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## Smadditisation: Dancehall in Dance/Movement Therapy to Address the Loss of Cultural Identity Within the Jamaica Diaspora

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Smadditisation:

Dancehall in Dance/Movement Therapy to Address the Loss of Cultural Identity Within the

Jamaica Diaspora

Allison Johnson

Submitted in partial completion of the Master of Science Degree at Sarah Lawrence College  
May 2018

Dedicated to my family and friends who have been a constant support throughout my life journey. To Shivonne, my sister, you've always had my back. Without you, I wouldn't be where I am today. To my Jamaican people, ever colorful and strong, continue to be the trendsetters in this world. Walk good.

**Abstract**

This is a theoretical based study that focuses on members of the Jamaican diaspora in the United States. Jamaican immigrants, or members of the diaspora, comprise the largest Caribbean immigrant group in the United States. These individuals have encountered a race stratified culture that is vastly different from their native culture. The culture within the United States also encourages individualism which is counter to the community-based values of the Jamaican culture. Encountering a new culture can be difficult and being assigned a new way of identifying can be stressful. This stress can manifest as depression, anxiety or feelings of isolation and alienation. These issues can result in feeling disconnected from their culture. Dance is a significant aspect of the Jamaican culture. Dancehall, a contemporary form of dance, is a major part of Jamaican identity. This study concludes with a discussion that recommends the use of dancehall in a dance/movement therapy setting to effectively address the loss of identity in a culturally appropriate and meaningful way for this population.

*Key-words:* Jamaican diaspora, Jamaican, Jamaica, dancehall, acculturation, acculturative stress, culture, dance, communitas, genna bounce, riddim, dance/movement therapy

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In Jamaica, there is an old proverb that goes “learn fi dance ah yaad before yu dance abroad”. It translates to learn to dance at home before you go abroad. It means to practice and be prepared before going out into the world. Growing up in Jamaica, I’ve always had great interest in that proverb because dance is a major part of the culture. To use the act of dance as a metaphor to prepare one’s self in life, is an indicator of how deeply dance is embedded in everyday Jamaican life.

In moving to the United States, I realized I was not prepared for the difference in culture. While the U.S. is a melting pot of cultures, like Jamaica, the structure of society is vastly different. Race and all its complexities is not the main factor upon which our society was built. In the U.S, there is a subtle push for immigrants to identify with either the dominant European-American culture or the African-American culture. Bearing similarities with both, while being inherently different, I realized that this choice or urgency to blend into the new culture could be devastating and result in feeling isolated or “less than”.

My intent with this thesis is to address the loss of cultural identity in the Jamaican diaspora when experiencing a new culture, and how the identity can be reclaimed through the use of a culturally appropriate psychotherapeutic method. With a population where dance is of great importance, using it as a catalyst for therapeutic change can be transformative. It can be life changing not only learning how to ‘dance ah yaad’ but also learning how to dance abroad.

## **History of Jamaican People**

Surrounded by the Caribbean Sea, lies the island nation of Jamaica. Its original inhabitants were the Taino Arawaks, who came from South America over two thousand years ago. They were a peaceful people who named the island Xaymaca which means “land of wood and water”. Xaymaca later became Jamaica (Black, 1991). In 1494, Christopher Columbus landed on the north coast of the island and claimed it as a colony in the name of the Spanish Crown. The Taino population became wiped out due to enslavement and diseases brought by the Spanish settlers. African natives were then brought to the island as slaves to replace the Tainos in doing laborious work (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998).

It was in 1655 that the British captured the island from the Spanish with Jamaica remaining a colony of the crown until 1962 when independence was granted (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). From the 17th through the mid-19th centuries, the British relied on African slaves to work the numerous sugar plantations that sprung up on the island. When slavery was abolished in 1838, indentured laborers initially from Europe (Ireland and Germany) and later from India and China were brought to the island. These migrations contributed to what is now the makeup of the Jamaican population and encapsulates the country’s motto “Out of Many, One People.”

This colonial history contributed to formation of Jamaica’s class-based society. Moving up in society was either based upon skin color or wealth, with many Jamaicans finding themselves in the middle or lower class. Ninety percent of the Jamaican population identifies as being of African descent or Black but during colonial times, the slave masters would divide the slaves based upon who was lighter (Robinson, 2005). Those who were lighter were seen as superior because they were descendants of the European planters and African slaves. Some of

the descendants of the slave masters were granted freedom before the abolition of slavery. After slavery, this mindset persisted. Any person who has a lighter skin tone is revered as having more class and as such, more opportunities are afforded to them (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998). The distinction isn't about race but division based upon the shades of black. Many Jamaicans made the decision to leave the country in search for a better life outside of their class distinctions (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998).

### **Jamaican Diaspora**

Before gaining independence, Jamaicans of all ethnicities and races would seek job opportunities outside of the country. Many left the island to work on the Panama Canal, fight in World War II and to seek better employment in the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom (Glennie & Chappell, 2010). In the 1970s, no more than ten years after independence, many Jamaicans migrated to the US. Many feared that a socialist government would be formed by the prime minister at the time due to his close ties with Fidel Castro. Others left due to an increasingly violent surge of crime surrounding the elections that occurred. Unfavorable economic conditions in the island also contributed to the migration of Jamaicans to the U.S. (Glennie & Chappell, 2010). Most settled in the New York area and later, the South Florida region (Glennie & Chappell, 2010).

Now, Jamaicans and those of Jamaican descent can be found all over the United States. Statistics reported by Buddington (2007) indicate that between 1981 and 1991 there were approximately one million immigrants from the Caribbean, of which Jamaican immigrants comprised one-fourth. The number of Caribbean immigrants has grown to over four million with Jamaica having the third highest number of migrants (Zong et al., 2017). The U.S. Census (2010) reports that there are over one million people living in the country who claim Jamaican



ancestry. Currently, New York and Florida have the highest concentrations of Jamaicans where the diasporic communities contribute to the economic and political arenas (Glennie & Chappell, 2010; Staff, 2017). Staying connected to the culture is important within the Jamaican diaspora. This is evidenced by the holding of cultural events, such as the Miami-Broward Carnival held in South Florida and the Labor Day Parade held in Brooklyn, NY, where participants take to the streets and dance all day. Also, numerous restaurants are operated by Jamaicans that serve traditional cuisine, and these establishments also serve as venues for dances in the community (Waters, 2001). Out of the one million Jamaicans reported to be living here, over 600,000 were born outside of the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2010).

As stated, many migrated to the U.S. for more favorable economic conditions, seeking a better life outside of their home country. To benefit from all that the U.S. has to offer regarding employment, health insurance and financial aid, one must become a citizen. Seventy-five percent of the 600,000 previously mentioned are naturalized citizens (U.S. Census, 2010). While being a citizen opens numerous opportunities and benefits, it does not remove issues faced as an immigrant. As previously mentioned, Jamaicans were accustomed to a class-based society and not one built upon race, due to the unique racial mixture of the island. In the U.S., a major part of identity is based upon race as evidenced by the U.S. Census. According to the U.S. Census (2010), 93% of the one million Jamaican immigrants identify Black as their race. The concept of race as integral to one's identity was not strong for Jamaicans until immigrating to the States. The motto "Out of Many, One People" represents how the country consists of different races but that everyone is Jamaican. Ethnicity has played more of a defining factor regarding identity for Jamaicans and there have been petitions to the U.S. Census to include Jamaican as an ethnicity

(U.S. Census, 2014). This is one issue the Jamaican population has encountered in moving to a country where the culture is vastly different from theirs.

### **Acculturation**

Acculturation is defined as the “process by which ethnic and racial groups learn and begin to participate in the cultural traditions, values, beliefs, assumptions and practices of the dominant or host culture” (Buddington 2007, p. 447). Typically, for acculturation to occur, two different cultural groups must come into direct contact with one another and with this contact comes some form of change. This has led to a conception of a bicultural framework of acculturation. In multicultural societies such as the US, immigrant populations come into contact with cultures aside from the European American mainstream culture, suggesting that, due to our globalized society, a tricultural or multicultural framework may be more appropriate. (Ferguson et al., 2012).

