to use an online transcription service. Once the IRB was approved and amended, Verbal Ink Transcription Services performed all audio transcription thereafter.

transcripts. That participant explained that the revisions were meant to provide clarity. Though there were several minor changes made, such as completion of a sentence or thought, the edits did not grossly alter the original responses. In those cases, I revised my copy accordingly, deleting unapproved portions from my records to prevent inadvertent inclusion in the final document.

After analysis of the initial interview data, I scheduled follow-up interviews. I audio recorded the phone interviews, video recorded the in-person follow-up interviews, had the audio transcribed, made notes of video content, and submitted the transcripts to the participants for approval as previously described. The meticulous transcription measures and careful attention to procedure for interviewing practices protected the participants from potential risks due to researcher misconduct and protected the integrity of the research. Further, it provided me, as researcher, the time to become extremely familiar with the data once I entered the data analysis phase discussed later in this chapter.

Internet Research Data Collection Methods

In addition to interviewing as a method of data collection, I conducted Internet research in order to examine curricula within several American colleges and universities having dance programs listing technique courses in African dance forms as part of their curriculum, whether for the dance major or the general college student. I also analyzed the faculty status of the instructors listed as teaching the courses and noted how many levels were offered for the differing courses. I relied heavily on web searches and word-of-mouth suggestions from colleagues when identifying which dance programs to examine. It would be very difficult, and was not necessary for the parameters of this

research, to include every dance program offering African dance techniques courses; however, I included programs offering African dance forms in differing formats and within differing types of dance programs and institutions. It should be noted that I did include the dance programs in which my participants taught. These Internet data are not meant to give a complete picture of how African dance forms are offered nationwide; instead, they provide only a basic context for the information emerging within the research interviews. Since the analysis of dance programs was not my primary method of data collection for this study, I decided the number of schools explored provided ample contexts for my research purpose (see Chapter IV for more details).

In choosing dance programs to include, I searched for BA or BFA programs in dance at four-year colleges. I also wanted the universities to vary in size, location, and type (i.e. public, private, historically women's, historically black, etc.). As I browsed the Web, noting web pages with information that I needed to access again, I bookmarked them using Diigo, an online bookmarking site. Diigo enabled me to organize bookmarked pages into groups, highlight passages, and make notes on the information. Later, I created Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to aid in my analysis of the data.

As useful as the World Wide Web was for searching and gathering information, indeed there were a few limitations when conducting Internet research. My data collection relied upon the amount and detail of the information that each university chose to publish about their dance programs and course offerings on the web. Some web pages were easier to navigate than others. Also, I conducted most of the search in 2014 and early 2015. I cached the bookmarked pages in 2015, so my research is based on the

information that was available on the web at that time. Whether or not that information was up to date at that time is another limitation. In one disturbing case, I searched for an African-intense dance program previewed in 2013 only to find that the dance program had been dismantled and no longer existed.[11]

Another limitation is that five of the dance programs identified in the northeast region of the United States share dance faculty and resources for African dance techniques classes in a consortium called The Five College Dance Department. I treated them as separate colleges and programs because the course titles and levels varied according to the information provided by the respective colleges, although the same instructor was listed at each. The sharing of one instructor of African dance forms at five schools slightly distorts the data in some cases (e.g., data on full-time vs. part-time faculty positions held by instructors represented in this web research). The analysis of these data is portrayed in detail in Chapter IV.

Qualitative Data Analysis Methods

To analyze the diverse forms of data collected within the modified case study methodology, I was guided by qualitative researcher Kathy Charmaz's approach to constructed grounded theory. Charmaz's approach leads the researcher to construct theory that helps to understand the "worlds" chosen to study (Charmaz 2006). Through a deep analysis of themes emerging from the data, Charmaz portrays this process of construction as adaptable to suit the needs of a particular research design. Since any

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11. The bachelor's and master's degree dance programs at Florida International University in Miami, FL were cut during the fall semester of 2013 along with 17 other programs due to "declining state revenues and a poor economy" (Florida 2015).

theories resulting from this method of analysis are rooted in the original data, the experiences of my participants will be privileged as the primary data of this study. I discuss these processes in the following section.

Generating Theory

Keeping a researcher's journal is one method for reflecting on the research process and also a way for researchers to avoid preconceived theory. Researchers use a journal for a variety of purposes such as keeping "accounts of initial contact and interviews" (Meloy 1994, 61) and as "a diary with feelings and frustrations included in the entries" (162). Some might not keep a journal in the formal sense but write "notes on notes" similar to memo-writing (162). No matter the journaling format, a researcher who keeps notes on his or her thought process during data collection, especially during data analysis, has a record of how theory is conceived and interpreted. One participant in Judith Meloy's (1994) book, *Writing the Qualitative Dissertation: Understanding by Doing,* recalled, "In short, it [the journal] was a sounding board. I reviewed mine recently and, after two years, I can still see how my thoughts proceeded from inklings to full-blown conclusions" (61).

Therefore, I felt it was important to keep a researcher's journal throughout this study. I began keeping track of my ruminations in this journal before I began the data collection phase of this study. I habitually wrote memos in my journal soon after conducting each interview. I then recorded thoughts about what struck or surprised me, and I wrote short summaries of each interviewee's general topic of discussion. Further, as discussed earlier when describing my "bracketing" process, the journal proved helpful for

reminding me of my personal thought processes and experiences as well as any fleeting thoughts that might turn out to be significant when analyzed in connection to the data collected from the participant interviews and the Internet research.

The process of generating themes or ideas emerging from the data began with the coding process described by Johnny Saldaña (2009) and the aforementioned Kathleen Charmaz (2006). Charmaz defines coding as "categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data" (43). To begin this process of categorizing segments, I initially began coding by simply defining what the data are about. However, during this process I had to be very careful about assigning data prematurely to specific topics since, according to Charmaz, coding for topics may lead to premature synthesis and make it harder to see connections between the data, thus also losing important insights into ideas emerging from those lost connections.

At one point during analysis I, indeed, fell into the trap of coding for topics, which made it difficult to make connections between the answers to a particular interview question. Although, I intended to provide the reader with information about the varied teaching practices of the participants, I sensed that the data could be more nuanced if my coding delved beyond the topic or the answer to one specific question. For example, I could gain insight into the teachers' goals throughout their discussions in all of the questions posed rather than limiting this data to the responses elicited in the specific question about goals. Therefore, I reviewed the transcripts multiple times choosing different coding methods to assist me in identifying connections between the interviews as a whole.

One example of a coding method employed is *In Vivo Coding*, which entails assigning a code that uses the exact word or words voiced by the participants in the interviews. Using In Vivo Coding was one way "to keep the data rooted in the participant's own language" (Saldaña, 6). I found it helpful during subsequent reviews of the transcripts to underline or highlight passages that struck me as intriguing or provocative, and indeed I included many of those passages as examples of noteworthy quotes, as Saldaña suggested I might (16), in Chapter IV to familiarize the reader with the participants.

After beginning the coding process with each of the transcripts, I moved on to what Saldaña calls *Second Cycle Coding*. I refer to it as "coding the codes." *Focused coding* is a Second Cycle process requiring the researcher to determine which of the initial codes should be used to set up comparison among the data. Initial codes that appear most frequently or that seem most significant help to create categories within the data. This level of abstraction helps synthesize and explain large amounts of data (Charmaz 2006). Therefore, this process involved creating a list of all the codes emerging from each transcript. I used an identifier to indicate from which participant's transcript and from which page the code was derived. I grouped the list of codes into categories, and as I created categories for each transcript, I compiled all of the categories and codes into a master list. In the end, I had a master list of codes and a master list of categories.

The next level of coding that I employed was *theoretical coding*. It indicates relationships between the categories that the previous stage of focused coding helped me to identify. Ultimately, the relationships identified between the categories resulted in the

organization of the sections in Chapters V and VI. This coding process led to the conclusion that, even though my methodology leans towards treating each participant as a case study, it was more meaningful for my research to show themes across the participants' multiple perspectives rather than discuss them as separate cases. This led me to organize the research as a comparative analysis of the differing teaching practices of the dance instructors rather than as a portrayal of distinct and separate case studies.

Therefore, the data in Chapters V and VI are not organized by participants but by themes emerging from the coding processes employed from the collective data provided by this set of participants. The themes cannot and should not be over generalized to portray the teaching practices of all instructors of African dance forms. Instead, the themes are an initial attempt to provide future dance administrators and dance instructors a way to begin thinking about how African dance forms can become an integral part of a dance curriculum.

Conclusion

The discussion of research methodology and methods for data collection and analysis in this chapter provided insights into what led me to conduct this study and the research questions shaping my inquiry. In addition, the chapter outlined how the data analysis, and the themes emerging from that analysis, created the framework for the final structure of the dissertation. Finally, this chapter clarified the limitations of the research in terms of generalizing these themes to a broader population. However, the information obtained from the research process in this dissertation will, hopefully, lead future researchers interested in reimagining future dance curricula a glimpse into how this

curricula might be deeply important to the changing demographic of the twenty-first century dance student.

The following dissertation chapter places this research and analysis of research within the context of current scholarly conversations and differing theoretical frameworks related to the topic of world dance forms and education in general, and the teaching of African dance forms more specifically. This contextual foundation will hopefully help the reader gather connections and possible disconnections between theorists and the research participants as practitioners teaching African dance forms as both world dance forms and dance forms deeply intertwined within an American culture.

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSIONS OF THEORY AND PRACTICE FOR IMPLEMENTING WORLD DANCE STUDY IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

This chapter outlines literary contributions of several dance scholars who are dance educators and often practitioners of world dance forms. In the chapter, I highlight theories relevant to the integration of world dance study at the post-secondary level. Moreover, I share insights gathered from the review of two recently published documents: 1) standards written by the national accrediting agency for dance programs in the United States and 2) a vision statement proposed by a think tank formed by members of the National Dance Education Organization. I conclude by addressing a perceived gap in the literature I aim to correct with this research and research to come.

Embodied Knowledge

I believe that much can be learned when one studies and performs cultural dance forms. Although, a great deal of knowledge can be accessed through study of written texts, I believe the crux of cultural knowledge is embodied by people who learn and practice the dance form within the culture from which it emerged. Second, given a multisensory approach for learning, to include verbal, aural, and kinesthetic approaches, one can access knowledge embodied by others and create one's own bodily knowledge of a culture. This embodied way of knowing, or *embodied knowledge,* was the topic of salient discussions in the literature about the teaching and learning of world dance forms.

Embodied knowledge was often addressed by dance theorists/practitioners who wrote about diaspora dance. Scholars who identified as members of a diaspora culture and practiced or studied the dance forms, which enabled them to speak from first-hand experience of learning and practice, contributed much of the theory that was essential to shaping my insights into and interpretations of my dissertation research. The experiential knowledge of the dance shared by these practitioners was key to how they discussed the dance forms and, therefore, how they discussed the learning of the dance forms as embodied knowledge or an embodiment of cultural knowledge. In the following, I discuss more in-depth the work of two dance scholars, Ojeya Cruz Banks (2010b) and Yvonne Daniel (2005), who both tackle the issues of "dance epistemologies located and understood through practice" (Banks 2010b, 12).

In the article "Of Water and Spirit: Locating Dance Epistemologies in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Senegal," Banks (2010b) examined the choreography, choreographic process, performance, and her personal dance experience of two cultural dance entities: the Maori contemporary dance theatre, Atamira Dance Collective; and a Wolof *sabar* dancer, Tacko Sissoko.[12] Her studies indicated that dance knowledge in both cases was multisensory. Banks found in her study of the two dance forms that dance knowledge was not only defined by what could be sensed through sight or kinesthesia but also through other senses that were linked to kinesthesia such as "hearing, remembering, empathy, and feeling" (Banks 2010b, 10). For example, she observed the Atamira Dance

12. In the Wolof culture of Senegal, *sabar* is danced traditionally by women on a variety of social occasions.

Collective as they were led through an exploratory exercise using gourds, objects significant to Maori traditional musical instrumentation. The facilitator of the exercise explained that gourds held water and "sacred *karakia*/prayer" (14). The exercise, when employing sensibilities of remembering and empathy, produced material for a choreographic work that "chronicles the way in which the past is always present" (15). According to the company's mission statement, the Atamira Dance Collective purposely aims to embody cultural knowledge specific to the Maori people in their contemporary dance works "whilst respecting [their] cultural heritage" (13). Banks witnessed and participated in the processes the dance company underwent to choreograph new work grounded in embodied knowledge of the Maori.

Banks's experience with learning the Senegalese dance form sabar, however, relied heavily on the construction of dance knowledge through the senses of hearing and feeling to embody the polyrhythmic music of sabar. She claimed, "Learning the *sabar* dance is about learning *bakks* or musical phrases and footwork that synchronizes with the beats" (Banks 2010b, 18). She also found the dance knowledge of the sabar dance to be "linked to expressions of femininity" (19). For the gourd exercise mentioned above, the dancers accessed their own embodied knowledge through remembering and empathy in order to represent in a choreographed work the cultural knowledge of the Maori. In Senegal, the senses of hearing and feeling aided Banks in embodying sabar music as she sought to access the cultural bodily knowledge of her teacher and musicians. Although Banks did not focus the discussion of this article on African or African diaspora dance per se, the notions of dance embodying cultural knowledge that can be learned through a

multisensory approach applies in both contexts, learning dance of the homeland and learning dance within the diaspora.

In *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé,* Yvonne Daniel (2005) explores the dances of African-derived religions. She, too, speaks of the multisensory learning of dance when she states she was "eventually coerced to access the multiple channels of sensory perception that I have felt when I have repeatedly performed these sacred dance offerings" (Daniel 2005, 246). In Daniel's discussion of embodied cultural knowledge, she elaborated on five distinct yet integral embodied knowledges she identified in three African American (African ancestry but practiced in the Americas) religious practices. She described *embodied botany* (knowledge of plants typically used for healing, embedded in texts of ritual chants), *embodied physiology* (associations of divinities with parts of the body), *embodied psychology* (associations of personality characteristics with divinities), *embodied philosophy* (religious ideology reinforced by behaviors and practices of the worshipers), and *embodied "mathematics" of drum performance* (numerical relationships of rhythmic patterns in ritual and non-ritual music and dance) (Daniel 2005). Ways of knowing such as these reside within a multitude of danced religions and within the practitioners themselves. Therefore, for Daniel, learning how to feel and sense aspects of the world that might be different than what a person knows from his or her own experiences becomes a very important aspect of why learning unfamiliar dance forms embedded within a cultural tradition is very important.

Beyond the multisensory learning practices discussed, authors always mentioned ethnographic methods as commonly used to access someone else's embodied knowledge since "[k]ey to the approach of dance ethnography is the quest to understand and communicate the emic, that is, the insider perspective of the participants" (Buckland 1998, 335). Observation and interviewing are common methods of data collection in an ethnographic pursuit, but as expressed by noted dance ethnographer Deidre Sklar (2000), "'subjective' bodily engagement is tacit in the process of trying to make sense of another's somatic knowledge. There is no other way to approach the felt dimensions of movement experience than through the researcher's own body" (71). Hence, in my experience, mimicking movement in an attempt to experience another's bodily practice is when accessing another's embodied knowledge begins. After becoming familiar with the relationship between the rhythm, the movement, and my own performance of movement, I am better able to embody the music and attend to other subtleties of the dance. Within those subtleties, I believe the most elusive embodied cultural knowledge lives, harboring the essence of a culture to which I can then relate. Thus, in the following section, I offer a few examples from the literature to support my assertion that world dance study will enhance the education of American college students through the practice of embodied learning of the unfamiliar.

Why **Integrate World Dance Study into Higher Education Curricula?**

In the hope of creating a compassionate and socially just global society in the twenty-first century, I believe educators and students both need to seek ways to learn about and learn from other cultures. Dance educator Sherry Shapiro (2008) further

supports my belief by asserting that "dance has provided us with an avenue for making sense of global culture and making us knowledgeable of our differences and similarities" (257). The assumption is that the way we as humans understand the cultures of others then characterizes our interactions with others. From this assertion, I further assume that it is not enough to celebrate only our differences within our American polycultural neighborhoods, workplaces, and universities. Instead, the learning of cultural dance forms of the world creates opportunities for one to construct bodily knowledge of the values, histories, and expressions of other cultures and people, acknowledging cultural similarities *and* differences within one's own body. This is the ideal that will be discussed further by the research participants in the following chapters of this dissertation.

Dance scholars Glendola Rene Mills (1994) and Ojeya Cruz Banks (2010a) both write about the use of African dance techniques in dance education in the United States. In the article "Umfundalai: One Technique, Three Applications," Mills (1994) writes about application of the Umfundalai technique to students in programs at three different locations: Temple University, the Intensive Training Program at the New Freedom Theater, and the University of the Arts, all of Philadelphia, PA. Umfundalai is a Pan-African contemporary technique created in 1970 by Kariamu Welsh, a professor of dance at Temple University. Responding to the need to determine exactly what to teach when asked to teach "African dance," Welsh drew upon her own choreography and knowledge of several African dance forms and eventually developed her own technique "built on common aesthetic elements found in dances from many African countries" (Frichtel

2010). Umfundalai technique provides a holistic, kinetic practice for movement expression while weaving "pertinent historical, political, and cultural information" into the learning of the African dance forms (Mills 1994, 37). Although learning outcomes were different for each program, the same cultural context was provided for each application of the technique.

At Temple University, in 1994 when Mills wrote the article, Umfundalai courses were offered for dance major and non-dance majors at the undergraduate and graduate levels, but many students who took the course were "inexperienced dancers who want[ed] to learn more about African culture. Therefore, the emphasis [was] primarily on individual awareness, growth, and knowledge of African culture and movement" (Mills 1994, 38). Mills noted that students entering who were already knowledgeable about African and African American culture often concentrated on movement mastery while novices experienced "a sense of affirmation and cultural and spiritual identification before the recognition and appreciation of movement mastery" (38). At the Intensive Training Program at the New Freedom Theater and at the University of the Arts, the focus was on "technical development and artistic expression" (38). Students of those applications attained technical competence but also developed the ability to view differing dance forms within a cultural context (38). Members of the Philadelphia community at-large initially taking adult classes in Umfundalai at the New Freedom Theater for recreation were often motivated to learn more about African dance and culture as a result of the Umfundalai learning experience. Mills concluded that all three applications of Umfundalai technique, "an Afrocentric dance technique," succeeded in

adequately addressing the differing educational needs of students of varying dance backgrounds, ages, and interests (36).

In reference to teaching African music and dance specifically, Ojeya Cruz Banks (2010a) in the journal article "Critical Postcolonial Dance Pedagogy: The Relevance of West African Dance Education in the United States" wrote about her use of West African dance in an ethnographic/action research process called the Dambe Project. The project was conducted at an American high school among a largely Latino/a population. Banks's West African dance pedagogy wove the history of oppression into her teaching of West African dance, an oppression that was often made invisible within the literature and teaching in the students' past, but was of major political and historical significance within the history of how the dances were formed within the cultures of the oppressed people. Banks found that the project supported "emotional and spiritual well-being and self-worth in the students" (29). Banks shared descriptive passages from her research giving the most insight that I have found in the literature from any teachers of African dance techniques.

Banks taught two 90-minute classes twice a week for a whole semester. Each class began with a Dunham Technique [13] inspired warm-up, progressing from shoulder rolls and stretches to more rigorous movement and a review of a dance learned at the previous class. Banks taught movement vocabulary from particular Guinean dances and

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13. Dunham Technique is a modern dance technique created by noted dancer and scholar Katherine Dunham. Dunham began creating the technique as a means for teaching modern dancers dance forms she studied in the Caribbean in the late 1930s. The technique consists of movement from several forms including ballet, modern, various Afro-Caribbean forms, and eventually South American and African movement forms.

often divided the class of 24 into small groups and allowed them to choreograph their own phrases using the movement vocabulary they learned. The class ended with circle discussion of "the similarities and differences between the African cultures [they] studied (such as the Malinke and Timene people of Guinea) and their own" (Banks 2010a, 25) and then journaling of their class experiences. Banks also taught African songs towards the end of class. She shared the following personal reflection about the pedagogical choice to include songs:

> The songs I taught them were proverbs that point to basic cultural philosophies—to epistemologies and to the ethics of a people. I used the songs to provoke and prompt dialogue and questions about dance culture and create a feeling of unity among the group. It was an effective complement to the dance learning because it provided another window into the diverse African cultures and also inspired joy, tranquility, and bonding between the students. [field notes, November 20, 2004] (25).

Not only were the songs important components of the dance cultures taught by Banks, but the learning of songs and act of singing worked to support the emotional and interpersonal connections between the students in the class, giving them first-hand experience of how traditional songs function in African cultures. Banks shared the following quote from a student's journal. The journal entry indicates the student's understanding of cultural dance as embodied knowledge:

> Ana Ross:[14] We are getting a taste of how different people do different things because of their culture. When African people dance to a song, they are dancing with a meaning and make a connection with the music that moves their body. We are learning how African people dance and make it special and put all their energy, tradition, beliefs and much more into a single dance. I am enjoying this very much. I am thankful. [October 5, 2004] (26).

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14. Banks used pseudonyms for names of students.

Banks acknowledges a key point when she states in her conclusion, "Although most of my students were Latino and European Americans, all young people need cross-cultural epistemological resources for constructing knowledge" (30).

The aforementioned works of Daniel (2005), Shapiro (2008), Mills (1994), and Banks (2010a) suggest what is possible within the learning process of studying world dance forms and, more specifically, African and African diaspora dance forms. From the practice of embodied cultural knowledge, movement expression, and rigorous dance technique to the development of spiritual well-being, self-worth, and sense of community, students at American universities stand to learn much from the study of dance forms of various world cultures. Specifically, as discussed by the research participants in the following chapters, students can learn how to move fully and with empathy and curiosity while navigating through increasingly multicultural spaces. The question I next address in the following section concerns what is being discussed by differing theorists and educators when world dance is integrated into higher education.

On Integrating World Dance Study into Higher Education

The insights of the following authors helped me to organize my thinking about the importance of world dance within higher education and further influenced how I designed my dissertation research process. Raquel Monroe (2011) described one of her studies in a journal article entitled "'I Don't Want to Do African . . . What about My Technique?:'[15] Transforming Dancing Places into Spaces in the Academy." In this article, Monroe prompts dance educators to think about how they regard *technique* and how they practice

15. The colon placement here reflects the way the title appeared in publishing.

their ideas within their classrooms. Monroe then indicates that African diaspora dance is often relegated to elective courses in dance curricula, where modern and ballet are considered foundational techniques for the dance student. If one accepts Monroe's ideas that "good technique" is not only limited to dance styles valued by the dominant culture, but can also be considered more broadly as a way for students to learn diverse and unfamiliar cultural values through their bodies, then African dance techniques can be vital techniques within higher education. "Technique" then becomes the practice of learning about the unfamiliar, about appreciating ideas beyond the familiar, about acknowledging that, as Monroe states, "All dance forms have technique" (51). She continues,

> Modern dance and ballet are forms of dance with their own specific techniques. They are not the only "technical" dance forms. Dance administrators are certainly allowed to shape their programs how they see fit, but semantics are important. What we qualify as appropriate dance technique, often reifies the not so subtle racist infrastructure of American colleges and universities. (51)

Perhaps, more significant for me within Monroe's research is her attention to the voices of students and teachers and the emphasis placed on the importance of their attitudes on the subjects of "technique" and dance curricula in higher education. For example, Monroe asked a colleague who teaches modern technique to define *technique*. The teacher responded, "Technique is the skill you need to do anything. It's a system of training typically using repetition that facilitates the ability to do anything" (Monroe 2011, 41). Monroe also shared the following quote from a student's journal:

> Why can't a hip hop dancer major in hip-hop dancing? Why does everyone require passing all four levels of ballet and modern? They should at least have

> hip-hop, jazz, and African as high up in the scale. Have everyone complete different levels of each dance style, not just ballet and modern. (45)

Straightforward, conversational voices of students and teachers are disturbingly rare to find in the literature. Thus, Monroe's research methodology greatly influenced how I chose to shape my own research process as a place for the participants' voices to be heard and valued.

Nyama McCarthy-Brown (2011) in her dissertation, "'The Proof is in the Pudding': An Examination of How Stated Values of Cultural Diversity are Implemented in Three Selected Dance Department Curricula," discusses her study of programs which claim to value cultural diversity and pluralism in their missions. She found evidence of diversity in each program, but concluded that they could go much further in their actions. Each program needed more diverse faculty and more diverse required readings. As I later found was often the case at many American universities with world dance course offerings, multiple levels were not offered in the programs McCarthy-Brown explored, limiting the level of mastery that students could attain. McCarthy-Brown makes the point that dance department claims of cultural diversity must be supported in curriculum design and implementation since students easily perceive these inconsistencies and learn the clear message that diversity as practiced through world dance is not something that will help them in the larger world; it is only something that is required, not valued.

