

HIP-HOP YOU DON'T STOP

**“HIP-HOP...YOU DON'T STOP”: EXPLORING EXPERIENCES OF PANDEMIC
PEDAGOGICAL CONNECTION**

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Abstract

Can you feel the groove? Hip-Hop has the rhythmic power to connect individuals while providing an outlet for creative expression. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a disruption in our day-to-day lives, causing a sense of disconnect between each other. The implementation of government protocols such as mask mandates, social distancing, and the transition to virtual learning has caused challenges for teachers in the dance community. I am curious to phenomenologically inquire into the experience of pedagogical connection during the COVID-19 pandemic. Can we connect in a time of disconnection?

The purpose of this Motion-Sensing Phenomenological study is to understand the interactive experiences of connection through Hip-Hop dance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants of this study were three Hip-Hop dance teachers who taught consistently, in-person or online through interactive technology during the pandemic. By actively immersing myself in the pedagogical connection, I observed, moved, and sensed this phenomenon in action. I conducted semi-structured motion-sensing phenomenological interviews with teacher to elaborate on their meaningful and connective experiences. Drawing from my participatory sensations and observations, I used the *Interactive Function to Flow Model* (Lloyd & Smith, 2022) to form my research questions: What connective postures showed when a participant was ready to groove? What connective gestures drew out the moments of connection? What qualities of timing and force cultivated feelings of a connection, and what kinaesthetic sensations were experienced when connections were felt?

By stepping into these motion-sensing experiences, pedagogical connective moments emerged between participants, revealing somatic connective meanings in Hip-Hop dance. A deeper understanding of the intricate relation between Hip-Hop, movement, and its connective power within a global pandemic was found tethered within three contexts: a cypher, a partnered dance activity, and beyond a four walled computer screen. From relational positions of teacher and students, connective gestures shaped moments of collective synergies cultivated interactive flow. Despite the barriers of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can feel the groove, and it is clear with HIP-HOP, WE DON'T STOP.

Keywords: Hip-Hop, dance, connection, interactive, movement, pandemic

Acknowledgements

I dedicate this to my mother, Audrey Campbell. She always rooted for me and fuelled my love of dance. Although she was not able to make it to my last dance recital, graduations, and soon, wedding, her love has been felt every step of the way. Mom, I hope I have made you proud.

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Interactive Function2Flow Model: Movement in the Classroom Edition

List of Acronyms

MSP: Motion-Sensing Phenomenology

IAF2F: InterActive Function to Flow Method

Chapter One: Introduction

The Pause

Picture a Hip-Hop¹ dance battle where break-dancers, also known as B-Boys and B-Girls, take over the space to demonstrate their best, most difficult moves. The audience does more than spectate, helping as well to create an energy amplified by a collective beat. A bounce begins to form that unifies everyone with the music and positivity that surrounds them. The energy continues to build as the Master of Ceremonies (MC) leads the commentary of the battle, and the Disk Jockey (DJ) controls the dynamic music on the turntable (Turner, 2012). The music is pumping as steady as a heartbeat. Suddenly, there is a pause. The DJ begins to scratch the record, creating a break in the music, and producing a moment of uncertainty. Hints and subtle cues of what is being mixed can be heard, but until the new track officially drops, what will happen next is unknown.

March of 2020 was the beginning of a new track, a song with a haunting beat... In just a few short weeks, COVID-19 became a global pandemic, forcing society to press pause on routine activities, and confine themselves to ensure the safety of all individuals in the community (World Health Organization, 2021). If the world was seen and felt through a Hip-Hop lens and played on a vinyl record, 2020 could be described as a DJ rewinding, pausing, and changing the beat in the lifeworld of the pandemic. Each government measure to prevent the spread of the virus acted as a scratch. Practices such as social distancing, face masks, curfews, and self-isolations were compulsory. Consequently, face-to-face education was left in a revolving cycle

¹ It is important to address the orthography of the term *hip-hop*, as it varies in the vast scope of literature (Alim, Ibrahim, & Pennycook, 2009). In the thesis it will be addressed as *Hip-Hop*.

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of confining measures and temporary lifted restrictions. In addition to new day-to-day practices, teachers and students had to contend with navigating through virtual learning. As everyone was experiencing new forms of connection in embodied living spaces, dance teachers were also trying new things to keep the record playing and keep the learning going.

Teaching in the Pause

Hip-Hop is more than a dance. It is a cultural movement (Bailey, 2020) that is palpably felt, communicated, and expressed through musicality and rhythmic conceptions of the beat (DeFrantz, 2004). The Hip-Hop bounce courses through my veins. It lifts my spirits, physically reminds me of my Bronx roots, and connects me to the students I teach. Energy. Light. Love. These are elements I try to emulate and foster in my dance workshops. To me, Hip-Hop is about creating a vibe that brings communities together. It is important to address the orthography of the term Hip-Hop, as it varies in the vast scope of literature, i.e., hip hop, hip-hop, Hip Hop, etc. (Alim, Ibrahim, & Pennycook, 2009). In the thesis it will be addressed as “Hip-Hop” due its power and immense impact on my life and the world. The words “Hip-Hop We Don’t Stop” as sung by the Sugar Hill gang in 1979, depict the motions I face as I teach within the pause. When the world stops, does Hip-Hop? Or does Hip-Hop provide an outlet for continued connection?

For the past six years, I have taught Hip-Hop dance workshops to children of all ages, from junior kindergarten to grade twelve. These experiences have amplified my feelings towards movement and interactive connection in and out of the classroom. But nothing had set me up for something like this pandemic. As I tried to continue a somewhat normal lifestyle, I also tried my best to carry on my dance workshops just as I did before the pandemic.

The room spins as I unravel my tight, ball-shaped body out of a seated spin. I pose, my left arm propping my head up, and my right knee pointing to the sky. I feel the

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sweat dripping down my back and the incredible cooling sensation of the floor as I try to catch my breath. I look up at the screen with a smile and see something drifting from the corner of my eye. I look down on the ground and I see crumbs gliding across the floor in cadence with my strident exhales — trails of my husband's late-night snack from twelve hours before. I snap back to reality as I remember that I am dancing in my kitchen, the only space in my apartment with enough room to dance. I feel the thumping in my chest as my heart races from the vigorous dance workshop I just finished teaching. I feel my muscles beginning to tense, and I shoot up to my feet.

“Wow! Great job, everyone!” I yell and give a thumbs up. “Now when I say: ‘Hip,’ you say: ‘Hop!’”

‘Hip’” ...

“Hip” ...

I am met with the silence of the screen. Outwardly, I grin and cup my hand over my right ear as I gesture to listen to my invisible audience, but my inward smile begins to fade.

Teaching dance online was not what I hoped it would be. I felt vulnerable to the technology and boxed in by the four sides of the screen. I spent the last hour playing with the parameters of the video lens, making sure I did not dance out of frame. I found myself always checking if my students could see my feet, not to mention worrying about how many times I would hit my hands on the kitchen table. I was struggling... I was left to wonder: how can I connect through the screen?

I greatly miss the power and the synergy that comes with collectively supporting others. This is where I feel the beat. This is where I feel at home. I yearn for the same level of energy —

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that heart pounding, body thumping, and uplifting experience that comes with interactively dancing with a community of young learners. I can picture it now: fist raised, wireless microphone wrapped around my cheek, I yell “Freestyle!” My students and I jump and move to the music, listening to our laughter and thud of the beat, fusing with bodily movements form an electric synergy. But as I hear the quiet hum of my computer, I am reminded that we are living in a time of drastic change. Teaching has to be done at a distance, masks have to be worn, and underlying fears about the pandemic grow day by day. This fear is crippling and comes with feeling of anxiety and doubt (Howard & Howard, 2012). With no end in sight, I feel as if I have lost control, not only of my dancing or teaching, but of who I am. I want to keep the momentum of my dance, my passion, my world, my life, and what I believe is my purpose. But the pandemic has pushed me away from what I crave the most: connection.

Inner Thoughts of Teaching Behind the Screen

As I try to recall the steps I did so easily in the past,

I begin to hesitate, wonder, question, and ask...

“What am I doing?”

SCRATCH!

I slide to the left and put my arms in the air

All moves that seemed so familiar,

Now seem weird

Moving in my kitchen all alone,

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Teaching a class, recording on a cell phone

Instead of in a gym filled with high energy students,

Eager to move, groove, and have fun with their movements.

SCRATCH!

But...

Why

Am I

Not having

Fun?

Why does this feel weird?

Why do I feel stationary?

Systematic,

Mechanic.

Like a machine forcing moves out from each corner of my body.

Something that seems so special to me now seems like a difficult task.

SCRATCH!

The thing that I found so powerful, the thing that I am so grateful for...

The thing that has saved my life more times than one.

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Now seems to be hard. Stagnant. Stiff. And no fun.

Forced.

SCRATCH!

I swing my fist harder in the air so I can get into the groove of the music.

I rock, I sway, I stomp to the beat.

Confusion leads to frustration

Frustration leads to defeat.

My inner thoughts take over

SCRATCH!

It's helpless.

I can't do this anymore.

I'm just not in it.

It's just too foreign.

What am I doing wrong?

Why has it been so long?

SCRATCH!

Why have I become so distracted?

How do I connect to my students beyond the song?

Questioning the Pause

For the past two years, I have tried to understand the meaning of connection. Like a DJ working their turn tables, the soundtrack of this year was filled with strenuous events, and each new disruption felt like a scratch on my life record. I was forced to rewind and start again. As an elementary school teacher with a philosophy rooted in an active, inclusive, and movement-based forms of education, I wondered how I could achieve pedagogical connection. I began to ask: Can we connect through the screen? With the current social tensions and physical limitations caused by COVID-19, I found it essential to reach out and create positive experiences for students and the greater community. What is the experience of teaching Hip-Hop dance virtually? What is it really like to dance through the screen?

As I began to ponder my feelings about faded connections through the screen, I realized re-learning how to connect with my students was a series of trial and error. With each class, I found myself facing new challenges. I found that my link to my students only went as far as my Wi-fi connection. This strenuous cycle continued, but my motivation for movement held steady. When wondering about pedagogical connection, I began to realize this may be my greatest strength - creating an authentic dynamic between myself and my students. Restricted teaching due to virtual parameters meant that I had difficulty conflating my goals for cultural embodiment with this new environment. I decided to introduce poses that allowed students' personalities to shine, such as standing with chests high, and arms stretched out wide. I also taught the power pose, where they stood with arms crossed and heads slightly tilted. Though these postures were meant to exude and express confidence, in these moments, I felt my own confidence dimming.

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As I rocked and bounced side to side, in gestures that once heightened my vitality, I now felt uneasy. I had lost my groove.

Why did something that felt so natural suddenly become so foreign? Was I the only one feeling this way? Doing this alone on my kitchen floor, with no tangible interaction between myself and my students, feelings of constant reassurance and communal support were not as present as they would have been in person. The dramatic shift had me beginning to crave social interaction more than anything. As I stared into the camera of my computer, I quickly found myself questioning my approach to teaching. I felt curious to know how other teachers were attempting to develop this sense of connection. To what degree was it possible to feel a collective and embodied beat through Hip-Hop?

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to understand the experience of pedagogical connection in Hip-Hop dance during the COVID-19 pandemic through an analysis of the postures, positions, gestures, and expressions of rhythmic movements that lead to flow. Teaching during a pandemic caused educators to restructure their pedagogy and develop strategies to create an environment of co-creation, differentiation, connection, and inclusion (Daniela & Visvizi, 2021; Mahmood, 2021) for their students. I am researching this because in a time of disconnection, isolation, and uncertainty, I wish to understand how teaching Hip-Hop dance draws people together.

My research goal is to dive into and deeply understand the phenomenon of pedagogical connection during COVID- 19 within the context of teaching Hip-Hop dance. I wonder, what is it like to move through and beyond socially created barriers and play with the scratches of our life records? Will a feeling of unity continue to emerge during these difficult times? To what

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degree is it possible to feel a collective, embodied beat through Hip-Hop? What experiences cultivate this felt sense of connection, one that is so strong that it has the potential to break through the barriers set by the COVID-19 context? I am also curious... what inhibits or works against this emergent feeling of connection?

I take up these questions in the remaining headings of this first chapter and continue to depict my progressive stages of emergent understanding in the next two chapters. This first chapter addresses the current literature surrounding pedagogical connection, Hip-Hop, and its innovative involvement in education. It will also introduce the methodology, conceptual framework for the research, the research questions, and the synopsis of my bracketing experience. Chapter Two features an article that will be submitted to the [Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry](#) journal for peer review. It features a phenomenological description and analysis of three vivid teaching experiences of Hip-Hop within the Canadian context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter 3 describes my experience of becoming a phenomenologist. Here I discuss my insights and understandings of pedagogical connection in Hip-Hop and what this study means for my practice and future goals.

Literature Review: The Throwback

Pedagogical Connective Experiences

Research shows that human beings have the “desire to connect and thrive in connective relationships” (Beardall, 2017, p. 3). Teachers take on the responsibility of challenging, engaging, and motivating their students to encourage these connections to unfold (Beardall, 2017). Pedagogical connection is a dynamic harmony that emerges from the relational support of the teacher and experiences of the student. This approach to teaching joins the teacher’s

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objectives and the students' understanding to welcome a felt sense of commonality and wellbeing (Keogh & Davis, 2017).

Teachers play an essential part in the classroom. Not only do they facilitate and guide students through their knowledge journey, but they are also advocates for active living and healthy choices. These lessons also go beyond the classroom. In a learning space that is purposeful and rooted in urbanity, Hip-Hop is uniquely situated in civic engagement (Nguyen & Ferguson, 2019). Looking through a phenomenological lens may help students and teachers find this connection through Hip-Hop and understand the beauty of the culture, allowing students and teachers to rethink instructional approaches as by moving away from instructional intervention (Dando, 2017). However, as Koff (2017) puts it:

Pedagogy only becomes a series of actions when these theories are put into place guiding the interactions between student and teacher. Without these conscious actions, there is no pedagogy and then “teaching” becomes “giving knowledge” without creating the environment for the learner to acquire knowledge (p.71).

Meaningful learning can occur when valuing individuality and providing the space for students to succeed (McLennan & Peel, 2011). The ways in which the teacher and student connection is formed in movement guides my review of the literature. Thus, I begin with how the body may create movement connections. Literature suggests dance pedagogy requires taking time to understand the diversity of student perspectives, and how they shape their lives and wellbeing, while engaging these diverse perspectives in open dialogue (Brown, 2017; Calamoneri et al., 2020; Shapiro, 2017). Implementing a pedagogy that creates a supportive community and considers individual unique expression enables communal connection (Peles, 2021), but predicaments like the COVID-19 pandemic are overwhelming and can cause feelings uneasy and

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agitation (Thompson, 2007). However, I would like to understand how we live through, and teach within, the constraints of a pandemic to achieve moments of pedagogical connection within the community.

Getting Into the Groove

Dance. Although it can be defined as exploring locomotive movements without equipment (Ontario et al., 2019), dance is also an outlet for students' energy and motion. Its reach is greater than many can understand. Dance can be extrinsic, as it has the power to reflect movements from other cultures and can be a communication outlet for curricular and conceptual knowledge. Dance can also be intrinsic, as it allows students the freedom to express their stories uniquely through the mind, body, and soul, providing opportunities for students to communicate values and beliefs about the human experience through a different medium. Teaching within a relational and connective pedagogy enables “robust connections” (McLennan & Peel, 2011, p. 44) between teachers and their students, allowing them to become “the best they can be” (McLennan & Peel, 2011, p. 40).