The act of acculturation occurs on an individual and a community level, and is influenced by personal, community and societal values (Al-Issa, 2004; Bhurgra, 2009; Buddington, 2007). According to Bhugra (2004), at both “covert and overt levels of culture, changes can and do occur” (p. 245). On the overt level, there are certain behavioral patterns and everyday responses to life that are utilized by everyone. The covert, or not easily seen, includes “common knowledge, psychological states, attitudes and values underlying the design for life” (Bhugra 2004, p. 245). For example, in Jamaican culture the concept of community is strong and is the foundation of Jamaican life (Hall, 2010; Chevannes, 2001). Those who live near each other take care of one another regardless of biological relation or at the very least, are involved in individual’s lives. In a country like the U.S., individualism is highly regarded and celebrated, which would be deemed as an overt level of culture (Hall 2010). The psychological states of

Jamaican immigrants may change as a result of acculturation while the overt aspects, such as going to work, may or may not. It is the changes that are not easily seen that will be looked at regarding this study.

Assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization are ways that researchers have identified how immigrants respond to a new culture (Al-Issa, 2004; Berry, 1997; Bhurgra, 2004). Assimilation is fully immersing oneself in the dominant culture by shedding one's cultural identity to fit in better. Integration is incorporating the dominant culture while maintaining native cultural identity. Separation is the disengagement with the dominant culture, which may appear as segregation either imposed by the dominant culture or by the group. Marginalization is where one loses contact with the majority culture and their own which results in feelings of alienation and acculturative stress (Bhurgra, 2004). Losing contact with one's culture can be stressful for a Jamaican immigrant because being connected to the culture is important for the diaspora. Examining the effects of marginalization and ways it can be addressed will be looked at in this study.

### **Acculturative Stress**

Immigrating to a new country with a culture that is different from one's own can come with many challenges and stressors. Language barriers may exist that cause complications. How race, ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic status are perceived are some of the challenges faced. These all affect a person's physical and mental health (Berry, 1997; Bhurgra, 2004; Ferguson et al., 2012). The psychological impact that one experiences when adapting to a new culture is defined as acculturative stress.

Acculturative stress can occur when the life changes associated with migration are coupled with the acculturation experience (Berry, 1997). This stress manifests itself as anxiety,

depression, feelings of alienation and heightened psychosomatic symptoms. Those who suffer from acculturative stress have difficulty adapting to the new culture(s), loss of identity and problems in daily life such as work or school (Bhurga, 2004; Buddington, 2007; Ferguson et al., 2012).

Within the Jamaican diaspora, the process of acculturation has been one of triculturalism. (Ferguson et al., 2012; Waters, 2001). Ferguson et al. (2012) found that the Jamaican immigrants encountered the mainstream European American culture alongside the African-American culture. The majority of the U.S. population consists of European Americans or Caucasians (U.S. Census, 2010) and is the dominating culture in the country. The European American culture holds different beliefs from the Jamaican culture, such as idealizing independence of self apart from the family and an emphasis on race as a defining factor of one's identity (Hall, 2010, p. 04). This emphasis on race is a cause for those in the Jamaican diaspora to be categorized within the African-American culture. This categorization is attributed to the shared African identity regarding race, skin color and varying customs (Ferguson et al., 2012). With a culture that bears similarities, it would seem plausible that the acculturation would be easier for Jamaican immigrants, but that is not so. Research has found that individuals who are dealing with triculturalism have higher levels of psychological distress than those who are bicultural or monocultural. The psychological distress is connected to the culture shock or acculturative stress experienced by the Jamaican immigrants (Buddington, 2007; Ferguson et al., 2012).

Navigating the cultural differences of three cultures can be emotionally taxing, especially in a country that is race stratified. Challenges in the workplace from White and African-American colleagues due to racial and cultural differences have been reported (Barrett, 2010;

Gordon, 2012). Lack of social support and racial discrimination have also been associated with the distress experienced psychologically. The feelings of isolation and no support, despite identifying with three different cultures, can be distressing to an individual (Ferguson et al., 2014).

#### Mental Health & Identity within the Jamaican Culture

There is little research regarding the effects of acculturative stress on the Jamaican diaspora. Stress within this culture is not commonly acknowledged or discussed as a concept. The effects of stress listed previously (anxiety, depression, low self-esteem) are also associated with mental disorders (American Psychological Association, 2014). Within the Jamaican culture, there is a stigma regarding mental disorders. Outwardly acknowledging or admitting to any such problems is seen as weak (Bhugra, 2004; Buddington 2007; Nettleford, 1979). Studies have shown that those within the culture view ill mental health with fear and disdain (Hickling, 2008).

A common ideal of Jamaican identity is that of being stalwart and strong to endure whatever comes one's way (Chevannes, 2001; Nettleford, 1979). After Jamaica received independence, the development of a national identity separate from Britain became of political importance (Hall, 2010). The solution was to amplify the African based folk culture of Jamaica to blur the class divisions to fully represent the newly established national motto "Out of Many, One People." The African based folk culture was prominent in the "lower class" at that time. These customs and traditions exhibited endurance and resilience which was what Jamaica aimed to represent after working towards independence (Hall, 2010; Cooper, 1995; Thomas, 2004). Despite the extreme mental, emotional and physical abuse the Africans went through during slavery, they kept themselves alive by holding onto and passing down their customs. The traditions and customs survived during four hundred years of slavery and over one hundred years

after the abolition of it (Robinson, 2005; Sherlock & Bennet, 1998). The survival of the traditions is a testament to strength in the Jamaican culture. This resilience has become a characteristic of being Jamaican. Admitting to the stress, or seeking help, goes against the Jamaican identity (Woodward et al., 2010).

It would be best to address these issues in a way that is culturally sensitive and relevant. In a study by Ferguson et al. (2014), they argue that intervention efforts with the tricultural Jamaican immigrant population should be culturally informed to facilitate clinical effectiveness and rapport building. Further suggestions were made that included facilitating and encouraging a better understanding of one's ethnic group and heritage and finding coping mechanisms for the anxiety related to acculturative stress. Exploring the cultural identity through treatment using interventions that are based in the Jamaican culture, while seeking to affirm cultural identity, would be beneficial for dealing with acculturation stress.

### **Dance in Jamaica**

In Caribbean culture, dance is significant in encapsulating a person's identity (Sloat, 2010; Nettleford, 1979). It reflects multiple elements of the culture and envelops the numerous aspects of identity (Nettleford, 1979; Sloat, 2010). In Jamaica, dance has been more than just a cultural art-form; it is a form of survival for the formerly colonized nation. Nettleford (1985) has stated that "the dance was a fierce instrument of survival and the body was a weapon of cultural self-defense" (p. 20). Dance is a creative expression that is reliant upon the body with the body language being ultimately controlled by the individual's emotional and spiritual state. Survival means continuing to exist in spite of difficult circumstances, and during slavery, the Africans danced to withstand their painful reality. They would use dance as a medium for religious

expression, healing, and entertainment as well as a means of rebellion against their slave masters (Sloat, 2010; Taylor, 2001).