To support her ideas, McCarthy-Brown employed case studies within differing schools and contextualized these studies through collected data from "mission statements, printed four-year sequential curricula, readings required for non-technique courses

focused on history and/or cultures, and audition requirements for each department" (McCarthy-Brown 2011, 106). She also created faculty and student questionnaires, which then inspired me to add a quantitative component to this study via the web research of dance programs offering African techniques courses at several American colleges and universities. The findings are discussed in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

In her 2002 thesis, "Multiculturalism and Indian Dance in Higher Education," Indian dancer and educator Asha Bala examined the presence of Indian Dance in higher education in America, or lack thereof, and offered a model for expanding the scope of Indian Dance study in higher education. Her model included study of technique but focused more on interdisciplinary study to include Indian philosophy and culture. She collected data from literature, personal experience, interviews, e-mail correspondence, and surveys sent to American universities with dance programs. Bala concluded that in order for American dance curricula to be more inclusive of dance techniques other than modern dance techniques, new teaching methodologies needed to be embraced. Similar to McCarthy-Brown's ideas, Bala's insights provide a space for the voices and practices of Indian dancers to be part of future dance curricular conversations. This inclusion of differing voices into the shaping of future dance curriculum will open new ways for students and teachers to learn dance and think about dance, as well as bringing dance to differing audiences and spaces.

In a recently published journal article, "Beyond Hierarchy," Takiyah Nur Amin (2016) argues a point similar to Bala's that dance in higher education should not be

centered on what she calls "European-derived movement vocabularies" (15). Amin supports the integration of African diaspora dance in higher education curricula and proposes that practice-based versus performance-based[16] curriculum would better prepare twenty-first century students to learn effective communication and problem solving skills, those skills often sought after by future employers. Both Bala and Amin agree that a shift in the American dance curricula paradigm is necessary to decenter ballet and modern and to integrate other "movement vocabularies" such as Indian and African diaspora dance in order to help students prepare for the needs of the twenty-first century. Both authors sense students as certainly needing to succeed in dance technique, but in a way that develops their skills for learning and appreciating the unfamiliar in order to move throughout the world of ideas. I agree that until that shift of thinking about technique takes place, all other dance forms beyond those taught reflecting dominant cultural values will be treated as peripheral, minimizing the impact that study of other world dance forms can make in the lives and futures of students.

Teaching World Dance Forms: Pedagogical Issues and Practices

Following are a few pedagogical issues and teaching practices discussed in the extant literature involving the teaching of various world dance forms. They include rote learning, use of improvisation, teacher-student relationship models, and inclusion of

16. Amin posits that undergraduate dance education currently emphasizes the performance aspect of dance. She proposes a *practice-based* model in which "students are expected to engage with the various practices that establish and compose dance as a discipline, including a range of movement vocabularies (dance forms), research practices (methods), choreographic practices (approaches to dance-making as art), performance practices/approaches, somatic/therapeutic practices, and teaching norms" (Amin 2016, 19).

world dance into varied fields of study. One approach to teaching African music and movement to non-natives is to do so in a manner that is assumed to be similar to the way African natives learn it. Dawn Joseph (2011), in an article entitled "Cultural Diversity in Australia: Promoting the Teaching and Learning of South African Music," describes the practices of three South African music teachers who studied at an Australian university. The music teachers taught South African choral music and accompanying movement by rote as it is taught in South African societies. The teachers describe how they demonstrated orally, requiring students to learn aurally. They also took care to teach the cultural context of each song and movement in order to relate the music to its socio-political practice and to make the music more meaningful for the students. This methodology was new to the Australian students and afforded them experiences with new ways of learning and embodying a new culture.

Vera Flaig (2010) shares German music scholar Thomas Ott's similar approach to teaching African music.[17] In her dissertation, "The Politics of Representation and Transmission in the Globalization of Guinea's *Djembé,*" Flaig identifies Thomas Ott as the music scholar responsible for "bringing Guinea's djembé music into the German music academy" (Flaig 2010, 183). Ott discusses his preference for teaching djembé playing by rote first, rather than learning through music notation, a skill that is highly emphasized in the university's traditional music program. Ott explained that West African societies such as Guinea, the birthplace of the djembé, are aural/oral societies

17. Since African music and dance exist together and not separately in African cultures, I find the conversation pertinent to my research.

meaning Guineans learn by repeating what they hear. Playing by ear enhances musical skill and quality, which is valued in West African drumming traditions, and Ott argues that reading music notation does not require students to train their musical ear and that not teaching the way Guineans learn would inhibit the process of learning the djembé. Further, students who learned to play the djembé using music notation would not benefit from the cultural knowledge embodied in the drum playing. Ott concludes that German teachers who use Western practices, namely notation, for teaching Guinean drum music are fundamentally changing the music.

Flaig then challenges Ott's assumption and argues that both the cultural brokers (music teachers bringing djembé music to German schools) and the culture bearers (the Guinean musicians) are in a process of negotiating and mediating the music; thereby, both are in the process of altering the music. The complex issues emerging in the teaching of cultural forms confirms the importance of these pedagogical issues, thus ultimately requiring careful consideration of the intended objectives of the teacher and the abilities of the students in relation to the form being learned as part of a living culture. The issues raised by Flaig open new ways for how culture may be disseminated and then altered in that process. These discussions are important to address as students living within an increasingly volatile multicultural world must find ways to work with others and analyze how that work affects the meaning and value of the cultures involved. These discussions emerge then within the practice of the cultural form in the moment of learning and doing, between both students and teachers.

Another teaching practice described in the literature involves improvisation. By encouraging one to release restrictive notions of how one should move, improvisational exercises can enliven memories and embodied knowledge that lie dormant within students. Dancer, teacher, and choreographer Ruth Eshel (2011) employed improvisational exercises to encourage her Ethiopian dancers to experiment with one of their own traditional dances. In "A Creative Process in Ethiopian-Israeli Dance: Eskesta Dance Theater and Beta Dance Troupe," she wrote,

> I told them that through improvisations we would explore expressive areas of which the dancers might be unaware, drawing from their somatic memories to reveal what might be hidden or not articulated verbally. Some improvisations were intended to uncover the rich reservoir of possibilities in the *eskesta* and to expand the lexicon of movement from within its current form. (Eshel 2011, 364-365)

Eshel also introduced another strategy for tapping into one's own embodied knowledge when working with objects that might trigger memories or stories that contain cultural knowledge that one rarely puts into words (Eshel 2011, 366). When handling familiar objects, one might ask the following questions: How does it feel? What is it used for? Why is it important? In this case, Eshel wanted her students to access their own embodied knowledge to facilitate the creative process when working with cultural source material. It is exciting to think how discussions might emerge in the American classroom as students bring their own past experiences and insights into the improvisational exercises shaped by the cultural dance form being introduced.

Yet another conversation in the literature about teaching various world dance forms is that of the student/teacher relationship. For many generations in India, the *guru-*

shishya parampara, or teacher-disciple tradition, has been the training mode for the classical dance traditions Kathak and Bharatanatyam. However, as more South Asian dance practitioners are studying outside of *gurukula* systems, teaching practices are being influenced by Western dance pedagogies (Prickett 2007). In "*Guru* or Teacher? *Shishya* or Student? Pedagogic Shifts in South Asian Dance Training in India and Britain," Stacey Prickett (2007) examines teaching practices among independent gurus and two state-supported academies in India, Kathak Kendra, and Kalakshetra. She found that the *guru/shishya* (teacher/disciple) relationship commonly utilized in India raises several issues of concern for implementation in the London society, among them the developing of "unquestioning deference towards the guru" and a "relationship of servitude" (Prickett 2007, 27). Prickett found that when a modified version of the gurukula system was employed in some dance academies in India, some Indians worried that too much modifying diluted the dance form or made it so that it was disingenuous. For example, traditionally a shishya in training spends extensive time with one and only one guru. In a modified gurukula system, the independent gurus interviewed by Prickett teach "senior students or disciples," and assistants teach classes for other students. Prickett noted the approaches of the independent gurus "emulate aspects of traditional practices while accommodating economic and social changes which problematize past modes of transmission" (30).

In Britain in 1998, the South Asian Dance Faculty of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) began a system for standardizing the teaching practices of Bharatanatyam and Kathak by codifying syllabi and examinations. The ISTD system

does not subscribe to the teacher-disciple tradition but provides a "a pedagogic umbrella under which individual teachers shape their classes and develop new forms of teaching dance and relating to their students" (Prickett 2007, 26). Prickett stated the number of South Asian dance teachers utilizing the ISTD system in countries from Canada to India is increasing, indicating the ever-evolving nature of global populations and cultural paradigms. The complex issues emerging about authenticity and shifting cultural norms are key places in which dance students can engage in dialogue about the world within which they live.

Korean-born dance scholar Kihyoung Choi (2008) underlined the significance of student engagement when discussing student/teacher relationship in traditional Korean dance teaching by theorizing a dialectical pedagogy in her dissertation, "A Pedagogy of Spiraling: Envisioning a Pedagogy for Dance in Korean Higher Education." The embodiment of a spiral proved to be a helpful model for the pedagogy that Choi envisioned; the energy, dynamics, and flow of spiral movement mirrored pedagogical concepts that she would like to see implemented in Korea to give students more agency than students are traditionally allowed within Korean cultural norms.[18] Here, the notion of how the practices of two cultures might dialogue and create and re-create energy in a spiraling action is important when considering how the teaching of cultural dance forms might be imagined within an American classroom and then reimagined within a Korean classroom.

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18. To illustrate for the reader how Choi discussed the spiral metaphor, Choi equated the impulse that must initiate a spiral to the Korean teacher's responsibility, as she imagined it, to "spark the students' engaged learning process" (123).

These conversations made me question what type of student/teacher relationship might be ideal for teachers and students of various world dance forms in the American university setting. I resolved to explore that idea when analyzing the data gathered from my research participants. Findings most relevant to the participants' student/teacher relationships can be found at the beginning of Chapter V.

Though not a major conversation, but still present in the literature, are examples of world dance being incorporated in higher education via fields other than dance and being taught at universities in varying departments. For example, theology professor Cia Sautter (2005) describes a course she teaches at a seminary in Minnesota but then also taught at a university in California. The course, *World Religions: Dance and Music*, enables students to study the performance of religion. Sautter teaches basic movement analysis methods that the students employ when observing movement or after participating in movement labs. The students choose a religious event to study, observe, analyze, and present for their final projects. This example of incorporating world dance in a theology course can be part of a conversation about how to accommodate additional courses should a dance program desire to incorporate more study of world dance in their curriculum. This practice could also be foundational for programs interested in developing team teaching possibilities between differing disciplines.

Both of the discussions of teaching music and dance traditions of world cultures in higher education imply the question: *How* should world dance forms be taught in higher education in our contemporary society? The conversations also raise the question: *Who* should teach world dance forms in higher education? To this point, I have found

conversations from scholars who choose to invite culture bearers/practitioners into the university classroom to share indigenous knowledge with students. The South African teachers in Dawn Joseph's previously mentioned study are one example. Elizabeth Mackinlay (2001), a professor at the University of Queensland in Australia describes another example. Situated in the anthropology department, Mackinlay teaches a course entitled *Indigenous Women's Music and Dance*. In addition to lecturing and leading theoretical discussions, Mackinlay provides students with experiential knowledge by inviting indigenous women to her class to teach music and dance. Modesto Amegago (2011), whose work I will introduce later in this chapter, asserts that teachers of African music and dance need not be "confined to cultural bearers or specific age, sex or social groups" (243). He continues by supporting the idea of inviting culture bearers into the university classroom/studio taught by faculty not native to the culture being studied. Amegago states,

> Attempts should, however, be made to involve competent cultural bearers in implementing the cross-cultural music and dance curriculum to facilitate the learning process and to give credit to them.
>
> Since language is the bedrock of African music and dance, this requires a facilitator to be familiar with the various African languages for effective instruction. (Amegago 2011, 243)

The discussions mentioned above represent most of the texts I identified in the extant literature available on teaching practices and pedagogical issues surrounding teaching world dance at the post-secondary level. I posit that the field is in need of much further exploration of these issues, and the insights of experienced teachers at American universities are sorely missed. I hope to begin to rectify this omission with this

dissertation project. In the next section, I look at the literature surrounding the specific issues raised by differing authors when discussing the teaching of African dance forms in higher education to provide the reader with a context for the voices and practices discussed within the dissertation's data chapters.

Higher Education and African Dance Forms Discussed through Practices of African and African American Dance Artists

Though conversations about world dance forms in general helped frame my thinking, I chose to focus my research on teachers of African dance forms at American universities since African culture has been and still is an integral aspect of American cultural history. Though not abundantly evident in the literature, issues surrounding the topic of teaching African dance forms at American universities have been discussed in various ways and are fast becoming a more prevalent issue within dance conferences focused on pedagogical practices in the twenty-first century. I will mention two works written in the 1990s that influenced my thinking and then three more recent contributions of scholars (two Ghanaian natives, one Ugandan) who speak more directly to the inquiry I chose to conduct for this dissertation.

First, at a time when "multiculturalism" was a fairly new movement in education during the early 1990s, and educators were pressed to include "other" dance forms in the curricula, Kariamu Welsh Asante (1993)[19], professor of dance at Temple University and founder of the Pan-African contemporary technique,

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19. The scholar no longer uses the surname Asante as she did in 1993 when she published the article "Dance in Curricula: Mode of Inclusion". She is now Kariamu Welsh.

Umfundalai (discussed earlier in this chapter), wrote the journal article "African-American Dance in Curricula: Mode of Inclusion," and in it offered

> three fundamental concepts [that] represent a cogent way to implement diversity in the dance curricula in an holistic mode that furthers dance as a meaningful and viable discipline and provides scholars and students with a means of study that does not compromise the heritage of any people. (Asante 1993, 51)

According to Asante, the three areas to be considered when including "African-American Dance" in a curriculum are *insertion and substitution* (the common practice in universities of simply presenting token course content about a selected minority rather than providing in-depth study of the artistic context and historical perspective), *location* (finding ways for situating African and African American dance as not just anthropological but also as artistic), and *content* (what is taught, including the rigors of the technique and a curricular framework supporting that rigor) (Asante 1993).

Asante further called attention to issues that she saw as problematic when reviewing the ways that African American dance was being included in secondary and higher education dance curriculum of the time. Her article reads as both precautionary and instructional commentary for educators who have worked or are working to diversify dance curricula at any level. Although Asante did not define her use of the term "African-American dance," her critique concerning how black dance artists and African dance techniques are being included within dance curricula remains to be relevant when reimagining American dance curricula in the twenty-first century. Today, as dance programs look to not only

diversify or "include" but also possibly integrate African dance forms into curricula, Asante's warnings should be heeded.

Next, Carolyn Lee Cotton Seubert (1996) focused on the student voice in her dissertation "Third World Folk on a First World Stage: A Phenomenological Study of Participation and Learning in the Arts." Seubert conducted a phenomenological study of six black college women at the University of Maryland who created and participated in a dance group, Dance Afrika!, on "the margins" of campus. Her research focused on the phenomenological question: "What is it like to learn traditional African dance?" (Seubert 1996, 33). In short, she concluded for that particular group of African American college women, it was about the creation and sustaining of community. Seubert's study contributed to a gap in the literature different from but related to the one I chose to address. She gave voice to students *learning* African dance techniques, which is also uncommon in the literature, and I have chosen to focus on instructors *teaching* African dance techniques. Both are two sides of the same coin and provide future insights into why the incorporation of differing cultural dance forms are important for the quickly shifting demographic of students entering the American higher education landscape. As college student populations become more diverse in the future, discovering new curricular frameworks becomes important. This dissertation and the authors discussed in this chapter provide possible ways to begin thinking about these future curricular needs.

To address future curricular possibilities, George Dor (2014) elucidates the phenomenon and histories of several West African dance drumming[20] ensembles in American and Canadian universities in *West African Drumming and Dance in North American Universities: An Ethnomusicological Perspective*. In this book, Dor discusses, among other issues, how these ensembles were conceived, how they function as part of ethnomusicology programs in universities, and how decisions are made regarding programming and teaching for these ensembles. Interestingly, two of the long-standing ensembles that Dor included in his study were founded at American universities as early as 1964 and 1968.[21] In his text, Dor succeeded in highlighting for me the presence of dance drumming ensembles, their contribution to the education of their student participants, and the potential for the study of African dance forms these ensembles hold as program models.[22] Further, Dor's work emphasizes how the interweaving of dance and music can be explored through the study of African cultural forms in which music, dance,

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20. Dor defines *dance drumming* in the book's glossary as follows: "Drumming that involves dancing or total performance including singing. While not all drumming in Africa are intended for dancing, dance drumming is not about drumming alone" (Dor 2014, 287).

21. The two ensembles are located at the University of California at Los Angeles (established in 1964) and Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT (established in 1968).

22. Dor described the following benefits for music students involved in West African drumming programs, whether course or ensemble participation: bi- or multi-musicality (in reference to students learning to play music from more than one culture); "acquisition of pre-compositional resources, team skills, new performance skills and perspectives, relational avenues, professional career development, and practical understanding of theoretical concepts associated with Sub-Saharan African drumming" (Dor 2014, 131).

musician, and dance artist are deeply meshed to form a whole, something that is often not emphasized in traditional modern and ballet classes.

Modesto Amegago (2011) also offers a framework for teaching African music and dance in higher education in his book, *An African Music and Dance Curriculum Model: Performing Arts in Education*.[23] Using primarily Ewe[24] music and dance traditions as material for the curriculum model he presents, Amegago outlines implementation procedures for bachelor of arts, bachelor of fine arts, and bachelor arts education degree programs in dance. Amegago emphasizes the importance of addressing several aspects of music making and dance when teaching African music and dance. These diverse aspects provide a holistic study that reflects the "integrated and multidimensional nature of African music and dance" (Amegago 2000, iii-iv). In his book, he dedicates discussion to language, songs, rhythms, instruments, instrument tuning, costumes, props, and many more elements of Ewe music and dance. By interweaving these elements, Amegago proposes a curriculum supporting in-depth study of the dance tradition.

Alfdaniels Mabingo (2014) takes a similar approach in his paper "Teaching East African Dances in Higher Education in the U.S.: Reconciling Content and Pedagogy." He offers insights regarding his teaching practice with specific emphasis on designing curriculum to meet the diverse needs of his students as well as "devis[ing] a means of

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23. Further developed research from his dissertation study "An Holistic Approach to African Performing Arts: Music and Dance Curriculum Development and Implementation" in 2000.

24. *Ewe* are a people who inhabit parts of Togo, Benin, Nigeria, and Ghana. Modesto Amegago is a native of Ghana.

adapting material of these [East African] dances to western higher education paradigm" (Mabingo 2014, 29). Part of the challenge for Mabingo was deciding how to teach dance traditions in Western academic settings that when taught in native contexts, are taught within the communities without the "use of mirrors, recorded music, and rhythmic counts as teaching aids" (29).[25] Mabingo also needed to determine what material to teach and in what order. Focusing his lessons on Tanzanian, Rwandan, and Ugandan dance forms, Mabingo described a scaffolding approach to designing the curriculum, which advanced from simple to complex material to accommodate the range of diversity in his class population. He used Ugandan children games for warm-up, introduced the background of the dances, taught footwork using demonstration, introduced instrument and vocal accompaniment and then required students to take turns demonstrating both, explored body posture and gestures, addressed appropriate interaction between performers, and incorporated costume, make-up, and props specific to the dances. Mabingo adopted a process-oriented teaching approach, which focused more on what the students were experiencing and less on movement perfection. This led him to develop assessment rubrics focused on class attendance and participation, written assignments, personal journals, and a final group choreography assignment. His pedagogy accomplished a goal of incorporating the content of the dance forms, contextualizing the material, and allowing students to engage in their own knowledge production.

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25. See Mabingo's (2015) journal article, "Decolonizing Dance Pedagogy: Application of Pedagogies of Ugandan Traditional Dances in Formal Dance Education," for a discussion of Ugandan traditional practices for teaching dance and the Western "counterparts" to the practices.

The insights shared by Amegago and Mabingo about their pedagogical choices for teaching traditional African dance forms at American universities, especially as persons who learned the dance traditions in academic and non-academic contexts in African countries, add complexity to the question of how African dance forms are taught in American universities and what issues impact the decisions of differing pedagogues when designing their course curricula. The next section introduces discussion of policy regarding standards for dance curriculum and progressive ideas proposed by dance educators and future policy makers.

World Dance Pedagogy as Discussed by Diverse Voices in Academia: Present and Future Policy for Dance Programs and Curricula

In the previous sections of this chapter, the examples of curriculum models focused mainly on the voices of African and African American dance and music practitioners or diverse dance practitioners practicing world dance cultures. In this section, the discussion will focus on a review of the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) standards with regard to world dance study.[26] NASD is the accrediting agency designated by the United States Department of Education for "freestanding institutions, and units offering dance and dance-related programs (both degree- and non-degree granting), including those offered via distance education" (National 2015, 1). "The Association [was] established to develop a closer relationship among schools and

26. Insight recorded here is based on review of the 2014-2015 handbook; however, I did not find any changes in the now published 2015-2016 handbook.

programs of dance for the purpose of examining and improving practices and professional standards in dance education and training" (2).

NASD does not dictate what the fundamental purpose or principles should be for dance programs but states that "there must be logical and functioning relationships among purposes, structure, and content" (National 2015, 85). Dance programs are free to determine their own purposes and missions with NASD standards only functioning as guides across its member institutions to ensure high academic and artistic quality that support the stated program's mission. However, when searching for how the NASD guidelines discuss the study of world dance forms, I found the words or phrases *Africa/n* or *world dance* did not appear in the handbook at all. The word *ethnic* was used in the section under "All Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Dance" with regard to performance as a "Common Body of Knowledge and Skill" and iterated the importance of high technical skill level for students in BFA programs: "Technical proficiency standards must be established for each area of technique (i.e. modern dance, ballet, jazz, ethnic, etc. . . ." (98). Further, the phrase *world culture/s* did not appear in the NASD handbook, but I found three places where *culture/s* was used and *world* was implied. Under "Baccalaureate Degrees with P-12 Teacher Preparation Programs," it reads: "Candidates [referring to prospective teachers] must have opportunities to experience and develop an appreciation and understanding of dance forms and styles from diverse

cultures" (101). The other two mentions were also focused on preparation for teaching but for graduate level students. Section XII.A.7.b. states,

> Preparation for teaching should include an introduction to the pedagogy of subject matter considered fundamental to curricula for undergraduate dance majors, including performance, choreography, dance theory and history, dance from a breadth of cultures, technology, and performance. (National 2015, 106)

Under "Research-Oriented Degrees—Doctoral Degrees" and "Dance Studies," the handbook read,

> Coursework and research projects may involve dance from all cultures of the world and the relationships of dance to other fields, to the other arts, and to the interrelationships among one or more arts. (National 2015, 113-114)

Of importance is the sense of how NASD emphasizes a broad knowledge of other dance forms rather than a need for in-depth study.

After several reviews of the handbook in search of standards that specifically address the study of world dance forms and finding only a few, I realized that most if not all, the competencies listed for the study of dance *can* be addressed in world dance classes. For example, a few competencies for general education and dance studies regarding a liberal arts degree program with a major in dance are: "An ability to address culture and history from a variety of perspectives" (National 2015, 94); "Understanding of and experience in one or more art forms other than dance" (94); "An understanding of choreographic processes, aesthetic properties of style, and the ways these shape and are shaped by artistic and cultural ideas and contexts" (95); and "An acquaintance with a wide selection of dance repertory, the principal eras, genres, and cultural sources" (95).

The language that addressed world dance study most explicitly was in Appendix IIA, "NASD Advisory Concerning Dance in General Education." This portion of the document covered suggestions rather than requirements for institutions to consider in an effort to offer dance education to university students (dance majors and non-majors) and the community at large (National 2015, 156). For example, one of the suggestions for educating the local community was to "[p]resent public performance of dance from many cultures and invite community people to the campus who represent diverse backgrounds and who could offer unique insights that would contribute to the education of students" (160). Clearly, NASD acknowledges the importance of learning dance as a cultural study and practice; however, clear guidelines have not been established in terms of how this learning can be implemented within future curricula. I hope the ideas emerging in this dissertation will begin to address this missing aspect of the major dance accrediting organization.

I conclude that appreciation for the in-depth study of world dance is not apparent to NASD; however, since programming is dependent upon the prerogative of the institutions, schools of dance must decide how to incorporate world dance into the curriculum. According to my interpretation of the standards, focused world dance study can easily be added to or adapted as the main focus of dance programs at member institutions and meet NASD standards. Even though NASD standards do not seem to explicitly encourage the integration of world dance study, educators across the country are envisioning the future of dance education, and their vision definitely includes the study of world dance practices.

In 2011, the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) called for a symposium for dance educators, administrators, and students to convene and discuss the future of dance in higher education. "DANCE 2050: What is the Future of Dance in Higher Education?," the blind reviewed think tank was formed and first met at Temple University in 2012. It held subsequent working sessions each year at different universities. In 2014, DANCE 2050 published a vision statement for the project entitled *Vision Document for DANCE 2050: The Future of Dance in Higher Education*. The goal for the DANCE 2050 project, as stated in the vision document, "has been 'to function proactively, articulating and substantiating potentially radical innovation in dance in higher education, while fostering the leadership required to forge structural change' (Kolcio, 2013)" (NDEO 2015, 3).