Literature has supported technology in dance education as it reinforces the traditional face-to-face learning experience in studios or classrooms (Colombi & Knosp, 2017; Li et al., 2018; Lucas, 2019; Nikolai et al., 2019). It can embrace ways of knowing and allow students to “grow in diverse learning environments” (Colombi & Knosp, 2017, p. 76). It can also extend thinking and discourse beyond the studio/classrooms (Risner & Anderson, 2008). However, dance is a “movement based participatory activity that requires everyone’s physical presence” (Li et al., 2018, p. 193) and although it has potential to embrace various pathways of learning, it has yet to deeply analyze the felt sense of interactivity in the virtual space. Therefore, further research must

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focus on the relational, somatic, and kinesthetic experiences designed for individuals to provide meaningful and engaging experiences.

If various workshop formats can provide an outlet for interactively developing relationships, deepening somatic understanding and personal growth, perhaps pedagogical connection can explore how somatic dance experiences can be used to build a greater understanding. Somatic practices provide a “valuable medium for exploring consciousness and cognition as embodied phenomena” (Braude, 2015, p. 127), and these experiences allow for enduring understanding and lifelong learning. Somatic dance experiences have the power to elicit transformative, embodied connection, that engages us to think critically and feel interpersonally so that we can gain greater awareness of ourselves in the lifeworld (Larimer, 2016; Laidlaw & Beer, 2018). It can open a willingness to move by exercising receptivity, encouraging whole-body listening, and guiding collective movement with others. When translated into communal dance forms (dancing with others), these movements become part of a lifestyle as they are centered on “human livelihood, community, and cultural exchange” (Chang & Hogans, 2021, p. 12). We can also feel a sense of belonging as we live through, and find future opportunities, to connect in the communal learning experience (Love, 2015; Laidlaw & Beer, 2018; Peles, 2021).

Historic Meanings of Hip-Hop Music and Dance and Connection

Over the past 60 years, Hip-Hop has become an established global phenomenon. It influences many facets of society and has made its way into education (Broome & Munson, 2019). Hip-Hop culture is comprised of the following nine elements: breakin' (breakdancing), emceein' (rapping), graffiti art (aerosol spray painting), deejayin' (disc jockey or DJ), beatboxin' (using the voice to create drum-like sounds), street fashion (visual expression through clothing and accessories), street language (specialize vocabulary and slang), street knowledge (how to

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navigate through communities), and street entrepreneurialism (independently building your creative enterprise) (Sachs, 2014; Johnson, 2018; MacPherson, 2018). Hip-Hop and its elements form a platform for individuals, specifically youth, to explore, create, and thrive.

Hip-Hop, as a cultural movement, is rooted bodily movement. Hip-Hop originated in the streets of South Bronx, New York, in low-income neighbourhoods, where community members lived in inadequate circumstances, such as homelessness, substance abuse, and criminal activity (J. Chang, 2005; Newman, 2005; Hamilton, 2021). One form of relief or claim to power that they had was their ability to express creativity and individuality. As an escape from the external struggles, members deep within the community took to the streets to escape the political noise.

One of the originators of this creative mindset is DJ Cool Herc (Clive Campbell), who invented the revolutionary technique of the “Merry-Go-Round” (Speers, 2017), where the breaks of a song held firm as a call out for dancers to hit the floor. During these breaks, people of the community would do a series of spins, kicks, and skillful tricks. They were later deemed B-Boys or B-Girls (Rose, 1994; Chang & Cook, 2021). While improvising, dancers move creatively, adding their personal touches, weaving their signature into the dance. This was a precursor to forming a *cypher*. Partly for competition and partly for the community (J. Chang, 2007), this dance circle created an important window into how humans organize their world through forms of self-expression, while being supported, appreciated, and validated by those around them (Fogarty, 2016; Nguyen & Ferguson, 2019). Despite societal adversity, communities were able to come together and connect through the rhythms of the street.

The Canadian Context

A connective power is also felt within the northern streets of Canada, where local artists and dancers began to share their talent in artistic showcases. Echoing their neighbors in the

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United States, artists such as the “Get Loose Crew, Maestro Fresh Wes, and Michie Mee” (Campbell, 2014, p. 272) placed Hip-Hop’s stamp on Canada’s history. These artists set the stage for dancers like Stephen ‘Buddha’ Leafloor, Wayne ‘KidQuick’ Lacasse, Trevor ‘TrickyT’ Walker, Chris ‘Dexter’ Albrey, Glen ‘Lil Glen’ Walker, Rob ‘BeatStreet’ Giroux to create the legendary crew: Canadian Floor Masters (CFM). The CFM is Canada’s oldest B-Boy dance crew (Lefebvre, 2012). Originating in Ottawa, Ontario, they co-created the B-Boy pedagogy and aesthetic, and became the “original generation” of Canadian Hip-Hop practitioners (Lefebvre, 2012). Over the years they have inspired expression and connected with others through this living, breathing, artistic culture. They paved the way for dancers Tara Wilson, Emmanuelle “Cleopatra” Le Phan, Alexandra ‘Spicey’ Landé, (Noel, 2020), and Yvon ‘Crazy Smooth’ Soglo to express themselves in cyphers, battles, jams, and performances all across Canada and the world. These dancers have also taken their passion and skills in the craft a step further by passing their knowledge to the next generation.

Community Connection

In the Canadian context, Hip-Hop dance and its power to connect can be seen in various community programs and events (Beaulac et al., 2011; Leafloor, 2012; Lefebvre, 2012). The impact of these programs are examples of Hip-Hop’s connective power when faced with adversity in the Northern hemisphere (Beaulac et al., 2010). In 2014, Stephen ‘Buddha’ Leafloor, founder of *Blueprint for Life*, created a youth outreach program in Canada’s remote arctic areas (Leafloor, 2012). With this program he taught “B-Boying, Boogaloo, Locking, and Hip-Hop” (Leafloor, 2012, p. 135). history to Canada’s youth in remote communities. During this program, Buddha changed lives through mentorship, movement, and meaningful discussion. Through cyphers, Buddha and his team of dance teachers encouraged the students to “connect the mind,

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body and soul,” (Leafloor, 2012, p. 139) as they developed meaningful relationships with others in the community.

Similarly, dancers like Tara Wilson, Judi Lopez, and B-Boy CrazySmooth, also took steps toward pedagogical applications of their skills. Wilson, a creative director, developed *Pulse* studios based in the Hip-Hop community in Calgary, bringing the flavour to Canada’s west end (*Our Story | Pulse Studios | Calgary*, 2020). Through *KeepRockinYou*, a community-based breakdancing program, Lopez created a platform for Hip-Hop in a pedagogical space that focused on the female presence in Canada’s south (Fogarty et al., 2018). CrazySmooth co-founded *BBoyizm*, which is an Ottawa-based program that uses “breakdancing and hip-hop to look at love in its many forms” (Theatre & Dance, 2012, p. 109).

Approaches to Connection in Hip-Hop Pedagogy

While most public discourse on Hip-Hop in the classroom focuses on literacy, academic practices, and student voice and identity (Haaken et al., 2012; Ibrahim, 2014; Kelly, 2019; Love, 2015; Ma, 2010), my research aimed to investigate the pedagogical connections made between teachers and students. Studies have shown that Hip-Hop's connective pedagogies can be seen in the classroom, such as with students sitting in a circle and constructing personal connections and meaning through dialogue. Doing this allows the students to openly explore their ideologies and identities (Taylor & Taylor, 2007; Kelly, 2019; Leonard & Cridland-Hughes, 2020).

The concept for the circle was also translated into the pedagogy of dance. The cypher, or the *Circle of Love* (MacPherson, 2018), creates past and present connections to keep the culture in its richest form. Hip-Hop dance’s original intentions were to promote peace, unity, and having fun (MacPherson, 2018). Over time, it became a form of social resistance and a way of life.

Energy bouncing from the dancers, to the audience, to the DJ and their music creates elemental

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synergy. These embodied moments can be electrifying. Here is where Hip-Hop can make the beat visible (Defrantz, 2004). The music's rhythmic evenness contributes to a sense of groove (Stewart, 2010). Not only are you able to hear it, but you can see and feel it, connect with it, and connect with others in the environment. This is the bounce. The bounce in Hip-Hop is a recoil, a function of the Hip-Hop sound, and a foundational move. It calls and invites dancers to move and exercise their sense of agency as they become a part of a connective movement conversation (Dando, 2017; Defrantz, 2004; MacPherson, 2018).

When it comes to dancing, Hip-Hop has been used to teach dance principles such as rhythm, shape, space, and dynamics, as students explore and embody their life world (Osumare, 2021). The riffs, rhythms, and repetition common to music throughout the African diaspora translate into social structures like cyphers (Hopkinson, 2020). Performing rhythmic actions in unison, such as in dance circles, is beneficial to positive well-being and good fellowship, as it strengthens relationships and builds a sense of connectedness. The layering of these connective experiences can show a link between individuals of a community inside and outside the classroom (Kelly, 2019), potentially forming a bond created by pedagogical connection.

The Push and Pulls of the Pandemic & its Implications for Pedagogy

Larimer (2016) explains dance as a movement pattern concept that reflects the value systems and cultural norms we embody. I have experienced a pull and desire to connect during this COVID-19 pandemic (Barrett-Fraser, 2021), but I am also struggling to connect as I am pushed against its constraints. The pressures of teaching and my fear of the unknown leave me longing to connect in a time of disconnection.

In Celeste Snowber's, *A Curriculum of Longing*, she explains the characteristics of longing and human desire. She describes that desire and longing are as natural as breathing, and

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its elemental value comes out from our limits. Just like our breath, we do not realise its importance until its gone. The COVID-19 pandemic forced a barrier between us and many of the parts of life we took for granted — moments of desire, movement, and connection. For most, this left at least a two-year space unfilled, so I wonder what it would take to experience those moments we longed for. I wonder what steps we can take to re-build or rediscover those moments of desire and longing, connected to a place where we felt whole.

Methodology: This is How We Do It

Phenomenology is not a “theoretical system” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015, p. 8) - there is more depth to understanding the experiences in our lifeworld. Some say phenomenology seeks to create “reflective texts” (Goble, 2019, p. 3). However, through what van Manen (2016) calls “reflective praxis” (p. 128), I have learned that there is a difference between constructing a text from a “body of knowledge,” and learning how to feel what is happening within and through my body. Motion-Sensing Phenomenology (MSP) challenges the concept of reflectivity. In contrast to reflective, one-way types of thinking, MSP explores the “motional sensations” of *living* experiences (Lloyd & Smith, 2021, p. 11). It’s one thing to *see* what is experienced, but *feeling* creates “distinctively different renditions of experience”(Sheets-Johnstone, 2020, p. 20).

Conducting phenomenology requires a careful “description of lived-through quality...[and the] meaning of the expressions of the lived experience” (van Manen, 2016, p. 25). However, it is important to note the difference between the *lived* and the *living* experiences (Lloyd, 2018). Living in the now offers deeper insight to the experiences of the lifeworld that van Manen (2016) describes as speciality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality with others. MSP looks beyond the lived body, time, space, and feelings to understand “sensitive touch, contact and

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direction” of *living* flow experiences (Lloyd & Smith, 2015, p. 268). It is a different way of meaning making, where movement is the primary focus, and to fully understand the phenomenon in question, one must completely engage in the process while becoming highly sensitive to the movement themselves. The process is complex as Lloyd and Smith (2021) state:

The goal of MSP is to describe moments of movement pleasure such that they spring to life and take on meanings that were not necessarily so obvious at the time. No interview transcript will do this work for you. Regardless of the source of information in the way one orients to and senses the functions, forms, feelings and flows of a movement practice, the onus is on the researcher to ‘write up’ the study such that both the researcher, the study participants, and interested readers come away (walk away and dance away) with heightened sensitivity to the movement practice being described and analyzed. (p. 12)

MSP is a wing that spreads to feel experiences more deeply. As the air glides under this wing of exploration, this methodology will allow me to truly participate in the phenomenon of pedagogical connection.

Sensing the Motion of the Connection

MSP is the “textual practice of moving kinaesthetically, aesthetically and ethically with others.” (Lloyd & Smith, 2015, p. 274). To understand the experience of pedagogical connection in a phenomenological manner, I must enter “into the personal subjective experience of another” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2020, p. 23). Thus, MSP is the methodological inspiration of this study - an approach to making sense of a phenomenon, in this case the experience of Hip-Hop pedagogy, through attention paid to the kinaesthetic sense. Primarily exploring the felt sense of connection gives voice to the temporal and kinaesthetic bodily movements we are usually unaware of (Sheets-Johnstone, 2020).

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Lloyd and Smith (2021) state the impact of first-person participation in the research, and how it can impact one's own feelings and provide a rich foundation for understanding and meaning. While engaging kinaesthetically in the practice, one may experience meaningful moments through the “‘form,’ ‘feeling’ and ‘flow ‘of [their] movement consciousness” (Lloyd & Smith, 2021, p. 3). Living through these moments allow for opportunities to experience the essences of connection. The term “essence” is rooted from the Greek term *ousia*, meaning “inner essential nature of a thing [and] the true being of a thing” (van Manen, 2016, p. 177). Teachers orient themselves with this essences that emerges from pure experience, and provide a layer of magic to their pedagogy (van Manen, 2014, 2016). This essence of pedagogical connection is what I am researching in relation to teaching Hip-Hop dance.

To help me form a kinaesthetic relational connection with each participant, I will attend up to three classes with of them before our interviews. Doing this will grant me the opportunity to step inside the shoes of their students and experience their teaching first-hand. As a participatory observer, I will able not only see the teachers in action, but also move with, feel with, and groove with them to experience pedagogical connection.

I will make field journal notes following each class to help construct an existential description of body, space, time, and relation. I these moments I will orient to the “now” of each participant's lived experience (Lloyd & Smith, 2021). I will observe how the participants build a relational pedagogical connection and got an inside feel for their teaching praxis. See Table 1 for more information on my methods and their theoretical underpinnings. This experiential data will be used as a reference to deepen the kinaesthetic nature of the interview, and prompt examples that were specific to each teacher.

Table 1

Questions, Theory and Methods: Main Research Questions Rooted in Theory, and

Corresponding Methodology.