The Africans came from different tribes which meant they spoke different languages. This was a deliberate choice by the European planters. It was meant to discourage communication which would hopefully reduce the chance of rebellion (Bennet & Sherlock, 1998). The Ashanti were among the diverse set of Africans that came to the island and were known for being warriors. They used dance as way to prepare for war physically and psychologically. In Jamaica, these war dances were instrumental in preparing the Africans for the many revolts that occurred on the island during slavery. They convened under the guise of a dance so they could communicate their plans of rebellion through song and movements (Coester & Bender, 2015). The revolts became an economic problem for the plantation owners, so large gatherings of Africans were discouraged in order to quell uprisings. Due to the high mortality rate of the enslaved, there were many funerals, and slaves were permitted to continue gathering at them. War dances were customary at funerals but were altered to deceive the slave masters and so rebellions continued to arise. A slave dying was seen as a loss in the war for their freedom, so performing a war dance was seen as preparation for rebellion (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Welsh-Asante, 2004). Throughout the period of slavery, the different tribes connected to one another through dance. Movement was a means of communication as well as a way to escape the harsh reality they faced. Dance was seen as communication between the tribal communities and the spirit world. The tribes acknowledged some of the same spirits so when they assembled to dance, they could understand each other based on the movements they performed (Coester & Bender, 2015; Welsh-Asante, 2004). Though the bodies of the Africans may have been “owned”, the language conveyed through dance was not. As a result, dance in the

Jamaican (and the Caribbean at large) culture, is an important aspect of everyday life that informs personal and collective identity (Hope, 2006; Nettleford, 1985; Sloat, 2010; Walker, 2008).

The traditional dance forms found in Jamaica have strong African origins and can be found in various corners of the island. Dance forms such as Dinki Mini, Junkanoo/Jonkanoo, and Kumina, all display African derived movements. Key elements of African movements include groundedness, isolation of body parts, call and response, polyrhythmicity, polycentricity, circle formations and improvisation. In the aforementioned dance forms, all of these elements can be seen. In Kumina, a spiritual dance form, the hips move in a circular motion while the torso is bent forward. The knees are bent as well, and the feet shuffle while keeping contact with the ground. Drums are integral in the Kumina dance and, when played, multiple (polyrhythmic) rhythms are present (Coester & Bender, 2015). The movements displayed in these traditional dance forms have meaning and kinesthetically portray the lived experience of the Jamaican people. In Kumina for example, the movements portray the connection between the dancers and the spirit world. The movements are a ritual way of communication between the dancers and a spirit to either honor them (spirit), express gratitude and/or to request healing (Sloat, 2010). In Jonkanno, there are characters in the dance and each of them portray everyday tasks or situations. For example, the characters of the Policeman and Devil are portrayals of Jamaican life. The movements that they do in the dance and how they interact with each other, are symbolic of situations that have or can occur in Jamaican life. In contemporary Jamaican dance forms such as dancehall, embodied experience and meaning are displayed as well (Morgan, 2012; Sloat, 2010; Stines, 2009).



## **Dancehall**

Dancehall is a genre of music that originated in the inner cities of Kingston, Jamaica in the 1980s. The term dancehall came from the physical space where the dances occurred, but it also means creating a space wherever the music is being played (Morgan, 2012; Stanley-Niaah, 2010).

The music of dancehall evolved from reggae, a popular genre with the drum and bass guitar providing the dominant beat. Dancehall music differs from reggae in the sounds of the beat as well as the addition of a DJ<sup>1</sup> over the beat. The beat in dancehall is produced electronically while in reggae, the beat is produced with live instruments. The beat in dancehall music is called the riddim and is essentially the foundation and heartbeat of the music (Manuel & Marshall, 2006; Henriques, 2011). The different beats or riddims in dancehall have names such as Military, Jonkanoo and Rebirth that provide a visual and felt effect as to the energy they portray. It is common in dancehall to find different artistes or DJs on one riddim. While some might see it as uncreative, this highlights the unique and creative stylings of the varying individuals who deejay on the same riddim. Manuel and Marshall (2006) state that this is a quintessential aspect of dancehall culture. Another integral player in the dancehall scene and culture is the selector, who plays (or selects) the music that is played during the dancehall event. The selector facilitates the energy of the session and is active in movement behind the turntables (Henriques, 2011).

While most of the research on dancehall focuses on the music, it encompasses much more than that. Dancehall is a dance style and its own subculture. It was birthed out of an

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<sup>1</sup> DJ or Deejay in the dancehall context is similar to a rapper in the Hip-Hop context. A deejay rhymes over the beat. (Stanley 2010, Hope 2006)

ongoing need for expression and escape from hardship (Cooper, 2004; Stines, 2009). Reggae and the culture surrounding it focused on love and peace, in line with the Rastafarian religious beliefs at the time. Bob Marley, a Rastafarian and the face of reggae music, brought reggae to the global stage during the late sixties - early seventies. During this same time period, crime and violence in Jamaica increased. In the 1970s, the inner cities of Kingston were ravaged by violence because of political warfare. Men and boys from these communities were groomed to obtain votes for opposing political parties through criminal and violent means. After this period of unrest, the eighties became a time for renewal and revival. Dancehall emerged from this bloodshed with lyrics that emphasized feeling good and prosperity.

The culture of dancehall centered around community with events<sup>2</sup> being held in the same streets where many lives had been lost. Dancehall became a reclaiming of the land on which they lived and the bodies in which they resided. Hope (2006) expands on how dancehall is a site of revolution and re-claiming for its participants through the use of the dis/ prefix through the use of the phrase dis/place that encapsulates various meanings in the Jamaican culture and dancehall. Displace is defined as a means to shift from or move to a new place and, in dancehall, the participants have displaced any negative connotations directed towards them through music and dance. "Dis" in Jamaican Creole is an abbreviated form of disrespect and also means "this". For example, "Dis man over here just dis me by not saying hello." In Hope's context of dis/place in dancehall, it means this place in an existential context, where the realities of those in society are mirrored through music and dance (Hope, 2006). She goes on to elaborate that it means "this disrespectful place where we have been placed; this place where we are consistently disrespected

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<sup>2</sup> These events take on the form of block parties and are called sessions or dances (Stolzoff 2001, Hope 2006). In this paper, the term session/event will be used when referring to dancehall events to differentiate from the dances (movement expressions) in dancehall.

and mistreated” and “this place from within which we are forced to re-create and claim our resources, identities, personhood and self-esteem by any means” (Hope, 2006, p. 26). This place is the lower class of the class-based society of Jamaica and they (the inhabitants) transformed this place or dis/place through dancehall. So, in this place or dis/place of dancehall, Jamaicans have subverted the negative connotations of disrespect or disempowerment through establishing and reworking their identities and concepts of self.

On a bodily level, Pattern (2018) goes on to state how the “subversive aesthetic of dancehall” and its emergence in a counter cultural space exhibits how one reclaims their body through dancehall. Pattern (2018) coined the term corporeal dancing body, based on the work of Thomas Fuchs, who speaks on the duality of the lived and corporeal body. The lived body is how one moves about in the world through the sensual experience and movement of limbs; the spontaneous, unconscious reaction of the body. The corporeal body is that which is “seen” by others and what we perceive in the mirror. This consciousness of self, based on being seen, tends to be reflected or manifested through emotion (Fuchs, 2003). Pattern (2018) states that dance is the “public display of cultural memory”, which consists of the symbolic gestures that emotionally link a community to its environment and is handed down over generations (p. 169). The ‘corporeal dancing body’ triggers this cultural memory and links the values of the formerly enslaved Jamaicans that were expressed in their bodies (Pattern, 2018). This cultural memory holds the value that dance in the African/Jamaican culture is a way of communication, survival and resistance; and through dancehall, its participants embody these values. The embodiment and expression of cultural memory provides the participants or dancers with a “consciousness of self that reaches way beyond ‘outsider’ (viewers outside of the culture) readings of the physicality of the corporeal dancing body” (Pattern, 2018, p. 169). The embodiment of cultural memory

through dancehall connects the individual to the Jamaican culture and is empowering in a space where one is marginalized.

Those who come from the lower class in Jamaica used dancehall dances to challenge the hegemonic class society of how they should be perceived (Hope, 2006; Stanley-Niaah, 2010; Pattern, 2018). Dancehall's subversive aesthetic therefore enables its participants to gain "smadditisation"<sup>3</sup>; which is the gaining of recognition, agency and visibility, despite the denial of access and opportunity due to class (Scott, 2006). This agency and visibility is displayed in the dances created which are a means of social commentary, celebration and expression of creativity (Walker, 2008). It is important for those in the Jamaican diaspora to feel like "smaddy", or somebody, if they are experiencing feelings of alienation and isolation.