Although the in-depth study of world dance is not apparent in NASD standards, it is apparent in DANCE 2050's vision for the future. One of eight themes presented in the Vision Document is "Diversity and Global Perspectives." In introducing the theme, the document first addresses the idea of world dance by stating a vision that "dance units and programs within academia provide opportunities to study and perform diverse styles, idioms, and genres of global dance technique and choreography" (NDEO 2015, 13). Further, the vision is that "all forms of dance are seen as global dance forms," (13) ridding the present field of hierarchal thinking in which Western techniques are most valued. In such a future, African dance techniques and social dance, for example, would be perceived in the academy as on the same plane as the concert forms of ballet and modern dance. World dance forms could and would be taught with the in-depth analysis

currently given to the forms currently valued in American dance curricula. Participants of DANCE 2050 propose a future where "dance programs welcome more non-majors, minors, and those involved in international and social dance clubs on campus" (14). This would bring dance forms that are represented by smaller communities within the larger campus community into the fold, expanding the experience of dance program students and encouraging collaboration among "those pursuing dance for diverse reasons and goals" (14).

As discussed in the DANCE 2050 document, much can be learned through world dance study, to include a sense of how dance emerges from culture and how specific and rigorous techniques can be practiced and embodied when connected bodily to differing cultures. DANCE 2050 envisions dance programs in academia "promot[ing] the diverse cultural values expressed through these global dance practices" (NDEO 2015, 13). (One major cultural value discussed in depth throughout this dissertation concerns the value of community.) Finally, the following description included in the 2050 document is interesting in light of the findings of the web research of dance programs conducted for this study and analyzed in Chapter IV:

> The curricula and design of dance programs vary widely, and dance degrees are commonly earned in a range of global dance forms, practices, and scholarship. Differing aesthetic and physical criteria—including ideas regarding the role of virtuosity—are found amongst the dance practices represented in universities, and the resulting curricular goals reflect these diverse viewpoints. (13)

Therefore, in contrast to the present dance programs that currently offer only a few levels of African dance technique courses, DANCE 2050 is envisioning a future in which world

dance forms can be embraced and practiced with integrity across the American educational landscape.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by naming a key concept that drives my interest in the study of world dance forms, embodied knowledge. The theoretical underpinnings of my inquiry are based on the notion that students at American universities can learn much about themselves, others, roots of *American* culture, and how to negotiate in a global society by studying world dance forms in general and, more specifically, African dance forms and culture. Then, I identified current issues discussed in the literature that concern the way world dance forms are being taught as well as ways world dance study, especially African dance study, is currently addressed in American higher education. The previously mentioned works of dance practitioners and pedagogues Modesto Amegago and Alfdaniels Mabingo are excellent resources for dance programs seeking to integrate in-depth study of African dance into their curricula. Both offer suggestions for content material and practical teaching strategies, which then support a holistic and student-engaged approach to teaching African dance forms in Western academic institutions.

As I reviewed the literature searching for scholarly work related to African dance forms and education, I found the majority of the texts refer to primary and secondary levels of education and often focus on a broad sense of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. The amount of literature focusing on actual teaching practices, however, is slim and becomes even scarcer when searching for the practice of teaching African dance forms. Furthermore, African dance is often discussed as secondary to the learning of

African music. This dissertation project addresses this gap in the literature by focusing on the voices of university instructors of African dance techniques courses speaking about their experiences in studio classrooms, by highlighting the philosophical foundations of the instructors' pedagogy, and by clarifying their expectations for student learning. In the following chapter, this dissertation research includes a comprehensive study and analysis of several dance programs at American universities offering African techniques courses, an analysis that is often absent from the current literature discussing the pedagogy of world dance forms of any kind within higher education.

CHAPTER IV

WEB-BASED CONTEXTS: THE ONLINE PRESENTATION OF DANCE PROGRAMS OFFERING AFRICAN TECHNIQUES COURSES

Summary of a Sampling of Programs at American Colleges and Universities

In order to explore and then create a broad foundation for where world dance in general is being taught, I began a search in 2013 for post-secondary dance programs in the United States having a significant world dance component described in the program's website. I defined significant as programs offering several courses and levels in world dance forms with the possibility for students to choose a world dance form as a concentration for their study. After searching numerous programs online, I identified three programs meeting those criteria: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and Wesleyan University. All three programs offered African dance techniques courses as world dance options alongside Classical Indian dance at Wesleyan; Latin American, Asian, European, and North American at UCLA; and African Diaspora as well as Central and South American dance forms at UWM.

I concluded that a student interested in "fus[ing] tradition and experimentation into new, contemporary forms," (Wesleyan 2015) especially if interested in classical ballet, Classical Indian dance, or Ghanaian dance forms, would find the program at Wesleyan University particularly supportive. Students with similar performance and choreographic interests but with a focus on African and African Diaspora dance forms

could consider the BFA program at the UWM. If looking for a comprehensive yet customizable world dance program that "integrates learning to dance, learning to make dances, and critical interrogation of dance as a cultural practice" (UCLA 2015a), then the dance program at the UCLA meets those criteria. Of the three programs, I concluded that UCLA's world dance component was the most significant according to my initial definition, due largely to its interdisciplinary, theoretical, and diversity-enriched approach.

I then narrowed my focus as my dissertation research interests narrowed in order to search for dance programs offering African dance techniques courses, whether required or not for degrees in dance. I began by searching dance programs with which I was familiar, including the schools of my five research participants: Appalachian State University, Denison University, Duke University, Texas Woman's University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Next, I further broadened beyond the schools with which I had some regional familiarity to schools in differing geographic regions. I also sought representation from public schools, private schools, historically black schools, historically women's schools, and schools of varying sizes.

Along my web-based journey, I found a website, UnivSource.com, publishing an "index of links to many of the schools and university departments that offer dance as a program in the US" (UnivSource 2015). I did not include every school on the list in my search, but I did use the list to expand my search, which resulted in the inclusion of several schools I had not previously considered. In total, I settled on analyzing data from 29 schools. Twelve of them were private schools, three were women's colleges, and six

were historically black colleges or universities. The rest were predominantly white, public, state universities.

Since I did not choose to collect data on all of the schools with dance programs in the United States, I will not draw conclusions about African dance techniques offerings at private versus public colleges and universities. Similarly, drawing conclusions based on the geographic locations of the schools is also limited. However, I will note that I included data from three schools in the West, four in the Southwest, three in the Midwest, nine in the Northeast, and ten in the Southeast. Schools from 15 states and the District of Columbia were represented in the data, but I found it interesting that 11 of the 29 schools were located in only two states, Massachusetts and North Carolina.

Five colleges in Massachusetts offering African dance techniques courses (Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Hampshire College, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst) are part of the Five College Consortium and thus the Five College Dance Department. This configuration helps explain why there seems to be a high concentration of dance programs offering African dance techniques courses in Massachusetts. "Each campus offers its own distinctive program of dance and collaborates as a uniquely rich inter-campus department. The department pools the offerings of these five different programs of dance, making it one of the largest in the nation" (Five 2014). One instructor teaches the West African dance techniques courses for all five colleges in the department.

I identified six schools in North Carolina offering African dance techniques courses: Appalachian State University in Boone, Duke University in Durham, University

of North Carolina at Greensboro and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, and University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte. None of the schools share instructors. It is interesting to speculate whether the concentration of dance programs that offer African techniques in North Carolina is due to Chuck Davis's presence in Durham, NC.

Chuck Davis is the founder and artistic director of the African American Dance Ensemble. Since 1984, he has been entertaining and educating audiences all over the world with stagings of traditional African music and dance forms (African 2015). Based in North Carolina, his company performs regularly and conducts workshops for all ages in public schools and community settings of all types in the state. Four of the five participants in my dissertation research have worked with Chuck Davis in some capacity at some point in their careers. He is considered a living legend particularly in the contemporary African dance world; therefore, I imagine his programming has influenced many post-secondary dance educators in the state of North Carolina.

The colleges and universities included in the web research data set vary in size, the smallest enrollment being 1,375 at Johnson C. Smith University and the largest enrollment of 69,551 at Arizona State University. Enrollment at 11 of the schools ranged from 1,375 to just under 5,000. Six schools enrolled just over 9,000 to just under 19,000 students. Enrollment at eight of the 29 schools ranged from approximately 25,000 to nearly 38,000, and three of the largest schools enrolled over 40,000 students.

Table 1. Student Enrollment for Schools in the Sample

College/University	Enrollment
Arizona State University	69,551
University of Florida	51,725
University of California, Los Angeles	43,239
Temple University	37,788
University of North Texas	36,168
University of Utah	31,515
University of Colorado	30,265
U Mass Amherst	28,635
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	28,042
University of North Carolina at Charlotte	27,200
Wayne State University	25,619
University of North Carolina at Greensboro	18,502
Appalachian State University	18,026
Duke University	14,850
Texas Woman's University	12,416
Howard University	10,297
North Carolina A&T	9,203
Savannah State University	4,600
Wesleyan University	3,224
Smith College	2,702
Muhlenberg College	2,440
Mount Holyoke College	2,347
Denison University	2,136
Spelman College	2,100
Amherst College	1,792
Swarthmore College	1,534
Hampshire College	1,400
Johnson C. Smith University	1,375

I chose to focus on schools with dance programs offering BFA or BA degrees in dance or related areas such as performance and movement, theater and dance, drama and dance, and dance education. However, two schools included in this research offered BS degrees in dance education as well as minors in dance. Further, two schools, North

Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (N.C. A&T) and Spelman College, offered only dance concentrations instead of dance majors. N.C. A&T's degree is a BA in Liberal Studies and Spelman's degree is a BA in Drama. Although several of the dance schools offered graduate degrees, I excluded data on technique courses for graduate programs.

Which Courses Are Taught?

Course Variety and Nomenclature

I noticed a variety of titles used for technique courses in African dance forms (see the table following this paragraph). Some courses employed broad titles (e.g., *Dance and Globalization*, *Cultural Dance Forms,* and *Contemporary Dance Techniques* with subtitles of *West African Dance* and *West African)* allowing for a variety of course content since curricular offerings for some schools are dependent on the changing expertise of available adjunct or graduate teaching assistant faculty. These broad course titles allow content change without necessitating continual approval from curriculum committees when a different dance form was to be taught. Also, general titles, considering how varied dance within each country in Africa is, were included in 15 schools to include *African Dance*, *African Dance Forms*, *Dances of Africa*, and *West African I* and *II*, to name a few. Only one of the schools, University of Colorado, indicated a more specific African culture in parentheses, Ghanaian. Other dance programs offered courses that appeared to include a combined content of African dance forms as well as dance forms from the African Diaspora such as Caribbean forms. A few

such courses were entitled *African/Diasporan Dance I* and *II*, *Dances of Africa and the Caribbean*, and *World Dance Practices in Sub-Saharan Africa and Diaspora*.

Table 2. Titles for African Dance Techniques Courses

Course Title	**School**
GENERAL	
African Dance	Appalachian State University Johnson C. Smith University University of Colorado
African Dance I-II	Howard University Temple University
African Dance I - IV	Alabama State University
African Dance II	Wayne State University
African Dance (Ghanaian)[27]	University of Colorado
African Dance Forms	Spelman College
Introduction to African Dance	Wayne State University
Dances of Africa I	Arizona State University
African Dance Tech I - II	Duke University
Dance Technique: African I - II	Swarthmore College
African Dance & Culture	Muhlenberg College
African Movement Aesthetics	Denison University
AFRICAN DIASPORA	
African/Diasporan Dance I - III	Denison University UNC at Greensboro
African-Caribbean Dance	Savannah State University
African Dance & Diaspora Technique I - VI	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Dances of Africa and the Caribbean	N.C. A&T
Beginning/Intermediate/Advanced World Arts Practices in Sub-Saharan Africa and Diaspora	UCLA
WEST AFRICAN	
West African Dance	Hampshire College UNC at Charlotte

27. Parenthetical information in this chart has not been inserted by the researcher but appears as course titles are listed on respective dance program websites.

West African I/II	Smith College
West African Dance I-II	Wesleyan University
Cultural Dance Forms: West African Dance	Hampshire College
DANCE AND MUSIC	
West African Dance and Music	University of Florida
West African Drumming and Dance	Mount Holyoke College
African Music and Movement	University of Utah
Dance and the African Diaspora - Merging of Rhythm, Music and Dance	University of Utah
WORLD DANCE	
Dance and Globalization[28]	Texas Woman's University
CONTEMPORARY	
Contemporary Dance Techniques: West African	Amherst College Hampshire College
PERFORMANCE/REPERTORY	
African Dance Repertory	Temple University
Performance: African/Diasporan Dance	Denison University
Performance: African/Diasporan Dance (student)	Denison University
Performance Dance: Repertory (Spr. section 3: African)	Swarthmore College
African Performance Workshop	Howard University
Repertory: African Dance	Duke University

Four of the 26 titles encountered during data collection clearly indicated study in dance as well as music, to include *West African Dance and Music*, *West African Drumming and Dance*, *African Music and Movement*, and *Dance and the African Diaspora – Merging of Rhythm, Music and Dance*. These titles imply that there is focus in the course on music and dance rather than just dance; however, I cannot assume that

28. Course syllabus indicates instruction in African dance forms.

the courses which do not include music in the titles do not have this combined focus since African dance and music are so deeply intertwined. Finally, I also included repertory courses in African techniques. A few of those titles were *Performance: African/Diasporan Dance*, *African Performance Workshop*, and *Repertory: African Dance*. Such courses were offered at five of the universities included in this study (see table above).

Curricular Offerings

Of the 29 dance programs in this study, over half of them offer only one level of African techniques (see figure 1). Of those, about a third require the dance major to take a single technique level for the dance degree or concentration. Two-thirds of the dance programs, therefore, offer single-level African-based courses as optional or elective courses for dance majors or the general college student. However, as indicated in the chart in Figure 1, several schools in the data set offer two or more levels of technique. Further, schools, such as the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with six levels of African techniques and Alabama State University with four levels, also have tracks or concentrations in their programs providing more intensive study of African techniques for dance majors. Denison University, UNC-G, and UCLA also have program offerings that enable students to extend their study of African dance forms. The following sections describe these programs in more detail.

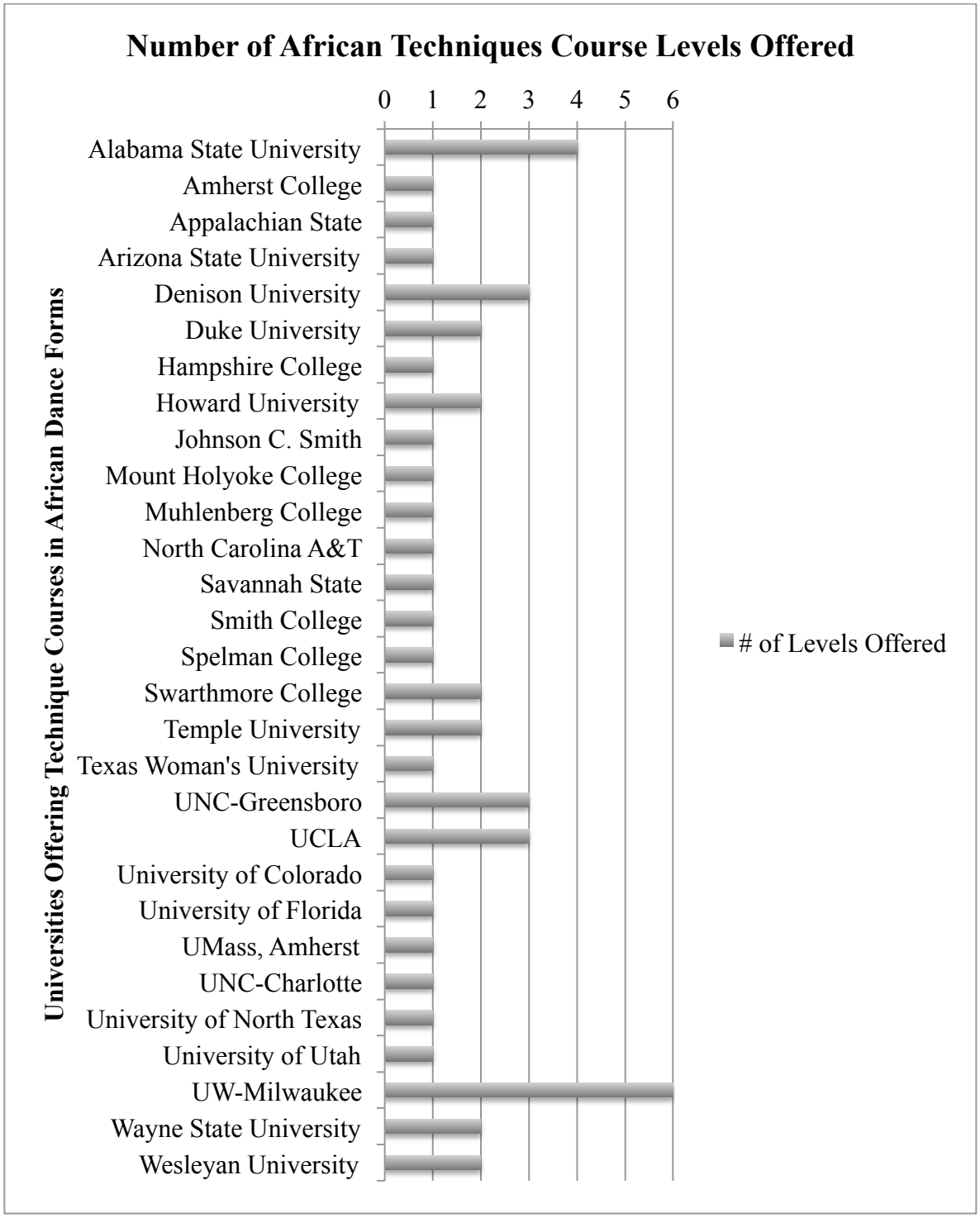

Figure 1. Number of African Techniques Course Levels Offered

African Tracks/Concentrations

The BFA program in dance at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee offers two tracks for performance and choreography, the contemporary dance track and Africa and the Diaspora track. The Africa and the Diaspora track is described as "a rigorous technical and creative curriculum with a foundation in Africa and the Diaspora techniques with cross training in ballet and modern" (University 2013). Specific dance forms are not indicated in the *African Dance and Diaspora Technique* course titles, however six levels are offered, and sixteen credits are required. Levels one and two each carry two credits, and levels three through six carry three credits each. Description of the curriculum on the dance program website indicates that students will experience dance forms from Central and South America, the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa taught by master teachers (University 2013). Additional opportunities to broaden student experience include study abroad in countries like Brazil and Ghana, and participation in Ko-Thi Dance Company, the African dance company in-residence (University 2013).

This BFA track at UWM clearly develops a very strong program of study for African dance techniques, not only because of the required six levels in African techniques, but also since the balance of coursework supports the stated goal of providing technical rigor and a creative curriculum. *African Dance and Diaspora Technique* courses comprise half of the total techniques requirement. Close to equal credits are allotted for creative courses, academic courses, and technique courses. The options available for University Core Courses enable an even stronger foundation for study of Africa and the Diaspora.

Alabama State University began a BFA degree program in dance in 2013. According to the 2012-2014 General Undergraduate Catalog online, the program offered classes in ballet, modern, hip hop, tap, jazz, and world dance when only a dance minor was available. Now, according to the Alabama State University BFA/Dance Program Course Listing and Curriculum Checksheet, the nomenclature of world dance has been replaced with the more specific African Dance. Ballet and modern are required courses with dance majors choosing further study of African or hip hop dance forms. Majors also choose either tap or jazz courses. The program offers four levels of each dance technique course, and majors are expected to take all four levels of the techniques that they choose. These four dance techniques are referred to as "focused electives" rather than "tracks" or "concentrations" (Alabama 2015).

At Denison University, dance majors must fulfill the minimum 12-credit movement practices requirement with any combination of courses from the African/Diasporan, Modern/Postmodern, Ballet dance forms (when offered), and required performance courses in each of the chosen techniques (Denison 2015a). If dance majors choose the African/Diasporan track, they must complete three levels of African/Diasporan dance, the first of which does not count towards movement practices requirements for majors, along with the required performance courses in African/Diasporan dance. This required curriculum is structured to help students meet the stated goal of being able to "achieve, minimally, an intermediate level of proficiency in a combination of various aspects of embodied movement practices" (Denison 2015a).

UCLA's dance program is housed in the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance (WACD), a merger, as of 2001, of the World Arts and Cultures Program, the Dance Department, and Folklore and Mythology. In 2011, both the BA in dance degree and the BA degree in World Arts and Cultures were approved (UCLA 2013a). A unique program by design, WACD is "defined by a dynamic interdisciplinary approach that encourages intercultural literacies and repertoires, including and transcending geography ethnicity, class, and other distinctions of identity" (UCLA 2013b). The required courses and electives for dance majors are a combination of dance courses and world arts and cultures courses (UCLA 2015a). Three levels (Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced) of technique courses from several regions of the world are offered including three levels of World Arts Practices in Sub-Saharan Africa and Diaspora (UCLA 2015b).

Courses in African Dance Forms as Electives

As illustrated in figure 2 below, five of the 29 dance programs included in this study offer courses in African dance techniques that are not *required* for dance majors but may be taken as elective courses to enrich dance study. Eleven of the 29 dance programs indicated African dance techniques courses as options for fulfilling requirements for world dance or technique electives. Ten schools require one level of an African dance techniques course for dance majors, and only three schools required dance majors to take more than one level. In conclusion, 16 of the 29 dance programs (55%) offer courses in African dance forms as electives as opposed to requiring them for dance majors.

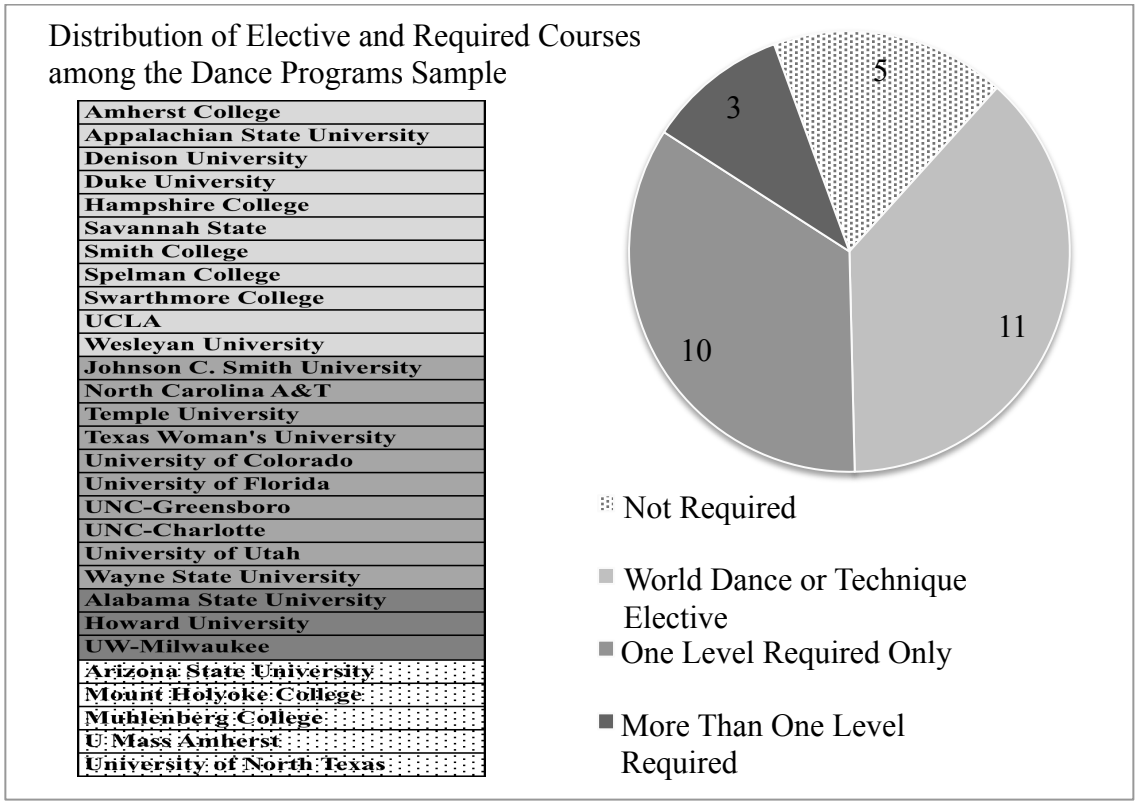

Figure 2. Distribution of Elective and Required Courses among the Dance Programs Sample

Who Is Teaching?

Faculty for African Techniques Courses

The following pie chart (see Figure 3) represents the faculty ranks of the African techniques instructors for the schools included in this data set. Although I reviewed a total of 29 schools, 5 of the schools are part of the Five College Dance Department consortium thusly sharing the same lecturer. Therefore, I counted those five schools as one, creating a total of 25 schools.