Research Question	Theory Used	Method
<p>What is the experience of pedagogical connection in the context of Hip-Hop dance?</p>	<p><i>InterActive Function2Flow Theory (IAF2F):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encompassing the four existentials of body, space, time, other found in an interactive ‘living’ experience with others, to understand the essence of connection. • Using Motion-sense phenomenology to describe the kinaesthetically meaningful moments of connection. • Fundamentally defining connection through subsections: interactive function, interactive form, interactive feeling and interactive flow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will becoming an active participant in the Hip-Hop dance workshop. • I will move, feel and observe what is it like to interactively connect. • I will interview the dance teachers and, through Motion-Sensing Phenomenology, which emphasizes the felt sense of specific postures, gestures, and shapes of made by the body. • I will find common themes between the dance teacher experiences that show elements of connective meaning through Hip-Hop pedagogy.
<p>What are the postures that cultivate a sense of readiness to pedagogically connect?</p>	<p><i>Interactive Function:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A subsection in the IAF2F Framework which looks at identifying the poses, postures, and positions of the moving bodies that welcome others to connect and invite a sense of fluid responsiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will observe, feel and describe my experiences of connective postures in the workshops. • I will feel the impact of postural stances that show they are eager to dance, connect and be present. • During the interview(s) I will ask the dance teachers to describe the signs of readiness from the teacher and students.
<p>What are the subtle bodily</p>	<p><i>Interactive Form:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will observe, feel and describe my experiences of

<p>shapes and gestures that form pedagogical connection?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A subsection in the IAF2F framework which analyses the shapes, gestures and kinaesthetic attentiveness of the bodies in motion which brings about communication and connection with others. 	<p>connective positions in the workshops.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will feel the ways in which the teachers are changing their positions and gestures, i.e., the bounce or lean. • During the interview(s) I will ask the dance teachers to describe the bodily shapes, gesture and signs that suggest both teacher and students are forming a connection.
<p>What dynamic sensations of force, rhythm and expression contribute to the felt sense of pedagogical connection?</p>	<p><i>Interactive Feeling:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A subsection in the IAF2F framework which looks beyond the somatic awareness and finds the feeling brought about or by changed by a greater depth of interaction. • These sensations can be introduced through the collective force, rhythm and expression of individuals in the activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will observe, feel and describe my experiences of timing and force in the workshops. • I will feel connective sensations in the movements of hands, torso, shoulders and head made by the teacher. • I will sense the connective rhythm within these movements to understand where they are felt in the body. • During the interview(s) I will ask the dance teachers to recount the feelings of connection experienced through rhythmical movements, force, space and attitude.
<p>What cumulative postures/positions/gestures/expressions contribute to the experience of pedagogical connection indicative of flow?</p>	<p><i>Interactive Flow:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final subsection that encompasses the feeling of unity through a connective moment(s) of vitality, energy and transcendent motions of flow. • What factors contribute to the synergic energy experienced these moments of flow? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will observe, feel and describe my experiences of connecting energies in the workshops. • I will sense the quality of movement and how it is created. • I will sense the shared rhythm and feel if it has a positive impact on the students. • I will sense general moments of surprise, as feelings of

		<p>energy, power and life emerge in relational flow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the interview(s) I will ask the dance teachers to describe moments indicative of flow, unity and connectedness.
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By using MSP as my methodological inspiration and approach to making sense of the kinaesthetic experience of Hip-Hop pedagogy, I sense that moments of connective postures, gestures, feelings, and movements have the power to create “solidarity both in and out of the space, disrupting the understanding of linear time and space... acknowledging the multiplicity of energy, and learning” (Le Lay, 2020, p. 147). In these moments of researching living experiences, I aim to feel and be a part of the culture of connection that can be experienced in education through Hip-Hop and movement. I will join individuals to connect and celebrate our bodies through movement in a meaningful and transformative way.

The Conceptual Framework: The Connective Beat

Max van Manen (2016) describes phenomenology as an approach that is rooted in “textual reflection on the lived experience and practical actions of everyday life with the intent of increasing one’s thoughtfulness and practical resourcefulness or tact” (van Manen, 2016, p. 3). However, my conceptual framework is based on finding the essences within interactive and connective dance experiences.

To do this, I must extend beyond the four existentials of phenomenological inquiry, lived body, lived space, lived time and lived other, to understand the felt sense of connection.

The *Interactive Function2Flow* model (IAF2F) has informed existential inquiries of moments of

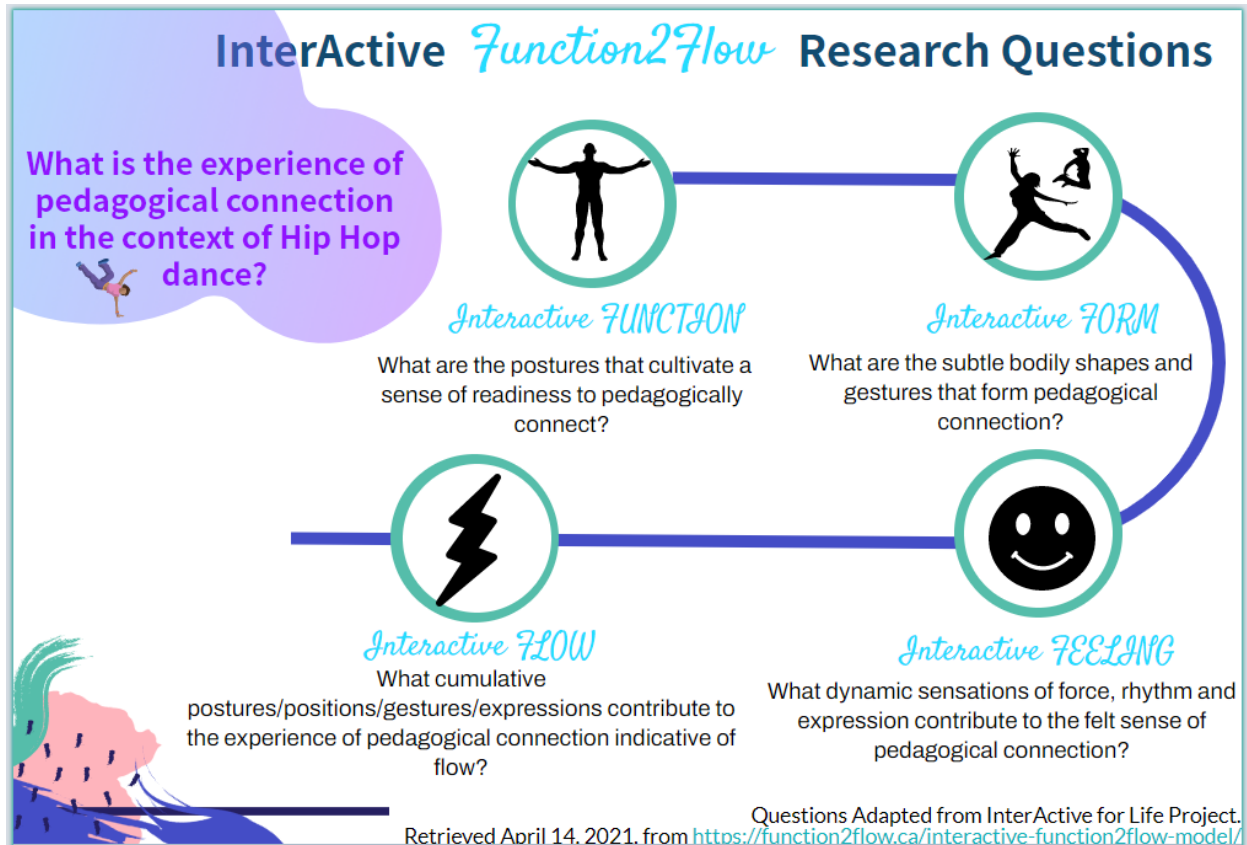
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relational connection through MPS (Lloyd & Smith, 2022). This model focuses on how individuals connect through the postures, positions, sensations, and expressions within the body and the timing, force, and energy cultivated in the shared experience. Adapted from the *Function2Flow* model, IAF2F can be explained by categorizing our *living* experiences into four dimensions: InterActive Function, InterActive Form, InterActive Feeling and InterActive Flow (Lloyd & Smith, 2022). When introducing the term *interactive*, the focus is shifted to looking into the connective potential of each dimension, while providing a relational motion-sensing perspective on how we experience the existentials.

My research focused on the shared space between the two meters distance, the limited space behind the mask, the extensive space experienced through the screen, and what shapes and postures are formed given the opportunity to move to the Hip-Hop beat. This framework, adapted in Figure 1, will guide my movement inquiry as it focused on the interactive functions, forms, feelings, and flows of the body/bodies as they move, using motion sensitivity to recognize and analyze the meaning of these lived experiences.

Figure 1.

Sub-Research Questions inspired by the Interactive Function2Flow Model to help me answer my over-arching question: In what ways may the phenomenon of pedagogical connection be experienced during this COVID time within the context of teaching Hip-Hop dance?



This model speaks to the dance world because of its kinaesthetic approach to movement and its process to sense making while being present through living experience. The dynamic postures of teaching dance will be the InterActive Function, the baseline of my inquiry journey. With this dimension I will feel for the kinetic presence of the living body, and how it shows an individual's readiness to connect through the connective posture taken within the activity. The InterActive Form of the relational bodies will specifically dive into the positional nuances of shape and gestural movements in connection to others and the beat of the music. The power sensed through the shared experience of relational movement will be my take on the InterActive Feeling dimension of the experiences. By sensing its physicality, specifically time and force, I will also sense for what emotions emerge. I will address the Interactive Flow that occurs when both

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teachers and students move in synergistic ways, ultimately forming a link between members of the learning community.

Research Questions

Through a series of *living* experiences, I will analyze the meaning of connectivity through movement and dance. The IAF2F model has provided a lens for analysis and deeper understanding of the interactive movements between individuals. This study therefore investigates the functions, forms, feelings, and flows of teaching and learning Hip-Hop dance within the COVID-19 restrictions. These include maintaining a two-metre distance, using face masks, and exploring virtual means of communication. By engaging in a first-hand motion-sensing phenomenological inquiry (Lloyd & Smith, 2021) with Hip-Hop teachers, I will better understand how we may teach and experience meaningful connection through Hip-Hop dance during a pandemic. I will do this by asking the following questions:

1. What are the postures that cultivate a sense of readiness to pedagogically connect?
2. What are the subtle bodily shapes and gestures that form pedagogical connection?
3. What dynamic sensations of force, rhythm and expression contribute to the felt sense of pedagogical connection?
4. What cumulative postures/positions/gestures/expressions contribute to the experience of pedagogical connection indicative of flow?

Although Hip-Hop's reach is globally impactful, for the purpose of this study, I will situate my research within the Canadian context. Canada's Hip-Hop history has the power to

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“inspire and reach out to others” (Leafloor, 2012, p. 132). Let us learn from the dance teachers of the north, and how they move, groove, and pedagogically connect with their students.

The Participants

Phenomenology is “more method than [a] system,” as it is generated from a specific point of view rather than a “fixed body of beliefs” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015). Due to the in-depth philosophical nature of phenomenology, a small purposeful sample of participants is recommended (van Manen, 1997). Accordingly, I will invite three Hip-Hop dance teachers to participate in a series of semi-structured interviews who meet the following criteria: they have taught Hip-Hop dance for over five years and have been teaching dance in-person, or online through interactive technology, for a minimum of eight weeks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now I would like to introduce three Hip-Hop dance teachers (pseudonyms): Taz, Sabrina, and Didi, and give a snapshot of their life experiences teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taz is a dance teacher specializing in Breakdancing, Hip-Hop, and House dance. He found his love for dance in his late teens, as it was not so much a hobby but a lifestyle for him. Breakdancing “saved his life” (interview with Taz). Throughout his career, he has danced with multiple dance crews and travelled across Canada, Spain, and the United Kingdom. After years of independent growth, Taz yearned to share his knowledge to youth. It was not long until he began to shadow dance experts in the global dance community. Teaching was not something that came easily to him. Being a shy individual, Taz found it hard to communicate with students, and took pride in learning from his mentors. Over time, he anchored his philosophy in mentorship and community building; aspects identical to the critical elements of his dance journey.

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For Taz, teaching is his form of connection with the community. His goal is to create a family with the members of the community. This philosophy can be seen in his partnered activities and circle-shaped workshops. Taz begins his warm-up with upbeat music inspired by who he calls “Hip-Hop legends” (interview with Taz), this includes rappers from the Tribe Called Quest, Busta Rhymes, and Missy Elliot to funk artists like James Brown. Taz leads his students through a series of movements with a fast and growing tempo, from the basic two-step to jumping jacks. He moves on to teaching what is known as a *Toprock*, where he focuses on keeping on the beat. *Top Rock* can be described as dancing with one’s body relatively upright but staying grounded and using one’s feet and arms to move around the space, including the *cross-step*, *salsa rock*, and *the Indian step*. He then teaches foundational breakin’ moves which include *Toprock*, *Go Down*, *Footwork*, *Power move*, and a *pose*. He then invites his students to use what they have learned and express themselves in a cypher of freestyle.

With the introduction of the pandemic, he felt limited even as he taught the classes, and hoped to widen his reach to become a mentor to other individuals. As he taught, Taz could see the hunger in his students. This motivates him to guide the students in the right direction, while teaching that all the lessons we learn in dance are transferable to many areas in this life. The idea of persistence and determination are common themes in his teaching and are evident as he repeats to his students the importance of being connected to the music. Taz encourages working hard until they complete a challenging move, being consistent in their craft, and bouncing back after facing challenges. He shares these lessons with his students, fueling their passion and nurturing the future generation.

Sabrina is a Breakdancer, teacher, and community activist. She has been teaching breakdancing for over ten years. Sabrina was first introduced to breakdance in South-East Asia

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after watching another female dancer show her moves in a dance battle. She wondered why so few women were dancing in the Hip-Hop scene. She began breakdancing and training with various dance groups in a short period. Inspired by the Fly Girls from Living Colour, JLo, and female dancers from the hit show America's Best Dance Crew, Sabrina found empowerment in being the only black girl breakdancing in her city at the time. After a few years, she travelled to the United Kingdom and New York City and continued training and learning from experts in the field. Here, she was also reminded about the lack of female energy in the breakdance community. When she returned to Canada, she saw the need for support for female breakers. She decided to create a safe and supportive space for women to learn breakdance and be comfortable in their bodies. The goal of her program is to help women through mentorship and workshops, so they can interact with the community and make a name for themselves in the scene.

When teaching, her focus is on building relationships. She believes that making this strong foundation helps dancers in their confidence and allows them to feel supported by like-minded individuals. She is adamant about specifically including females in the male dominated Hip-Hop community, the breakdancing community. The motto of "Each One Teach One" (interview with Sabrina) is also the foundation of her pedagogy. She credits her past teachers who helped shape how she teaches today. Drawing from her own experiences as a student, she reflects on how she was trained and how it forms the contours of her lessons—planning and learning, building relationships, and community support from her reflective student perspective.

Sabrina begins her class with a 10-minute check-in conversation with her students. This check-in helps Sabrina gauge her audience and helps set the class's pace. Once she has checked in, she then begins her class with a warm-up, drills in the foundation movements and floor work. These include *CeCe's*, *monkey swings*, *kick-outs*, and *freezes*. Floor work can vary in the dancer's

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complexity, effort, and strength. It also may require an ample amount of space to move across the floor. Periodically, Sabrina will check in with her students and watch them experiment with bodies moving through their space. As Sabrina watches, she may comment on a few dancers she may notice who can use a slight tweaking in their movements. Once she has seen everyone try the moves, she then encourages her students to try and combine the new moves with the top rocks and add their style. For Sabrina, Hip-Hop means culture, community, and relationships. Giving time to develop relationships guides the community to a thriving state.

Didi is a dance teacher and expert in Whacking, House, and Hip-Hop dance. Although she does not consider herself an expert, her reserved yet dynamic personality seems to shine through as we spoke on her dance journey. Didi found a love for dance at an early age and began her classical dance training in ballet and jazz at the age of seven. After ten years, she was introduced to Street and Club Dance styles of Hip-Hop. In her early twenties, she branched off and began training with and learning from dance experts in Montreal, Toronto, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. In those years, she furthered her dance career and knowledge of Hip-Hop dance, and quickly found her way into teaching. Over time, her education shifted from the structured choreography she was initially trained in, to introducing the history and helping other dancers understand the rooted elements within Hip-Hop dance. Through our conversations, she explained that in doing this, she was able to apply these elements to herself and share them with others from a place of understanding.

When preparing to teach a class, Didi creates a set structure that ensures she can give her students a taste of the Hip-Hop foundations and allows room for interaction and creative expression. Didi teaches Hip-Hop as a social dance. An innovative, cultural dance style is supported and promoted by the community. Instead of giving choreography, she decides to go

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straight into a freestyle to challenge their creativity. Didi introduces the three fundamental dance moves for Hip-Hop: the rock, a subtle rock forward and back to the rhythm of the song, the bounce, a knee bent swoop with the chest from side to side, and the groove, which is a combination of movements that showcase your style and personality, together forming a baseline for connective Hip-Hop movement.