Cheryl Ryman (1979) outlined seven core types of dances found in Jamaica with five listed as religious and two as secular/social. There are over forty types of dances that stem from these two categories (Ryman, 1979). Dancehall falls under the social/secular heading, but the movement expression draws inspiration from both the religious and secular dance forms. The aesthetics of many popular dancehall dances exhibit traditional dance forms (Stolzoff, 2001; Walker, 2008).

The performance of dancehall dances has its roots in the slavery era when the African slaves would gather and dance weekly. During this period, dance was a reclaiming and affirming of space and identity within the community. Dancehall encompasses this in how it is performed by the dancers and attendees (Stolzoff, 2001; Walker, 2008).

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<sup>3</sup> Smady or Smaddy in Jamaican Creole or Patois means somebody so smadditisation essentially means to become or be somebody.

In dancehall, events/dances/sessions are held weekly where participants gather to connect socially and dance together. The enslaved Africans gathered to dance in a place/space where they had been displaced and disrespected; and like the dis/place within dancehall, the dancers embody this cultural memory. An embodiment of this memory is seen in wining, a dancehall movement that exhibits African origins through the isolation and rotation of the hips. Most dancehall movements involve the planting of the feet firmly on the ground as a means of connection to the earth, which is another cultural memory passed on from the days of slavery. This cultural memory is also known as thematic repertoire; the cultural beliefs and social practices that form Jamaican tradition (Cooper, 2002). Through dance, this thematic repertoire is imparted symbolically through the creation and performance of dancehall movements (Pattern, 2018). This is important because the symbolic movements in dancehall tell personal and collective stories of the creators and performers.

Many dancehall movements have important stories attached to them and are created based off of the dancer's experiences and creativity. Gerald "Bogle" Levy was one of the most prominent dancers in the dancehall culture. Bogle paved the way for dancers such as Ding Dong (who later became a dancehall artiste), Keiva the Diva and groups like the Black Roses Crew and Ravaz Clavaz (Stanley-Niaah, 2010). Bogle created a dance called "Bogle" which inspired Buju Banton, a dancehall artiste, to create a song about the dance and dancer. In "Bogle Dance" Banton proclaims Bogle to be the "wickedest dancer outta JA" (Myrie, 1992). Many dancehall artistes have written songs that center on dances such as Elephant Man's "Log On" (2001), Tony Matterhorn's Dutty Wine (2008) and Demarco's "Puppy Tail" (2010). In Jamaican culture, music and dance go hand in hand and this applies in dancehall (Cooper, 2004; Morgan, 2012). These dances move from within the individual who created it to the community who participates

in the dancehall because of the music. Highlighting the prominence of the music to the dance is important when discussing dancehall because you cannot have the dance without the music. The relationship between the artiste and dancer also displays the sense of community within dancehall. Every participant in the dancehall relies upon one another and this communal spirit is the foundation of dancehall (Stanley-Niaah, 2010).

The foundation of the music, the riddim, is seen in Jamaican culture as “the heartbeat of the people,” or “the pulse of life.” (Habekost, 1993, p. 93). The riddim is the driving force of the dance and is felt by the dancer and community and not just heard. Henriques (2011) describes this felt experience of the dancehall riddim as sonic dominance. It is “the visceral experience of audition” which is “being alive to, in and as the excess of sound” where the “internal organs resonate to the finely tuned frequencies, as the vibrations of the music excite every cell in your body” (Henriques, 2011, p. 1). The dances created are inclusive and meant to be expressed through the bodies of dancehall lovers worldwide in a social setting. Dancehall style is centered around the expression of the body and the dancing body “becomes a crucial site for articulation for the individual and the group” (Morgan, 2012).

### **Dancehall and Identity**

Participating in the dancehall provides a means of affirming or reaffirming one’s identity within the Jamaican culture (Morgan, 2012; Stolzoff, 2001). Erikson (1994) defines identity as “a sense of psychosocial well- being” as well as a “feeling of being at home in one’s body” (p. 15). In defining identity in the Jamaican culture, one has to consider how class, language, gender, color and race intersect. Most ways in which people identify as Jamaican are through food, music and language. These factors are typically attributed to the lower class due to their strong African origins. As stated earlier, the African folk culture of Jamaica was prominent in the lower

class before it was heralded as the marker for national identity. In spite of this, Jamaicans of all walks of life hold these as a part of their identity (Sherlock & Bennett, 1998; Thomas, 2004). Even though dancehall was birthed out of the ghettos or “lower class”, it is seen as a characteristic of being Jamaican regardless of class or status. Dancehall is seen as the “true and natural expression” of how Jamaicans are inside (Thomas, 2004, p. 1). The corporeal dancing body in dancehall enables the acquisition and development of cultural knowledge and memory. This provides a connection and confirmation of Jamaican heritage and identity that was built upon African beliefs and traditions (Pattern, 2018; Scott, 2006). Dancehall represents a space where identity, smadditisation and personhood is developed and negotiated in modern transformative rituals of renewal and transcendence (Pattern, 2018; Scott, 2006).

The dancehall culture has established itself as being against the dominant culture from its inception (Cooper, 1995; Thomas, 2004). This is demonstrated through the music, sessions and movements (Thomas, 2004). The movements and music are a “powerful form of communication of identity between and among groups of Jamaicans in varying geographic spaces, constituting a sense of place among these dispersed immigrants” (Hall, 2010, p. 135). Dancehall became a space for one to have pride in who they were and this is articulated in the music and dance (Bakare-Yusuf, 2006; Cooper, 2004; Morgan, 2012).

One of the issues faced by Jamaicans living in the diaspora is the feeling of loss of identity (Buddington, 2007). Dancehall is the expression and eminence of the prominent Jamaican identity and through it one “responds to life through a culture of dance and music” (Morgan, 2012, para. 16). Cooper (2004) has discussed dancehall and the identity it affirms as well as Donna Hope (2006). In Thomas’ (2004) research, she found that dancehall was one of the most common and immediate indicators of what it is to be Jamaican.

Dancehall is a space where the identity of a Jamaican is celebrated and affirmed through the dance and music. Hall (2010) stated that, through dancehall, “home” is no longer a physical location, but rather an idea that is re-inscribed in music and language and becomes a source of identification and even political and cultural solidarity” (pp. 135-136). It can be extended to say that this idea of home is present in the dance because as stated previously, the music and dance are linked. The dance in dancehall becomes a source of identity and cultural solidarity regardless of where it is embodied. Morgan (2012) has stated that “this transportable view of dancehall points to its ability to maintain an identity that is distinctly Jamaican regardless of the changes it undergoes” (para.3). The bodies of Jamaican immigrants have been transported to a different culture yet they can experience ‘home’ through the embodiment of dancehall movements. The nomadic nature signifies its means to uphold an unmistakable Jamaican identity regardless of change in space (Morgan, 2012).

It is also a site for healing and transformation, just like the dances & rituals it evolved from (White, 2003). Pattern (2018) shared their personal experience of being a part of the Jamaican diaspora in the U.K and how embodying dancehall reaffirmed their Jamaican identity. Pattern (2017) stated that they achieved smadditisation through the participation of ritualistic cultural acts such as the meeting together of fellow Jamaicans to celebrate life events. Pattern (2017) said “I personally began adopting, from childhood, movement vocabulary embodying... cultural knowledge and cultural memory in the celebratory spaces of christenings and wedding receptions” (p. 106). Pattern (2017) goes on to state how they used the school disco as a space to exhibit dancehall movements as a counter-cultural display of resistance to oppression felt within the British society. The feeling or “vibe” felt by Pattern (2018) and their peers through dancing, combined with the sonic dominance, contributed to a transformative sense of community among



them. This sense of community is known as *communitas*, a “heightened, intense sense of community and belonging”, that is experienced by those in a liminal (margin or transitional) space (Pattern, 2018, p. 116; Turner, 1969). Stanley-Niaah (2010) expands on the connection of being in a liminal space to *communitas* by way of dancehall. Turner (1969) stated that there are liminal phases between rites of passage which are “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age” (p. 94). In these liminal phases, the participant “passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past state” (Turner, 1969, p. 95). Stanley-Niaah (2010) states that dancehall events celebrate those in marginalized spaces (Jamaicans of a lower class) and the transitions between life events or rituals, like weddings, funerals or christenings. Turner (1969) said that in the liminal phase, the sense of *communitas* is heightened due to societal constructs being suspended during this phase. Those in the Jamaican diaspora are in a continuous liminal space and through dancehall, they achieve a sense of belonging with others who are a part of the diaspora.