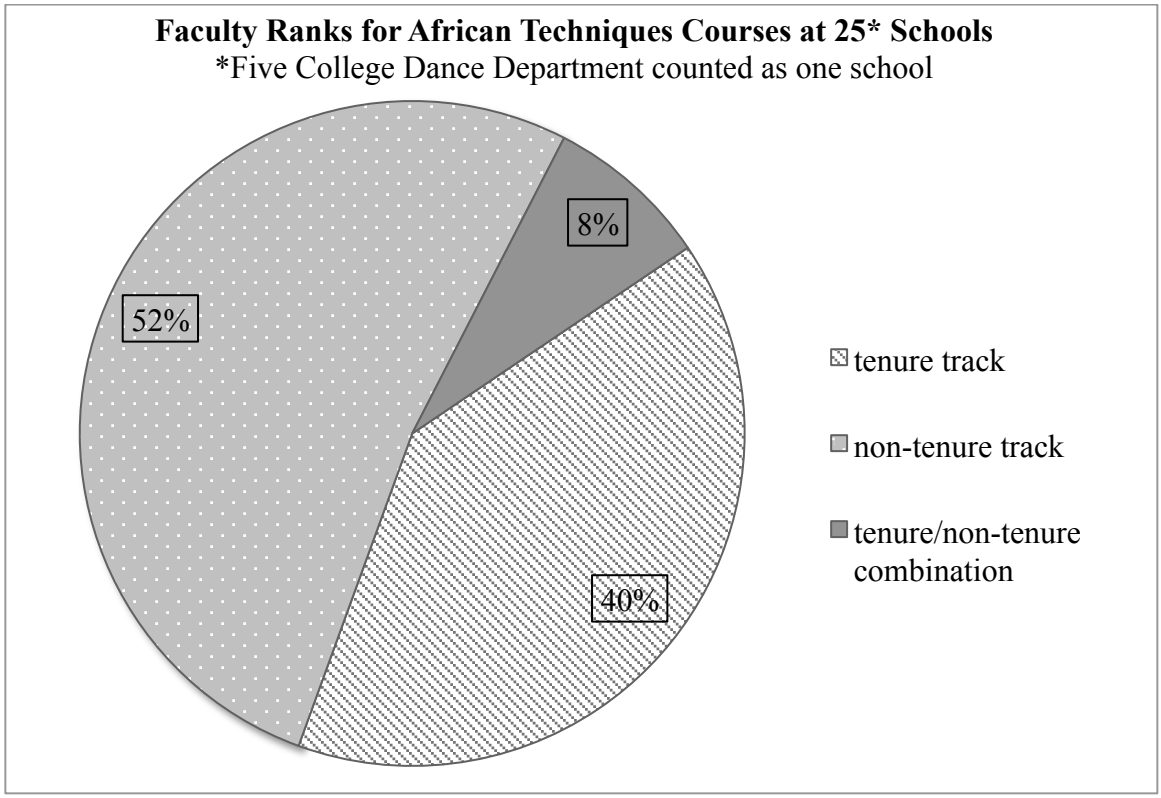

Figure 3. Faculty Ranks for African Techniques Courses at 25* Schools

Figure 3 delineates the percentage of schools filling the African techniques courses with tenure track versus non-tenure track faculty positions. The tenure track positions were assistant and associate professorships. The non-tenure track positions included position titles such as adjunct, lecturer, instructor, visiting professors, faculty associates, and graduate assistants. At two of the schools (indicated as 8% on the chart), both tenure track and non-tenure track faculty taught the courses. Only non-tenure track faculty taught the African techniques courses at 52% of the schools, with only tenure track faculty teaching at 40% of the schools. Therefore, for this data set there is close to a 50/50 relationship between courses in African techniques being taught by tenured and non-tenured track faculty.

At the start of this project, I wrongly suspected that a large majority of African techniques courses were not only elective courses but were also primarily taught by faculty in non-tenure track positions, such as graduate assistants and adjunct lecturers hailing from professional African dance companies. While reviewing faculty bios online, I learned that while that is true of several of the instructors, many are now full-time tenure track faculty who also have performance experience with African dance companies in their backgrounds.

Even the five participants that I chose to interview for this research project negated my assumption about the faculty teaching African dance techniques at American universities. One participant is a graduate assistant, but the other four are tenured or tenure-track faculty. Three are associate professors. One of the associate professors teaches the single African techniques course offered at the school, and the other two teach multiple levels of African techniques as well as several other courses. The fifth participant is an assistant professor who also teaches multiple levels of African techniques in addition to other courses.

Conclusion and Questions

Modern and/or ballet are required courses for most of the dance programs included in this study. One exception is at Spelman College where the degree is primarily focused on drama, having dance as a concentration or minor. In many programs, a student may choose to fulfill requirements for technique classes by taking multiple levels of either modern or ballet without needing to study both techniques. Although this study focused specifically on course offerings in African dance techniques, I found that many

schools offered courses in world dance forms, such as Flamenco, Bharata Natyam, Caribbean forms, and even movement forms such as Tai Chi. Although African technique courses are not required at many of the schools in this study, most schools require at least one course in a world dance form of some kind.

Throughout this Internet research, I faced some difficulty determining who taught the African techniques courses and how frequently the courses were offered at a few of the universities. I contacted dance faculty at Muhlenberg College and Johnson C. Smith University and was informed that both schools had been in the process of searching for new instructors to teach their class offerings. I learned from the instructor at Savannah State University that she, in fact, is an assistant professor in a different department and has been teaching courses in dance to "help out." She planned to resume teaching *African-Caribbean Dance* and modern dance courses in Spring 2016 and to add a new course after her summer study in Ghana. At Texas Woman's University, where a graduate assistant soon preparing to graduate teaches *Dance and Globalization*, a faculty member informed me that the content of the course will remain as focusing on Ghanaian dance and culture since an incoming doctoral graduate student will be entering in 2016 to take over the course from the graduating teaching assistant. Interestingly, the incoming teacher received her training in Ghanaian dance while studying in Wesleyan's dance program.

The preceding data leave me with the following questions: How many other schools are searching for instructors for courses in African dance forms? How many dance programs are interested in offering courses in African techniques but do not have

open faculty positions for hiring qualified instructors? Are the qualified instructors being educated in dance programs at American universities or studying outside of the United States? In the past several years, I have seen few open job searches specifically for instructors of African dance forms. However, many search positions do mention wanting faculty who can teach throughout the dance major but who also have expertise in a world dance form. Therefore, schools seeking such instructors often desire applicants who are able to teach modern, ballet, or improvisation as well.

In this section, I provided a brief overview of several dance programs in a variety of American colleges and universities offering African dance techniques courses both as required and elective courses. Further, suggestions about how the content of the courses may vary based on course titles was discussed, and questions were raised concerning how faculty are procured to teach these courses. In the following section and in Chapters V and VI, I will look into these issues in more detail through the specific insights provided by the research participants volunteering to share their knowledge in this dissertation.

The Participants

In this section, I reintroduce the participants, five experienced instructors of African dance forms from five different colleges and universities. I preface a brief description of each participant's university setting, the instructor's typical class populations, and courses taught with an interview quote that captures an essence of their described experiences.

Sherone Price

> *I remember my first time seeing Les Ballets Africains. Once I saw the national company perform, I knew then what I wanted my material to look like. Or if I'm teaching somebody, like no, you're not going to just do it this way. You have to do it to a place where it's respected. Or where people who are coming from Africa can look at it and say, "Wow, where'd you learn that? You look just like my people back home." . . . That to me is when somebody's giving you props, when you really researched it well enough, it really looks like back home. So it doesn't look like the watered down version of African dance. I don't want the watered down version. I want the real version of it, the performance version of it that you might see in a national company.* (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Sherone Price is an associate professor in dance studies at Appalachian State University (ASU), a public institution in Boone, NC. The undergraduate population is approximately 77% white (Tableau 2015) and 12.8% "ethnic minorities" (Appalachian 2015a). According to ASU's dance program website, "The Dance Studies program is modern-based but offers classes in a variety of levels of dance techniques including: Modern, Ballet, Jazz, and selected topics such as traditional African Dance and Pointe" (Appalachian 2015b). When I asked Sherone[29] to name the courses that he teaches, he replied,

> I teach an African dance course. It's just titled *African Dance* at this point. It's just going through our AP&P [Academic Policies and Procedures], which will now allow it to be a part of our Gen Ed Wellness courses. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Even though, the *African Dance* course was the focus of the research and, therefore, this interview, Sherone also discussed the other courses he teaches, to include *Modern II, Choreography* (which he expounded upon quite a bit at the beginning of the interview), and a dance appreciation course titled *Style and Form*. When asked to describe the

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29. As noted in Chapter II, I respectfully refer to the participants by first name, as is common practice among many in the dance discipline once formally introduced.

population of the *African Dance* class, he first expressed disappointment about the enrollment. He said,

> I'm hoping it will get better. Right now—my numbers this semester were very low compared to previous semesters. And that's because the course wasn't falling in any special place . . . I'm expecting more people to be able to take it because [it can now fulfill] Gen[eral] Ed Wellness, it can actually almost be considered like a P.E. as well . . . Without that, people won't take it because they don't know what to do with it. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

African Dance is not a required course for dance majors but an elective technique course, so Sherone cannot count on the class to be filled with dance majors. Since the interview, the course has been adopted as a general education wellness course, which might help enrollment and enable exposure to more students at the university.

When I inquired about the typical ethnic and gender make-up of the class at the time of the interview, he responded,

> It's usually mixed. I usually have a lot more female [students]. This semester I have three white males in my class, and I have one African American woman and the rest are white females. . . . And we usually have to have a number between nine and 12 or even more [to meet university enrollment requirements]. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Despite the limited time that Sherone has with his students in one semester of the *African Dance* course, he aims to help them master the African techniques so that when performed at a semester's end showcase, the students have internalized an understanding of the rhythms, the energy, and the relationship individual dancers should have to one another. According to Sherone, these three objectives not only enhance performance quality but also speak to what he emphasized at length in Chapters V and VI when describing his experience teaching African dance forms to American college students.

Ava Vinesett

> *There's such a passion that I have for it [African dance forms]. But I think that the passion comes from the power of these forms, in my opinion, to transform individuals because I think about how my own life was transformed directly as a result of pursuing African dance forms on a performance level and then beyond the performance level. Because I didn't get into, as I said, researching as a scholar until well after I had been performing.*
>
> *It's interesting that the hook of it was the excitement, the energy. That observing these forms, that that created. And watching individuals move their bodies in space in a way that I didn't even know was possible. It was so beyond my realm of understanding. So that's what the hook was, but then in terms of what has been able to sustain me and fire my interest comes from, as I said, this point of transformation and how the kind of impact doing these dances have had on my own life and then on the lives of others, colleagues and students, and there's such a power* . . . (Ava Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Ava Vinesett is an associate professor of the practice of dance at Duke University in Durham, NC. Duke is a private, research university known especially for its medical school. Its undergraduate population of 14,850 is approximately 48% white, 10% black, 7% Hispanic, and 21% Asian; and the graduating class of 2018 is 50% female (Duke 2015b).

Dance majors at Duke University "are expected to attain and/or maintain the high intermediate level of modern dance or ballet or African dance technique, and they are also to choose two courses to fulfill requirements in one of three concentrations: Choreography and Performance, Dance of the 20th and 21st Centuries, and Human Movement in its Cultural Context" (Duke 2015a). Ava currently teaches *Techniques in African Dance I and II, African Repertory*, and *West African Rootholds in Dance*. She also co-teaches *Dance and Religion in Africa and Asia* with her dance program colleague, Purnima Shah. Every other year she teaches *Perceptions of the Self, Society, and the*

Natural World for the Baldwin Scholars Program (a mentor program for Duke's female students). That course is housed in the Sociology Department.

When I inquired about the make-up of her *Techniques in African Dance* classes, which were the focus of our conversations, she responded,

> Limited numbers of males come through, very limited. Well, I'm saying limited. It seems to be almost like on kind of a cycle. Like I can remember times when I've had several male dancers in class. It's been some years though . . . this semester I don't have any male dancers in class. Last semester I think I may have had a couple. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Even though Ava's technique classes are predominantly female, the classes are ethnically more diverse. Keeping in mind that 48% of the undergraduate population at Duke is white and 10% African American, Ava said,

> I have white students, Asian and South Asian, African American students, African students. So it's a pretty diverse population as far as that's concerned. Now the thing is, I don't know how that compares to how much of a microcosm the class is as compared to the university. I would tend to think, though, that the numbers would be skewed. I think there are less white students now in the class than there were in years past. . . . African American students, I think, make up 10 percent of the population at Duke . . . I think it's a little less than 10 percent [African Americans] that make up in the class. At one point I didn't have any African American students in class or any African students. I had no Black students in class whatsoever. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Ava recounted a story about a student and parent she met one year on Duke's "move-in day" when new students move into dormitories on campus at the beginning of the school year. She said,

> So I was telling her I teach dance, and she was like "Oh, I would love to take your class." And I was like, "You're welcome to take—" and her mother said "I'm not bringing you here—" (This was an African American student.) She's like, "I'm not paying this money here for you to take a dance class!" Just like that. (Ava Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Not only was this a statement about how this particular African American parent felt about the costly tuition at the prestigious private university, but it also indicated the parent's low value of dance as a field of study for her daughter. Ava's anecdote suggests an attitude such as this parent's may contribute to the reason small numbers of African American students take African dance techniques classes at Duke University.

Ava's description of her experience with teaching African dance forms to college students focused a great deal on how she sees it as a tool for self-discovery. She values it as a tool for helping her to discover a lot about herself and her passion, and she encourages her students to "do the work" to learn more about themselves as well (See Chapter V, p. 99 for more details about this).

Stafford Berry, Jr.

> *The feeling, the high, was meaningful for me, initially. I took one of my earliest [African-based] classes when I was in high school at the Swarthmore College Upward Bound Program on Swarthmore College's campus. And Larry Wilson was the teacher, and while he didn't have access or resources to give us an authentic* [makes air quotes gesture with fingers] *or close to authentic experience, it was close enough that it allowed me to know that this style of dance was something that seemed fun and interesting to me, and at* ***that*** *level, fun and interesting. But as I developed and become more interested in dance, it became even more intriguing to me . . .*
>
> *But there was this moment where I was—it was in West Philadelphia—I was walking to the community education center at 34th and Baltimore, in that general area, near the University of Penn's campus. That's where this class was held, and a block away I heard the music. I felt the music, and I remember stopping and thinking, is this what we're about to go to? And she [a friend who invited Stafford to class] said, "Yeah, that's it. Do you hear it?" And I said, "Oh, my gosh!" And I knew. I didn't put it in words, but it was at that moment that I knew that*

> *whatever that was happening in that room, that I had to have it as a part of my life.* (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

Stafford Berry, Jr. is an assistant professor in the Dance Division of Fine Arts and the Black Studies Interdisciplinary Program at Denison University in Granville, OH. Denison is a private liberal arts college. It has an undergraduate enrollment of 2,136 students, of which 57% are women. Thirty-six percent of the class of 2018 is made up by what the school describes as "multicultural students" (Denison 2015b). Dance majors at Denison take movement practices courses in African/Diasporan and Modern/Postmodern. Additionally, they take a dance studies course in three of the following areas of inquiry: Critical Historical and Cultural Inquiries, Compositional Studies, Human Movement Investigations, and Movement Analysis (Denison 2015a).

I asked Stafford the titles of the dance courses that he was currently teaching. He responded,

> I teach movement practice courses and dance studies courses. My movement practice courses are *African/Diasporan* Level I, Level II, and Level III. And my dance studies courses are *Cultural Studies*, *Seminar and Production*, *Composition*, and I'm going to be teaching next year when I come back from my leave a *Dance is Art* class. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

We focused most of our discussion on his African techniques classes allowing him to describe the populations for the *African/Diasporan* classes by levels. He explained that the Denison dance division decided within the last couple of years to determine quotas for how many upper and lower level students can be in each class; thus making it easier for first-year students to get into the classes. In Stafford's words, "not that there is anything wrong with a class full of juniors and seniors, but we want our community to be

a little bit more varied demographically in terms of the classes" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.). He further commented,

> All kinds of people take the AD [African/Diasporan] courses, particularly the level one course and the level two course as well. There aren't a lot of males that take those courses. In fact, it's a personal mission of mine to get them in here. And I had to fight and claw and scratch and intimidate in some cases— [We laugh] I'm just joking—to get them in the door, and they have come. They have trickled in. Trickled in, meaning I taught some classes where there's one. And I've taught some classes where I've started off with four and it dropped down to one. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

With regards to the ethnic make-up of his movement classes, he said,

> We've been growing in that respect. It's so wonderful to see. Consistently for the last at least two years, I've seen all kinds of ethnicities in my movement practice courses: African American folk; African folk; folk from Nigeria, Ghana, other places in West Africa; folk from the Caribbean islands, Haitian. And then there have been white folks, Caucasian folk, and they may distinguish themselves as whatever their ethnicities are. [Also there is] a contingency of Asian folk: Sri Lanka, Thailand, [and] India. So we've really been blessed and fortunate to have all kinds of ethnicities showing up in our classes. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

The focus of Stafford's description centered around two main ideas: 1) the concept of community as it relates to his practice of teaching dance, and 2) his concept of relating to rhythm and movement. As described in the leading quote, the vibrations of the drum have captivated Stafford for years, and his pedagogy has developed out of a desire to help others make sense of their own relationships with the rhythms as well as with everyone around them inside and outside the classroom (See Chapters V and VI for more details).

Robin Gee

> *In terms of preparing students for a life as artists, it [learning African dance forms] makes them better dancers. For me, I think it accesses things in the body that other forms don't access. And I think that it makes them think outside the*

> *body in terms of how to approach not just movement but how to think critically and be global citizens, to be sensitive to other ways of thinking about moving and being in the space. That's what I see. I think that the dancers who actually excel in [performing] West African [dance forms] are generally some of the stronger dancers that we [UNC-G dance program] create. That's my opinion.* (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin Gee is an associate professor of Dance at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G). UNC-G is a public liberal arts research university with an enrollment of approximately 17,700 students. According to their website, 65% of the resident undergraduates are female and 25% are African American (The University 2013). Dance majors at UNC-G are required to take contemporary, ballet, and African dance technique courses. When asked which courses she teaches, Robin took in a deep breath and responded with a long, varied list of courses that may be required at different times. She said,

> I was brought here [to UNC-G] to kind of shape an African-based curriculum, so I teach all levels of African whenever possible . . . I also teach contemporary, so I teach in the contemporary track. . . . I teach composition in the undergraduate and graduate tracks. I teach in the pedagogy track, also. I teach curriculum development . . . My undergrad degree is actually in film, so I'm really interested in screen dance and filmmaking. I also teach a freshman seminar that's offered every fall, so I teach first-year incoming students, both transfer and freshmen. . . . I've taught in the dance history track. So I've taught *World Dance Traditions*. I've also taught *Dance Appreciation* [and] *Introduction to Dance*. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

With regards to the demographic make-up of the African movement courses that Robin teaches, she said,

> It's rare that I have more than three or four men. That's a good semester, and a lot of them are non-majors.
>
> In terms of ethnic breakdown and configuration, because it's [a] required [course], it's really broad-based, but I would say that the African American

> students really gravitate to African. I mean there are some students that it really resonates with as well. So they'll take their requirements and then go on, but you know the percentages [of African Americans] in the school are very small. So overall there are fewer minority students in the university and then in the department in terms of ratios. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin has taught all ages and in a variety of settings including community centers, jails, and colleges. As she mentioned in the leading quote, she has several interests in addition to dance, including film and musical theater. Before she began teaching full-time, she toured as a performer with several dance companies, and she traveled to and studied dance in Africa. She continues conducting research in African countries, and it informs the way she teaches college students at UNC-G.

Beatrice Ayi

> *[In the village in Ghana] I learned some of the dances that I now have rearranged, I'll say, because it's still traditional dance, but it has been rearranged. Because students have to learn, and they will be examined, it has to be set. It can't just be freestyle, so I had the privilege of learning it raw, the way it was before [I arranged it for teaching students] . . . I have that village experience. And then also at the primary school that I attended, we were privileged to have members from the nation's dance company [Ghana Dance Ensemble] come every term.* (Beatrice Ayi, pers. comm.)

Beatrice Ayi, a native of Ghana, is in the United States on study-leave from her faculty position at the University of Ghana at Legon. She has earned a master's degree in dance from The Ohio State University and has gained certification in Labanotation (a form of dance notation). She is currently a doctoral candidate and, at the time of this research, was a graduate teaching assistant at Texas Woman's University (TWU) in Denton, TX. TWU is a public university, which has a student enrollment of approximately 15,070. Eleven percent of the population is male, with 20.8 % of the

population being black and 20.4% Hispanic (TWU 2014). TWU offers BA, MA, MFA, and PhD degrees in dance (Texas 2015c). There are two options for BA study, dance and dance education (Texas 2015a). Dance majors are required to take modern dance every semester, ballet four semesters, and Urban and Global Dance Practices (a course offering differing levels of jazz, tap, or world dance forms depending on faculty availability) three semesters (Texas 2015b).

Bea's residency as a doctoral student allowed students at TWU to benefit from her professional expertise in teaching Ghanaian dance forms. For six years she taught two sections of *Dance and Globalization*, a required course for dance majors that shifts its cultural emphasis depending on the available talents of adjuncts or Graduate Teaching Assistants to the Denton campus. *Dance and Globalization* is one of the university's core courses, so it attracts students of all majors. Bea said, "I'm always excited when I have one male student in the class. It's always females. Probably—I mean if you look at the population of the students at TWU, it would explain it because I think there are more females than there are males." When I asked Bea about the ethnic make-up of her classes, she said, "That is the fun part!" She said that two-thirds of her class is usually Hispanic, and she went on to name several countries that are often represented in her class. She said, "I have people from all over. I think from—not only from all over, from all the continents." She named Nepal, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, China, Uganda, Nigeria, Guatemala, and India. I asked, "Are these all represented in one class?" She replied, "In one class" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.).

Bea's background is much different from that of the other participants. She grew up in Ghanaian villages learning African dance forms, music, and language in the context in which the dances emerged, versus learning the dance forms primarily in dance classes and then having to travel to the African continent whenever possible to study the forms in their original contexts. Her approach to teaching Ghanaian dance to American college students is grounded in her desire to share her culture with others and to help others thereby recognize what they have in their own respective cultures.

These five research participants were chosen to share their expertise and insights into the teaching of African dance forms due to their diverse interests, teaching environments and length of time, and strong professional backgrounds. They give the reader a sense of how individuals are trying to create a foundation for an African presence within American higher education institutions. This African presence is shown to be important not only as one aspect of a multi-cultural education but also as providing an important missing link within the studies of American history, American dance, and an American cultural heritage.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a variety of insights into the current statistics for how African dance forms are emerging in higher education settings at the undergraduate level in the United States. Of interest from an analysis of these statistics is the number of schools currently offering world dance forms in various formats, by differing teaching methods, and in various depths of practice. The growing interest within the various dance departments and programs highlighted in this chapter relates significantly to the findings

and insights shared by authors and educators in Chapter III of this dissertation. The conversations for how to create new curriculum, and the practices needed for supporting this curriculum, are clearly emerging in differing scholarly conversations. In this chapter, then, details for how these conversations are now being placed into practice within differing formats and schools were shared with the reader.

The interest in multicultural education, specifically in relation to African and African Diaspora studies is becoming important to educators around the world. However, how these interests are emerging within institutions is clearly not systematic or organized by any governing body such as national accrediting organizations, etc. Basically, the data for this dissertation research seems to emphasize the somewhat haphazard but very lively manner in which dance curricula offering African and African Diaspora dance forms are being shaped for students of the twenty-first century.

Insights into how five specific dance artists are trying to create curricular possibilities were also introduced in this chapter. In the following two chapters, the insights, pedagogical practices, and guiding philosophies of these five participants teaching African dance forms in diverse institutions and diverse environments are detailed in depth.

CHAPTER V

SHARED INSIGHTS INTO PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS AND TEACHING PRACTICES

This chapter presents insights shared by five experienced instructors teaching within differing university dance programs in the United States. The chapter focuses on salient themes emerging from conversations with instructors about their ever-evolving teaching practices, factors that influenced their philosophies for teaching African dance forms, and their descriptions of course content. In the following section, the research participants share differing philosophical foundations concerning their teaching of African dance forms within a university setting.

Personal Philosophical Approaches to Teaching African Dance Forms

In response to my question, "How does your teaching compare to the way you were taught African dance forms?," Ava and Robin shared their view on rote learning and the need for more discussion in the classroom setting. In doing so, they provided insight into their teaching philosophies. Ava explained,

> I would say when I was starting out and learning these forms, most of the emphasis was on doing the step, and rarely was there any discussion of any kind of spirituality, the hows and whys, who's doing this, and how the dances came about . . . And that, I would say, would probably be the biggest difference between the way that I teach [and how I was taught]. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Now, Ava chooses to contextualize the dance forms for her students by not only teaching movement but also discussing background and significance of the dance forms within her

technique classes. She also aims to help students think critically about themselves as movers, which she describes as different from the way she was taught.