Participatory observation and sensation are vital to this project since it allows me to capture and experience the complexities of learning and meaning making through movement. I aim to physically connect to the core of each teacher's pedagogy and reasons for their love for teaching. After recruitment, and participatory sensory data is collected, I will conduct up to three interviews with each participant. With this approach, I expand the opportunities for new and spontaneous upsurges of meaning to rise beyond my pre-understandings.

Interviewing

After attending three Hip-Hop dance workshops run by Taz, Sabrina and Didi, as a participatory observer, feeler and groover, teachers will be invited to partake in three MSP semi-structured interviews. Interviews will take place either face-to-face or virtually at a time convenient to the teacher. Each interview will last 60-90 minutes within a three-week time frame, allowing for in-depth inquiry. I will begin with a set of questions to help guide the motion-sense-making conversations with the teachers about their experiences with teaching Hip-Hop dance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Appendix A shows the scheduled interview guide.

These interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Each teacher will be given a pseudonym. By leading with open-ended questions, I have the flexibility to probe interesting areas that will arise from participants' interests in a way that the participants express themselves freely.

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The first interview is to generate examples of connections experienced in Hip-Hop dance. I begin by asking: “What does Hip-Hop dance mean to you?” By starting with this question, I open the space to what Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2015, p. 9) describes “as a pre-reflective consciousness” of dance. Here, the dance teachers are given a chance to describe what brought them to Hip-Hop, dance, and teaching. A review of the participant's life history until they became a Hip-Hop teacher “constitutes the foundation upon which all future knowledge is built” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015, p. 9). This allows for a deeper understanding of each teacher's roots in the dance form. To find the details of the teacher's connective pedagogical experience, I ask: “can you describe a memorable moment while teaching Hip-Hop where you experienced connection?” The questions following were guided by the answers of the teachers.

In planning for the second interview, I was inspired by Seidman (2006) and the tenets of MSP to bring out a sense of *living* experience and the meaning these interactive interactions hold. I continued to feel the existential moments of body, space, time, and others through the *Interactive Function2Flow* framework, moving and grooving even within the interview spaces. Using the questions in Figure 1 as a guiding principle, I will explore this feeling of connectedness and its potential to emerge during these difficult times. During the final interview, I will revisit their experiences and look for the meaning through their felt sensitivities. Through the interviews and first-hand experiences of participating in the Hip-Hop teachers' classes, I will sense to what degree it is possible to feel a collective and embodied beat through Hip-Hop dance.

Analysis

To analyse how moving bodies connect and interact in different pedagogical spaces centered on Hip-Hop dance, I will begin by diving into the connecting postures, positions, sensations, and connective energies experienced in these moments (Lloyd & Smith, 2020). To deeply understand

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the memorable moments of connection shared during their dance workshops, I will highlight the most meaningfully significant dispositions the participants had to offer (Seidman, 2006).

Through thematic selection, I will use a holistic approach to find “sententious phrases” (van Manen, 2016, p. 93) and moments that captured the fundamental meaning of connecting through Hip-Hop dance. With the description of the memorable moments and field data collected by participatory observation, I will write up the experience of connection through anecdotes and vignettes intertwined with descriptive depth acquired by questions related to the IAF2F model. The goal at this stage is to not only describe the connective experiences, but to “draw [readers] into the motions...with enhanced appreciation” for the phenomenon (Lloyd & Smith, 2021, p. 12) and have these vivid experiential accounts encourage reflection. van Manen (2016) describes an anecdote as a concrete demonstration of “wisdom, sensitive insight, and proverbial truth” (p. 120). Through these anecdotes, I will strive to take the reader into the experience of the *living* phenomenon.

Historically, “the second-person perspective is one that can illuminate the ways in which we [as observers] have a direct access to the meaning” (Churchill, 2016, p. 103). Once several vignettes of relational connection will be constructed, I will analyze them in terms of what aspects are unique to each participant, and what universal themes are tied those various experiences together to form clusters of meaning. As I write, I engage in “heuristic, experiential, thematic, insight[ful] [cultivation], inceptual, and vocative draft writing”(Adams & van Manen, 2017, p. 790). This re-writing process drew me closer to the essences of connection brought about in these embodied experiences.

Bracketing: Moving Through the Scratches

For me to understand the “experiential meanings we live as we live them” (van Manen, 2016, p. 11), I need to take my research a step further. As an interrelated element of my research, I will also address my experiences as a Hip-Hop dance teacher and then set my pre-assumptions of what it means to pedagogically connect through teaching Hip-Hop dance aside. This experience is called *bracketing* (van Manen, 2016, p. 40). In reference to the mathematical use of the bracket: to keep operations inside, separate from the operations outside of it, bracketing, welcomes the same process as I bracket my own experiences, and pre-assumptions of pedagogical connection (van Manen, 2016). Max van Manen describes bracketing as “the act of suspending one's various beliefs in the reality of the natural world in order to study the essential structures of the world” (van Manen, 2016, p.175). Although much literature questions the reliability of the bracketing experience, it is proven to be a “useful methodological device to demonstrate validity in phenomenology” (Chan et al., 2015, p. 6) and is essential before the data collection. Through this approach, I will be able to “implicitly [become] aware [and reflect on the] inherent spatial-temporal structure” of the movement and connection (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015, p. 22). Therefore, as I engage in the practice of phenomenology, it is essential to look beyond my own presumptions to really acknowledge and appreciate what my participants have to say.

To deeply understand the way each participant experiences their existential sense of body, space, and time, and how these manifest within their teaching of Hip-Hop dance, it is crucial that I bracket my own experiences. Rooted from Greek origins, the concept of “epoché” meaning “suspension of acceptance” (Embree, 2011, p. 123) will guide me to write about my own pre-understandings of connection to prevent potential biases from emerging throughout my research

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journey. Edmund Husserl expressed three stages bracketing: “*epoché*, reduction and purification” (Embree, 2011, p. 123). *Epoché* as mentioned earlier, is action of suspension of assumptions and preunderstandings of the phenomena in question. Reduction addresses the “consequent change in the researchers' attitude” and allows for a “direct and primitive contact” to the phenomenon (Adams & van Manen, 2017, p. 789). Purification refers to the result of both suspension and change in research attitude to understanding and seeing “the thing-as-intended-to”, in a way allowing for a “pure” understanding of the phenomena in question (Embree, 2011, p. 123). My goal is to understand the phenomenon (pedagogical connection) and go beyond what I already know and think. In shaping these evocative examples, I aim to turn “mundaneness into transcendence” (van Manen, 1997, p. 355). Stepping back and understanding the feeling of experiencing connection, or the lack thereof, will play an essential role in my preparation to interview my participants.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I oriented myself in the teacher's perspective and wrote *Desires to Connect: Within and Beyond the Pandemic* (Barrett-Fraser, 2021). I was able to bracket throughout my inquiry by becoming reflexive, which involves the realization of an honest examination of the values and interests of the researcher that may impinge upon my research work (Primeau, 2003). As I taught with a mask, face shield, and two-meter distance between myself and my students, I realized the subtle ways in which we may connect with our students in the classroom, and how my past experiences helped guide my teaching today (Barrett-Fraser, 2021). I had to step back and suspend myself from this experience (*epoché*) in order to identify my pre-assumptions of pedagogical connection through movement.

As I watch my students dance around the classroom during their much-needed movement breaks, I am reminded of my connection to movements and dance. Dance provides a

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fundamental aspect of education that is “not present in any other form” but can be integrated into multiple areas in the classroom (Koff, 2012). Once I complete this step of reduction, my “attitude” is anticipated to change (Embree, 2011, p. 123) as I sense what Husserl describes as the “essences” of connection in the classroom (van Manen, 2016, p. 217). I do not refer to the screen, physical distance, or masks as barriers as I start my interviews and observations. Instead, I open myself up to what these COVID conditions mean and feel like for my participants.

It is important to note that the bracketing process is not meant to create reflective stories based on experience, but to deepen the understanding of the living experience (Lloyd & Smith, 2015). By looking at the sensing and *essencing* of lifeworld experiences through postures and gestures, I might truly understand the feelings that emerge in pedagogical interaction. This process required me to understand what Embree (2011) asserts:

If one adopts the theoretical attitude, one suspends acceptance of things as practical, which is to say as ends and means, and/or one suspends acceptance of things as “aesthetic” in a maximally broad signification, i.e., as objects of enjoyment or suffering. Thereby, one gains a theoretically pure object. The thing may continue to have its usefulness or attractiveness for others, but for the researcher such are suspended. (p. 124)

With this deeper understanding of connection, my curiosity continues as I question the experience of pedagogical connection when Hip-Hop is introduced into the mix. I am prepared to dive deeper into my understanding of teaching Hip-Hop dance. Through writing this article about my own experiences of pedagogical connection, bracketing allows me to phenomenologically analyze how I make sense of the world. I will keep a “reflexive diary” to write down my “thoughts, feelings and perceptions,” which will allow me to “re-examine [my] positions when issues are raised that might affect the research process” (Chan et al., 2015, p. 3). Below is a

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poem from my reflexive and motion-sensing diary, that describes my experience of the pandemic pull:

The Pandemic Pull: A Poem

The pull between you and your dance partner.

The pull that makes you want to move.

The pull that gets you into the groove.

The pull of a teacher to her students.

Enabling the urge to help them succeed.

Regardless of vaccination passports and IDs.

The pullback that may occur after the interaction between two strangers.

Still... wondering about the COVID-19 dangers.

That force: what is it?

A pull or a push?

Now there is no more beating around the bush.

We've been trapped for so long.

All our social interactive skills are gone.

Unsure how to say "hi" or "hello,"

Is it a handshake or a tap of the elbow?

HIP-HOP YOU DON'T STOP

Just give me a hug,

because the feeling is so foreign.

My love for you is stronger than COVID.

Don't live in regret. Life is too short.

Share the love, with a smile, please do not abort

The chance...

The chance to connect.

Social interaction is how we all connect.

Soon, we believe, it will be all over.

And yet,

Here we are...

fighting

the

pull.

The urge to hug and greet each other as usual.

But alas, I have found a way to connect.

That may go beyond the mask, and two-meter space that was set.

Play the music, bust a move.

HIP-HOP YOU DON'T STOP

Now I invite your body to groove.

The power to connect is between me and you!

The relative space is not enough.

We must connect with our eyes and our love.

Sway to the left, bounce to the right.

This kind of groove can last all night.

A sense of normalcy in a time of uncertainty.

It is just the thing we need.

As we all need a teacher to succeed.

Regardless of vaccination passports and IDs.

The pull to connect is between you and me.

- *Journal August Entry 2021*

Motion Sensing Phenomenological Questioning

“Hip-Hop has enlightened its listeners and garnered oneness among its audience” for decades (Bailey, 2020). Will this feeling of oneness continue to emerge during a pandemic?

In this study, I sense, present, and interpret the meaning of three Hip-Hop dance teachers’ *living* experiences of pedagogical connection. I do this to bring light to the experience of pedagogical connection in a Hip-Hop dance setting. I want to better understand the essences of pedagogical relationships in moments outside of the classroom, as they influence how we

HIP-HOP YOU DON'T STOP

experience connection in our day-to-day lives. What is it about the pandemic that has limited this connection? What are other teachers doing during this pandemic? Do they have moments of relational connection? What part of their pedagogy allows for this connection?

Feeling limited by the uncertainty of what is to come, we continue to listen to the variations in rhythm and flow that can derive from this live record. As we gain momentum and closely watch the world at large, we begin to find ways to bounce together in unison with the music, disconnecting and reconnecting in a continuum of interaction, creating opportunities for new connections in our embodied living space.

HIP-HOP YOU DON'T STOP

*“...Now I'm feeling the highs and you're feeling the lows
The beat starts getting into your toes
You start popping your fingers and stomping your feet
And moving your body while you're sitting in your seat
And then damn, you start doing the freak
I said damn, right outta your seat
Then you throw your hands high in the air
You're rocking to the rhythm, shake your derriere
Ya rockin' to the beat without a care
With the sureshot MCs for the affair
Now, I'm not as tall as the rest of the gang
But I rap to the beat just the same...”*

(1980, The Sugarhill Gang)

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Chapter Two

**“Hip-Hop... You Don’t Stop”: Inquiring into Experiences of Pedagogical Connection in
Hip-Hop Dance**

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Abstract

Can you feel the connective power and possibilities of the Hip-Hop beat? Through a motion-sensing phenomenological inquiry, that is premised on kinaesthetic modes of sense-making, the pedagogical interactions of three Hip-Hop teachers were explored within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research questions, conceptually framed by the Interactive Function-to-Flow model, included: What postures emerge when there was a readiness to connect? What positions and gestures further enhance these moments of connection? What feelings and kinesthetic sensations of timing and force were experienced? What connective energies are experienced in flow? Through observation, first-person researcher participation, as well as a series of interviews, the phenomenon of pedagogical connection in Hip-Hop was discerned in the following contexts: a dance cypher in an in-person class, a spotlight cypher in an online class, and a partnered dance breakout activity in an outdoor class. From relational, grounded and open postures and positions, connective gestures like a head nod or a bounce of the knees shaped experiences cultivated experiences of interactive flow. Despite the barriers of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study revealed that we can continue to move with and by the Hip-Hop groove.

Keywords: Hip-Hop, dance, connection, interactive, movement, pandemic

**“Hip-Hop... You Don’t Stop”: Inquiring into Experiences of Pedagogical Connection in
Hip-Hop Dance**

Introduction

*The room spins as I unravel my tight, ball-shaped body out of a seated spin. The beat fades.
I pose and I feel the sweat dripping down my back, and the incredible cooling sensation of the
floor as I try to catch my breath. I look up at my computer and shoot up to my feet.*

“Great job, everyone! Now when I say, “Hip!” you say, “Hop!”

“Hip” _____.

“Hip” _____.

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Figure 1.

Teaching a virtual workshop from my kitchen and living room floor.



I am met with silence from the screen. Outwardly, I grin and cup my hand over my right ear, gesturing to listen to my invisible audience, my inward smile begins to fade.

Pandemic teaching is harder than I expected. Never did I imagine hearing silence in response to my call. I record myself giving Hip-Hop¹ dance classes that will be distributed to school-aged students (as seen in Figure 1) but the joy of experiencing a sense of meaningful connection has faded. It leaves me wondering: Is this lack of connection there for other Hip-Hop Dance teachers? Are there ways to cultivate meaningful pedagogical connections during a time that separated us all?

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Connecting within the context of a Hip-Hop dance class is more than an experience of fluidly transitioning from one dance movement to another. We must also consider the lived experiences of connecting with ourselves, each other, and the culture of the larger communities in which we are situated (Brown, 2017; Calamoneri et al., 2020; Shapiro, 2017). To experience this sense of connection in Hip-Hop is to acknowledge the myriad of Hip-Hop's cultural experiential practices (Hall, 2020). When *Rapper's Delight* by the Sugarhill Gang hit the charts in 1979, Hip-Hop dances such as breaking, popping, and locking had taken over the streets and connected dancers across New York City (Garofoli, 2007). And when I think of this song's lyrics, "Hip-Hop We Don't Stop", they invite me to question if this sense of community can continue in this COVID context.