The embodiment of dancehall in those in the British Jamaican diaspora kinesthetically expresses thematic repertoire (the cultural beliefs) of Jamaica as a means to combat racism and oppression (Pattern, 2018). The same can occur for those in the U.S. Jamaican diaspora. Through dancehall, identity and personhood are exemplified where smadditisation occurs – individuals being recognized as person of worth and claiming agency of their body. Pattern states that it (dancehall) becomes “an important medium through which identity and personhood are negotiated” (Pattern, 2018).

### **Dance/Movement Therapy**

Healing and transformation through the medium of dance is the basis of Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT). It is the integration of the body and mind through movement

and psychotherapy for an individual's emotional, physical and mental well-being (Levy, 2005). The premise of dance/movement therapy is in dance, with the pioneers of the field being trained dancers themselves. The culmination of dance with psychotherapy was seen as a way to heal and transform the mental health of individuals. The field has grown since its inception in the US during the 1940s and is practiced worldwide. The role of the therapist is integral to the field. The dance movement therapist is responsible for providing a safe space for the clients to express themselves by facilitating the processing of their thoughts and emotions (Levy, 2005; Fischman, 2009). The therapist attunes to a client or clients and aims to develop kinesthetic empathy. Kinesthetic empathy is a core concept of dance/movement therapy and is the embodiment of understanding or seeking to understand another's felt experience (Fischman, 2009). Being empathetic or attuned to another in the body requires the therapist to be aware of their own bodily sensations. Understanding one's own sensations and feelings are important to the therapeutic process which seeks to aid in healing (Fischman, 2009).

With modern dance as a driving force behind the development of dance/movement therapy, dance is seen as the backbone of the practice. Dance is an art form that is highly regarded in various cultures socially such as Jamaica and it is seen as a source or method of healing and community building. Many of the current and aspiring dance/movement therapists have found their way to the field through dance. What dance looks like within dance/movement therapy is different than in a classroom or on the stage. Dance in therapy "is expressive movement determined by the thoughts, feelings (conscious and unconscious) and interpersonal context of the dancer" (Bruno, 1990, p. 101). It is used to convey meaning and emotions that come from the individual and is important in the process of healing.

Utilizing dance as an expression of feelings, community and healing is present in the Jamaican culture. In dancehall, the events are centered around the movements displayed by the patrons and the subsequent healing that follows. Since dance is integral to the Jamaican culture and identity, dance/movement therapy can be beneficial for the Jamaican diaspora in addressing acculturative stress manifested as loss of cultural identity.

### **Dance/Movement Therapy & Culture**

Dance/movement therapy can be an exceptional pathway to treat persons from diverse cultural backgrounds because the core principle, that body movement is basic to communication, is valid across cultures (Pallaro, 1997). Examining the role that dance and movement play for individuals in a cultural context is important in dance/movement therapy. Every aspect of human experience is related, shaped, and influenced by culture (Pallaro, 2001; Panagiotopoulou, 2011). It is important to take into consideration not only what dance means for an individual but also how they view themselves culturally. This is necessary when constructing the course of dance movement therapy sessions (Panagiotopoulou, 2011). Fundamental to dance/movement therapy practice is the idea that being culturally aware in therapeutic interventions and assessment is essential to the work (Hanna, 1990; Caldwell, 2013; Pallaro, 1997; Panagiotopoulou, 2011). Panagiotopoulou stressed the importance of participants' cultural identity in a dance/movement therapy session and the necessity of adjusting interventions to their cultural identity. Amber Gray has facilitated dance/movement therapy sessions with Haitian children living on the island by incorporating Vodou ritual dances in the work (Gray, 2008). It was in this work that Gray (2008) stated that she learned from the children and "that as a white American dance therapist, the Western psychotherapeutic perspective must undergo a transmutation into communal, ritual and spiritual forms consistent with Haiti's traditions" (p. 225).

Akunna has looked at how Igbo mourning dances could be applied in dance/movement therapy to alleviate fear and suffering associated with loss or bereavement in working with those from this population. In the Igbo culture, dance has traditionally been seen as a pathway to healing and community building (Akunna, 2015). Integrating culturally significant dance forms is an ongoing work in dance/movement therapy. Research and praxis has been done by dance/movement therapists in regards to dance forms that are culturally relevant to themselves as well as the population they are working with. Most research and practice that has been done includes cultures from the North American, European and Asian regions (Pallaro, 2001). In regards to integrating dances significant to African and Caribbean cultures such as Jamaica, little research has been found. Investigating the use of dancehall in dance/movement therapy would add to the field of dance/movement therapy while being of benefit to the Jamaican culture and other cultures with African retentions.

### **Dance/Movement Therapy & Schmais Group Processes**

In the works of Gray & Akunna, the spirit of community and moving in groups are prominent themes. In African or African descent cultures, community is highly regarded and identity formation begins within the community. The Jamaican culture has African roots and community is a part of the cultural identity. One way in which community is expressed in the culture is through dance. The traditional and contemporary dance forms in Jamaica, such as Kumina and Dancehall, are socially based (Coester & Bender, 2015). It is in the gathering of individuals who are moving together that healing is found (Sloat, 2010; Hope, 2006; Stanley-Niaah, 2010). In dance/movement therapy, dancing or moving together in a group session can create a sense of community for those involved (Schmais, 1985; Akunna, 2015; Gray 2008). Schmais (1985) recognized that in a group dance/movement therapy session, the feeling

of community was healing for the group members. She identified and developed a theory of eight healing processes that occur in group movement sessions. These are synchrony, expression, rhythm, vitalization, integration, cohesion, education and symbolism.

Each process flows from one to the other and cannot be looked at in isolation (Schmais 1985). Synchrony is when people are moving in the same time whether spatially, movement wise or through effort. Expression is the emotions that appear during/after synchrony which is supported by the use of music and rhythm. Rhythm is seen as the “most profound catalyst in dance therapy” (Espenak, 1981, p.11). It clarifies and contains the emotional expression. Vitalization imbues life and energy in the group’s experience. Integration “implies achieving a sense of unity within the individual and a sense of community between internal and external reality.” (Schamis, 1985, p. 26) This occurs simultaneously in dance/movement therapy groups. Cohesion is the bond that forms within the group and is achieved through synchrony and rhythm which aids in bringing clients “out of isolation to experience a sense of belonging” (Valenzuela, 2014, p. 95). Education occurs when an individual learns about one’s self through the moving with others as well as the experiences of those within the group. Symbolism is rooted in dreams and fantasy and functions “to abstract, abbreviate, and structure what is imagined, felt, and seen” (Schmais, 1985, p. 33). Symbolism provides a bridge between the internal and external worlds of the individual within the support of a group.

Schmais’s healing processes within a group movement therapy session support the exploration of self-identity and community while encouraging emotional expression through rhythm and synchrony. With community being a strong aspect of Jamaican identity, having those from the diaspora participate in group dance/movement therapy sessions could be inherently healing. Applying a dance form, such as dancehall, that is a signifier of Jamaican identity within

the group session, could enhance the therapeutic experience. It is in the group sessions that the members of the diaspora could address their acculturation stress manifested as loss of cultural identity. Employing significant aspects of a culture into treatment has been heralded as being effective when working with immigrant populations dealing with acculturation (Bhugra, 2004; Buddington, 2007).