When asked how her teaching of jazz and modern dance techniques differs from her practice of teaching African forms, Ava reflected on how she has evolved as a dancer and teacher since her early days of teaching. When she began, she focused on choreography, but now her approach is different. Ava continued,

> It's been so long since, as I said, I did those other forms [jazz and modern], and that was before I even developed whatever my identity was within these [African] forms. And so, for me, now, and for the past, whatever, 20 years, my role as an instructor or teacher of these techniques I see as being more of a facilitator and – where it's beyond, "Okay, here's a step, and I want you to learn this step." So I want to do things like help students to examine, how do you enter into this movement? What are the transitions about? Being familiar with where your body is in space and how do you transition in and out of the movement? What's your own, personal process for learning material because I think each of us has a different way of actually processing material. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Robin also expressed that many of her teachers offered very little discussion to help create a context for the African forms that they taught. She took it upon herself to do research and ask questions when she traveled to learn more about the dance forms that she performed. Robin's students now benefit from her embodied practice and research of the dance forms, which enables her to create context and make the material culturally relevant to her students. Robin said,

> I'm really anal about my research and studying, and I've had the privilege of having it both on paper and in my body, so I'm looking at it theoretically, and that's always growing and developing, and yet it's also in my body, and I've done it—so like embodied research praxis that I feel like I share that with my students in a way that my—my teachers were much more old-school. It's like, "This is it. Do it, and shut up!" kind of thing. Which, you know, hey. I was like, "5-6-7, and I got the step." I'm not mad at that approach . . . I can do it, but in the academy, we're nurturing and supporting, so I do it a little less. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Both Robin and Ava agree that rote learning and imitation has its place in instruction, but they both choose to create an environment in their classrooms that nurtures students and equips them with more than the ability to learn "steps." Ava summarized,

> Some people are very attached to the kind of rote, "I give you a step; you repeat the step." That's all fine and good; there's a purpose. I think there's a time and a place for that, especially when you're in a time crunch – but there are other times when you – as an instructor, I think it's important to help students work through material and work through breaking down what the parts of doing a movement are about, the parts of doing a step, what that actually means, because it's a mental exercise, too. And so that's a difference, I would say, or one of the things that I try and emphasize, is that it is a physical exercise; it's a mental and physical exercise, and it's one that has to be integrated. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Ava further aims to facilitate learning in meaningful ways for students, and she takes time to help students to process material. She also gives them space to "do the work" as she states it. It is important to her that students do the work for themselves, that they take ownership of their learning. She continues to explain:

> You have to figure out a way to help them get the information, and that's one of the things that I think that I do, too. I spend a great deal of time doing that. And I do think there's something to be said though, too, when you've got to give students also the space to fail, whatever failure means. And you've got to allow them to work. So I don't believe in spoon-feeding students. Sometimes they want you to walk them, talk them through everything. And I'm like, some things you do have to just work out on your own. I'll help, but like I said, to me helping isn't "Can you do that again?" No. I can do that again, but can you do it? And what's stopping you? So I teach like that, like helping them to try to figure out that space. Like I said, it can be challenging. It can be very, very challenging. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Part of "the work" that Ava expects of her students is figuring out, "How does any of this relate? How does an African class relate to my life?" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.). She adds, "That's not what I say [to students] as an instructor. 'I'm going to show you and

demonstrate how this affects your life.' No. That's the work. So part of that is about discovery" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.).

Ava spoke at length about what she believes technique encompasses and what she believes to be the student's role in learning technique in the classes that she teaches. Her beliefs are, again, what lead her to teach differently than the way she was often taught. She clarified,

> And as I was mentioning earlier, so for me it's extremely challenging to choreograph, for example, a dance without some motivation, emotional even motivation behind it, so that's a piece that I often bring to the way that I teach . . . So maybe part of the difference has to do with again choreography, I think, can be limiting if that's your introduction to learning technique. . . . Starting out that way for me wasn't really an opportunity to bring Ava into my dancing. It was really more about replicating or duplicating what it is that I saw. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

For Ava, then, dance seems to be strongly related to who she is and how she interacts with the world. Practice of African dance forms played a large role in helping Ava to develop as an expressive being, and her philosophy for teaching African dance techniques reflects that value.

A Participant's Discourse on Personal Voice and Technique

Ava's philosophical approach to teaching African dance forms is heavily influenced by her views on what comprises technique and how the personal voice of a dancer relates to technique. Ava said, "I place a high value on the personal voice of the dancer" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.), and she and Robin both discussed the inclusive nature of African-derived forms that allows a student to "come as you are" (A. Vinesett,

pers. comm.) and to "experience this form without judgment" (R. Gee, pers. comm.). Ava stated,

> You don't have to be a certain size. You don't have to look a particular way. It's just asking you, here are the movements. Here's a way for you to express yourself, and that whatever your expression is, is totally valid. The way that you express yourself is valid. You're not supposed to look like the person standing right next to you. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Ava went on to emphasize the improvisational nature of African-derived dance forms and techniques, which not only leaves room for individuality but also requires it in performance. She said,

> There's so much allowance for dancers to bring their own personal flavor or preference to the space of these forms, which is one of the things I always felt was incredible about doing this is that I don't have to look like anyone else. I mean I have to do the step. I have to do the technique and especially if you're going to be on stage dancing as part of a company, yeah, but still though, but I don't have to look just like – I don't have to hold my head just like this person. I don't have to. It's not about that. It's really how much of Ava can I bring to the execution of this form . . . (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Ava's responses indicated that for her dance technique is not just about movement precision and body alignment. She thinks a student's personality and energy are an important part of technique as well. Ava clarified this idea when she said, "developing technique, again, is not just about physically doing stuff, but it's like the personality and energy and all that you bring" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.). Ava then continued to ask, "and what is it that supports that process?" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.). To answer this question, she discussed how she works with her students to help them discover how to move from "just the mechanics of doing a step to absolutely embodying the energy of the

movement" and they then question how that embodiment of energy reads for an observer (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.).

Integrating Personal Teaching Practice with Borrowed Concepts

This section discusses the research participants' perceptions of how borrowed concepts, often from past teachers, influence their current teaching practices. When asked to compare their current teaching to the way they were taught, some of the participants reflected on past teachers and identified borrowed concepts they choose to integrate into their own teaching practices. They also pointed out that they have added their own voices by relying on personal experiences with teaching and learning.

In the following, Sherone shared an anecdote wherein he realized that he was not always conscious of what he learned from his past teachers but in which their influences surfaced unexpectedly:

> I remember starting at UNC-G, and they had asked me to teach an African dance class. I looked at John Gamble and said, "What? Me teach an African dance class?" I said, "I don't know how to teach African dance." And then all of a sudden I was in that classroom, and Chuck Davis's voice started coming to me in my head. All this stuff started coming out of my mouth . . . And so you just remember those things, but you're still trying to find who you are as a person, not to try to say you're imitating somebody else. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Although Sherone had not acknowledged it prior to that first experience with teaching African dance techniques, he had learned quite a bit about teaching African dance forms while he was in the student role. When he became an instructor, then, he chose to adapt his teaching practice to a style that specifically suited him.

Robin pointed out that she had African and African American teachers, and in the following reflection she discussed how she took something different from each teacher:

> In terms of like the praxis of instruction, I would say that I feel like I live on a continuum . . . I had African American teachers that were phenomenal and really pushed me and taught me a lot about teaching and performance. My instructors from the continent had different qualities that I've embraced. So, Marie Basse [of Senegal] is like a technician. She is so unhurried and absolutely consistent and crystalline in the way she teaches that I really learned a lot from that. I talk to her about it all the time. It's like; "I really learned this thing from you that's about the specificity of movement that is really important before I engage my own personal voice in it. That I understand it fully because I'm clear." I definitely have borrowed that from her. And I borrowed other things from Youssef [Koumbassa]. And then I'm an African American, and I bring my own sort of training and graduate school and somatic knowledge and body knowledge into it, so it is both. On the continuum yet different, I think. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin's desire to use her personal experiences and her graduate school training to delve deeper into the "intersection between contemporary and African technique" is ultimately where she wants to differentiate her teaching practice and methods of instruction from those of her past teachers (R. Gee, pers. comm.). She said she is working at it and developing her ideas, but is not yet able to articulate the "intersection" as clearly as she hopes to do in the future.

Stafford named two teachers in particular that were influential for his teaching practice, Chuck Davis and Kariamu Welsh. He described key concepts that he learned from each. Stafford learned a philosophical and technical approach to African dance forms as well as an aesthetic approach from Kariamu Welsh. From Chuck Davis and from African native teachers, Stafford said he learned to teach "by the auspices of the rhythm." In the following he expounds on what he means by "auspices of the rhythm":

> That could mean the literal rhythm, like the literal vibrations coming from the drum, or it could mean the rhythm of the class or what's happening in class. How quickly people are gaining information and—or how slowly people are gaining information, their attention. I learned a lot about the rhythm of class, and the rhythm of what's happening in the moment and in the room. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

He went on to explain how he learned to take cues from the audible rhythm, "actually hearing the vibrations and using that to teach movement and culture and other things" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.).

Stafford then continued to acknowledge how he had to learn some aspects of teaching on his own:

> Now, there are some ways about teaching that I had to discover myself . . . that have to do with my personality and how I experience teaching and experience people in the room and then how they experience me. And some ways of teaching that I know I couldn't replicate because it didn't make sense for me and my body. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

Stafford further elaborated that he started off being "really strict and stern . . . and everything that I did when I first started teaching was hard and fast and serious and with yelling. Not yelling because I hate you, but yelling because I wanted to get the point across" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.). He since has adopted a different approach after finding that the "hard and fast" teaching style was not always effective. Though some of his teachers taught that way, he discovered that he needed different strategies to become the kind of teacher that he wanted to be.

Ultimately, though these instructors acknowledged how their past teachers influenced them as learners and then as instructors, the participants also articulated how personal experiences and ideas informed their philosophical approaches to teaching

courses in African dance forms. One important common thread in this discussion is the sensed need to adapt nurturing teaching practices. Not only regarding the delivery of instruction but nurturing with regards to helping today's student learn in ways that will encourage continued learning. Therefore, they are preparing today's students (via an education in African dance forms) to negotiate life in a rapidly changing global society.[30]

The Content: *What* is Taught in African Dance Techniques Courses?

Insights into Warming Up in African Dance Techniques Classes

I asked the participants to walk me through a typical class in order to give a general idea of how they usually go about teaching African techniques. They all mentioned, in varying detail, beginning class with "warm-up." Sherone employs a set warm-up, meaning he does similar exercises every class. Following is how he described and demonstrated the movements:

> It comes with nice flicking of hands [shakes his hands forward with relaxed wrists, flicks hands towards the same shoulder alternating right and left, flicking both hands forward with palms facing away from the body] and all that stuff like that. Nice scooping of legs [scooping motion of hands and arms while lifting legs alternately] and pressing of arms [pressing hands out to the side with wrists flexed], and presenting movement [touching chest and extending arms away from the body] with the bodies.
>
> Just a lot of hand gestural movements in the beginning. And then I go into a regular stretch movement. Pulling up and arms stretching [touching shoulder then extending the arm upward] and stuff like that. Side stretching [alternating arm reaches across the body over the head] and then from there I go into more isolated kind of materials. Isolating arms and legs and all these different things working together [raises arms and hands alternately as the head moves side to side] . . . (S. Price, pers. comm.)

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30. See Chapter VI for more discussion of the instructors' intentions regarding global citizenship.

The movements he described and demonstrated were examples of exercises he uses to "get the energy up" to the high level he expects for his *African Dance* class. Within the warm-up, he said he also includes exercises meant to teach performance skills such as "present[ing] movement" to another dancer. He demonstrated by making hand gestures from his chest towards an imaginary person in front of him as his upper body contracted away from his hands. He said he does this kind of work in the warm-up because he wants to help the students learn that they have to be "real people on stage" (S. Price, pers. comm.). Thus, Sherone is clear about taking an opportunity during warm-up to work on performance quality.

Ava operates in a similar manner with regard to warm-up, but she begins with moving across the floor doing phrases of the dance form that she is teaching. She explained,

> So before we start stretching or anything like that we start moving first. So we do several passes for whatever the dance form happens to be. We do several passes down the floor before we come to the center of the floor and start stretching and just warming up.
>
> So the idea with moving initially has to do with physically getting the body charged and the blood up, because they're not asked to dance full out because that would be crazy to do, but just to come in and it's a good way to charge, just kind of get the energy charged in this space because it's very much about that. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Similar to Sherone's idea of "getting the energy up," Ava uses movement from an African dance form to "charge" the energy. Afterwards, she spends 20 minutes stretching and continuing to warm up the body (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.).

Robin's description of a typical warm-up for an African techniques class includes verbal discussion and practices such as floor work for stretching.

> We begin with a warm-up that I build over time but [then] becomes kind of a dance in and of itself. It starts sort of slow and standing with discussions about sort of Robert Farris Thompson's apart playing and playing away from the music.[31] Because they [musicians] may be playing up-tempo, and I'm doing something that's sort of meditative and slow. We might go to the floor after a while and do some floor work. I talk a lot about three-point flexion, this whole thing [motions with both hands near her head indicating mental work]. So we work on that on the floor. The warm-up used to be like 45 minutes, but in an hour 50-minute class, [warm-up] has been reduced to about 30 minutes. And sometimes now I don't even go to the floor as much. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Therefore, Robin uses the warm-up to prepare the body physically for the class, but also to introduce and/or discuss concepts applicable to the day's lesson.

Consistent with her goal to teach students about her Ghanaian culture, Bea described in the following an example of how she integrates discussion of culture when students are warming up to dance. She explained,

> I'm not doing warm-up just so that they just warm their bodies. I'm doing warm-ups so they can understand why when we are doing our dance forms, we don't stand up straight [sits upright] like immigration officers, but we stand as African dancers [inclines her torso forward, hands on knees as she sits] down there because we want to respect [touches her chest with both hands and gestures towards the floor] this earth that sustains us. We want to feel our weight as we dance. Moreover, a lot of things we do at home, we are not upright [sits upright]. We're cooking. It's down here [inclines forward]. We're washing. It's down here [rests her elbows on her thighs]. We're sweeping. It's down here [leans forward more and reaches for the floor with one hand]. So they know about our culture. That's why we don't dance up here like that [sits upright]. It's not that we are shy, so we are bending [inclines forward]—no [raises pointer finger]. It's because that is how we go about our daily life. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

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31. *Apart playing (and dancing)* is one of the five characteristics identified by art historian Robert Farris Thompson that is shared by West African music and dance. It refers to West African musicians playing in an ensemble, each playing something different as a contribution to the "polymetric whole" (Thompson 1999).

So Bea's warm-up sequence addresses posture and stance as physicalizing the needs of the Ghanaian dance forms she teaches.

For these participants, the warm-up not only serves to physically prepare the body for dancing but also to introduce or reinforce concepts relevant to the dance forms they are teaching. In the next section, the participants discuss their insights into choosing dance forms to teach, determining the number of dance forms to cover, and using repetition as a tool for teaching African dance forms.

Insights into the Participants' Curricular Decisions for African Techniques Courses

When it comes to the movement sequences, Bea draws material from the traditional dances she learned growing up in Ghana. She rearranges the dances so that the choreography is set and students can learn them in order to be assessed on specific elements of the dances taught during the semester (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). Bea stated,

> Right after the warm-up we get into the movement. Either I teach a new movement phrase or it depends on the time of the semester. If it is getting close to mid-term, I may want to see them perform the dance that they will perform for assessment. If it's not close to midterm, the typical day would be to introduce movements across [the floor], and I take movements from different dance forms. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

She explains that for the theory section of the class, she discusses dance and culture across the African continent, but for the practical sessions, she limits instruction to select countries in West Africa due to her expertise. She said, "I don't do dances from Sierra Leone because I don't know dances from Sierra Leone. I don't do dances from Liberia. I don't do dances from Ivory Coast. I do Guinea. I do Mali. I do Senegal. I do Togo, Benin, Ghana" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.).

Bea's self-described focus of the class is to teach students about her native culture, so she chooses to teach Ghanaian dance forms as well as other West African forms to give her students an idea of the variety that exists among the many cultures in West Africa. She explains that she covers several dance forms during the semester, but she assesses her students on only two Ghanaian dances in the semester. Bea summarizes,

> So I teach Ghanaian dance forms. At least they would have three or four per semester. Even though they would just be examined on one . . . One for midterm and one for finals, but I teach a couple of them, so they just have a feel of the variety of dance forms. Because in their minds, African dance forms are out there [raises hands up, arms outstretched indicating large movements]. And I tell them, "No. There are dance forms that require you to be gentle [demonstrates more subtle hand and arm movements from Kpanlogo dance]. Just enjoy the move as you roll your ball. Just enjoy your move. You don't have to be out there." And then there are others when we talk of Sorsonet where you cannot do it here [holding hands close to her body]. Those guys are tall and slim, so they like to do that [stretches arms out, one moving slightly behind her]. So we do that one as well.
>
> So we do a variety, and because I know they are not dance students, I try not to go here [stretches arms overhead] so much also because it like scares them. So we go here [stretches arms overhead] a little and then we go back to the little [subtle hand gestures in front of body]. The like kind of cool ones [slight shoulder movement and torso contraction] so they can learn. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

Similar to Bea, Robin may teach four or five dances during a semester depending on the course level. For Ava, "anywhere between five or six dance forms are covered over the course," and "depending on who's in the class I would say sometimes that might dictate how much time we spend on a particular form" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.).

When discussing the differences between how she teaches African techniques versus contemporary or jazz, Robin identified the use of repetition as one of the key differences:

> I would say how we get to the material is different. I would say that I use repetition in a way in African genre that I don't in the same way with contemporary. [With] contemporary I use the repetition of movement material over time, but in African, for me, the genre exists within and around this notion of repetition, of repetition of movement, repetition of cycles. So I kind of infuse that in my teaching a bit in terms of having the body do similar things every day and revisit it in new and different ways. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Her choice to teach African techniques utilizing repetition as a tool is influenced by what she has studied and observed about how African dance forms are traditionally learned and practiced. Robin continued to clarify this issue,

> Contemporary [dance class] kind of moves and changes a bit faster in terms of movement material and getting to the larger idea. I might come at the same material from different perspectives in contemporary or different positioning in terms of combinations or warm-ups. In African [class], I don't. . . . I like repetition in African. I read Margaret Drewal's book [*Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (1992)] some years back and was really interested in this notion of what repetition means in traditional society, and that even though you do the same thing over and over, it actually is changing. . . . Your body is different every day. . . . So even though you might do the same exercises, there's a point in the semester when I allow them to organize the way they approach it on their own. It's almost like an improvisational moment, where they take things that they've already done, and they reorganize them in a new way. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin finds it appropriate to teach African dance techniques using this traditional notion of repetition, but she is also interested in teaching contemporary techniques in a similar way. She responded, "Absolutely!" when asked if it was fair to say that the traditional notion of repetition is useful for modern dance students as well. She indicated that she would be interested in investigating how she could use repetition more in her contemporary techniques classes if she had the time. Robin added,

> When I go to Africa, [repetition is] also something that I have to embrace when I'm studying or doing research, when I'm doing this kind of embodied research and on the continent is that repetition exists in this very same way.

> You do very simplistic – it is actually an extension of this notion that [Margaret] Drewal was talking about [in her book, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (1992)], is that you do very simple things over time for long periods of time. I mean for like six, seven hours a day, what might seem really simplistic to us here in the West. There are no combinations. It's really about the experience of this one small piece of information consistently over time and watching how it evolves. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Significant Cultural Expressions Related to African Dance Forms

Ghanaian Songs and Games as Additional Course Content

In addition to dances, Bea teaches songs and games that she sang and played as a child in Ghana. She provided an example in the following:

> And so we didn't have any entertainment. There wasn't any TV for us to watch, any program. There weren't any movies, so we had to entertain ourselves. So every day after school, we'll come back, we'll do our assignment before it's dark because if you don't have light we don't get our homework done. We'll do that, and then we'll go take a shower. And then now it's time to play. We'll play all kinds of, you know—We'll have fabric. We'll put it around our waists. We'll hold it [gestures like holding fabric behind her like a cape] and run, run, run, run, run. You know? And then we would have a song that goes with it. [Sings a bit of a song] And all of that is imitating a peacock. We do that based on stories that we are told, and then the songs that we sing as intermission, we'll say, during the storytelling session. So these are things that I experienced. I learned a lot of songs from them, from there in the village. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

Bea continued to explain that, "I include the games because I want them [the students] to experience the fun that the kids experience at home as they participate in music making and dance" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). The games also reinforce values and skills such as trust, rhythm, and focus. The stone-passing game that Bea detailed below covers all three of the values she emphasizes in class:

> So when you are doing that game, there are several things that go with it, but you must keep your focus. So when we're passing the stone, you must pass it within an established rhythm. It mustn't be slower or faster than the rhythm. You also must make sure that you're putting the stone at the right place, so several things

> are going on, but you must keep your focus to make sure that you are not kicked out. Because if you don't pass it according to the rhythm, you'll be out. If you're not very careful, the next person will drop the rock—the stone on your hand. So it's teaching the kids about the fact that life is not always smooth. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

Teaching songs and games helps Bea demonstrate how Ghanaian culture teaches children the interrelationship of music making and dance, and how performing this interrelationship further instills the values significant to success in life. Using dance as a touchstone, Bea shares with her students the cultural values of her native Ghana and helps students learn about their own cultures by asking how certain values might have been taught to them when they were children. Further discussion of Bea's teaching goals will follow in Chapter VI.

African Percussion as Musical Accompaniment

Having live accompaniment for teaching African dance forms is often preferable for instructors. It facilitates the dancer/musician relationship important for most African dance forms. Stafford, realizing that live music is not always feasible for dance classes, says his class is "blessed" to have live accompaniment (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.). He said he likes to "work back and forth" with the accompaniment and is sometimes "creative with the music" during warm-up: having musicians makes that creative exchange possible. Robin integrates music, singing, and working with musicians in her classes as well (R. Gee, pers. comm.). Instrumentalists for Bea's class are there once a week, so she makes sure to use that day for dancing instead of lecturing to take advantage of having live percussion. Ava's accompaniment happens to be led by her husband, and she talked about how incredible it was to not only have musicians to accompany the class

but to have a close, long-term relationship with a musician who can almost anticipate, rhythmically, her next move. She said:

> So we've been working together so long that it's like I can do a gesture and he knows what I'm getting ready to do . . . or he'll know immediately to go into a particular rhythm. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Infusing the Class with African Traditions and Practices

Beyond the integration of music and dance, the participants mentioned the inclusion of several other traditional African practices when describing what takes place on a usual day in class. For example, Bea requires female students to wear a traditionally styled wrap skirt called a *lapa* when dancing in class because it is traditional attire for dance in Ghanaian culture.

Both Bea and Sherone practice the call and response, ago/ame, when addressing the class. Bea demonstrated, "Agooooo. [calling out loudly] Ameeeee [indicating students' response]. That is the way the class begins" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). Sherone's use of the call and response practice is so deeply ingrained that he said he uses it in all of his classes and elsewhere. He explained,

> I mean I always – the ago/ame comes with whatever I do . . . *Ago* [means] to pay attention. *Ame* means that I'm listening. That comes to me whether I'm teaching a technique class, whether I'm teaching a history class. It's going to come out of me. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Bea and Robin both talked about making use of the circle. The circle is a common organizational structure especially for the gathering of people in many African cultures. Bea asks her students to sit in a circle, a significant practice in African oral tradition, during class discussions. Robin, when discussing challenges with teaching African dance

forms in a Western dance studio, said she uses different approaches, which include African traditional practices. The use of a circle is one. She stated,

> I do find a challenge being in a Western dance space. Sometimes I'm with the mirror and then away from it. I try to move around. Dancing in different directions, dancing in a circle, incorporating the musicians. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

I consider Robin's utilization of different spatial orientations that closely resemble what takes place in the context of a dancing event in African culture a way of presenting content for the course. Just as the actual steps for the dance forms are course content.

Stafford ends his classes with a circle and a salutation that is referred to as a *collective dobale* by Kariamu Welsh (2015) in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of African Cultural Heritage in North America*. Stafford adapted the practice of dobale from Welsh, his mentor. He said, "We usually close out in a circle, [with] dobale paying homage to all the forces that allow us to be there" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.). In *The SAGE Encyclopedia*, Welsh writes that the collective dobale "generally occurs at the end of an African dance class, rehearsal, community event, or social gathering. . . . This gesture is completely nonverbal and is performed by everyone in the group on the count of eight" (Welsh 2015). Ava, who also performs dobale in her class, further described a similar practice that she later referred to as an opening meditation. She said,

> So we begin and end with a salutation. Salute to the four elements, if you will, which also parallels then the four directions. It's also an honoring to whatever our ancestral lineage is, and so we begin the class that way, and we end the class that way as well. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

I sense that the inclusion of African traditions enumerated in this section is an attempt for these instructors to provide contextual experiences for teaching African dance

forms; however, according to Ava, sometimes her students have trouble reconciling their own spiritual beliefs with unfamiliar cultural practices such as the dobale. She reflected on this challenge:

> Every now and then that comes up as an issue for students because at the end of class we always do dobale. We have to pay homage to the musicians and, trying to explain, it's not only to the musicians, but it's to those ancestral voices that speak through the musicians. Some people have issues with that because of whatever their leanings are towards spirituality, religiosity. They take issue with it, and that's fine, but this is the protocol for the class.
>
> This is what we do, and I compare that sometimes to – I've had to compare that to if you're taking a class in religion, you don't pick and choose which chapters of the book that you're going to read and which ones you're not going to read. So just because you're not a practitioner in any way doesn't mean that you get to decide because this is the text for the class. For here, this is the text. Everything that we do is the text for this class. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Therefore, as Ava summarizes, everything that is done in a technique class may be considered content for the course. In this case, the donning of fabric wrapped around the waist when dancing, the response of *ago* to *ame*, the sitting and dancing in a circle, and the salutation practice are all purposefully included by the instructors as a way to enmesh the students in the course content. The following section discusses more in-depth how these practices are physicalized in the participants' individual classes.