Framed by the tenets of phenomenological research, the "description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them" (van Manen, 2016, p. 11), I wish to better understand the ways we may experience a sense of connection when teaching Hip-Hop dance during this COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding that phenomenology is methodology premised on the practice of writing in the act of bringing experience to life through evocative writing, I wish to speak to the orthography of "Hip-Hop" as it may be written in a variety of ways, as Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook (2009) reveal, i.e., hip hop, Hip Hop etc.. I have chosen to both hyphenate and capitalize the term to indicate not only its relative importance in my life, but also the connective power it holds. I am also curious to learn from other experiences of teaching Hip-Hop in this pandemic, as learning from other people's experiences "allow us, in a vicarious sort of way, to become more experienced ourselves" (van Manen, 2014, p. 313). Through engaging in an immersive, first-person participatory Motion-Sensing Phenomenology (Lloyd & Smith, 2015, 2021) of Hip-Hop pedagogy, I aim to not only reflect back on my Hip-Hop dance practice

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with “intent of increasing one’s thoughtfulness and practical resourcefulness or tact” (van Manen, 2016, p. 3), I will be asking, in what ways will the sense of pedagogical connection manifest in the movements of Hip-Hop dance?

Teaching Hip-Hop Dance: A Review of Literature

In times of hardship, Hip-Hop has provided solace for expression and connective experiences through rap, art, dance, and music (J. Chang, 2005; Forman & Neal, 2012; Rose, 1994). Hip-Hop in classrooms is frequently mentioned within academic educational literature, specifically investigating the way pedagogical relationships between educators and students facilitate the development of a critical classroom community (Broome & Munson, 2019; Ibrahim, 2014; Kelly, 2019; Mulvihill, 2019). I wonder, what happens when the spotlight shifts from Hip-Hop at large to illuminate experiences of Hip-Hop dance?

Critical Hip-Hop dance educators transform energy as they become active models of what engaging in meaningful dialogue and movement can look and sound like. They are not static and stationary as they teach, but are fluid and dynamic with their performative postures, gestures, and movements. As Bragin (2015) frames it, “active, embodied participation is a central tenet of Hip-Hop” (p. 7). Within these interactive moments, the tempo of the music grows alongside the energy of the educator. Their students may feel an attraction and pull emerging from within, calling them towards the music. Their bodies may start to bounce and move, beginning to forge a connection to the rhythm of the music (Defrantz, 2004).

Hip-Hop is a cultural movement, and Hip-Hop dance brings about the culture through movement (Bailey, 2020). Dancers may engage through freestyle improvisational expression that is reflective of the true essence of one’s personality (Forman & Neal, 2012). Similar to Sheets-Johnstone’s “mindful body,” concept of thinking in motion, (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017b, p. 9),

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improvisational dance can provide a clear depiction of unique thinking where “movement and perception are seamlessly interwoven” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017b, p. 9). Performing freestyle Hip-Hop in a class, battle or social gathering encompasses complex layers of personal, social, communal, cultural, and spiritual elements to produce the Hip-Hop art form (Osumare, 2021). Commonly gathered within a circular formation, freestyle experiences of connection occur in what has been coined as a cypher, where a dancers take turns stepping into the center to showcase their skills and movement expression (J. Chang, 2005). Opportunities to freestyle allow the Hip-Hop community opportunities of expression, validated by gestures and words of encouragement. This interactive relationship is a “code for unity, diversity, performance, and solidarity” (Le Lay, 2020, p. 329). Freestyling strengthens relationships and helps with resocialization through communal dance forms, which fosters a community of learners (Behrends et al., 2012; H. J. Chang & Hogans, 2021). At its core, Hip-Hop is a space for collaborative and connective learning (Love, 2015) and maintaining this during COVID-19 is where the challenge begins.

Pandemic Teaching

In the wake of the pandemic, we have experienced many moments where the “familiar became strange” (Roderick, 1989) – a catalyst for transformative understanding and the basis of phenomenological sense making (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 2015, 2020a, 2020b). Prior to the pandemic, my own experience with Hip-Hop dance had taken many forms, including directing and choreographing flash mobs, performances, youth outreach, and teaching in schools across Canada. Regardless of context, I would build a sense of “comm(unity)” through my choreographic engagement (Klein, 2019) with interspersed moments of freestyle. Now as stare into the green dot of my laptop lens, I realize that “small changes in our conventional approaches

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to teaching technique can make an enormous difference in how students engage with each other” (Fitzgerald, 2017, p. 6). Many teachers share my struggle in that the constraints of the imposed distance between teachers and students challenge the taken for granted ways we interact. I wonder what Hip-Hop dance can teach me about experiencing a sense of pedagogical connection during the COVID-19 pandemic? I wish to learn from expert teachers who have continued to teach dance workshops (both in-person and online) during this pandemic and phenomenologically analyze their experiences as a way to understand this phenomenon of relational connection in Hip-Hop pedagogy.

Phenomenology: A Methodology and Conceptual Framework

Phenomenological Ontology & Epistemology

Phenomenology is a careful “description of the lived-through quality [and the] meaning of the expression of the lived experience” (van Manen, 2016). I turn to make sense of pedagogical experiences that create a sense of connection in Hip-Hop dance with the support of Dr. Rebecca Lloyd, an experienced researcher and dancer, who has developed a phenomenological approach that is oriented to making sense of motile phenomena (e.g., Lloyd, 2016; 2017; 2020). Motion-sensing phenomenology (Lloyd & Smith, 2006; 2015; 2021) extends van Manen’s approach of researching *lived* experiences (van Manen, 1997; 2014; 2020) to the active, unfurling present moments of *living* experiences (Lloyd, 2018; Lloyd & Smith, 2006; 2015; 2021). When movement, such as Hip-Hop dance, becomes the topic of phenomenological inquiry, shifts from the visual to the kinesthetic realm of sense-making provide opportunity to understand the primacy movement has in regard to thinking, feeling, and meaningfully connecting to one another (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015, 2017b, 2018; Lloyd, 2017, 2020; Lloyd & Smith, 2021).

InterActive Function2Flow and Motion Sensing Phenomenology

The conceptual framework that I will use to inform my existential inquiry into moments of felt relational connection is the “InterActive Function2Flow” model (IAF2F) (Lloyd & Smith, 2021, 2022). This model has four distinct dimensions which focus on how individuals connect through postures, positions, sensations, and expressions, influencing the timing, force, and energy cultivated in shared experiences. InterActive Function is the kinetic presence of the living body, which shows an individual’s readiness through connective postures taken within activities, specifically the body’s optimal alignment tone and tension. InterActive Form consists of the various shapes and gestures created during movement, representing the lived body’s engagement in the world. InterActive Feeling is the emotional connection and “inner sensation” made during the movement connection with others and the felt sense of movement through the form, breath, balance, and timing of the movement. InterActive Flow is the unspoken communication and synergic connection between dancers, those around them, and elements encompassing their environment (Lloyd & Smith, 2006; 2015; 2020; 2021). Interactive flow can occur when a connection or union is made between individuals through an optimal shared experience(s). In these moments, lived time may speed up or slow down depending on the experience one’s body is invested in.

Research Questions

The IAF2F model informs the sub-research questions I will ask to better understand the experience of relational pedagogical connection within Hip-Hop dance. As I engage first-hand in Motion Sensing Phenomenology (MSP), which transposes the action of living into the activity of writing, I will go beyond observing teachers in their practice and step into the dance classes themselves (Lloyd & Smith, 2021). I will move, groove, sense and feel the potential depth of

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flow in the InterActive experiences. I will engage in writing as I engage in the interactive movement.

As I orient myself to the phenomenon of pedagogical connection, I will ask questions guided by the IAF2F method to better analyze and discover the essences of connection. I will focus on teaching experiences in shared spaces – an outdoor park, and a virtual screen and ask: What are the postures that cultivate a sense of readiness to connect? What are the subtle bodily shapes and gestures that form a pedagogical connection? What dynamic sensations of force, rhythm, and expression contribute to the felt sense of pedagogical connection, and how do these elements allow for interactive flow to emerge?

“This is How We Do It”

A small but purposeful sample facilitates in-depth philosophical questioning in phenomenological methodology (van Manen, 1997). Guidelines for selecting my three participants include: teaching Hip-Hop dance for over ten years as well as teaching Hip-Hop dance in-person or online for a minimum of eight weeks during the COVID-19 pandemic. I will attend three of their classes before holding three 60–90-minute interviews with each educator. These interactive dance experiences will inform my field journal notes, through which I will construct an existential description of the lived body, space, time, and relational connection between each educator and their students. Using the IAF2F framework as a guiding principle, I will further explore feelings of connectedness in my participatory observations, field notes, and interviews. I will then engage in the motion-sensing phenomenological technique of ‘writing up’ (Lloyd & Smith, 2021) key exemplars of my phenomenon of interest in action in the form of a vignette depicting each educator in a moment where pedagogical connection emerged. These “carefully crafted” vignettes are snapshots of *living* experiences of each teacher (Adams & van

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Manen, 2017, p. 788) and are aimed to provide a “heightened sensitivity” to the movement as the moments of flow fully take place (Lloyd & Smith, 2022, p. 12). I invite the reader to dive into these experiences and get a taste of what is like to connect during a pandemic.

Results: The Playlist

Allow me to introduce Taz, Sabrina, and Didi, pseudonyms of three Hip-Hop dance teachers with a minimum of ten years of experience who were invited to participate in this University of Ottawa ethics-approved study who continued to teach through this pandemic either online or outside in a physically distanced context. Taz specializes in break dancing, Hip-Hop, and House. Sabrina teaches dance with the intent of helping women make a name for themselves on the breakdancing scene. Didi is an expert in Whacking, House, and Hip-Hop dance who is passionate to help others understand the roots of Hip-Hop dance.

Taz

When the pandemic began, Taz felt lost and craved a chance to dance with others again. He cleared out his garage to create a dance space to learn, practice, and teach online. In summer 2021, when the government lifts lockdown restrictions, he decides to host outdoor workshops. He spends weeks scouting for an area that will suit the COVID-19 protocols, and finally discovers a small square of cement in a park just minutes from his home. Upon finding the perfect spot to groove, he returns a week later with his speakers, phone, and twelve local dancers.

The workshop begins with his students standing in a circle as he briefly introduces himself by his B-boy name and a brief history of breakin'. Taz then leads his students through movements with a quickening tempo and growing groove. He teaches his students the many variations of a *Toprock*, a dance style consisting of cross steps, pivoting turns and a rocking of

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the chest, with the main objective of keeping his students on beat. As he circulates the learning space, he notices something...

Track one: Can you Hear it?

“Okay, great job, but... pay attention to this.” *Click*. Taz steps forward towards his semi-circle-shaped outdoor class, begins to bob his head to the music, and shakes his shoulders to the rhythm of the song. He puts his hands together: “You hear it?” *Clap, clap, clap...clap, clap, clap*.

Some students nod as they focus on the rhythm, while others lean forward, tilt their heads and wear puzzled looks as they try to keep up. A few begin to join in on his clapping: “1, 2, 3...5, 6, 7,” Taz counts, then pivots and moves his shoulders to the beat. He stomps and turns his head, as his students smile as they think up their own ideas. “Try moving with a partner! Feel the beat!”

The students pivot towards each other, nodding and bouncing along to their new instructions. Taz, still clapping out the rhythm, circulates the space. A student is popping his shoulder with each clap. “*Nice!*” he calls to them.

He turns to another, in which one student claps to the beat but the other moves at a less synchronized pace. He steps closer to them. “Okay, try this: *Tick, tick, -ahh—Tick tick-ahh*.” He vocalizes this rhythm while bobbing his head and clapping, indicating the contours of the rhythm. “*Tick, tick, -ahh—Tick tick-ahh*”, the pair of students recite with him, chanting the rhythm as one continues to clap. The student who was struggling begins to move again. She crosses her arms and with a flick of her chin, she repeats the beat. This time, her arms move more in sync with the rhythm.

He weaves in and out of the space, clapping and chanting: “*Tick, tick, ahh—Tick, tick, ahh*.” His energy is contagious. More students are now joining in. Bouncing from group to group, the *Tick, tick, ahh—Tick, tick, ahh*” ripples through the space. One student is leading this rhythmic movement with the shimmy of his shoulders. Another is tapping his toes and flicking his wrists. Sweat drips, bodies groove, and the air begins to buzz as everyone moves to “*Tick, tick, ahh—Tick, tick, ahh...*” in their own way.

Each pair of students continues to practice and explore how their bodies move to the music in exploratory and interactive ways. This lesson leaves a lasting impact on everyone in the space, myself included.

Sabrina

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sabrina's dance workshops abruptly stop. When community members desire to dance and ask her to consider hosting virtual workshops, she feels hesitant. Sabrina fears that she will not be able to make the same connections online, but eventually makes her first attempt.

Track two: Spotlight Cypher

Sabrina changes her Zoom call layout. *Click, Click.* As she looks up at the screen, where there is a tiled format of 12 boxes, she realizes that this is the first time she can see everyone all at once. *"Okay, we are going to try and do a cypher. This one will be a little different because we are not in person, but we will make it work."* She is met only with the low buzz of her computer that has been running for quite some time. Like Sabrina, most of her students are unsure about how this will play out. Besides the familiar looks of exhaustion they wear, she notices one student cradling a baby, and another drinking water. Many are close enough to their camera that their virtual box is filled by their face, with computer light reflecting off their cheeks, illuminating their eyes, nose, and lips.

Click, click. Music begins to echo through the speakers. With a big smile and a slightly louder voice, she asks: *"Who wants to go first?"* Amongst many reactions, one student eagerly waves her hand in front of her camera, her bright red nail polish catching the attention of all the students in the workshop. *"Okay, take the floor!"* Sabrina instructs. The student quickly backs away from the camera until the close up of her smile morphs into a head-to-toe view. She begins her round with a cross-step and then spins down. Sabrina claps and yells, *"Okay, I see you!"* The student incorporates a series of leg twists and spins on her knee. *"Wow, combining the moves I see!"* Sabrina says from her minimized box on the screen. She leans in, pinched with excitement as her grin stretches from ear to ear.

The student finishes her round by gliding across her kitchen floor and striking a pose, one hand on her head and the other supporting her body in a suspended mid-air freeze. *"Awesome!"* Sabrina shouts as she watches the tiny images of her other students giving silent snaps and claps. Suddenly, the screen switches to another dancer in a green Wu-Tang t-shirt, whose eyes suddenly grow in surprise. *"You've got this,"* Sabrina's voice is drowned out by music. The student quickly gets to her feet, and after hastily pushing her dog out of her dance space, her initially rigid movements transform into smooth twists and spins on the floor. Sabrina can see the student's confidence growing with each step. Once the student stops and poses with her arms crossed, she shouts: *"You go, girl!"* This pattern continues, but when Sabrina looks at the other students watching their screens, she notices no other bouncing or rocking back and forth movement, just stares.

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Learning online is not something Sabrina had imagined doing, but her dimming passion for connection is renewed once she begins. Eager students from all across Canada tune in every week, and the energy Sabrina sees in them creates an unexpected ricochet effect that changes her outlook on teaching online. However, some things are just not the same.

Didi

As a dance educator, Didi values positive and nourishing relationships among dancers. Due to COVID-19, facing waves of lockdowns and renewed government restrictions on social gatherings, Didi loses her spark. When the COVID-19 restrictions lift, she hosts outdoor Hip-Hop dance battles and workshops in her community as she had done pre-pandemic. To her surprise, Didi is met with rave reviews and consistently positive feedback from the students. Most dancers are happy to be dancing again, while other community members fear the potential effects of reuniting during a time of uncertainty. Despite this, she is thrilled to see the community alive again. As they *rock*, *bounce*, and *groove* in her “Intro to Hip-Hop” class outside a community center, Didi intends to help her students break out of their shells and find their connection to the music.

Track three: “Claim the Space!”

“Everyone, get into a circle!” Didi waves one hand to gather the students, while the other adjusts the music. Receptive to her call, some dancers stride tall to their places and others who are new to Hip-Hop dance trickle in, carrying visible tension in their elevated shoulders. A cluster begins to form. Didi crouches with her back against the speakers. She taps at her phone until the bass of Fat Joe’s *Lean Back* blares through the multi-colored speakers.