### **Dance/Movement Therapy & Acculturation**

There has been research regarding the use of dance/movement therapy group sessions in addressing issues associated with acculturation. Valenzuela (2014) enacted a study addressing the needs of Hispanic immigrant mothers in a group dance/movement therapy session. She highlighted the Schmais group processes and how addressing culture was vital in meeting the needs of the population. The healing process of synchrony, vitalization, cohesion, and education would be addressed directly or indirectly through the structure of her model. These processes were highlighted because they supported the goals to connect the women with one another while learning about each other's immigration experience.

The proposed outcome of the study was for the population to feel connected within their culture, to one another and process their acclimation to a new culture. This study is the only one the author has come across that directly addresses acculturation as the focus. Dance/movement therapy is present in different cultures and work is being done by dance/movement therapists in communities that are culturally different from them.

A study by Pylvänäinen (2008) was enacted to utilize dance/movement therapy with women who were transplanted in a different culture. The group sessions were conducted by Pylvänäinen, who is of Finnish origin, in Tokyo, with women from varying cultural backgrounds. Some of the women were of Japanese descent, others had a bicultural Japanese-

Western background and the others were from Europe and South America. The focus of this study was for the women to reconnect to their inner selves and connect with other women with whom they did not have a shared cultural identity. While the focus was not on acculturation, effects of it on the body and inner self were addressed and commented upon during the sessions. Pylvänäinen employed elements found in Butoh dance, a traditional Japanese movement form, in the sessions. Pylvänäinen had immersed herself in Japanese culture and trained in Butoh dance before bringing it into her work. She felt it was important to educate herself about the culture of which she and the others were now a part, as well as incorporating the culture in the sessions to bring awareness to the environment the body was in. She utilized the new culture the women were living in as a common understanding for them to connect and ground themselves. Pylvänäinen (2008) stated that “in a new or changed environment there is an active question of how to connect with the environment and how to adjust to it” (p. 42). This also describes the experience of those who have migrated to a new country. Pylvänäinen’s goals were for these women of different cultural backgrounds, some who shared a cultural connection to the Japanese culture and those who didn’t, to ground themselves in a new environment through the body.

Subramanyam (1998) conducted another study using dance/movement therapy with South Asian immigrant women living in Britain. Subramanyam, who is of South Asian descent, chose to focus on connecting the women in the group based on their shared cultural identity to aid in feelings of isolation brought on by migrating to a new culture. Using dance that was culturally significant to the women was important for Subramanyam, as was keeping the spirit of dance in the work. She states the role of the therapist is “moving with them and helping them in facilitating their own dance” (Subramanyam, 1998, p. 184). The therapist must encourage the individuals to engage in relationship with others to elicit the spirit of dance (Subramanyam

1998). Subramanyam (1998) mentions rhythm and synchrony as “aspects of dance that bring about a sense of harmony between individuals and their surroundings” which are a part of the therapeutic process (p. 184). The use of South Asian music and dance in dance/movement therapy with the South Asian women provided a space for creative expression that is important to them and “validated their experience” as immigrants in the U.K (Subramanyam, 1998, p. 188).

In this theoretical study, the author will focus on how those in the Jamaican diaspora can connect with those who share their identity to re-affirm that cultural identity and sense of community through group sessions.

### **Dancehall & Dance/Movement Therapy**

Dancehall is a space, culture and lifestyle that celebrates the individual within the community. It reinforces and affirms one’s Jamaican identity wherever in the world they are. Dancehall has left the shores of the island and can be found worldwide (Morgan, 2012; Stines, 2009). Dance/movement therapy aims to reconnect the mind-body relationship within an individual through the use of movement and can be found globally. The role dance plays in dancehall is vital as is the role dance plays in dance/movement therapy. Both use this medium to help, empower and connect individuals to themselves and the greater world. Dancehall and dance/movement therapy have many similarities such as integrating the relationship of body/mind and spirit through dance, individual creative expression and encouraging a sense of community through dance. Dance/movement therapy encompasses a therapist versed in movement to facilitate and connect with the clients or members of the group while dancehall has the selector who facilitates the energy of the participants through the selection of music while reading the crowd.



In dance/movement therapy, Schmais stated that there are healing processes within the group therapy process and these processes are inherent in dancehall. To address the needs of Jamaicans in the U.S. diaspora who are suffering from acculturation stress manifested as loss of cultural identity, using dancehall (music and dance) in a dance/movement therapy group session would help in healing, developing self-efficacy and re-affirming cultural identity through a sense of community.

Examining the parallels of dance/movement therapy and dancehall through the relationship of therapist as selector will be discussed. The author will emphasize four of the group healing processes while exploring how these healing processes are inherent within dancehall culture and dance as well. This provides a basis for further research on the use of dancehall within dance movement therapy.

### **Discussion**

As stated earlier, acculturation can produce stress in individuals who find themselves grappling with a different culture. One of the ways the stress is manifested is through a sense of loss of cultural identity. Those within the Jamaican diaspora may grapple with this in the U.S., as they are confronted with integrating into the mainstream European American culture as well as the African-American culture. Dance has been a source of healing for Jamaicans, specifically within the dancehall genre or culture. Dancehall has been a space for those who felt marginalized to reclaim their identities through the use of movement. The reclaiming of their identities was facilitated by *communitas*, or an intense sense of belonging to the community.

Incorporating dancehall into dance/movement therapy would be a way for those dealing with this issue to reaffirm their cultural identity within the space of the session. Valenzuela (2014) proposed that connecting with others with a shared cultural identity in a group

dance/movement therapy session would promote healing for women dealing with acculturation stress. Her study was based on the processes outlined in Schmais's group theory. Schmais's healing processes support the exploration of self-identity and community while encouraging emotional expression through rhythm and synchrony. Out of the eight healing processes Schmais outlined, there are at least four inherent within dancehall. For this discussion, the author will look at how these processes are demonstrated within dancehall and how they contribute to the feeling of *communitas*, which can alleviate the loss of identity for those in the Jamaican diaspora. The dancehall dance, Genna Bounce, will be looked at in the four healing processes as an example.

While researching dancehall, the author noticed that the structure of a dancehall event/session is similar to that of a dance/movement therapy session. Both begin with a warm-up, a middle section for a theme development, and a cool down/ending. Dancehall sessions can run for hours and start from 10 pm and continue until the sun comes up, while a dance/movement therapy session can range from 25 minutes to an hour, depending on the nature of the session. Within dance/movement therapy, the structure of a session contributes to the sense of wellbeing for the clients.

Dancehall is a space, culture, and lifestyle that celebrates the individual within the community. The community normally gathers at a dancehall event, called a session, or dance, held weekly (Stanley-Niaah, 2010). The session/event is a space where the individual connects with the community through dancing and gains a sense of *communitas*. The event is based or staged around a purpose, such as regular enjoyment or a link-up for members of the diaspora (Stanley-Niaah, 2010). A session or event tends to have a name based on a dancehall song, lyric, or phrase found in the Jamaican culture and relates to the purpose of the event. While dance/movement therapy sessions may not have names attached to them, the sessions are

organized around a purpose. Themes develop within a dance/movement therapy session and themes of dancehall such as celebrating community, celebrating women, or political commentary arise within a dancehall event. These themes develop based on the purpose of the event, the actions of the selector, and crowd participation. This is similar to how themes in a dance/movement therapy session develop, with the selector being the therapist and the crowd being the clients.

### **Selector/Therapist**

There is a connection between the role of the selector in the dancehall and the therapist in dance/movement therapy. The selector is the person who controls the sound system and is normally apart of a sound crew (Stanley-Niaah, 2010). The selector mixes and “juggles” the music to set the vibe for the session and feed off the crowd’s energy to determine what next to play. Juggling refers to the mixing of various songs by creating smooth transitions between songs on different riddims and songs on the same riddim. The selector also interacts with the crowd by talking over the microphone while expressing what he/she observes, both verbally and non-verbally (Stanley-Niaah, 2010). The role of the dance movement therapist is similar in that he/she is normally in charge of the music and how it flows. The therapist interacts verbally with the clients, as well as through movement. Both the selector and therapist are known to feel the vibe, or energy, of the crowd and react accordingly. The healing processes found in a group therapy session are cultivated by the members of the group and the facilitation of the dance movement therapist.