Daily Practice: *How* Do the Participants Teach African Dance Techniques Courses?

This section focuses on details of daily practice such as strategies employed and classroom techniques used by the participants when teaching African dance forms in their respective university settings. According to Bea, when she was asked to teach *Dance and Globalization,* it was formatted as a three-credit online theory course. Bea then requested to teach the course as incorporating both theory and practice in the face-to-face

classroom. After receiving permission for this designation, she discovered that the course was scheduled to meet in a lecture hall. Bea described her reaction:

> And I said, "No, no, no! I don't see how I can teach people about my culture and just lecture." I mean there is no fun in just listening. It would be boring to have my students holding pens and having their books and just writing. I would prefer to have them experience the moves, and then they would be able to learn about the culture. And so I moved the class from a seminar kind of setting to a studio. We actually do a lot of theory, reading and stuff, but there is the movement that goes with it.
>
> So we read stuff, and then we try to dance and experience that which the Africans, I'll say, also experience when they do those dances. And then when they read about it, they can understand much better what ideas have been shared in the articles that I give to them to read, so it is a three-credit theory course, but I choose to teach it in the studio. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

Bea's goal for the class was to teach the students about her own culture with dance as the focus. In doing so, she felt it was important to have the students interact with one another, and she felt she needed a small class to do that effectively. She said the first time she taught the class there were 60 students. Then there were 40, and at the time of the interview she was teaching two sections of the course with 24 students each.[32]

Bea also explained the need for creating context with her students at TWU, and that the need of context is different than with her students at the University of Ghana at Legon because their dance experiences and expectations are different:

> It is different, one, because at home [Ghana] I don't have to bother too much about creating a context for the students to dance. In here [TWU], I always have to strategize to make sure that the context encourages the students to dance. Basically that is what I [do] because they come as non-dance majors. Some have *never* danced before in their whole life, so to them they thought it was a theory course. They want to sit down and write, and then they realize it is a studio course

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32. Interestingly, the university has now mandated an enrollment of 35 for the class.

> and they want to run away . . . so I have to create a context and an environment that would make them open and learn and participate because if they are not dancing and they just come to the class, they're all shy and there's no class. So when I'm teaching here, that becomes the focus, creating the context. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

To further encourage learner engagement, Bea devised and implemented a strategy that reflects the value of community in various African settings I also sensed during my studies on the continent. Bea divides the class into several small groups and holds them responsible for helping one another throughout the semester. In Bea's words, "Now those groups I call *families*. And I tell the students, 'I put you in this *family* for a reason. In this family you may have six or seven *siblings*, and that is your *family*'" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.).

The responsibility of each student to help the others in the *family* in Bea's classes extends beyond helping with movement to include participating in group discussions. She explained, "When they [the students] read about the history of the dance, and they come to class, just a couple of students do the reading, so there's usually . . . not many questions about the dances" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). However, Bea continued, "They ask a lot of questions when one person who has read the history is bold enough to ask a question" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). She went on to say that once one person asked the first question, others spoke up and a class discussion would begin. To prevent students depending on others to lead the discussion, Bea said she "had to devise another strategy" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). She described,

> Ok, so if I tell them to bring *potatoes and onions* to class for us to *cook*, it will help the discussion. So what I do every week is just to give a simple assignment, so it's always based on the reading. I may say discuss three ideas from the reading

> that you found interesting. Or discuss two points that the author mentioned that helped you understand the reading. Something, I mean, so there is always something that they can come to class with, and that we call our *potatoes* and our *onions* and our *vegetables* and—to *cook*. . . .
>
> I will start off the discussion, and then they discuss in their little *families.* And that is where they get to share ideas from different cultures. So if the assignment is based—let's say it's something about the music and dance forms of Africa. So after discussing that, each *family* will also want to learn from their *siblings* . . . So then they also hear what their *siblings* have to share. After that discussion, we open it up. Two *families* will get together, and then they share. So I'll say, "Ok. You've finished *cooking*. Get together and have *dinner*." So they sit, and then they share ideas. Once in a while we put all four *families* together, and make it a big conversation so that those from the other *families* can learn from their *cousins*. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

Bea's strategy is also effective at eliciting discussion and encouraging engagement among the students bringing their varied cultural backgrounds to the class. She noted,

> They share their culture. Each time we have class discussions, you will see them sitting and giggling, and that is because somebody in there is sharing about their culture and they're—it's like new to them. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

At times Bea even experiences the pleasant problem of discussions going too long. She described one instance: "It was difficult to stop the class. Even though the time was up they kept on because they wanted to hear what other people had to say. You know? But other times it feels like they are just sleeping" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.).

In contrast to Bea's example, according to Robin, the foci of her *African Dance* courses is "mainly technique" (R. Gee, pers. comm.). So when it comes to in-class discussions, Robin spoke more in our interviews about the level of verbalization that takes place in her classes regarding movement and movement analysis. She says she faces a "dilemma" about how much talking should take place, and she explains,

> It's the conundrum that exists across my teaching in how do I adequately address this notion of technique. I'm a performer, a mover. I ain't mad at dancing at all, but sort of giving them some substantive context by which to address movement is something that I just am always working on. Like, am I giving them too much information? Because I can break it down to within an inch of its life.
>
> Everybody's going to get it to some degree in my class. I can help anybody dance it, but how much time do I want to spend on that is something that I'm always working on and struggling with. The only time I don't do that quite so much is if I'm in an advanced class. I work with a different set of assumptions. I'm like, "Ok. You know what? A lot less feedback. A lot more work on your part. We're going to dance the thing, and we're going to make some—we're going to figure some things out through the body in that way."
>
> I don't take as many questions [air quotes] in my advanced class because similar to an advanced contemporary class . . . you bring to bear a different skill set. That's the assumption. It's not always the truth. [She laughs] (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin and Bea both use learning management systems, Canvas and Blackboard, to provide background information about the dance forms that they teach in their courses. So at times during the course when in-class discussions are not planned, Bea posts information on Blackboard to help students with contextualizing the dances. She tells them, "Go read about the dance. You need to know where the dance is from. You need to know the history of the dance. You need to know the context [within] which it is performed. You need to know the music that goes with that" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.).

Robin also posts supplemental material on Canvas to support her students' learning. She stated,

> I'm a lover of Canvas now, so I'm constantly uploading videos and my work . . . I upload a lot of support materials to contextualize what we do, and I've found that it really helps them. It helps me disseminate my research to and with them. So depending on where we are with the series of dances, I'll integrate that. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin finds that the materials she posts often create interest among her students, which then enhances their learning in class.

Sherone takes his *African Dance* classes outside to provide students an experience with African dance forms he feels is "more like a village setting," a context that is closer to authentic. He explained,

> When you dance in the studio you don't have the earth, and you're not dancing with something that is bigger than you are. And now when you're outside, now you have the trees. You have—music echoes. People are watching you. So all kinds of different things are happening . . . And so, what does it feel like to dance with the wind going through your hair and all that? And so I think it really gives them that same kind of sense and the feel of the earth . . . which is sometimes bumpy and uneven. It's like you [compare it] to actually dancing on something that's nice and clean and nice and straight and flat [like the studio floor], and so it's very different. So they get a chance to feel both sides of it. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Providing the experience of dancing barefoot on the ground and in the open-air outdoors is one strategy Sherone shared for creating context for the African dance forms that he teaches to college students.

Improvisation: An Applied Concept for Teaching African Dance Techniques

In my own experience teaching African dance forms, I find that improvisation is important to how the students understand the dance's form as well as its function. Also, due to the fluid and conversational structure of African dance forms, the dancer's ability to converse with music in the moment and sense what should happen next becomes paramount for a *virtuosic* performance. Based on their descriptions, the instructors often approach instruction of African dance techniques in a similar improvisational fashion.

Sherone said he begins his class with "a little check" (S. Price, pers. comm.). He talks to his students about what is in the news and what is going on around them. He asks them how they are feeling and how their bodies are feeling. He said, "Sometimes I listen to those things. Sometimes I don't listen to those things. Sometimes I do feel as if I'm going to be a cheerleader regardless of the situation" (S. Price, pers. comm.). Looking and listening for cues from the students regarding their focus, energy, and physical well-being is one way Sherone and other participants determine how to present material to their classes each day.

Like Sherone, once Stafford has taken the attendance, he begins his classes with an energy check. He said,

> I usually have us gather so that, in thinking about what I've set for us that day and also thinking about and reacting to the energy that's in the room, I'll decide what we're going to be doing specifically. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

He gauges the energy of the students in the class and if need be, he adjusts his planned lesson to suit that energy. Previously, Stafford discussed the improvisational element of his warm-ups, but he also leaves room for improvisation in the teaching of the main material. He explained,

> When we're going through the regular material, that often has some kind of improvisational component, too, because I—it will occur to me in the moment that there might be different ways that I might want to teach the material. It'll occur to me in the moment or there will be a question or some evidence that I see in their bodies that will inspire me to say, "Oh, you know what? We need to do this now."
>
> So a chunk of the class, I would say, about a fourth of the class, has that improvisational component. And I want—I have that freedom there on purpose because I never know what the energy is going to be in the room for that day, what I will see, what questions they will ask me, or sometimes how I will be

> feeling when I come into the room. And I will be inspired by either current events or something that's happened out in the world or across campus. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

Therefore, in his explanation, Stafford describes how he is *inspired* by his students' questions and happenings in the world outside of the classroom. Additionally, he is practicing teaching that is improvisationally responsive to the uniqueness of each class and of the student feedback he senses in their verbal and movement exchanges.

Robin also indicated that she enjoys responding to what is happening in the moment in her classes. She called it "teaching on [her] feet," and she sees it as opportunities for her to learn (R. Gee, pers. comm.). Robin elaborated,

> If somebody asks me a question that makes me go "hmm." Or if I have to change up everything I was thinking of doing based on what's in front of me, they don't freak me out [hands up, like a "stand back" gesture] so much anymore. In fact I kind of enjoy them. I'm constantly saying "Wow! This is a pedagogical moment. This is a learning moment for me. [raises a pointed finger] Let me see." When I have to change up and dance on—and teach on my feet and problem solve and problematize something in the space, I really enjoy that . . . (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin went on to say that there are times when the students have unexpected difficulty with "simple" movements that challenge her to change her teaching approach, but she enjoys the challenge it poses. She explained,

> If I'm trying to get to something that they're not quite getting, how do I shift what I had planned to something that is actually going to help them address— because I assumed they were going to get this thing that they're not getting . . . It's something that might be really simplistic to me that they aren't quite grasping, and I'm going, "Ok, now I've got to figure out how to teach them how to walk across the floor. March. Like something really basic. . . . Yeah, I kind of enjoy that now because it really forces me to be a better teacher, and it makes me live my pedagogy as opposed to plan it or get sort of complacent, which I think after like ten or 12 years in the same room and the same group of students, you can [become complacent]. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Similar to Robin, Stafford also discussed how "there is always something" unexpected happening in his classes. He continued by giving an example of how he can become inspired when students surprise him:

> Like move in a way that completely surprises me. Because in my head I'm thinking, "I didn't do that at all. Not only did I not do that, it's not even close in the ball field of what I was doing. So what are *you* doing?" [I laugh] That happens often. But I also get inspired often. Usually each day there's someone who I either didn't expect to move as well or to get the material as quickly or to impress me or not impress me. Usually that happens once a class period. So all of that—the good and the bad. All of that becomes inspiring to me, and all of that I feed off of in terms of saying, "Ok, we need to do this now" or "Let's spend some more time on this. We were supposed to go here, but we're not going to do that because we need to be here." Yeah, but inevitably there's always something that is not planned that happens every single class, a big something or a little something. It's usually something every class. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

Just as Sherone and Robin indicated, Stafford's instruction is often based on how his students are responding to the material in class and how those responses inspire him to develop unplanned teaching practices in the moment of teaching. In that unplanned moment, he is continually learning about his own teaching.

Sometimes the varied backgrounds of students in a class also affect the way the instructor teaches. This diversity of background, both in terms of training and culture, may call for the instructor to break away from his or her routines. Ava talked about how the population of her second level African techniques class varies with class participants sometimes consisting of professional dancers and people with very little experience with African dance forms. The students may be taking the course of the first time or they may

be repeating the course. Ava explained that she modifies the content of the course to suit the needs and abilities of the students in a particular class:

> So it depends on who's in the class as to whether or not it's taught as a second level or whether or not it's taught as a three to four level, advanced level. All of that is happening in the context of that second level course. So some of the material . . . I find myself oftentimes having to give different versions. I might have to do different versions of a movement to accommodate the fact that, okay, this student may have taken a class with me before so they may have some familiarity, but this one hasn't taken a class with me before and has never done this, but they can move, but they're not quite getting the flavor or the signature of the movement, so I may have to do some other version. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Bea also mentioned how different the make-up of her classes is from one semester to the next. Like Ava, she changes the way she teaches to suit the particular group of students in her class. Bea elaborated,

> There may be a class [of students] that are very slow on the movement but are so fast on the theory. And so you have to kind of give more attention to the movement, create more fun around—and then there is another class, and you say, "Oh. They're so smart on the movement. I need to push the theory. Bring in more readings." You know, so it's always different. There are no two classes—even during the same semester, the two sections are never the same. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

Undoubtedly, the make-up of students in all classes of the participants varies in some way each semester. This section illustrated a few ways these instructors of African dance techniques deal with the differences in their classes, largely by adapting improvisatory teaching practices. This practice of making decisions in the moment of instruction based on the needs and context of each class is something they also note as foundational within their practice of African dance forms.

Conclusion

This chapter presented how the research participants discussed their philosophical foundations for developing teaching techniques when sharing African dance forms with their students. Further, the participants note how their foundations were similar to or contrasted from the foundations they sensed undergirded the practices of their own teachers. The participants further emphasize how their missions are formed by the need to educate twenty-first century college students in the richness of African dance techniques by fully integrating traditions and concepts from the dance forms into how the class is structured. This structure then becomes flexible as the students bring in differing energies and interests depending on what is happening in their inner lives and the world around them. Acknowledging how these outside and inner influences are parts of our lives and, therefore, part of our dancing together will be discussed further by the research participants in the next chapter. In the concluding chapter, I will also use the ideas presented by the participants in this chapter to discuss how dance faculty can develop new ways of thinking about the teaching of cultural dance practices within a curriculum. How can the ideas about teaching practices shared by these research participants help us reimagine curricular offerings meeting the needs of current students living in a complex, diverse, and globally connected world?

CHAPTER VI

"GRANDIOSE" LEARNING GOALS, ASSESSMENT, AND OTHER CHALLENGES

This chapter addresses the overarching learning goals the participants set for the students in their African dance forms classes. The participants explicitly expressed some of the goals discussed here, and some were implied in descriptions of their experiences when teaching the courses within their respective university settings. The participants were not specifically asked to discuss learning goals and objectives as they appeared on course syllabi. Instead, they were asked, "What do you want students in your African dance techniques classes to learn?" Often the participants admitted that the goals they described were not necessarily outlined on their syllabi. Also, when analyzing the responses of the participants, it seemed their emphasis was on teaching college students dance rather than teaching *dance* to college students. By that I mean many of the goals indicated by the instructors are not dance specific. They seemed to be goals that would be important for any student whether or not the student was studying dance. Further, the chapter will include discussion of various challenges the participants perceived as hindrances to students' learning pace and/or faculty pedagogical goals, assessment considerations, and ways students indicate they are learning what the teachers intend.

Community and Connecting: Concepts Explored within Technique Courses for African Dance Forms

Each of the participants discussed the concept of community when describing what and/or how they wanted students to learn in their classes. Whether pertaining to the

classroom environment they wanted to create or to their hopes for helping students relate to one another and the outside world, each participant discussed community as an important and foundational concept for supporting their student learning goals.

Class as Community

All of the participants discussed their expectations of how the class should function as a community and how these community values are reflected in the African cultural material with which they work in their classes. Ava explains to her students at the beginning of the semester that they are expected to contribute to the class and that how they choose to contribute affects everyone in the class. She tells them that each student is responsible to the class community:

> I go through the course syllabus with them, and I talk about what their responsibilities are as citizens of the class and even extend that out as global citizens. You are responsible to and responsible for not only your own energy and what you bring but also for other members of this community too because we are establishing and creating a community here. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Further, she says that teaching African dance forms is "very much about building community" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.). When comparing how she taught jazz and modern techniques to how she teaches African forms, she said she emphasizes community more when teaching African forms. She continued,

> When I compare those spaces [teaching jazz and modern techniques versus teaching African techniques], it's important to me, within teaching the African-rooted traditions, to establish a ritual within the space, and that ritual having to do with an ability or providing some kind of a support for individuals to connect to each other and connect to the space and the purpose and the focus with a different mindset than they do with some of the other genres of dance that they may be exposed to. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

The notion of connecting will be discussed later in this chapter, but here, Ava mentions "connect[ing] to the space and the purpose and the focus" of African dance forms in conjunction with her understanding of African forms being about building community. Therefore, she chooses to teach her African techniques classes in a way she believes emphasizes active citizenship and community.

Similarly, Sherone aims to teach his students the importance of being responsible for others. He said,

> I don't teach a class without having some kind of community part in it. . . . I will tell them, "Okay, at least once or twice, I'm going to bring you something to bring you together as a community in the classroom." That's a must. Because you have to learn while you're in college to be responsible for other people. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

He went on to explain that in his travels, he observed Africans who were generous and, as he saw it, embodied a spirit of sharing he credited to their African culture. He explained,

> When I was over in Africa, the one thing I did notice is that people share. African people will share the last thing they have with you. They will give you the last bit of food that they have. Because they feel that you come in, travel the world to see their country, [so] you're going to have a wonderful experience [and they want] to be able to show you what makes them who they are. And it is their community, which makes them what they are. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

He saw them as "giving" and "[un]selfish" (S. Price, pers. comm.). He continued,

> I was really amazed that people had to make a decision whether or not other people were going to eat in their family. But it wasn't even a thought that if they have food, they were going to give it to me. . . . That's deep. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Clearly, Sherone's experiences living within the African culture shape how he recreates that culture within his American classes: he does not separate the dances from the culture in which they emerged. He senses that one cannot know the dance without

also sharing in the culture. For him, sharing and showing respect for others as a way of developing community includes when his students bring food to class to share with each other, while learning to care for one another and to be "responsible for [their] neighbor" (S. Price, pers. comm.).

Sherone further mentioned that not only did he want his students to appreciate others and to be respectful, but he also wanted the students to gain a way of respecting their ancestors and "people who have laid the groundwork for them to be here" (S. Price, pers. comm.). I asked, "How do they indicate to you that they are learning that?" Sherone responded,

> When I see my students on campus, they look at me very respectfully. They speak to me very respectfully. I don't have people who've ever been in my class to walk past and not acknowledge me. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

He continued by explaining that students have told him they will see other teachers on campus and the students and teachers do not acknowledge each other. He questioned,

> But if you've had time in somebody's class [and] if they have educated you, how do you feel that you don't have a connection to them? You don't know something about them? (S. Price, pers. comm.)

So just as Bea stated that respect is of utmost importance in her culture, Sherone deems it important for his students to learn as well, both as a practice in class and in everyday life.

For Robin, it is important that students experience the class community as a "safe space" that is free of judgment. She wants her students to make it an environment where they feel comfortable even though she thinks many of them will be asked to move in ways that may not be comfortable. Like Ava, she sets expectations for this type of "safe" learning environment by modeling this behavior in how she relates her goals to the

students, but she also holds the students responsible for contributing and creating a community that is judgment-free. Robin explains how she introduces her expectations to the students,

> I want them to create a sense of immediate or intimate community in that it's important that they understand how to work in a non-judgmental way. Because this is pretty foreign to most of them: to support one another, to respect one another. One of the first things I do at the beginning of the semester very often is when I'm talking about respecting one another in the space, before we start the very first class, we stand at the doorway, and I just say, "Look at the space. Have a look. This is the space where we are going to work together for the next 16 weeks. See it for what it is before you inhabit it. Look at it. Let it speak to you. And understand that in this space . . . we're going to respect one another. This is where we are going to begin to create a sense of community." (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

She continued,

> Then we go in and inhabit the space. And so I guess that means that that space becomes important [for the student] because it isn't the space in which *I* learned the material, but that they understand that *we're* going to be working in a particular way that might be unfamiliar, but it's a safe space. And it's a space that they can do that exploration and not be judged. Even though they're being assessed. They're not judged. I think that's all I can ask for. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin's first-day-of-class ritual described here is an attempt to help her students understand that they each have a responsibility to create a nurturing and supportive environment. However, she also believes that there is something about African dance forms that is inherently welcoming. Robin elaborated on this idea with an anecdote about a differently-abled student that once took her class,

> We have a student in one of the beginner classes this semester who is a non-traditional student, and we were concerned because she's one of those bridge students who has a severe learning disability. But she *loved* the class, and we didn't want to grade her . . . it turned out she could audit the class, but oh my God! She did her showing the other day. She's amazing. *Loved* the class! Loved

> it! Came to every single class. Didn't want any assistance. Her assistant stopped coming to class. She was coming to class by herself.
>
> So we get that, and it will happen more in African than any other subject area in the department. . . . I feel like I've worked to create what I consider part of the continuum of African-based and Diasporan-based dance in that there's a sense of community and openness. That's really sort of important to me to create this sort of safe space where people are able to experience this form without judgment, with support and respect. . . . So I think that's why we have a tendency to have more non-traditional students. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin attributes having more non-traditional students in her African dance forms classes versus in her contemporary classes to the "sense of community and openness" that she contends is part of the design of African and African diaspora dance forms. (R. Gee, pers. comm.).

Ava, when answering the interview question, "When do I feel valued as a teacher of African Dance forms?", discussed how the inclusive nature of African forms, which welcomes diversity and encourages the sense of a supportive community, is important in her teaching. She further discussed how her students thrive in this open environment. She explained,

> [I feel valued] when I know that I've had an impact on someone's life through dance, and not only through dance but, specifically, through African dance forms – dancers who come and say that they never even imagined being able to dance. They've always wanted to dance, but they didn't have the body type to be the ballet dancer, or they felt like they didn't have the coordination to be this kind of a dancer or that kind of a dancer. But for whatever reason within these dance forms, that allow you to come as you are, you don't have to be a certain size. You don't have to look a particular way. It's just asking you, "here are the movements and here's a way for you to express yourself" and that whatever your expression is, is totally valid. The way that you express yourself is valid. You're not supposed to look like the person standing right next to you. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Therefore, similar to Robin's anecdote, Ava explained how her students expressed a sense of acceptance with no judgment about who they are as dancers when in her African techniques class. This lack of judgment is not something the students sensed in other dance forms they experienced in the past (e.g., ballet).

Clearly, the participants want their students to create and experience a supportive community in the classroom and to be able to manifest the same in their lives beyond the classroom. The medium they use for teaching this type of support is African dance techniques, including the context in which these techniques emerged. Some of the participants' methods for teaching the concept of community are simple and practical. For example, Ava said that she expects her students to learn the names of all the other students and anyone else who walks through the door, such as the musicians, within the first two weeks of class. Bea's strategy of grouping students into *families,* discussed in the preceding chapter, is yet another example of building support for the students while also making them responsible for one another within the classroom.

Sherone emphasizes the importance of developing interrelationships between the dancers when performing African dance forms. He sees these relationships as the basis of developing community within his classes. He contends that the notion of community is central to the dance forms, and he helps his students access this community when working in class and when performing onstage. He stated,

> When I teach it [African dance forms], I always tell them that it is about the community as you're moving. . . . I think that sometimes with modern dance, you might be dancing by yourself . . . or you're trying not to pay attention to the people around you. But in African dance you have to. It is what it is because of the community. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Sherone spoke excitedly about the energy he perceived when watching students perform his African Contemporary choreography. He described the "beauty" and "heightened energy" he perceived as a result of the students successfully connecting with one another: The dancers smiled at one another and uttered words of encouragement. Their movements and handclapping fit together as if they were "one onstage dancing" as opposed to presenting as individuals dancing alone. He said it was like a "celebration," and he was able to appreciate all the parts, such as the music, the dancing, the lighting, the voices, and the costuming happening together to make "one visual picture, a community" (S Price, pers. comm.).