Didi crouches on one knee and assumes her place in the circle. Her arms bounce up and down to the beat, a pulsation that spreads through the circle as fast as the smiles that spread across each face. Suddenly, a dancer steps into the center. He swoops in wave-like motions. His peers cheer until he eventually slides back and returns to his spot.

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For the next few seconds, there is a gradual shift in the atmosphere. Uplifted cheers fade into lowered gazes of uncertainty. A feeling of emptiness sweeps the floor. Didi shakes her head, cups her hands over her mouth, and shouts: “*Don’t waste the music!*” Her request ignites some students to maintain a light bounce while others timidly rock back and forth. She shouts with her arms reaching for the center of the circle, this time with some urgency: “*Take the space! Claim your space!*”

Just as the song’s second verse begins, another dancer jumps in with an iconic move that rocks forward as shoulders swing back - “*Lean back, lean back,*” the class sings. The cypher has new life! Voices roar: “*Let’s Go!*” “*Go! Go! Go!... Go!*”

Another dancer takes the center with a *Dip, dip, roll, snap. Dip, dip, roll, snap.* Mirrored by a nearby dancer, the solo turns into a duo as they start doing the *fila* in synchronicity. They dip and roll their shoulders with each step before reaching their arms up with a snap. The circle draws in tighter.

Didi rose to her feet, “*Yass, take your space!*” she yells, bouncing and beginning to dip her shoulders toward the circle. Instantly, all the dancers join in: *Dip, dip, roll, snap. Dip, dip, roll, snap!* They maintain a steady rhythm and the air floods with laughter as all dancers join in with their own variation of the *fila*. One waves her arms and rolls into her hip, while another waves his arm and lets the movement travel up to his head. *Dip, dip, roll snap!* The circle turns into a scattered mix of bodies. *Dip, dip, roll snap!*

Since the pandemic's beginning, Taz, Sabrina, and Didi have found new ways to interact, teach dance, and connect with their communities. What did they do to build this connection? What postures elicit readiness to learn? What gestures invite students to connect, and what feelings emerge within these moments of connection that provide moments of vitality and flow? How might we further understand what it means to connect through dance during a pandemic.

InterActive Function2Flow Analysis

When using the lens of InterActive Function2Flow to analyze the three aforementioned pedagogical moments, I dig deeper into the movements that form the foundation of pedagogical connection and detail the feelings and flow that emerged during the pandemic.

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Listen to the Beat

In *Can you Hear it?* Taz approaches a student struggling with the activity he set up. His stomps, head turns, shoulder pops, and vocalizations genuinely take to the call of the music. His beaming smile and polymodality bring the music to life, leaving his student spellbound. Perhaps these movements open their minds to the flowing rhythm and provide a window of opportunity to connect to the music. As he bobs his head, emphasizing the rhythm with his waving motions, the students lean in, nod, and become receptive to the music. Does this posture give a taste of the connective energy looming in the air?

Let's take a moment to see through the eye of the student and ask, what is it about gestures that build connective energy? As a participatory observer, it is evident that the partnered activity is a new one for many students. However, the alacrity in their movements, wiggles, and giggles reflects their ambition and willingness to be challenged. The moment Taz approaches, his student leans in and joins him in a light bounce. As they lean, they share eye contact, bounce side to side, and shout affirmations, that help maintain a positive atmosphere. What is it about the bouncing gesture that deepens connection?

In Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's *Thinking in Movement*, she describes the "mindful body" as a body that is thinking in movement as it plays with the infinite possibilities of dancing in improvisational ways (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017b, p. 9). As a dance is forming, there is no set ending, but rather continuous performance of the emergent movement. As the music plays, Taz's gestures: bobbing his head, shaking his shoulders, and clapping to the rhythm of the music, calls his students forward. As he pivots, he exchanges eye contact and smiles with his students, this is a window of opportunity that invites students to listen to the call of the music and synchronously respond to the pulse of the beat. Taz bounces from student to student, helping them realize the

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various ways a rhythm may move them. In this moment, they are thinking in movement. Soon, something begins to pull the students to express themselves through “whole body responsiveness,” (Laidlaw & Beer, 2018) engaging their bodies in somatic conversation with the music. The give and take of movement can be seen as what Lloyd and Smith call “a *joie de vivre*,” (Lloyd & Smith, 2021, p. 3) in physical interaction. The students’ interactive movements become the primary form of inquiry that is kinetically, aesthetically, and energetically understood with each step, slide, twist, bounce, and roll.

In this experience, contagious positivity forms a warming rhythm of integration and acceptance. The willingness to move, the collective bounce, and the smiles emanating from the dancers provide an energy feedback loop that helps the educators understand the importance of connection. This kinesthetic musicality through rhythmic iterations of the beat afford opportunity for others to express the same rhythm in different ways. The rhythmic beat of the music invites students to open themselves up to lean into moments greater than themselves.

Spotlights on the Hip-Hop at Home Dance Floor

As the *Spotlight Cypher* begins, Sabrina transitions from a moment when she is dancing in synchronicity with her students to a sitting position while they refuel with water and wipe the sweat off their brows. Moments later, one student is invited to fill the zoom screen and be in the spotlight on the Hip-Hop-at-home dance floor. Sabrina attentively leans in, wearing a wide smile and a focused gaze. The students mirror her position with a sense of readiness in their illuminated faces, relaxed shoulders, and encouraging smiles. What pulls them to the screen? Does this engaged posture provide support and investment in the virtual space? Does the lean cultivate a sense of connection as does in other movement disciplines (Lloyd & Smith, accepted)?

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The *Spotlight cypher* activity is Sabrina's attempt to incorporate the most authentic experiences of Hip-Hop in her virtual space. Instead of feeling the music and instinctively finding the optimal pocket to enter the cypher as dancers do in face-to-face contexts, Sabrina verbally invites students to dance. Despite this barrier, Sabrina leans in, gives positive words affirmation and supports the student seen by her smile and wide eyes locked on the screen. Once each student begins dancing, not only in response to her verbal call, but also the call within the music. Motivated by her comments and engaged posture students forget about the camera and are teleported to their own spaces where they can exercise choice and be creative with their bodies. Sabrina's students leaned further into their screen as they watched others dance and showcase their skills. They are all drawn in by a spotlight dancer and captivated by the energy that togetherness brings.

Don't Waste the Music

In *Claim the Space*, Didi calls to form a cypher. The students' varying comfort levels are apparent through the postures of their bodies, but despite any hesitancy, they are motivated to move. They begin to bounce as Didi stably crouches and leans in, her weight aimed low, her chest opens towards her students. Is this her ready stance? Does this stance prepare her class for connection?

How do teachers encourage their students to take to the call of the music? As her students follow her in the motion, they create a gradual build-up of liveliness, animation, energy, and vibe. The students respond to the call of the music, swaying and scooping their chests, instantly intensifying the enthusiasm in their bodies and collective space. Perhaps this link between the educator and student experience is the shaping of a connective structure in relational and communal ways.

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How do we navigate through open spaces that are calling for one's presence? Teachers may take moments to "stop and feel" (Bredmar, 2020, p. 64) and trust "feelings of pedagogical connection with pupils beyond the lesson" (Bredmar, 2020, p. 61). When Didi yells, "*Don't waste the music!*" while cupping her hands over her mouth, students are reminded of their power. As the students continue with light bounces and timid rocks back and forth, Didi reaches for the center of the circle. This reach is an invitation, an extension and a yearning to connect. With this lean into the circle, a somewhat magnetic force pulls students into this hallowed space, reducing the building tension in their social distance. After having two years of "wasted time" due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no room to waste this moment unfolding before them. The push and pull sensation of entering the cypher is identical to the back and forth lean from a partner and the lean in during the active engagement between teacher and student. These moments of interactive connection through "a mutual gaze, a postural shift, a gesture, a facial expression" and a "change in vocal tone and strength" (Stern, 2004, p. 145) can form a wavering development of flow. These movement contours emerge when connections start to shape, but also has the opportunity to fade as the students and teachers watch the moment unfold. Didi observes her dancers confidently express themselves. She joins the ripple effect of the formed synergies. Like a boomerang, her energy moves from the individual level to the community and back to her again. Together, they resist the pull of the pandemic isolation and instead give in to the pull of the cypher, and the natural calling to connect with others on a relational level.

Discussion: Pedagogical Connections within Social (Dis)Dancing

In each connective experience both students and teachers are dancing, interacting and connecting at a distance. The construct of social distancing shifts from one of separation to connection in moments of 'social (dis)dancing'! Despite the implementation of government

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protocols of mask mandates, social distancing and transition to virtual learning, the experience between the dancers and the music develop moments of flow between the students and the teacher. Connection was not found in choreographed movement but in the moments of freestyle and expression. By doing different variations of the *fila* and responding differently to the rhythmic call of the *Tick tick-Ahh*, dancers exude their personal flavour as they move to and also moved by a collective beat. Sheets-Johnstone characterizes form of dancing as a series of “free movements” (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017a), where the dancer's movement cannot be predicted, planned, or measured. As the dancers grow together in confidence and expression, so do their feelings of energy and connection.

With each dance workshop held by Taz, Sabrina and Didi, I find pockets of connective experiences that allow for a deeper understanding of Hip-Hop's somatic and relational connective potential. Moments of connective postures such as the lean, and gestures like the bounce, have the power to create rhythmic feelings of solidarity both in and out of the pandemic space. This feeling disrupts the understanding of pedagogical linear time and space to acknowledge the “multiplicity of energy and learning” (Le Lay, 2020, p. 147). In these moments, researching ‘living experiences’ in a way that “exudes a sense of life” (Lloyd & Smith, 2021, p. 3) can form a culture of connection that can be experienced in education through Hip-Hop and movement.

Hip-Hop has been used to teach dance principles of rhythm, shape, space, and dynamics as students explore their life world (Osumare, 2021). What I notice, is no matter where I dance or who I dance with, the rhythm of the music holds the vitality of Hip-Hop, which connects us all one beat at a time. Through this postural, positional and expressive relational analysis, I learn how we might experience a sense of connection when teaching Hip-hop dance during this

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COVID-19 pandemic. Some moments of connection result from a gradual development of energy, while other moments happen in sporadic bursts. The collective rhythmic experiences within Taz, Sabrina, and Didi's teachings create opportunities for their students to claim the space. Through their open and outward-facing gestures of the lean and the bounce, they support their students, who flourish and thrive throughout their learning experience. Each of their students could feel the tensions of movement expression and eventually realize their power and sense of agency in creative exploration.

Connections are present in these moments through the ebbs and flows of movement and interactive communication between Taz, Sabrina, Didi, and their students. In moments during the cypher, partnered activities, and spotlight cyphers, feelings of connection were formed when embracing improvisational methods of movement and expression. When looking at the Interactive Function, grounded and open postures, welcome students to connect. As they "think in movement," the reciprocal energy the educators give and receive from their students allows for meaningful movements to emerge. With each step, rock, lean and bounce, a groove begins to form in the community which allows for vitality and wholeness as a collection of moving bodies and forms invitations to connect. Thinking in movements is felt in the various ways the teachers and students 'claim their space', as Didi leans in to *dip, dip, roll* and *snap*, one student waves her arms and she rolls into her hip, another waving his arm and letting the movement travel up to his head. We can see, hear and feel the beat as students *Tick, tick, -ahh* when one student moves with the shimmy of his shoulders and another taps his toes while flicking his wrists. Smiles spread as students make sense of their subjective understanding of the world around them and teachers keep the culture in its richest form through the evolution of connective synergies in each moment. Rhythmic patterns and accents act as pathways for connecting through somatic

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conversation, even within a virtual space. This all leads up to pockets of interactive flow, where reciprocal energies exchange in full expressions of connection. They smile and laugh, as a sense of joy brings them together in a time of distance. The various movements exploring the space together are the telltale signs of energetic connection —these movements of ‘social dis(dancing)’ were spontaneous, seamless, and connected.

Connection Beyond the Screen

Looking back to my virtual teaching experience I have realized the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Pandemic teaching pulled out my spark, but the restriction of the two-meter distance and isolation periods also pulled individuals apart from one another. However, there was no longer a pandemic push of separation within these moments of connection but one of unification, a dance of intertwining intentions with a common goal. As I took to the dance floor, I found my original understanding of pedagogical connection outdated and, ironically, more restricting than I had initially understood. The choreographic nature of my pedagogy was functional, but it was not practical. In the past, I directed and facilitated the learning instead of enculturating and empowering my students (Davis et al., 2015), making for a devitalizing state of connection, vastly limited by the objectified teaching style. Taz, Sabrina, and Didi became co-participants in the experience, blurring the lines between teacher and dancer as they engaged in emergent forms of collaborative teaching (Davis et al., 2015). Moving with and teaching with foundational movements like the rock, bounce and groove, welcomed spaces for students to experience a sense of synchronized synergy with room for personalized expression. This relational pedagogy is the highlight of my fruitful insights. By setting the stage for students to exercise their agency, they proactively partake in this shared repertoire and collective ways of moving and become part of a community of practice.

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Stepping back into my experience of teaching virtually, I take a moment to re-sense the connection in the four walls of my screen. I can look back now and understand that this experience created a portal for a new form of connection. In each experience, the educators believed their students can dance and collectively respond to the rhythm of the music, embracing kinetics, aesthetics, and kinesthetics energies of creativity and invention. This belief is attributed to student success (Shouldice, 2019). I have learned that this connective energy is not calculated or structured. These feelings need time to shape, grow and evolve, eventually creating something beautiful within the chaos and rigidness of the world around us. The synergies felt in response were contagiously captivating and drew students closer as the feeling of acceptance develops amongst them. Perhaps these were the moments I was missing? The rhythm of the beat can develop a bravado of feelings that may seem somewhat spiritual but provide a sense of peace in a time of uncertainty. Can you hear it?

Conclusion

Through this motion-sensing inquiry, I have a deeper understanding of the intricate relation between Hip-Hop, movement, and its connective power within a global pandemic. Each educator taught with a grounded and open posture, welcoming their students to connect. The subtle gestures of a rock, bounce, nod or smile formed an invitation for their students to engage. The teacher-student interaction set the tone for progressive and dynamic feelings to emerge and as they moved together, a reciprocal energy contributed to a sense of community and oneness.

I challenge educators to reflect thoughtfully on the phenomenon of pedagogical connection during a pandemic and in our day-to-day lives. How might we question the ways we may embody music and culture within a communal relational experience (H. J. Chang &

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Hogans, 2021)? These aforementioned analyzed experiences of Hip-Hop pedagogical connection have inspired me to value connection in its entirety, despite the potential and unexpected barriers life may bring. I want Hip-Hop teachers to question how we can connect through dance using our positions, postures, and gestures as we teach. In each experience, the physical shifting of space and bodies creates a paradigm of dynamic, kinesthetic, and relational forms. These moments of interactive flow are felt, perceived, and experienced as meaningful to the educators, subsequently affording a deeper place of knowing, and integrating the emergence of possibility.

During these moments of 'social dis(dancing),' Hip Hop teachers actively learn to reflect, reshape, and explore experiences of pandemic pedagogical connection and, for just a brief moment, forget about the world's irregularity. This allows them to live within and enjoy the uncertainty brought by the bodies moving before them. Students are welcome to adapt and hopefully discover that they are not alone in these moments. Although they are each moving in separate spaces, there are all tethered by the rhythm of the beat.