### **Healing Processes in Dancehall**

The biggest takeaway for the author during the research was that within a dancehall session, the healing processes of Schmais were evident. Rhythm, synchrony, cohesion and

symbolism are displayed in the dancehall through the music and dances. Emphasizing the display of these processes will demonstrate how dancehall in a dance/movement therapy session can provide healing and reaffirm the cultural identity for those in the Jamaican diaspora.

### **Rhythm**

According to Schmais (1985), the rhythms in life that connect an individual to self, others and the environment are disrupted when one is disturbed. Disturbed means that normal patterns of being have been strained. For a person who identifies as Jamaican, moving to a different land and culture disrupts their way of being. Rhythm is essential for order in life and structure in art. Breathing and the heartbeat are vital functional activities governed by rhythmicity, first experienced in the womb. Rhythm is the basis of dancehall culture, as it developed from the music. The foundation, or beat, in dancehall music is called a riddim. Many researchers link or cite dancehall as an expression or identifier of what it means to be Jamaican. Rhythm, or riddim, is also understood to be the “heartbeat of the (Jamaican) people,” or, “the pulse of life” (Habekost, 1993, p. 93). Without the riddim, dancehall ceases to exist, and to some philosophical extent, the Jamaican people would cease to exist. In dancehall, the riddim’s importance is exemplified by its name, for no riddim exists in dancehall without a name. This may be linked to the importance of names in the African culture as dances in dancehall are also named. Names of riddims include Icebreaker, Remedy, Diwali and Genna Bounce. The names of dances have been linked with the riddim, for example Genna Bounce, which is also the name of a dance. It is in the naming of the riddim/dance that gives it identity and the embodiment of the dance which contributes to the sense of identity for the participant.

In dance, rhythm is the basis for movement. Goodridge (1999) has stated that it is “the foundation of human interaction and group activity” (p. 39). Skipping, swaying, swinging,

punching and bouncing are some of the movements which create a distinctive rhythmic pattern (Goodridge, 1999). In dance/movement therapy, moving rhythmically together in a group can be powerful, motivating and provide security and freedom for the participants in a group therapy context (Chace, 1993). Rhythmic movement is a balance of movements that contract and expand which are then connected and repeatedly performed. The connection and repetition of movements eventually results in the creation of rhythm (Boswell, 2005). Rhythmic movement can spur on an intensely heartfelt shift in a group (Levy, 2005).

In dancehall, the Genna Bounce dance displays the elements of group rhythmic movement and identity formation. Genna in Patois means general or someone who is of importance and highly respected, and so, to embody the Genna Bounce is to display a feeling of importance and respect. This feeling of importance and respect can be characterized as smadditisation. The Genna Bounce is a movement pattern characterized by the accents in the Genna Bounce riddim. The dance starts out with participants skipping to the right with their right leg bent and the right hand tapping the leg as they skip for four counts and then switch to the left side and repeat. When the beat or riddim displays an accent or sound that sounds like a boom, the dancers/participants then bend the left leg, lower their torso on the boom and then step out with their right leg to the right side. They step in a bouncing rhythm for four counts while bent low (the bend & drop of torso as one count) and then straighten their torso to an upright position on the fifth while stepping forward with the left leg. The following count is marked by doing the Fling Yuh Shoulda<sup>4</sup> dance which is the isolating of the right shoulder by moving it forward. The Genna Bounce is a prime example of rhythmic movement because of the connection with the Fling Yuh Shoulda dance and constant repetition of steps. The stepping of the feet while bending

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<sup>4</sup> Fling Yuh Shoulda means to throw your shoulder

the knees relate to the African style of dancing that dancehall evolved from and displays a sense of grounding. This promotes the grounding of identity for the members of the Jamaican diaspora who are struggling with loss of identity.

In the 21:22 minute mark of the “Ding Dong & Ravas Clavas” video (BBC Radio 1Xtra, 2018), the dancers start to do the Genna Bounce. A few seconds later, Ding Dong asks for a moment to speak but for the riddim to continue playing. That illustrates the importance of the riddim in dancehall, for it to keep going means the dance continues even if he isn’t singing the lyrics. The dancers continue to dance, with many of them doing variations of the Fling Yuh Shoulda dance. Ding Dong says “Wi nah run dung fahrin cuz everyting ago come ah wi foot” which means that we (Jamaicans) aren’t chasing after things that are foreign to our culture because our culture is making a mark through our foot movements/dance (BBC Radio 1Xtra, 2018). The feet are important in dancehall and Jamaican dance as a whole, for it represents the relationship between self and the earth. His statement displays a sense of grounding in cultural identity based on the expression of the Genna Bounce. He then proceeds to show respect to the selectors who play the music which supports the dancing. This reinforces the importance of the role that the selector plays in facilitating the atmosphere in dancehall.

Emotions can be effortlessly expressed by clients through rhythmic action, and through Genna Bounce, a feeling of importance and cultural identity, or smadditisation, is expressed. Having clients of the Jamaican diaspora explore the feeling of importance and respect through the Genna Bounce would aid in the feelings of marginalization associated with acculturation stress.

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## **Cohesion**

Cohesion brings about a sense of belonging to a group through the connection of rhythm. As stated earlier, rhythmic movement brings about a feeling of *communitas*, which is a goal for those in the Jamaican diaspora dealing with loss of identity. Rhythm puts a person in time with another while sharing and repeating the same simple movements. In dance, this builds a sense of community. This is evident in dancehall when participants do dances together, such as Genna Bounce, where they are moving in step with one another side by side. Schmais (1985) has said that cohesion is displayed when persons are moving in step with one another side by side. Cohesion is important because it is in this process that the participants feel a sense of belonging. Feelings of isolation, alienation and loss of identity are some of the issues that are manifested as a result of acculturation stress. Promoting cohesion in a dance/movement therapy session will foster a sense of belonging which will aid in reducing the feelings of isolation and alienation. Cohesion fully takes hold when the members actively participate in shared symbolic expression.

In dancehall, this symbolic expression is the various dances that symbolize various things. For example, Genna Bounce represents the movements of a general, a highly respected person. Participants in a dance/movement therapy session doing the Genna Bounce as a group can promote a unified feeling of respect amongst the group. Embodying this movement of importance while seeing others who share feelings of alienation express the movement can be transformative for someone.

In “Campion College Celebrating After Winning The 2018 School Challenge Quiz” uploaded by Insta Media (2018), a group of high school students are seen dancing to celebrate their school winning the island wide quiz competition. These individuals have a shared identity of being Jamaican students who attend Campion College and they decided to celebrate this

victory by dancing to dancehall. At the eight second mark, a group of students enter the frame doing the Genna Bounce (Insta Media, 2018). The students have not practiced together but they are moving in rhythm with one another and their movements are synchronized. A feeling or sense of community or *communitas* is displayed through the rhythmic movements.

A sense of cohesion is present as the students embody feeling important and respected through the Genna Bounce because their school is the island wide champion. An important thing to note in this video is that the students are doing the Genna Bounce but not to the song that was created based on the dance. The dancehall song they are dancing to is called “Champion” which is about being a champion. This showcases that dancehall dances stand on their own regardless of the song it is performed to and the meaning of the dance can transform based upon the music and context it is performed in.

In “Calabar Genna Bounce Victory Dance” uploaded by Jamaica World Magazine (2018), another group of high school students are shown doing the Genna Bounce to celebrate a victory. Calabar, an all-boys high school, won the island wide track and field competition and the students celebrated by embodying this dance of importance. These videos display the nomadic nature of dancehall, in that it is not restricted to being performed in a dancehall event/session. It displays how dancehall dances affirm identity in a group while unifying the group with a shared identity. The cohesion in the videos is displayed through the rhythm and the synchrony of their movements. Schmais (1985) states that cohesion is propelled by rhythm and synchrony.