Connecting to a Larger Community

Another goal that the participants discussed during their interviews involved helping college students learn to examine and negotiate their roles in a larger community outside of the classroom, such as society at large. Ava wants students to be able to assess their roles as individuals within this outside community. She aims to help students see her *African Dance Techniques* courses as an opportunity to "better understand who they are as individuals," "better understand their community," and "see themselves as being part of a community and not separate and *apart* from the community but actually integral [to it]" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.).

Stafford expressed a similar goal to Ava's intentions. Stafford used the word "connection" to describe how he wants students in his *African Diasporan Movement Practice* course to learn about themselves and how they relate to communities, including

classroom, campus, family, and "larger populations beyond that" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.). Stafford further discussed how the importance of community interaction "wasn't revealed to him until he matured"; however, he attributes Chuck Davis, his mentor and founder of the African American Dance Ensemble, as planting the seed for how he currently teaches community interaction in his classes. Stafford discussed this borrowed concept and practice,

> The whole idea of community extended heavily from Baba Chuck Davis because that's what he's about. And it made sense to me. It made sense to my body, and I as a person who danced with him for many, many years, got a chance to experience it myself as a member of the company. So I got a chance to know what it was like to explore and learn about who I was in connection with my immediate community and the company and then how that affected my relationship with my family. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

Stafford said he is still developing the best way to assess whether or not his students are learning how to connect in their in-class communities and then, hopefully, how they learn to bring these connections to their interactions within larger communities. Currently, he relies on conversations with students and observations of their actions and interactions with one another to determine the effectiveness of their class experiences. In the following discussion, Stafford offered more detail about what he hoped to observe and hear from his students:

> I want to experience and hear about them and see them behaving in ways that reflect agency, where they're taking ownership and minimal responsibility for who they are and what it is they are doing and what they would like to do with their lives. And I want to see evidence of it, and I want to see them interacting with their peers in . . . their community here, but hopefully once they leave Denison, their community outside of—I want to read about, I want to hear about, I want to know about them having some effect in their community here either through their actions or their interactions with people or their conversations with people, effect that's about growth and about taking risks and about forward

> motion and about development and about valuing the people that are here around them and the ideas that those people bring. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

In summary, for both Ava and Stafford, the practice of "connecting person to person and person to a wider community" proved to be very important within the teaching of their African dance techniques courses. As they did in their discussion of "community," the participants focused on interpersonal as well as intrapersonal aspects of connecting. Interestingly, to assess whether this sense of community is being created in the classroom, Stafford looks to how his students continue to develop community once they leave the classroom.

Making Connections

A few of the participants expressed that they wanted students to be inquisitive and find some way to relate to the class material in order to make it a personally meaningful endeavor in their lives. Ava asks students to consider, "What does this [class material] mean for you outside of you being in this classroom for two or three days a week? What significance does it have in your life, or does it?" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.) Ava expects them to find that out for themselves. She discusses that she does not demonstrate how learning African dance forms affects the students' lives. Instead, she adamantly says in her interview, "No!", that's the work for each student to discover for himself (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.).

Ava also pointed out that in these times when technology is literally at our fingertips, people frequently interact through devices, but she notes that the "human connection" is lacking in this type of interaction. She has observed people walking down

the street together or sitting together at lunch and not even talking to one another because they were preoccupied with a device. The fact that most of Ava's students come from a generation deeply immersed in technological devices leads her to feel that the human connection is important to emphasize in her classroom and that the dance forms she teaches require students be actively engaged in these personal connections through movement. She wonders if such active interaction is something that attracts students to her class:

> It demands of you to have this human connection. . . . So I'm wondering if part of that, in terms of why students are drawn to this space, may be that's what it's about, too. So I'm just thinking that it requires students to be and relate in a way that they're not accustomed to in any other space. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Whether or not the human connection is the reason students come to class, Ava makes it a priority for students to not only interact with one another in the class community but to also discover within themselves ways these interactions might be carried into the outside world. I will discuss in more detail Ava's emphasis on self-discovery as a goal later in this chapter.

Robin also wants students to extend their concept of community to include the global community. More specifically, she wants students to "walk away with a sense of the context in which Africans live and move and breathe" (R. Gee, pers. comm.). She wants them to "begin to bridge their communities here and think globally and connect to the sense of Africa as being something very real" (R. Gee, pers. comm.). Developing this sense of global citizenship is important to Robin, and she believes what she teaches in her African techniques classes is not only about dance but also about helping students "find

entry into a larger discourse on both dance and culture" (R. Gee, pers. comm.). She gave examples of how she was able to explore in her classes issues such as the recent Ebola outbreak and the kidnapping of young girls in Nigeria. Robin explained to her students,

> That's not some other thing happening in the world. Those things are happening in a world in which you live, and you're not disenfranchised. So connect to that, and that means connecting because you have a window into Africa. . . . We are all connected. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Although world issues such as these can be addressed in most classes at the university level, what is unique about addressing them in dance classes is that students have the opportunity to embody aspects of various African cultures through dance and music. This practice of active engagement in class, especially for students who may often be tied to a desk or technological device, creates a practice for how they might continue to be actively engaged with their communities in the future.

When I asked Robin how the students indicate to her that they are developing a sense of global citizenship, she said,

> They [students] don't always indicate that they're learning. And that's the very sort of grandiose goal that is achievable, but I can't say that I achieve this all the time. But I think having it as a goal for myself pedagogically is actually okay. How do they indicate that they have achieved any of those things? In a variety of ways of being engaged in the space. Engaging with me. Engaging with one another. Many of them don't achieve that. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

For "grandiose" goals such as this one, Robin further explained that she, similar to Stafford when discussing his goals presented in the previous section, is happy when

students finally show an active engagement with the world around them, even if it is semesters after they have taken the class. She remarked,

> The best experience for me, as an educator, is when someone comes back two semesters later and is in another course, and I see . . . they had that epiphany. . . . but it doesn't happen for everyone. It doesn't happen, I think, for most people. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Even though Robin believes that many of her students do not learn to operate as global citizens in the way that she hopes, it is important to her to use her *African Dance* courses to give them a start in that direction. Much like Chuck Davis's planting of the seed that later inspired Stafford's community-centered goals for student learning, Robin realizes she is sowing seeds that many students may not reap immediately.

Commitment

When describing expectations the participants had for their students, several of them expected to see some form of commitment to learning and the practice of learning being developed. Bea said she wants her students to learn (because they are college students) that they are in class "for a purpose." She tells them, "You must keep your focus" in order to be and stay committed to an education (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). She further discusses how specific games, (see Chapter V, p. 111) are practiced to develop focus in her Ghanaian culture. It is these games that Bea presents to her students to help them create a "practice of focus," something she hopes will be transferred to their study practices.

Sherone talked about the discipline that it takes for students to learn African dance forms and to be able to perform them at a level of mastery he expects for stage

performance. Many of the students in his *African Dance* course have little prior experience with African dance forms. With that in mind, he said, "I want them to transcend while they're taking class. I want them to *not* be themselves" (S. Price, pers. comm.). In this sense, he was referring to his desire for students to let go of inhibitions and preconceived notions of what the movements should look or feel like; instead, Sherone wants them to be committed fully to the dance forms and give themselves over to the experience of performing the dances.

One example Sherone shared, in which he sensed a commitment to dancing and a "giving over" of one's self to the dance form, concerned an experience he had while collaborating with a colleague who taught history. The history professor talked to the dance students about African masks and had them create their own masks while dancing in movement led by Sherone. Sherone further discussed how the wearing of masks provided the students with a way to move with less inhibition and self-consciousness. Reflecting on the history professor's discussion of mask-wearing, Sherone stated,

> I think for him, it's like you don't have to be the person that you are already when you put your mask on. So when you put your mask on, then you allow yourself to do other things that you normally wouldn't do. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Sherone mentioned the anecdote of the mask lesson because it reminded him of the way students he taught at a different university judged themselves in class. Looking in the mirror, they would say things like "What am I doing?", "Oh, I look so silly!", or "I look so stupid!" (S. Price, pers. comm.). To combat this sense of self questioning, Sherone tells students when they enter class, "leave yourself at the door" in hopes they

will refrain from judging themselves and commit to learning something new in order to increase their performance options (S. Price, pers. comm.).

Furthermore, Sherone expects students to be physically committed to the movement. He admitted to "push[ing] them to utilize the full body" (S. Price, pers. comm.). Sherone talked about a time that he stopped the class when they were progressing across the floor because they were not giving the fullness of energy he expected to the movements, the energy that the dance form required. He told them, "Give me some legs. Give me some arms. Give me some body. Give me some bounce. Give me something!" (S. Price, pers. comm.). He was pleading with them to commit to the movement by using their full range of motion and effort to enliven the dancing.

Others articulated a similar idea yet expressed it differently. Ava used the phrase "be present" when expressing her desire for students to fully commit to the class experience and not focus on anything except what is taking place at the moment. Similarly, Robin used the phrases "be in the body" or "let your body be present" when she wanted students to focus on learning a technique different from what was familiar to them. For example, Robin at times tells her students, "I'm not taking questions. I want you to be in your body. . . . Let your body compose the questions, and stop thinking [she touched her temple] so much" and "We're not in ballet. I can understand your ballet body, but let's imagine that we have a different hat on. So, you can understand this [African dance technique] if you allow your body to be present in it" (R. Gee, pers. comm.). Both Robin and Ava speak about presence as being in your body and then connecting this bodily presence with an act of commitment to learning something new.

Without this commitment, both feel the students will have a difficult time trying to learn a new dance form.

Ava further summed up the notions of community, connection, and commitment when she used the phrase "active participation." She explained,

> I spend a lot of time when I'm in class asking them to be aware of their own presence in the classroom and asking them to understand that their participation in this class, each and every time they come into the class, (right now I'm not just talking about when we're in lectures and the exchange of ideas that we have), is about exchanging ideas. We're exchanging ideas when we're in the studio and we're dancing to the drums and understanding that every time they come into that space they create.
>
> Whatever it is that happens it's because you're creating it. And you're creating it at that time, in that moment because you can't go back to your dorm room and think about or read about what it is that you just did. You just created there in that space and time, and every single body that's in that space, at that time is contributing to in some way, or taking away, in some way of what transpires then. So it's an active participation that you have. Intellectually it's an active participation that you have because we know within that space there are lots of things that are firing all at one time that you have to attune yourself to. . . .You have to be present. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

To develop this active participation, Ava adapted an opening ritual (see Chapter V, p. 114-115) that she requires her class to perform. The practice encourages students to bring their focus to the present, to be in the moment. Ava explains,

> In all the classes that I teach now, we have a formal opening to start the class off, and that formal opening could be viewed as a meditation. . . . I consider it to be an opening of the space. It's really about mentally being present in addition to physically being present.
>
> So it's just a way to acknowledge a difference between where you were and what you were doing prior to the start of the class, and then being there in that moment. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

The ritual acts as a performance reminder for students to commit their thoughts and actions to full participation in the class at hand.

To summarize, whether discussing the importance of students bringing focused attention to their educations, their participation in class, or their dance practice when studying African dance techniques, the participants saw value in encouraging students to hone their ability to commit to their dance practice. The instructors discussed how they were able to make connections in their *African Dance* courses to help students learn this important life skill of commitment.

Self-Discovery: A Time for Students to Learn More about Themselves

Bea's primary goal for her class is to help students learn about Ghanaian culture, but she also wants them to learn about their own cultures by comparing ideas found in the diverse readings about Ghana to ideas developed within their own personal communities. She makes this goal apparent to the students by including in each of her written assignments an element of self-reflection. Bea explained,

> Each time I tell them to talk about their culture when they read an assignment and they're writing their paper, I always make sure there is something about talking about their culture in relation to what they learned. So if they read about maybe a country in East Africa, I'll say, "Ok. Talk about their [East African] culture and compare it to your culture." (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

Bea continued,

> So at the end of the class, they always say, "I thought I was going to learn only about other cultures, but I ended up learning more about my own culture" because it made them dig deep into their own culture. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

For Ava, the goal of students using African dance forms to help with self-discovery is not *always* at the forefront for her when teaching, but it is important to her. She admitted,

> Like this week all I could say is what I wanted them to do was to move their arms in the way that I wanted them to move, to do the dance the way that I say. That's what I wanted them to do this week, but big picture-wise, it's really, really about discovery. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

In her discussion of this goal for self-discovery, Ava shared that the reason she set this learning objective for her students is due to how she learned a lot about herself through performing African dance forms. She talked about how she thinks students can use the experiences in her classes to develop and present their best selves in conjunction with them learning how to be global citizens. She also hopes that her classes help college students to find direction in their lives. Not only has the dancing done that for her personally, but also, students have returned after taking her class to tell her the similar effects her class had on their lives. Ava continues to describe how this process of self-discovery is not necessarily a comfortable or easy journey for students. In the following, she discusses her students' apprehension about taking the class and how she attempts to change this apprehension into a moment of discovery:

> So in terms of what I give to them, I hope if nothing else that I start to raise questions or help them raise questions in their own minds about the direction of their lives, where they see themselves. Because some walk into the class, and I don't even know what got them in there, but for them to even come into there—And this has been something that they've expressed. Students have expressed that even for them to come into the space, it's almost like they had this kind of leap of faith, and it was like, "I'm just gonna do it." So for me that was about, okay, so you're trying to discover and you're trying to discover something else about yourself. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Ava, acknowledging that she was also speaking to what *she* gets from the experience of African dance forms, continued with questions that she hopes to raise for her students such as "Who am I?", "Where am I going?", "What kinds of relationships can I create?", and "What kind of positive impact, or *is* there a positive impact I can have?" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.). She went on to say,

> [African dance forms] can be an incredible tool for discovering that space or making that discovery, because I think that's what I've been able to get from it. It's allowed me to get to that representation of myself that I really feel has great value. It allows me to present my best self. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

In order to assess this self-discovery goal, Ava uses reflection papers written by the students, but she says she can tell best by what students do. However, she finds the evidence that self-discovery actually took place often comes long after the students have taken her classes. Ava gave an example of communication she had with a student who is now a dance professional and took classes with her 15 years ago. In the communication, the student discusses how she still remained friends with many of the students in the original class. However, the student continues to say that the impact went further,

> . . . in terms of having a certain level of confidence to pursue just a subject she never thought that she would be – I don't know if she put it like "intellectually capable." Not so much that she was intellectually capable, but how it helped develop her confidence in terms of even pursuing a particular area. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

After receiving the student's letter, Ava continues to acknowledge that,

> . . . sometimes it's how I know whether or not that [learning] is happening may be from them again later in life reflecting back on the space and just the ability to reflect. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

This process of reflection is something Ava emphasizes in all of her classes. Therefore, in addition to the overarching goal of discovering who they are and what they want out of life, Ava wants her students to be self-reflective in the classroom. She summarizes,

> One of the things they're required to do is think about the process of learning material. How is it that you go about learning the material in the class? What is it that makes sense to you? What is it that doesn't? What are the questions that you ask? One of my pet peeves is whenever students say, "Well, can you do that again?" And I'm like "Yeah, I can do it 1,000 times. But what's your question?" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Encouraging her students to reflect on their own learning process is only one way Ava is able to help her students feel self-empowered. Another is emboldening them, especially the female students, to physically and symbolically "claim space." She reasons,

> It's predominantly women in the class, and it's about women claiming space, and the need and the desire for them to own that and be okay with it and not continue to make themselves small and apologize. So for me this is an incredible venue. African dance forms is an incredible venue for women and *these* young women to claim that space, totally claim it. Claim it physically clearly, but even start to make that connection with that being an intellectual claim as well. Claim the space! Go big or go home. Go big! (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Ava goes on to say that "claiming space" is also about helping her students to value their voices. She admitted that she had to learn the same lesson, and that African dance forms helped her to discover her own voice, which is why she "pushes to create that kind of an environment" for her students (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.).

This sense of "claiming space" as the pure physicality of moving through the dance forms underlies all of the research participants' goals for their classes. Stafford

sums up their ideas and goals for self-discovery when asked: What is it you want students in your *African Diasporan* class to learn? He responded,

> I want them to learn about themselves. I think one of the best things that dance can teach or moving can teach you is it can teach you about yourself. I don't know if people in the general population necessarily know that or come in the door thinking that at all, but it's something I want them to learn. I want them to learn about themselves, and it could be about themselves as movers or it could be not related to movement at all. In fact, I don't stipulate that it has to be one or the other . . . As a matter of fact, I will go as far as saying I hope it teaches them something about themselves that is not necessarily about moving but maybe comes through the experience of moving. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

However, also important for all the participants is the knowledge that this movement, this physicality, exists and lives within a culture. Therefore, knowledge of the culture is the next important topic addressed by the research participants.

Knowledge and Assessing Knowledge as Embodied Learning

In Chapter V, discussions regarding what the participants teach and how they teach it were included. Here, I will share the participants' discussion about what they want their students to know. Among the knowledge the participants aim for their students to gain is information about African/African Diaspora cultures and dance forms as well as the cultures' movement and performance skills. Stafford confirms this notion by summarizing that he wants his students to learn "African Diasporan dance cultural information, kinesthetic [and] philosophical" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.). He added,

> For me, that means the information that comes from the actual culture, be it directly from Africa or be it a Diasporan offspring culture. That includes the movement and why the movement is done or what the movement means. (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

Bea, describing a similar objective, said she mainly wants the students to appreciate diverse African cultures while learning about Ghanaian culture in particular. Unlike when she teaches at the University at Ghana at Legon, when she teaches movement to college students in the United States, she is not teaching them so they will be performers, and that is why she is "not too keen about how well they dance" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). She said, "I'm teaching them movements so they can learn about my culture. So that is the priority" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). Bea confirmed that teaching her culture has always been her objective when teaching in American universities. She explained that she believes American students "have the opportunity to learn about African dance forms anywhere," such as recreation centers or various dance studios. However, because she is an African native and danced and studied dance in the villages and schools there, she has more experiences to bring to bear than non-natives who teach African dance in the States. In essence, Bea wants her students to benefit from her firsthand knowledge of Ghanaian dance forms and other cultural practices.

One way Bea assesses the knowledge of her students is by giving them the following written assignment:

> For my final assignment I make it open, and I say "Share your experience in the class with the reader who knows nothing about this class. That person is not a part of us. The person is on a different continent altogether. Now you have been in the class for 16 weeks. Share what you learned with that person . . . from the readings, from your assignments, from the dancing, from the singing, from everything that happened in the class." (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

The assignment enables Bea to assess what students have learned about Ghanaian dance and culture. Furthermore, she is able to determine if the students connect their knowledge

of Ghana with experiences from their own cultures and the cultures of others in the class, a process she emphasizes throughout the class.

Ava described in more detail what she expected her students to learn about the African dance forms they study in her class. She explained,

> Clearly there's the body of knowledge that I want students to walk out of the classroom with. If we're working on five different dance forms, then you need to know what those five dance forms are. You need to be able to recognize the rhythm that goes along with them, the people who do the dance form, on what occasion is it danced. Who dances it? Is it gender specific or whatever? So there's that kind of basic body of knowledge that I expect them to learn, which clearly is about an intellectual pursuit and mastery . . . (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Ava continued by stating that there is "a different intellectual pursuit as well . . . how do you integrate this knowledge?" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.). Ava indicated that, although she wants her students to know information about each dance's context, she does not want her students to stop there. She wants them to be able to determine how that knowledge and physical practice relates to how they move through their own lives. When describing how the students indicate that they are integrating the knowledge and going through the discovery she is hoping for, Ava said,

> I think it's my responsibility to be a very keen observer as well in this process and watch them, and I feel personally if they look the same way that they did at the start of the semester, if they look the same way they did at the end of the semester then I didn't do my job. And fortunately my experience has been such that . . . I can tell from observing them whether or not they've covered any space. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Therefore, Ava video records her students to help her assess observable changes. As mentioned before, she also assigns reflection papers, but she considers them support for her physical observations.

The participants also indicated that they want their students to know that African dance forms are varied and have distinct characteristics and qualities. Ava said she wants her students "to be able to speak intelligently" about the dance forms they study in class and "to be able to notice the difference aesthetically . . . because all of the dance forms clearly are not the same" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.). Bea said she teaches a few different dance forms in her class to help dispel the myth among many of her students that African dance forms are all high energy with expansive movements. As mentioned in Chapter V, p. 108, Bea teaches a variety of dance styles from West African cultures in addition to forms from Ghana. However, when Bea assesses movement skills, she assesses them on only two of the Ghanaian dance forms that she teaches, "one for midterm and one for finals" (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). Since she teaches several novice dance students in her *Dance and Globalization* course, she customizes grading so that each student is graded according to his or her individual progress.

There were several movement/performance skills that Ava and Sherone mentioned throughout their interviews that seemed like knowledge they deem important for their students to learn. For example, Ava posed the following questions directed to her students regarding what she wants them to know as performers:

> What is it that allows a dancer to move from just the mechanics of doing a step to absolutely embodying the energy of the movement, and then how does that read as an observer? What is it that you want the observer to see? Where do you want the eye to be directed? Are you even conscious of that? (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

Ava also mentioned that she facilitates student learning about how to approach movement, how to transition in and out of movement, how to know where the body is in

space, and how to "move from just the mechanics of doing a step to absolutely embodying the energy of the movement" (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.). All of these skills represent knowledge that Ava wants her students to gain as a student in her *African Techniques* classes.

Sherone wants his students to understand what he calls the "marriage between music and dance," and says to his students, "When people see us dancing they should hear music in our bodies" (S. Price, pers. comm.). During a conversation, a student revealed to Sherone that he felt he had finally embodied this music and dance relationship in class. Sherone recapped the conversation:

> Student: "I was in a class the other day and I was just watching everyone and somehow or another I never thought about letting the music go into me [gestured with hand towards his body and downwards].". . .
>
> Sherone: "What do you mean by that?"
>
> Student: "I never let the music get into me. I'd always looked at it from the distance like this [held the back of his hand very close to his face, almost blocking his eyes] and just said 'Ok. This is what I *see*.' But I didn't let the music absorb into me and then let that come out of me." [did a hand sweeping gesture, wiping downward and then away from the body]
>
> Sherone: I was like, "Yeah. That's what should happen. That's what should happen." (S. Price, pers. comm.)

This conversation prompted by Sherone provided an indirect assessment of how this student was learning and then embodying the knowledge gained in the class.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Sherone also wants his students to be able to perform certain movements with energy appropriate for the dance forms they are learning. He wants them to be able to discern the type of energy required for movements

within different African dance forms, and he is looking for students to attain a certain level of skill mastery. Similar to Sherone, Robin also states that technique is the focus for the class, even though she further emphasizes the importance of students beginning to learn how to connect to cultures outside of their own as a result of embodying African dance techniques.

Robin described a much more formal tool for evaluating the students' progress with technique. She uses what she calls an "African Dance Feedback Sheet" which mirrors her learning outcomes and learning goals (R. Gee, pers. comm.). At midterm she video records and then assesses "a couple of dances" by recording her evaluation on the feedback sheet. She then holds a mandatory group conference to discuss student progress in consultation with her feedback sheet. At the end of the semester, she repeats the assessment process; however, instead of group conferencing she holds optional individual conferences to give students feedback.

Complexities: Factors That Make Teaching African Dance Forms Challenging

With goals such as teaching students about African cultures through dance, teaching experienced and novice dancers in the same African dance techniques class, facilitating self-discovery via African dance forms, and then developing new and effective ways for assessing these overarching goals, these instructors face several challenges both in the classroom and within the higher education academy at large.

The challenge of determining how to assess lofty or "grandiose" goals is certainly a major hurdle for all of the participants. Stafford summarizes the difficulties faced when students learn at different paces throughout the class: "Sometimes, you know, it's just not

there because students are younger and don't have as much experience" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.). However, on the other hand he notes,

> But then you have a group of students or you have a student, and they totally defy that and you see lots of depth. And you think, "Ok." Either I read it or I see it in their actions or we have a conversation about it, and I think, "Ok. How can I capture this with all of my students across all of my classes?" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.)

In the preceding quote, Stafford is concerned with how one meets the basic needs of the class goals while also challenging those ready to move on to what he considers more "lofty" goals.

Robin also recognizes that some of the goals she has in mind are not goals that are delineated on her syllabus; nevertheless, she considers it important to help college students to work towards these goals. Referring to her discussion of what she wants students to learn, Robin notes,

> Some of these things are, although achievable, goals that I set that I'm constantly working toward. . . . It's sort of a path or journey for me as an educator, so even though I'm not achieving them every semester with every student every day, it doesn't mean that they're not attainable, so I'm going to keep them in my mind. They may not be on my student learning goals or outcomes, but they are part of my own prioritization of the content in the space. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Therefore, for Robin, reconciling how to create learning outcomes outlined on the course syllabus for an African techniques class that can be achieved during the class with the continual development of learning outcomes that she actually seems to value most, but which may or may not be achieved during the actual timeframe of the class, proves to be tricky. In the following sections, the research participants share several other challenging

aspects of their teaching practice they felt were integral to learning within their classrooms but were also difficult to assess in any definitive manner.