The SugarHill Gang's *Rapper's Delight* said it right, in "Hip-Hop, we don't stop; we keep it pushing and keep it moving". Despite the adversity we face, we can be resilient and bounce back. While leaning in and out of our collective spaces, we can form a unity fueled by the rhythmic connectors. This pulse within music connects the community and keep us going in times of uncertainty. Not only is this connective beat powerful and rooted in our relational understanding, but we can feel its power residing in the rhythm of our hearts. It is our primal connection with one another that makes life meaningful. No matter who we teach, or what we teach, our movements have the potential to create rhythmical connections that can grow and fade with intensity. These postures and gestures have the potential to create a rhythmic call open to all who are willing to hear it.

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Chapter Three: Concluding Thoughts & Lessons Learned

Chapter Organization

The DJ has the power to exercise their agency as they push, pull, and play with time. This power allows the DJ to control the space, and the energy the music may emit. In the following chapter, I will play the music from two significant records - theory and practice - both voices that speak to the same song. Join me as I play with the scratches from the life song as I share my experiences as a researcher through this motion-sensing phenomenological approach to understanding.

Where is the Groove?

At the beginning of my journey with motion-sensing inquiry, my understanding of pedagogical connection focused on my relationship with my students through a computer screen. I began by questioning: How can we connect through a screen? Is it possible to connect in a time of disconnection?

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I oriented myself within the teacher's perspective, as I tried to maintain a somewhat normal lifestyle. I also tried my best to carry on my dance workshops just as I did before the pandemic. As I moved through the motions of change, I tried recording virtual dance workshops and hosting outdoor lessons as alternative forms of connecting. But I felt that something vital was still missing. I had to step back and suspend my assumptions for what I assumed teaching to be in this pandemic (*epoché*) in order to open myself up to new ways of understanding the phenomenon of pedagogical connection as a researcher (*reduction*).

As I continued researching throughout the pandemic, I learned how to rewind, *re-sense*, *re-feel*, and reshape the way I was experiencing things in my lifeworld. Introducing InterActive outlets for virtual teaching like Facebook Live and Instagram Live was one avenue I decided to take. For weeks I continued hosting mid-week “Moves and Grooves” online workshops through these platforms. Over time, I learned that my own experiences of craving moments of connection were shared by my students. We were all listening to the same record and trying our best to keep the learning going. What I came to realize was that the screen was not, in fact, a barrier but a portal to various ways of connection.

These motion-sensing experiences allowed me to analyze how I make sense of relational connection in a phenomenological manner. I found myself agreeing that “desire meets us at

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every corner; yet the paradox so evident is that its presence is apparent as its absence” (Snowber, 2006, p. 2). The formation of, and the yearning for, community, seemed to be a collective motivator amongst my participants, and as I analyzed each experience, I noticed a common theme of absence and loss in my day-to-day experiences. Teaching online provided a mild sense of connection as I watched others dancing in their own homes. I wasn't alone. I was virtually connected to a community greater than before and, as my flickering passion was growing stronger, I began to find my way. In this process I record my thoughts in my journal:

Our Atmosphere

The beat, the rhythm of the music.

A strong connection of heart, soul, and body.

The unity between each element is what draws me to the floor.

Any solid ground that my feet can be placed, any space that I may move my body in a fluidity

That is mine and mine alone.

Amplified by the surrounding atmosphere,

I can feel the thump of the beat in my chest,

Which now emanates from my feet through to the palms of my hands.

I sway my shoulders and begin to rock back and forth with my chest,

Mixing in a sharp freeze and a pop.

Joy builds in my veins, dispersing into my body, spreading to my hands and eventually...

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Into...

My smile.

My eyes scan the crowd of smiling faces.

Laughing students mirroring my movements as we dance.

Unified and sweaty, together we begin to jump in the air, our fists shooting for the sky.

The warmth has travelled now to everyone in the room.

The rhythm of joy and happiness is our air.

Our atmosphere.

The beat of the music acts as our metronome.

As a collective, we share the message of peace,

Love,

And unity.

The essences of Hip-Hop

-Journal Entry August 2020

Finding the Groove

With my newfound paradigm, I then decided to change my question. What was I really looking for? It was not connecting *through the screen* but connecting with others during a global pandemic. What specific postures and gestures cultivate an environment for pedagogical connection? How do teachers read to their students, feel their energies, and decide which steps to

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take next in their lessons? Is it better to preplan or be spontaneous? What is the experience of teaching Hip-Hop dance during a pandemic?

I first had to learn from the place where it began. Where connection is the baseline of movement interaction. Where communities use dance as an outlet to connect with others. Where they forget about the negative elements that may be influencing their lives and leave all their conflicting emotions on the dance floor, the streets. This was the next step in my research.

As I explored the wide variety of talent in my local dance scene, I kept running into street dancers who shared their passionate stories of growth and stamina when it came to the art of dance. I learned how some do not see Hip-Hop dance as a hobby, stress reliever, or a way to make a quick buck, but as a lifestyle. Most street dancers I spoke with were self-taught, and others stated that they intentionally strayed from taking studio Hip-Hop dance classes. Their hesitation was derived from the notion that studio classes were teaching ‘watered down Hip-Hop’ and that *Freestyle* was seen as the best style of Hip-Hop dance. I learned that *Freestyle* allows one to show their signature style, and that there is a contrast between learning choreography as it plays the opposite role. Some street dancers did choose to take dance classes in the local area and enjoyed learning from others to build their dance vocabulary and movement content. However, they were also cognizant of the reputation that their lessons featured watered-down Hip-Hop. After learning about this stigma, I knew I had to conduct research with teachers who exemplified and integrated Hip-Hop philosophy into their dance classes. I had to find the experts.

After emailing various dance teachers in the spring of 2021, I was met with little response. Many teachers were not holding in-person classes due to the lockdown and government protocols. Some teachers decided to find other outlets to share their passions. A few stopped teaching completely. I quickly realized that I wasn’t the only one being pushed away from this

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passion by the pandemic. A few months after reaching out, I was worried I wouldn't find anyone to learn from. Fortunately, summer 2021 brought along lifted restrictions, the opening of outdoor learning spaces, and two dance teachers willing to be my participants (Taz and Sabrina).

Subsequently, as the fall season rolled in, I decided to expand my search to the virtual spaces of Instagram and Facebook, hoping for more opportunities to dive into expert teaching experience.

One day as I scrolled, I found an Instagram post for weekly breakin' class - enter Sabrina.

Grooving with the Experts

In sharing moments of reflection, each teacher showed resilience in their movements and their approaches to teaching. Their diverse range of styles allowed me to acquire a more well-rounded somatic take on their teaching pedagogies. What stood out for me was Taz's resilient effort to form connections with the community. I quickly learned that his goal was to create a family with the members of the community. His philosophy could be seen in his partnered and circle-centered activities and emanating through his postures and gestures. He could see the desire to move in his students and wanted to guide them to a space of musicality, expression and freedom.

Sabrina's personality moved me in more ways than one. Although we moved and grooved in our own spaces, we were able to connect on a different level. As we spoke, Sabrina smiled from ear to ear, as she explained that she had no regrets in making the decision to teach online. Her passion for teaching, which had been diminished by the pandemic, began to renew. The enthusiasm for learning that Sabrina saw in her students created an unexpected ricochet effect on her outlook about teaching online. She no longer saw this method as a bruise on her community

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outreach, but as a new avenue to connect with others, including students who would not have had access to her otherwise.

Learning from Didi helped me to understand how humble we must be as teachers. What stood out when speaking with her was that she does not refer to her attendees as *students*, but as *dancers*. As we spoke, she made it a point to explain her personal decision to address her dancers this way. At this moment, I understood her commitment to building trusting relationships. Instead of labeling her dancers according to the dichotomy of teacher and student, she used a more personal approach to teaching. Although she did not consider herself an expert, her reserved yet dynamic personality seemed to shine through, as we spoke about her passion for connecting with others through dance. She promoted the idea that Hip-Hop is a social dance, a creative dance, and a cultural dance, supported and created by the community.

Learning my participants' stories and dancing in their classes lead me to a deeper understanding of pedagogical connection. Each teacher explained the meaningful implications of connecting with their students within and through their pedagogy. Themes of agency, resilience, and community development have emerged from these connective experiences.

Sensing in Motion

Conducting a motion-sensing phenomenological interview is not for the faint at heart. I struggled with setting aside my ideas and found myself interjecting from my standpoint as a teacher. I realized quickly that bracketing my experiences would be vital for continuing my interviews successfully. To do this, I took part in a phenomenological interview with my supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Lloyd, to draw out a moment of pedagogical connection from my own practice. What became of it was nothing short of spectacular. Dr. Lloyd began by asking me

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about a particular moment in my practice where I felt a connection with my students. I thought of a moment that stood out to me while teaching at my summer dance camp. At this time, recording and hosting virtual dance workshops had become my new avenues of teaching. However, it was not until the summer of 2021 that I was finally able to get a taste of deep pedagogical connection.

As I continued describing the experience, I found myself speaking on the surface. I described how I taught in a gym on a hot summer day and how the air conditioning was broken so it was much warmer than usual. Dr. Lloyd proceeded to guide me through the experience by asking me to describe the relative positions from which I taught and how they changed throughout my lesson. She then took it a step further and asked about the gestures, and feelings that emerged within the moment. Taking on the role of the interviewee allowed me sense and understand the impact of my past teaching experiences on how I viewed other practices. From this interview I was able to create the following vignette.

As I adjusted my mask, I could feel the moisture of my hot breath rubbing against my cheeks - a quick reminder of my reality. It was the last day of dance camp, and we were reviewing the dances we had learned throughout the week. This dance specifically was my favourite; not only was it catchy and to the camper's favourite song of the summer, but it also came with one of the most challenging dances taught this year. The campers (aged seven to twelve) had difficulty picking up the moves at the start of the week, but it was the last day, and I could tell they had been practicing. As I stood in front of the speakers, I could see most students in their staggered formation, smiling with anticipation. I felt the trickling of sweat glide down my back. The air-conditioner was broken, but it had not stopped us from dancing this morning.

Air Guitar

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“One more time! From the top!” I yell through my mask. I click play on my computer, turn up the volume, and pivot back to face the campers. The beat hits, and we dance together as the campers mirror my every move to the choreographed dance.

“To the left....”

“and to the right...”

“1, and 2, 3 and 4...”

“brush your shoulders off...”

I lead the campers through the movement, encouraging them with each step. We reach the song’s point where I break the mirrored pattern and instruct the campers to freestyle around the room. I cup my hands over my mask and yell: *“FREESTYLE!”*

I step into the crowd of campers as they move in different directions. Some students wave their arms in the air. Others do the orange justice—a dance move from a popular video game. My excitement builds. *“Oh, yeah! Show me your moves!”* I yell to every other camper I see.

Abruptly, I pause to adjust my wet mask, debating on using this time to switch to a fresh one. I scan the room. Campers are jumping in the air, spinning, gliding, and doing anything that feels good to them.

Suddenly, I catch a glimpse of a camper across the room. I noticed him by his signature move...the air guitar. As I watch him close his eyes and strum his guitar, he suddenly drops to the ground, landing on his knee then falling onto his back. I gasp and instantly reach my arms out as I began to run toward him. To my surprise, the camper starts to spin on his back with his air guitar in hand.

I stop running, and as my feet merge with the ground, my head tilts, and I realize that he is taking his freestyle to the next level. I scan the room, watching for other potential injuries, but I am met with smiling faces and wiggling little bodies. Feeling the warmth and energy in the room, I step toward the rock star, pull out my air guitar, and join him on the ground. I lie on my back and spin on the floor with him, sweeping up the small specks of sand and debris left from the campers that had previously stepped into this space. Mid-spin, our eyes met, and we share a laugh as we both sit up. His eyes widen, and I feel a smile beaming toward me from behind his mask.

These moments of dynamic expression and freedom are what move me as a dancer, a teacher, and a human being. I followed him as he got to his feet. I noticed the strain in my knees as I pulled my body up from the ground. I watched as the camper continued to rock out, this time hopping on one foot. I rubbed my knee, shook my head, and laughed, missing the days of my

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youth. I pulled out my guitar again, strummed, and looked out to watch my students drift into another world. As I danced with them, I felt my students' personalities coming to life. I experienced a moment of “stop and feel” (Bredmar, 2020, p. 64) as I thought through what I had helped to produce as a teacher.

Grooving in Space

After speaking with Dr. Lloyd, I started to understand the impact of relative positioning. As we danced to choreographed synchronized movement, I felt the natural connective positions and gestures that elicited this sense of flow. As opposed to teaching in a studio space with mirrors stretching from floor to ceiling, I was teaching in a school gymnasium. This afforded the space for my students and myself to focus on how the moves *feel* rather than how they *look* when dancing, allowing for the development of our kinesthetic and relational awareness (Durden, 2017; Lloyd, 2017). As I faced my students, I formed the first line of connection. I could see the growth of confidence in my campers as they raised their chests and slowly extended their arms toward the sky as we started the choreography. However, it wasn't until I stepped into the crowd that I could feel the connection strengthening.

Grooving Through Time

As I continue to discover elements in my teaching that cultivate an invitation to connect in my summer camp class, I realize it is not the mirroring movements but the sporadic and diverse freestyle movements that set the stage for connection. In this experience, I played around with the relational position between myself and my students. Once I yelled: “*FREESTLYE!*” my position shifts from standing outside the student's learning space at the front of the class, to moving within their space and enacting a diverse approach to education. I begin to fuse myself into the student exploratory space. As I join the dancing campers, I encourage them to move

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around the space to show that they are not limited to the movements I teach. This change in relative positioning causes a shift in the learning experience. Instead of guiding the movements and expecting synchronized movements, I encourage the students to break the cycle and showcase their personalities. Their dance positions reveal them to be playful, spontaneous, and magnetic. I can see the growth of energy in my campers as they move around the space.

However, this is just the beginning. The deeper point of connection emerged when I spot a student playing his air guitar. What stands out about this particular student is his drop to the ground. No matter what songs we danced to throughout the week, this student always pulls out his air guitar and strums his invisible chords. The other campers always admire his energy, charisma, and charm. Similarly, after watching the music take over his body, I find myself captivated by the energy in his movements. The dynamic gestures are electrifying and invite me to dive into the moment with him.

Grooving Together

As I approached the guitarist in my summer dance workshop, I felt urged to join in. With his eyes closed and head rocking, I started to feel the rhythm in his movements. As I looked back, I wonder, where was the rhythm felt? Was it in the strum of the guitar, the rocking of the head, or the bouncing of the body? The rhythm was felt throughout the entire experience. It started in the head and guided our bodies down to the ground, as we continued strumming to the rhythm of the music. The feeling of joy from a spontaneous movement helped give us a glimpse of life before the pandemic.

This particular moment was special because I was not taken back to the previous times I have taught this choreography. The students frequently focused on the accuracy of the choreographed movement, but they were stiff and withheld, and unsure what to do with their

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freestyle. However, they became comfortable and confident over the four days they practiced. It was then that I realized their freestyle had become more dynamic.

When teaching my summer dance workshops, I understood the effect of dancing choreography and, more importantly, the value of a freestyle moment. Allowing the students to develop their movement vocabulary through freestyle encourages communication and connection with others. By just following choreography, the repletion of agency will be present. However, the ability to tap into the core power of connection is hindered. Introducing more freestyle moments also allows everyone to move differently together.

Freestyle is not just dancing however you want to but connecting to the space around you. Exploring the relations and tensions of movement demonstrates how collective synergies may form with others around you. Dancing, and teaching dance isn't just: "*1 and 2,3 ... follow me*". To have a more significant and more meaningful connection with others requires judgment-free exploration of the self and the postures, positions, and gestures of the body. Moments of interactive flow can be found by traversing and cruising through spaces of uncertainty. By gaining this sensed perspective of dancing, students can find strength even in solitude. Here they are open to making conscious choices, accepting both the freedoms and limitations of movement.