### **Synchrony**

Synchrony means that the participants are moving in time with others. Schmais (1985) outlined different forms of synchrony, such as rhythmic synchrony, which is moving in time with different body motions or spatial patterns. Spatial synchrony is moving in time with the same



spatial designs being made by the same body parts. Effort synchrony is the same effort being exerted by participants but can be seen in different body parts. Dance/movement therapy encourages identifying with a social group by having a structure where people move together in time and space.

Schmais (1985) stated that “people moving in the same rhythm with the same spatial configuration become identified with one another” (p. 19). The structure of the dancehall session/event encourages the participants to move together in time and space through the selection of music by the selector. This encourages identifying with the social group and promotes *communitas*. The choice of music by the selector facilitates the type of movement from the group. For example, if the selector plays the Genna Bounce song, the participants will more than likely engage in the Genna Bounce dance where rhythmic, spatial and effort synchrony are displayed. With the culmination of the three types of synchrony, the group achieves a sense of solidarity (Schmais, 1985).

Synchrony, whether one or all three, tends to be supported by visual contact, sounds and/or words. This is evident in dancehall as explained by the selection of music by the selector. The selector promotes synchrony by verbally encouraging the participants through the sound system as well as the lyrics from the music he/she plays. For example, a selector will say to the crowd “From yuh know yuh look good and yuh heart clean, buss a dance” or “look roun and grab your real fren hand and wave inna di air” and proceed to play songs that correlate with the call & response. The selector verbally encourages the participants to embody a certain feeling and to respond non-verbally through movement as a song that relates is played. This is where the role of the therapist as selector comes in to play. The therapist can encourage synchrony through affirming the clients verbally while inviting them to respond through movement.

In “Kids Dancing to Ding Dong Genna Bounce Like A Pro” uploaded by Ninja Eyes Jamaican TV (2017), the selector can be seen dancing with the kids at the eleven second mark. Synchrony is displayed in the movements of the three kids as well as the selector, who joined in with them for eleven seconds. This video shows how synchrony was achieved through visual contact, as at the thirty-six second mark, one of the girls begins doing a different dance. The other girl looks at her and then proceeds to match her movements rhythmically and spatially. Afterwards, the selector can be heard over the microphone at the forty second mark, verbally encouraging the young boy who decides to improvise while using the Genna bounce as a basis for his movement.

Stanley-Niaah (2010) has stated that in dancehall there is a “particular ritual of interaction” that is enacted in “the dynamic relationship between the patrons, the selector, music and the dance” (p. 96). Schmais (1985) also discussed the role of the leader/therapist regarding synchrony and that the interaction between therapist and client facilitates the different forms of synchrony. The progress of synchrony within the group aids in resocialization, initiates expression and promotes cohesion. Resocialization with those who share the same cultural identity can aid in affirming one’s identity in a dance/movement therapy session. Those in the Jamaican diaspora can feel a sense of belonging and *communitas* through synchronous movements. Moving together in time, space and effort can lead to individuals feeling comfortable in expressing feelings that they initially didn’t feel to. These feelings or emotions are expressed through symbolic movement.

### **Symbolism**

As mentioned earlier, the Genna Bounce is symbolic of feeling respected and important. Expressing feeling important through movement is beneficial for those who feel less than or

disconnected from their cultural identity. Moving with others symbolically is therapeutic as it illuminates the feeling through the creation and collective participation of the dance. Symbolism in dance/movement therapy provides a link between the internal and external worlds of an individual. The internal thoughts or emotions can be represented structurally through movement. In this, the thought or emotion can be felt in the body, contemplated/analyzed and then connected to other symbolic movements provided by the individual or other group members. In continuing to look at the Genna Bounce, the providing of other symbolic movements by participants is seen in the Ravas Clavas video mentioned previously. The Fling Yuh Shoulda dance is linked with the Genna Bounce, even though Fling Yuh Shoulda is its own separate dance. In the Kids Dancing video, the girls and boys provide other symbolic movement in relation to the Genna Bounce. These connections can provide insight to unrealized feelings within an individual and illuminate shared experiences. Using the foundation of dancehall dances being named after personal lived experiences or culturally relevant phrases, those using dancehall in dance/movement therapy can move out their own experiences and name them if they so choose. Embodying these symbolic movements can provide insight into how to engage in a new culture while exploring their feelings of loss and alienation.

A part of the symbolism process is learning and creating the dance with the collective. Genna Bounce is a dance that is learned by watching others, whether a leader or a group, to engage in the symbolic movement. Schmais (1985) said regarding symbolism, that in order for an individual to participate, they “must pay attention to the therapist/choreographer, to the music and to each other” (p. 34). To learn the patterns, timing and steps, one must be aligned with the whole group by restraining impulses. It is in the collective that the healing occurs and in dancehall, the dancing is experienced by the collective. The group support is crucial as, with it,

people can move through liminal phases and sustain emotions (Schmais, 1985). Those in the Jamaican diaspora are in a liminal or transitional stage and through symbolism, they can move through this stage while enduring the emotion of exploring identity in a group.

### **Dancehall in Dance/Movement Therapy**

Dancehall has displayed that it is inherently healing based upon the similarities found in four of the Schmais healing processes. The act of dancing together in a group promotes a sense of community, or *communitas*, which is crucial to the Jamaican identity. The symbolic meaning of importance associated with the Genna Bounce illustrates how embodying this dance can be redeeming for this population. The Genna Bounce is just one example of how dancehall and the movements created in the culture, can be transformative and healing for those in the Jamaican diaspora. Integrating dancehall into a group dance/movement therapy session could be extremely beneficial in reconnecting the diaspora to their cultural identity.

### **Conclusion**

The Jamaican people have a long history of migration to various countries which has led to the formation of the Jamaican diaspora. The countries in which the Diaspora is most prominent are Canada, the U.K. and the United States. These countries, specifically the U.S., are different culturally from Jamaica in that the society is race-stratified, while Jamaica is a class-based society. Acculturation can prove to be mentally stressing for those in the diaspora due to the stark difference in culture and can be manifested in feelings of isolation, alienation and loss of cultural identity. Addressing mental health and seeking treatment are not common in the Jamaican culture, so finding a way that is culturally appropriate would be beneficial. Dance is a

significant aspect of Jamaican culture and has been used as a method of healing, transformation and identity affirmation within the community. Dance/movement therapy seeks to address mental health issues, such as loss of identity, through the use of movement and dance. The use of culturally significant dance forms in dance/movement therapy has been researched and found to be effective in dealing with acculturation stress, especially in group sessions. Claire Schmais outlined healing processes that occur during group dance/movement therapy sessions based on people moving together, similar to a community.

Dancehall is a culture that evolved from traditional Jamaican dance forms and is a signifier of Jamaican identity and community building. It provides participants with a sense of *communitas*, which is a feeling of community as well as *smadditisation*, a feeling of importance. With dancehall being a community dance form, four of the healing processes Schmais presented have been found within dancehall. By highlighting the healing processes in dancehall, it can be asserted that utilizing it in dance/movement therapy group sessions would be effective for the Jamaican diaspora.

### **Future Consideration**

Implementing cultural forms of dance into dance/movement therapy should be taken with great consideration. In researching dancehall, the author came across the act of invitation into the culture in the study by Sjövall (2013). Sjövall is of Swedish descent and researched dancehall when she was invited by dancers living in Kingston, Jamaica. She noted that her research and subsequent understanding of dancehall would have been impeded if she had not been extended the invitation. The Jamaican people are protective and prideful regarding their culture. It would be appropriate and culturally sensitive to first research and then be invited into the culture before

using it with the population. Practical research should be done with the population to test the theoretical study.

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