Movement Skills: "I Didn't Do That at All. . . . So What Are You *Doing?"*

Even though most of the participants communicated to me that learning the actual dance steps was not the most important goal they set for students in their African dance techniques classes, as dance instructors they do aim to help students master the dance material they teach. As Stafford previously indicated, sometimes he is pleasantly surprised by a student's performance, but at other times he and the other participants faced the challenge of teaching students when they had trouble "getting it" as Robin stated. Whether it is students "stomping the floor" instead of rebounding like a basketball as Sherone put it (S. Price, pers. comm.), or misinterpreting the movement and "flapping their wings" instead of moving their torso and shoulders as Bea demonstrated (B. Ayi, pers. comm.), teaching movement and then assessing that teaching's success can be challenging.

Student Resistance: "How is This Going to Help Me?"

Some of the challenges that the participants face stem from a form of resistance from the students. Bea talked about the need to devise a strategy for getting students who were less experienced involved in class so they did not feel so "out of place" in the studio (B. Ayi, pers. comm.). Sherone mentioned that he has to address students' apprehensions about freely moving their hips because it carries cultural or social stigma for some. According to Robin, she deals with students who do not always embrace their classes in

African dance techniques the way they embrace their other dance technique classes. She said,

> I just notice that here in the South. I don't know. I'm a northerner. Maybe I'm a regionalist, but I feel like kids do this [puts hands up like a "back-off" gesture] a lot with African. They're not quite sure how to approach it. They don't feel like they have a way in. You know? An "I'm not going to perform this" or "how is this going to help me?" kind of thing. So it's my job to help them. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

Robin continues to discuss how she deals with this student resistance by showing students how learning one form of dance can translate to learning another form. She explains,

> That's the sort of thing that I articulate all the time. Like, if you can get your body in this, then when you're on the floor doing release [dance technique] you're going to be able to make connections there. But you've got to figure out how to get in your body here, and this is informative. . . . And I have to say for the most part they get it, but they just don't have the anticipation that they are going to do it well. (R. Gee, pers. comm.)

However, Robin admits that some of the students take the attitude that they will do just enough to get through the course. She thinks they say to themselves, "Yeah, it's going to help me, but I'm never going to be an African dancer" (R. Gee, pers. comm.).

Sherone struggles with a similar student attitude to the one described by Robin. It seems to baffle him that many of his students do not use the resources that they have to help them when they take his *African Dance* course. He said,

> They won't look at YouTube. That's the craziest thing to me that can be! They will look at YouTube for everything else except when they're studying something [like African dance forms]. I would have to send them a video, and say look at this, and then try to test them on it to make sure they look at it. If I don't do that, they won't even go there to look at it. They won't go there to even connect with it. They won't learn from it. I don't understand it. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Sherone's frustration was clearly communicated in our conversation, and it seemed to be fueled by the assumption that his students do not always value their study of African dance forms as much as he would like and even expects from university students.

The Academy: "It's a Daily Challenge"

I am certain that university professors across the country in most fields of study would agree that teaching in higher education comes with many rewards, but also many challenges. One challenging issue that my participants raised was not specific to teaching African dance forms but did certainly affect their teaching practice. That issue was the heavy workload and demands placed on tenure track professors. Several of the participants commented that they would love to have more time to devote to developing their courses. Robin said, she is "really interested in growing pedagogically," but it is difficult because "a real problem with the academy is that there's this expectation of excellence in our teaching that we're not really given the time and space to develop" (R. Gee, pers. comm.).

For Sherone, his workload is specific to the fact that he teaches African dance techniques because he became the go-to person for all things African when he was hired at his university. He said,

> When I first got there, I did so much stuff. I never said, "no" because I really wanted people to know who I am, and also to understand what I do and [that] it's about community. I've cut some of those things back now, but I had to because it was like they would ask me for everything! (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Still now, he struggles to balance his workload and other obligations in order to find time to become the "complete artist" that he strives to be both within and outside of academia (S. Price, pers. comm.).

Another major concern addressed by my participants was a perceived devaluing of the study of African and African diaspora dance forms in higher education. Stafford noted that in many programs dance is relegated to extracurricular activity and not considered a main course of study. He partially attributed this marginalized placement to the fact that dance is "relatively new to the academy" compared to "theater and social sciences and other ways of knowing" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.). Thus, he thinks "African dance," a form often new to academically approved dance curricula emerging in the twentieth century, is "still working for respect in higher education" (S. Berry, Jr., pers. comm.). Ava's comment echoes that idea:

> To be offering a major in dance at Duke University is not a small feat. It's one of the top research institutions in the country, and so our job has been to help our prospective students, and not just prospective students [but] the population of Duke itself, to see and recognize this as a field of research, as a tool that can be used for research. (A. Vinesett, pers. comm.)

The participants seem to sense they are faced with a double challenge: They must work within a dance discipline that is often not highly respected as being rigorous within academic environments, and then further struggle to create a new curricular option of African dance forms often relegated to the margins of the dance curriculum. Therefore, a daily challenge my participants and other instructors of African dance forms at American universities face is communicating to the higher education administration the value in the study of African and African diaspora dance forms for college students. One of the

participants alluded to the idea that, although it is being taught at the university and it appears that the institution sees it as valuable, a hint of lip service is detected since the African dance forms are not being treated as distinct and complex forms having requirements different from other Western dance forms taught as complex and multi-leveled dance techniques. For example, musical accompaniment and other needs for creating context for classes in African forms are quite different from needs for ballet, modern, or jazz dance. Gaining access to these necessary resources and developing rationales for why these resources are important in terms of interdisciplinary learning can be difficult if the form itself is not accepted as important within the dance curriculum.

Lastly, at the schools where multiple levels of African techniques classes are offered and/or required, students are able to extend their study of the dance forms, developing their performance skills and expanding their knowledge of the dance forms. Since only one level of the *African Dance* course is offered at his university, Sherone does not have much opportunity to develop the students' African techniques skills to the extent that he would like. Sherone recognizes that at his university located in Boone, NC, the students do not have much exposure to African dance forms through access to performances or workshops with professional companies specializing in African dance forms. He wants to increase the university community's exposure to African dance forms, but he is limited by the curricular choices of the dance program to offer only one African techniques class. Sherone explained,

> I want them to see it [African dance styles performed] on a different magnitude compared to what my class can offer. Because what my class can offer is only

> what my class can actually do. But they [the university community] should be able to see where people are *really* performing it. (S. Price, pers. comm.)

Further, Sherone discusses how he would like to choreograph more African pieces for dance concerts at the university, but because he does not have enough students who have taken his class and/or who have mastered the techniques enough to support a full, choreographed dance, he has only presented one work to date. It is a dilemma that can only be addressed when the potential of the study of African dance forms for students in American universities is recognized.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared the African dance techniques instructors' emergent discussion of goals for student learning. In doing so, the participants described their classes as models, which prepare students for their future lives within differing communities. Among the instructors' goals were aims for students to be active participants in the classroom/studio, therefore learning to become active participants as global citizens in the world. To these research participants, the act of learning to make connections with others in the classroom community increases the ability for students to make future connections with others in larger communities beyond the classroom. The instructors further discussed this learning as taking place when students developed a cultural knowledge of places beyond their classroom and connected this knowledge to aspects of their own culture, when students developed a sense of self as they connected their moving bodies to the music and to others moving with them, and when students

were able to connect their new self-discoveries to new possibilities for moving outside their comfort zones.

Throughout this chapter, I further addressed issues raised repeatedly by the instructors regarding the assessment of goals that are not easily quantified or goals for which learning is evident in the long term versus in the time span of a single semester. As noted in the presentation of data in Chapter IV (see p. 76), over half of the dance programs researched on the Internet offered only one level of African techniques, making it even harder for instructors to see and therefore assess the growth students make towards the goal of learning to be active community participants and globally-minded citizens. Clearly, challenges to the development of curriculum in African dance techniques can be lessened when dance administration, faculty, and students are able to sense the value in the unique goals in this dance form and acknowledge the importance of engaging with the material over the course of several semesters. With new curricular developments comes the further challenge of *how* to assess growth; however, by beginning to offer and require multiple levels of the African dance courses, the students will have a better chance of internalizing and then demonstrating improvements that can be assessed. The following chapter offers further insights into the issues raised by the research participants and posits questions and possibilities for future research into the importance of offering African dance forms within dance curricula.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The dance educators, administrators, and students who convened to pen the vision document, "DANCE 2050: What is the Future of Dance in Higher Education?," envisioned a future when a term like "global dance" will be purposeless because it would refer to *all* dance forms (NDEO 2015). Before reaching that place in the future, however, "global dance" forms have to be placed on the same playing field as dance forms that are currently central to most dance degree programs in higher education. In order to create this leveled space, dance programs at colleges and universities across the United States must first fully integrate study of world dance forms into their curricula. Dance study centered primarily on "European-derived movement vocabularies" (Amin 2016) such as ballet and modern perpetuate the fallacy that all other dance forms are not as worthy of in-depth study. Without a shift in the dance academia paradigm, the assumption of many will remain that little of value can be learned from dance forms derived from cultures outside of the mainstream in America. Considering the diversity of the United States population and how globally connected societies have become, world dance study will help students acknowledge cultural similarities and differences between themselves and others in society, thus helping them learn to navigate the inevitably multicultural spaces in which they will work and reside.

Integration of African dance study, in particular, benefits American students in ways that surpass the acquisition of "fun" polyrhythmic movement vocabulary. Among

other beneficial reasons to be discussed in the following sections, in-depth study of African dance forms supports the understanding of how African aesthetics permeated American culture, including American dance performance (Gottschild 1996). Therefore, the study of African-based dance forms opens new insights into the cultural heritage and history of the United States, insights often overlooked in past and current higher education curricula.

The experienced instructors I interviewed for this dissertation study aimed to prepare students to engage in a multicultured, polylingual, and vastly connected global community through the study of African dance forms. As suggested by African dance educators discussed in Chapter III of this dissertation, various African movement forms and the cultural contexts surrounding the forms, such as music making, games, folklore, and traditional attire, constituted the main content for their classes in addition to the acquisition of specific dance "steps." However, interestingly, even though the participants described their experience teaching classes in African dance techniques and the goals they set for students, they did not elaborate on how proficient they wanted the students to become in the dance techniques, the learning of the dances. Instead, the participants focused much of their conversations on how they address the social and communal aspects of African dance forms within their classes.

With these shared insights concerning the balance between the learning of dance steps and the learning of cultural contexts surrounding the steps, I therefore concluded that for these instructors, learning the steps and embodying the African dance techniques served three functions: 1) to facilitate learning of self, 2) to connect to cultures outside their own,

and 3) to encourage communal aptitude.[33] The participants further emphasized the importance for students to develop skills of self-reflection and self-evaluation grounding them to then connect to others and become contributing agents in the often rapidly changing communities they will face beyond the university setting. These objectives when teaching African dance forms were emphasized by the participants as important in order for students to learn more about themselves in order to then sense how they might navigate and adapt to communities in which they are both familiar and unfamiliar.

In my experience teaching African dance forms, I also note that the more students engage with African dance techniques and the context of the cultures from which the forms emerged, the more the students are able to compare and contrast their own daily practices and beliefs to those they are learning and experiencing in class. This exchange demonstrates the power of what the study of world dance in general, and African dance forms more specifically, might do for dance students in higher education: Students make connections to other cultures through the kinesthetic stimuli of dance; they move the culture and in so doing, begin to sense the culture within themselves. This type of embodied and cultural learning is often neglected in higher education classrooms.

Further, the dissertation participants not only emphasize how the study of African dance forms can create an environment for self-reflection and a deeper understanding of how African aesthetics are thoroughly interwoven within American culture, but also how

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30. By *communal aptitude*, I am referring to an ability to work with others in a group. In 1927, Moss and Hunt used a similar definition, "ability to get along with others," quoted in "Influence of Intellectual Well-being on Communal Aptitude of Adolescents" by Manpreet Kaur (2014, 68).

the study of African dance techniques helps students learn to connect to cultures other than their own, which is becoming increasingly important given the growing multicultured make-up of the United States today. Students need to graduate college with the advanced sensibility of relating to people of cultural backgrounds different from their own: American students need to learn how to move with others as others are now learning how to move with them. This ability to move and adapt to the unfamiliar is something the twenty-first century students will need in their futures in order to become fully functioning global citizens.

The specific techniques the experienced instructors in this research study employed to foster communal aptitude in their students included many African dance elements such as call and response, use of circular formation for various activities, and the sharing of food. Such practices were noted by the participants as encouraging students to engage with one another in an inclusive, non-threatening, non-competitive manner. This sense of dance as something that happens between people rather than as an individual acquisition of specific skills models behaviors the instructors hope students will continue when moving into communities outside of the classroom.

The Inclusions of Diverse Dance Forms in American Higher Education

The dance programs included in this study were situated in diverse settings within the United States. The demographics of each university's student population along with the geographic locations, school type, and historical backgrounds were varied. What was common among the dance programs included in this study was that they each offer at least one dance technique course in African dance forms. Although the number of course levels

offered and degree requirements varied among the schools, what remained highly significant is the existence of African dance courses at these universities. Also important is the fact that African dance courses are often currently taught by tenure-track faculty at nearly half of the schools in this study, which suggests high probability for the courses to remain in their departments' curricula in the future. This future possibility also portends the further development of these courses in the future. Therefore, this dissertation study provides a way for other dance programs to begin thinking about how the teaching of diverse dance forms might be incorporated into their individual curricula in the future. Furthermore, as programs, specifically those in African dance forms, do become more interwoven within dance higher education, the insights shared by the dissertation research participants will help dance faculty rethink how dance can be integrated throughout the academic landscapes of their schools.

Insights for Implementing African Dance Forms

When considering the dissertation participants' descriptions of their current teaching practices and aligning these practices with those described in the literature concerning the teaching of world dance forms within and outside universities, clearly the participants employ both Western teaching methods for classroom/studio settings and traditional African dance pedagogical methods used in teaching outside higher education classrooms/studios. As has been noted, research participant Bea is a native of Ghana, West Africa and is currently teaching within an American university dance department. She grew up in the villages of Ghana where she learned traditional dance forms in both her village and later in differing schools and universities within Ghana and the United

States. In the following, Bea describes the way she and other children learned "music-making and dance" by imitating adults when in her childhood Ghanaian village:

> The kids usually are not the center of attraction. They are always dancing outside the periphery of the circle. They would dare not go in unless an adult pulls them in. So whilst they are out there, they may be watching the adults, and then when they are on their own, and they are playing their games and stuff, they may stop once in a while and do what they saw the adults do. "Oh, I saw them do that—" And they will take their own kind of drums. Any kind of tin. Be that if it's a Milo tin, if it's whatever tin—playing their drums. And they will dance, you know, imitating the adults as they do that. (B. Ayi, pers. comm.)

Bea described the way children in her village commonly learned by watching the adults and then imitating what they saw. For Bea, therefore, imitation and the playing with imitated movement were important to how her culture was and continues to be passed on from one generation to the next.

Research participants Robin and Ava also discussed their experiences with being *taught* African dance forms by teacher demonstration and learning by imitating or reproducing the movements of their teachers. Both Robin and Ava admitted finding imitation to be an appropriate pedagogical practice for African dance in many cases, even though they further noted that emphasis on reproducing an instructor's movement was a practice often frowned upon in contemporary Western pedagogical practice. However, by incorporating African traditional elements into the teaching of the steps, to include the use of live accompaniment, songs, games, dobale (ritualized salutation), call and response, repetition, traditional costuming, the use of circles, and dancing outdoors, the instructors further noted how these elements opened new ways for the American student to actively recreate the imitated movement within the new and imagined landscapes of

the unfamiliar culture being introduced. Their imaginations were stirred through this kind of imitation.

Delving more deeply into how imitating the movement done by the teacher might be reconsidered within dance pedagogical practice as a means for passing on and experiencing diverse values and histories could be a very interesting field of study in the future. The questions of when imitation might be important and how one might approach teaching through imitation could prompt future research discussions about how dance is taught in relationship to what is being taught within specific cultural contexts. For example, even though each of the dissertation research participants often employ the demonstration-reproduction model when teaching African techniques courses, they each also supplement that "traditional" teaching practice with discussions of background information to help contextualize the dance forms being imitated.[34] Trying to explore how to incorporate Western higher education lecture and discussion formats within cultural practices of learning a dance form could be an important research path emerging from the teaching of African dance forms within American universities.

Beyond the issue of how imitation of movement plays an important role in embodying African cultural values when practiced within the full context of the dance form being studied, were the issues faced when bringing those dance forms into

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34. "Traditional," here, refers to the pedagogy of Africans in non-academic settings, but the demonstration-reproduction model for teaching has also become a "traditional" practice for teaching dance in Western academic settings. Also, for an analysis of the demonstration-reproduction model for teaching dance technique, see "'How Seeing Helps Doing, and Doing Allows to See More': The Process of Imitation in the Dance Class" by Harbonnier-Topin and Barbier (2012).

American higher education settings. Since the instructors interviewed are all teaching within the context of university dance programs in the United States, they must meet Western curricular standards for teaching dance courses required by the university and dance education accrediting organizations. For example, in Chapter V, several participants explained their warm-ups were designed to energize and prepare the body for movement but also to introduce the lesson for the day, a Western standard for beginning classes in most academic fields. The warm-ups, however, were often structured to focus on cultural concepts and theory, not only the production of the dance's steps, further meeting standards for developing skills for critical thinking as well as technical proficiency. The practice of critical thinking is something deemed fundamental in most university learning outcomes and, therefore, needed to be clearly addressed within the pedagogy of each of the research participants.

Ava discussed at length her role in "facilitating" student learning. She wanted to leave students room to think for themselves rather than attempt only to imitate her actions. Ava works to help students think critically about their movement performance and learning process. East African dance instructor Alfdaniels Mabingo (2014), studying in the graduate dance education program at New York University, further shared how he emphasized the values of his Western dance education while teaching dances from his native home of Uganda. In his article, he provides examples of assignments/assessments employed to help students critically think about the movements learned within the context of the culture being introduced. These examples include: requiring students to journal about their studio learning experiences, writing papers based on the "comparison

between the students' class experience and their social, cultural, and artistic background and experiences outside the class," and "rearrang[ing] all the dances that they learned throughout the semester into a group choreography" (27). These practices shared by Mabingo assured students were asked to not only imitate the steps, but to also think about how the steps might be critically considered in differing familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

Therefore, Mabingo and the dissertation research participants are creating a foundation for how dance instructors of cultural dance forms can develop pedagogical practices that meet the needs of the dance studied while also addressing the common body of knowledge and skills standards outlined by the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD) for professional baccalaureate degrees in dance.[35] Hopefully, this dissertation provides a format for how to acknowledge the emerging insights of African dance instructors as they continue to create learning outcomes that move between the needs of the culture being introduced and the requirements of the university in terms of strategies, practices, assessments, and learning outcomes needed for accreditation. However, there were some aspects of teaching African dance forms that all research participants agreed could not be lost within the needs of Western academia.

What Cannot Be Lost within an African Dance Course

Since the dissertation research participants clearly stressed one aspect of their teaching that was fundamental, I too want to conclude by restating this aspect. The

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35. The four main areas of knowledge described by NASD regarding common body of knowledge and skills to be acquired by all dance students in baccalaureate degree (such as BFA) programs are: performance, choreography, theoretical and historical studies, and teaching (National 2015).

participants shared a common belief that the inclusive and communal nature of the African dance forms they taught was the basis for developing a communal aptitude among the diverse populations they taught; this aptitude was the most significant learning goal stressed by the instructors. However, the issue of assessment was and continues to be a challenge for this learning goal since how one develops community is not easily quantifiable. For example, how can instructors determine whether students are developing a sense of community? This question becomes even more complex for the instructors interviewed since many noted only being able to sense a student's ability to practice the values learned in class after leaving the class and entering the wider world outside of the university: The instructors often did not identify evidence of student learning within the timeframe of a single semester. However, even though this difficulty was noted as being a problem within the university assessment protocol, each of the instructors continued to emphasize the importance of how their students embody dance as a community practice, a practice learned in the African dance class. Therefore, it is my hope that the insights shared by the participants in this dissertation will prompt future dance education research into how to problematize and challenge university assessment requirements in the future so that important learning outcomes are not discarded or devalued because they do not fit into current university requirements for course evaluation.

Implications

For the scope of this study, I did not examine the syllabi for each participant's African dance techniques courses.[36] I can only assume that goals and objectives for technical proficiency and knowledge of historical, social, and other contextual aspects of the dance forms covered are identified in the participants' course syllabi. However, I was surprised that the participants chose to focus on the "grandiose" goal pertaining to how one relates to others within a community while also discovering insights into one's own ability to navigate and move through unfamiliar dance territories. Since these goals were prominently valued more than technical mastery of dance steps, future instructors of African dance forms specifically, and world dance forms more generally, should consider developing plans for how to address these goals emphasized by the seasoned teachers highlighted in this dissertation. Specifically, how might future dance educators continue to develop course syllabi, day-to-day lesson plans, and then assessment practices supporting often unquantifiable goals? Should these "grandiose" goals be disregarded because they are hard to assess? If not, how might dance educators continue to move these goals into future dance curricula? By delving into these issues in the future, dance practitioners and pedagogues can be more explicit with university administrators and other dance colleagues about the importance of the goals within an African dance course to the twenty-first century student.

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36. Perhaps a suggestion for future research might be a study of the teaching practices of African dance techniques instructors including review of course syllabi and other materials used for instruction.

Still, the challenging issue of assessment remains. To offer a different example to illustrate the dilemma, the participants implied that their courses physicalize the students' commitment to the performance of a dance within a culture they are trying to embody. But how does one determine whether or not a student has developed commitment within a dance techniques course, especially when contextualized within a culture's values? Nebulous but key goals for assessment such as these are difficult to parse into "competencies" to be demonstrated or "knowledge" to be expressed through verbal or written communication with rubrics for these goals being just as problematic to design. Therefore, a different approach to assessing such learning outcomes is warranted for future dance educators.

Assessment strategies should suit the goals, not vice versa. With that said, as a result of this research, I see the potential for future educators to grapple with this assessment conundrum. Perhaps this struggle could be in the form of developing dance as a form of community engagement, (e.g., internships for students to take their cultural dance training into diverse community settings or performances in which the students create accompanying programs in which the dance steps are described in relation to the cultures being expressed). These are only the first "idea seeds" that might hopefully be stimulated by the insights shared and explored through the voices of the research participants in this dissertation. Perhaps the next research step will be focusing on the voices of the students participating in African dance techniques classes. This step is discussed in the following section.

Suggestions for Future Research

The main focus of this study was the experiences of instructors of African dance techniques courses and their objectives for their courses. In Chapter V and VI, I shared the instructors' experiences as they described them to me. I used the participants' quotes to lend their voices to this increasingly relevant topic of African dance study in higher education. As I indicated in Chapter III, literature of teachers describing their teaching experiences is scarce, but the voices of students are almost nonexistent. The field will benefit from future research focusing on the student experience of African dance study in American universities, both through short term and longitudinal studies. The students' insights are an important piece of the puzzle to consider when discussing curriculum development and corresponding assessment designs and the implications of both.

Since the secondary focus of this research was a limited survey of several dance programs across the United States offering technique courses in African dance forms, another future research trajectory would be an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of other American colleges and universities offering courses in African dance techniques. This in-depth study of curriculum placed in connection to the ideas emerging from the instructor voices in this dissertation and the voices of students studying African dance in possible future research studies could lead to important and potent new ways for developing a twenty-first century dance curricula. Specifically, this curricula would meet the needs of students trying to not only succeed in familiar and habitual dance communities and spaces but also those needing to develop skills for navigating in emerging unfamiliar dance spaces.

In conclusion, this dissertation has elaborated on the need for dance programs across the country to create and implement curricula with integrated rather than marginal study of African dance forms. The questions raised throughout the dissertation include: How will schools go about creating such curricula? What should classes look like? What are the best approaches for addressing the challenges discussed by the participants in this study such as student resistance to taking classes in African techniques? What are the best methods for communicating the value of African dance study to university administrators? What can be learned from the few schools named in this study that have successfully integrated study of African and other world dance forms in their programs, to include the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the University of California, Los Angeles? By trying to answer these questions in the future, new ideas for how the discipline of dance can continue to thrive within shifting higher education landscapes will emerge. Therefore, hopefully, this dissertation research and the future research it spurs will be helpful as university dance faculties across the country reevaluate their dance programs with regard to inclusion/exclusion of world dance forms within current and future curricular frameworks.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
http://www.twu.edu/irb.html

DATE: May 30, 2014

TO: Ms. Melanie Dalton
Department of Dance

FROM: Institutional Review Board - Denton

Re: Approval for African Dance in Diverse Higher Education Settings: Perspectives from the Practices of Five Experienced Instructors (Protocol #: 17702)

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the Denton Institutional Review Board (IRB) on 5/30/2014 using an expedited review procedure. This approval is valid for one year and expires on 5/30/2015. The IRB will send an email notification 45 days prior to the expiration date with instructions to extend or close the study. It is your responsibility to request an extension for the study if it is not yet complete, to close the protocol file when the study is complete, and to make certain that the study is not conducted beyond the expiration date.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Mary Williford-Shade, Department of Dance
Dr. Linda Caldwell, Department of Dance
Graduate School