These learning experiences have helped me develop a well-established sense of self as embodied in the world (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011). As I developed a sensitivity to and awareness of my connective experiences, I found that encouraging freestyle moments prioritized students' voice, choice, and responsibility, helping students develop a new attitude towards movement. Hip-Hop is all about being your authentic self. Knowing his truth, my student could shine through that moment and the many others we witnessed throughout the week. This defined his moment of flow, where he did not have to think about dancing - he felt it (Beardall, 2017).

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Quickly forgetting the COVID-19 pandemic, face masks, vaccines, or uncertainty about when it will all end, what was clear in that moment is that we wanted to move. As he strummed his air guitar, he was free, comfortable with who he is, and how he expressed himself. This characteristic of authenticity played into pedagogical connection in Hip-Hop, and what it stands for.

Movement is the Method

After partaking in my interview with Dr. Lloyd, I was able to truly understand how to approach Motion-Sensing Phenomenological interviews. As I proceeded, I was able to dive deeper into the experiences of the dance teachers and their connective pedagogies. This experience with Dr. Lloyd also guided my interviews throughout my research journey. Sheets-Johnstone (2015) states “without returning again and again to this lived experience, one cannot hope to arrive at a valid and meaningful description of dance” (p. 23). Thus, I did not settle with one interview with each participant but decided on several over a three-week time span. I wanted to sense “the nature of, and structures inherent in, [the] appearance, creation, and presentation” of teaching Hip-Hop dance (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015, p. 23).

Inter-feeling

While moving into the phenomenon of pedagogical connection, I got a feel for how participants built relational pedagogical connections with their students and got an inside perspective of their teaching praxis. This later flowed into the interviewing stage of my research. By taking their classes beforehand, I was able to develop a relationship with each participant. Each interview felt like talking to a friend. I ended up dancing, moving, and sensing the motions

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of the movement with them to deepen my understanding further. It quickly turned from *inter-viewing* to *inter-feeling* (Lloyd, 2017, p. 62).

While taking Taz's class, I was moved by the exhilarating rhythm of his call and response, which was also felt in our virtual interviews. As we discussed how he encouraged his students to diversify their movements, I caught myself leaning into my computer screen. I could feel the power in his gestures and energetic freezes as we spoke about these activities. At one point, he jumped out of his seat and began showing me poses that showcased his flavour and style. He transitioned from pose-to-pose, drawing on his B-Boy influences. I knew in this moment that I was not *inter-viewing* but *inter-feeling*.

This passion spilled over into his teaching. As I grooved with him, listening to the call of the music acted as a catalyst that sent me into playful experimentation with movement and expression. As I joined in vocalizing the rhythm *Tick, tick, -ahh—Tick tick-ahh*, I felt a connection while dancing with *polyrhythms* (Durden, 2017; Chang & Hogans, 2021). While taking on this new sense of movement and watching others do the same, I experienced pockets of meaningful connection. Responding to this rhythmic call is open to all who are willing to hear it.

Sabrina's virtual space at the start of the class felt all too familiar. Pushing my couch aside this time and dancing in the small space in front of my television, I was reminded of many ways to connect through this portal. As my husband watched me roll, pivot, and glide across the floor for my weekly virtual dance classes, my confidence slowly began to grow. After taking Taz's breakin' class, I found myself building upon my skills. The progressive development brought me feelings of pride, and I leaned into my computer camera to watch the other women experiment on their makeshift dancefloors too. In my nine weeks of learning how to breakdance, I became closer to the other students. As we grew, we exercised our agency, and explored our spaces

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without addressing the computer screen. Throughout these moments, we collectively expressed individual creativity in our foreign environments.

Learning from places different from the norm has caused individuals to develop the skills to focus on a set activity while the world moves around them. I understood the potential it may bring to building a community, and its capacity to reach children on a global scale. Sabrina's support for her students was influential, as she used her understanding of her students' journeys to guide her lessons. Despite the difficulties she faced within the virtual landscape, she stated that teaching online was a "crazy but necessary thing" (interview with Sabrina).

As I stared at the screen, I witnessed the dedication and resilience of each dancer in the class. This moment reminded me of Csikszentmihalyi's explanation of happiness and enjoyment. He stated: "enjoyment does not derive from the satisfaction of instinctual needs but from the achievement of emergent goals, that is, from one's ability to respond to opportunities in the environment that one learns about, or discovers, in the course of one's life." (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, p. 159). The virtual cyphers provided a space for these opportunities. Here I was able to respond to the call of my spotlight.

In Didi's class, I realized the pandemic that once stifled my movement had opened a door to new ways of learning. My experiences in the cypher were pinnacles in my explorations. At first, I felt confined to the space within the circle, second-guessing my ability to break free. As those around me watched carefully, I recognized my subconscious fear of judgment, and felt even more vulnerable. As I scanned the circle, I wondered: Who would continue the pattern? What movements will be showcased? What feelings will emerge when entering the circle? What will the support from the other dancers look and feel like? These sensations of wonder were a "spontaneous feeling, variably weighted with fear and longing" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, p. 284).

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Once I finally stepped in, moving with this group of dancers elicited a sense of community. As we grooved together, mirroring each other and later dispersing into our own worlds of expression, I experienced genuine moments of connection that had been lost to the pandemic.

In each participatory experience, I was able to move, groove, grow, and connect with others. At the end of each class, I would record the events in my journal - the postures, positions, gestures, song titles, catch phrases, and memories. Most importantly were the moments of the class when there was a shift in understanding, and a connection formed between the teacher and the students. My sense of comfort grew with each class. I had a community. A family. I was not alone. I quickly learned about not only the teachers, but the students who shared the dance floor with me. Taking these fresh and sweaty moments to my computer was where my challenge truly began.

Movement in Writing

“Research does not have to be experienced in ways that detach us from our most deeply felt sensations” (Lloyd & Smith, 2021, p. 13). With particular attention to Hip-Hop pedagogical connection, I delve into how we may phenomenologically make sense of the functional, forming, feeling, and flowing movements that constitute connectedness within Hip-Hop dance classes and the community. I focused on how pedagogical connection may be experienced despite the presence of the screen, the shared space between the two-metre distance and/or the mask, and what shapes and postures are formed when allowed to move to the Hip-Hop beat.

When I began “writing up” my vignettes (Lloyd & Smith, 2021), I initially felt the fluidity of my thoughts pouring onto my paper. However, the little pond of knowledge quickly grew into a river of detail. I had to go through a process of writing, rewriting and reshaping the ideas to draw out a “directly felt sense” of the experiences (Sheets-Johnstone, 2020, p. 9). I had to “hone in” on

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my experiences and those of my participants (van Manen, 2014, p. 255). To do this I had to “‘try out’ the interview data that [was] ‘texted out’” to offer a more in-depth sensing of the experiences, and the essences they may bring (Lloyd & Smith, 2021, p. 9). Over time, the river transformed into a lake, and from a lake to a stream of knowledge. In doing this I was able to find a variety of ways of “questioning, strengthening and appraising phenomenological writing” (Adams & van Manen, 2017, p. 789). This process took several months to complete. I was constantly practicing the reflective methods of epoché and reduction. With the help of Dr. Lloyd, I was able to draw out the essences of each experience, thus leading in into the next step of my analysis.

Movement and Meaning

After forming the carefully crafted *living* experiences, I continued to phenomenologically make sense of the ways the felt sense of pedagogical connection emerged through the *Interactive Function2Flow Model* (Lloyd & Smith, 2022). I focused on the various postures, positions and feelings that manifested a sense of ‘oneness’ and ‘flow.’ Describing the essences of connection may seem “simple and natural” but it is in fact “very hard to explain or even talk about” (Stern, 2004, p. 371). Putting words to experiences we take for granted is a daunting but doable task. As a practicing phenomenologist, I had to gather experiential material through motion-sensing interviews, written descriptions, observations, and thoroughly understand literature, to analyze the meaning of pedagogical connection.

Through thematic selection, I used a holistic approach to find “sententious phrases” (van Manen, 2016, p. 93) and moments that captured the fundamental meanings of connecting through Hip-hop dance. Phrases like “claim the space” and “can you hear it” guided my analysis further. From these phrases, I deciphered the multilayered experiences to find the interactive

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functions, forms, and feelings that developed flow. These themes helped me convey descriptive accounts of meaningful connective moments in Hip-hop dance.

Textualizing this phenomenon has helped me dive “more deeply into feeling acts of seeing” (Lloyd, 2017, p. 58), illuminating teacher experiences and feelings of flow created by their various postures, positions, and gestures. By analyzing these moments of optimal connection, I identified themes of agency, resilience, and community that contribute to meaningful understanding in each connective experience. As the teachers opened the space for student agency, connections began to form. Students may or may not be aware of their movements, but a rhythm tethers them to the movement in the moment through their subtle postures. There is also a communal experience developing. Through their gestures, teachers set the stage for building a communal atmosphere as they leaned towards, bounced, and grooved with their students. In these moments, resilience was seen through each experience as we moved and grooved despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students and teachers were able to dance in new spaces and were able to claim their spotlight in company of their community members.

Groove is in the Heart

I completed this paper in a different place than where I started. My outlook on pedagogical connection, specifically in relation to Hip-Hop dance, has transformed in many ways. I largely attribute this to the communities that welcomed me during these projects, where I transformed as a teacher through my experiences from the student perspective. During the course of this research project, I joined a Hip-Hop dance training team, learning the basics of breakin’, ultimately becoming a beginner B-Girl.

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Figure 3.

Here I am practicing a baby freeze. Sensing researcher in motion.



After learning how to do *CeCe's*, *monkey swings*, *kick-outs*, and various styles of *freezes* (you can see me in a *baby freeze* in the picture above), I participated in my first battle in over ten years. This training allowed me to appreciate the complexity, effort, and strength involved in Hip-Hop dance, which also opened my eyes to its vast potential impacts on pedagogy. This embodied experience offered an outlet for me to rediscover myself as a dancer and shaped the narrative of my life and my praxis. Learning within various spaces allowed me to become more vulnerable in sharing my feelings with others, connecting through this” everchanging, multicultural expression of individuality” (Durden, 2017). My findings helped solidify my teaching philosophy which is that teaching and learning are reciprocal experiences - a continuous cycle of learning and teaching, teaching and learning. In this regard, its impact on students invites connection beyond the kinesthetics, and into a relational communal form, potentially stretching beyond the dance floors and into the classrooms. I have learned that: “beyond the movement, communal dance forms are a lifestyle because they are centered on human

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livelihood, community, and cultural exchange” (Chang & Hogans, 2021, p. 12). The embodied experiences of synergic energies and uplifting senses that are felt in these moments do not just mechanically transpire. They emerge.

By using MSP as the methodological inspiration and approach to making sense of the kinaesthetic experience of Hip-Hop pedagogy, I quickly begin to understand that moments of connective postures, gestures, feelings, and movements like cyphers and the bounce, have the power to create “solidarity both in and out of the space, disrupting the understanding of linear time and space- acknowledging the multiplicity of energy, and learning” (Le Lay, 2020, p. 147). In these moments, researching ‘living experiences’, I was able to feel and be a part of a culture of connection that can be experienced in education through Hip-Hop and movement. I joined individuals to connect and celebrate our bodies through movement in a meaningful and transformative way.

I learned that even in in these moments, connections can fade and grow, releases and tensions revealing its tenuous nature. What may result from these moments is uncertain, but ultimately a gained sense of awareness can inspire creative exploration. During cyphers, partnered activities, and virtual spotlights, there are essences of connection formed through embracing improvisational movements and expression. Dancer experienced flow through their purposeful and somatic intentions, rebuilding what was once lost. As our bodies experienced *thinking in movement* (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017b), shared everyday moments contributed to a more holistic awareness of our lives, possibly connecting us to something “more-than-human” (Laidlaw & Beer, 2018, p. 282).

As I ‘social (dis)danced’ with my peers I noticed the change in postures, gestures, and expressions of each moving body. These InterActive moments validated my understanding that

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dance is more profound than movement, and go beyond harmonies to thrive within and through the beating hearts of each individual. Here, smiles and laughter seemed to blend in with the music playing from the speakers, forming a new song playing in their collective souls.

Throughout the pandemic, I always questioned my moments of connection, and as we all grew accustomed to communicating through the eyes (Barrett-Fraser, 2021). Fortunately, during these dance experiences, there was no need to question the connection. They expressed to me crystal-clear joy and gratitude to just be dancing, connecting, and moving individually or with others again — this was the genuine moment I was longing for.

Without this prefixed notion to teaching, moving, and grooving, I felt strange to move so freely. I had to find my way back to who I was as a dancer. For so long, I was used to pre-set choreographed movements, and I forgot along the way what it was like to just dance like... me, for ... me. I always danced for others, to facilitate moments of connection, instead of allowing them to form authentically.

Looking back at my summer camp experience, I understood as I watched my student who felt comfortable enough to express himself through the air guitar, and I felt comfortable enough to follow. On my way down to the ground, we both discovered new ways of expressing ourselves. There was no second-guessing myself, because with masks on and air guitars in hand, we were able to dance freely, have fun, and still be true to ourselves without worrying about the risks. The tensions of the pandemic were brushed away like the debris collected on the ground. Instead of moving away or standing up out of it, we rocked and rolled in it. The pandemic was less of a hindrance and, just for a split second, as we felt the cold ground upon our flesh, we connected.

Limitations

Phenomenological research allowed me to see my “limits and to transcend the limits of [my] interpretive sensibilities” (van Manen, 2016, p. 76). However, one challenge faced in this phenomenological approach was completely separating myself as a teacher, to sense, move, and live, through these moments. The processes of bracketing and reduction were my most significant obstacles. At the start of this project, I had a linear understanding of teaching. I wondered if there was a way my instruction could be transmitted to my students through a screen. This fixed mindset inhibited me from seeing the potential in virtual learning. However, as I continued to dive deeper into the literature, I realized the goal at hand: understanding pedagogical connections and how we may experience them. Once I suspended this idea of one-dimensional teaching, I was able to open myself up to the various ways we may connect through the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout my journey, I never stopped writing, re-writing and re-sensing. As I did, I was in constant separation from my thoughts, the thoughts of others, and the phenomenon in question.

Another methodological limitation I encountered was the availability of my participants. At the beginning of my research, it was difficult to find teachers who had been teaching during the pandemic. Many dance teachers decided to put their classes on hold due to the government restrictions.

Despite these limitations, I came to understand that “knowledge always refers us back to our world, to our lives, to who we are, and to what makes us write, read, and talk together as educators” (van Manen, 2016, p. 46). I explored what I could in this study given the design, and this should not define what pedagogical connection in Hip-Hop dance is, but what it could be.

Future Steps

The project has allowed me to “get a sense for how [my] passion for movement may become infused with a program of research” (Lloyd & Smith, 2021, p. 13). In the near future I hope to mobilize my knowledge by hosting Hip-Hop dance workshops that encourage other teachers to connect with their students virtually and in-person. With a chance to extend this research, I hope to develop recommendations for future teachers, and create guidelines that redefine barriers, using pedagogy that is rich in cultural flavour and allows the creativity of students to thrive.

When given the opportunity to further my research, I would examine how the emerging theme of relational connection in pedagogy can be implemented into the classroom when teaching movement. My future goal is to create guidelines that help teachers understand how to connect in the classroom and develop recommendations for teachers to use dance as an extension to students’ critical literacy (Harste, 2014). I hope to advocate for students to express their understanding of meaning in different forms, and through various art mediums, including: painting (graffiti art), music (DJing), and movement (Hip-Hop dance).

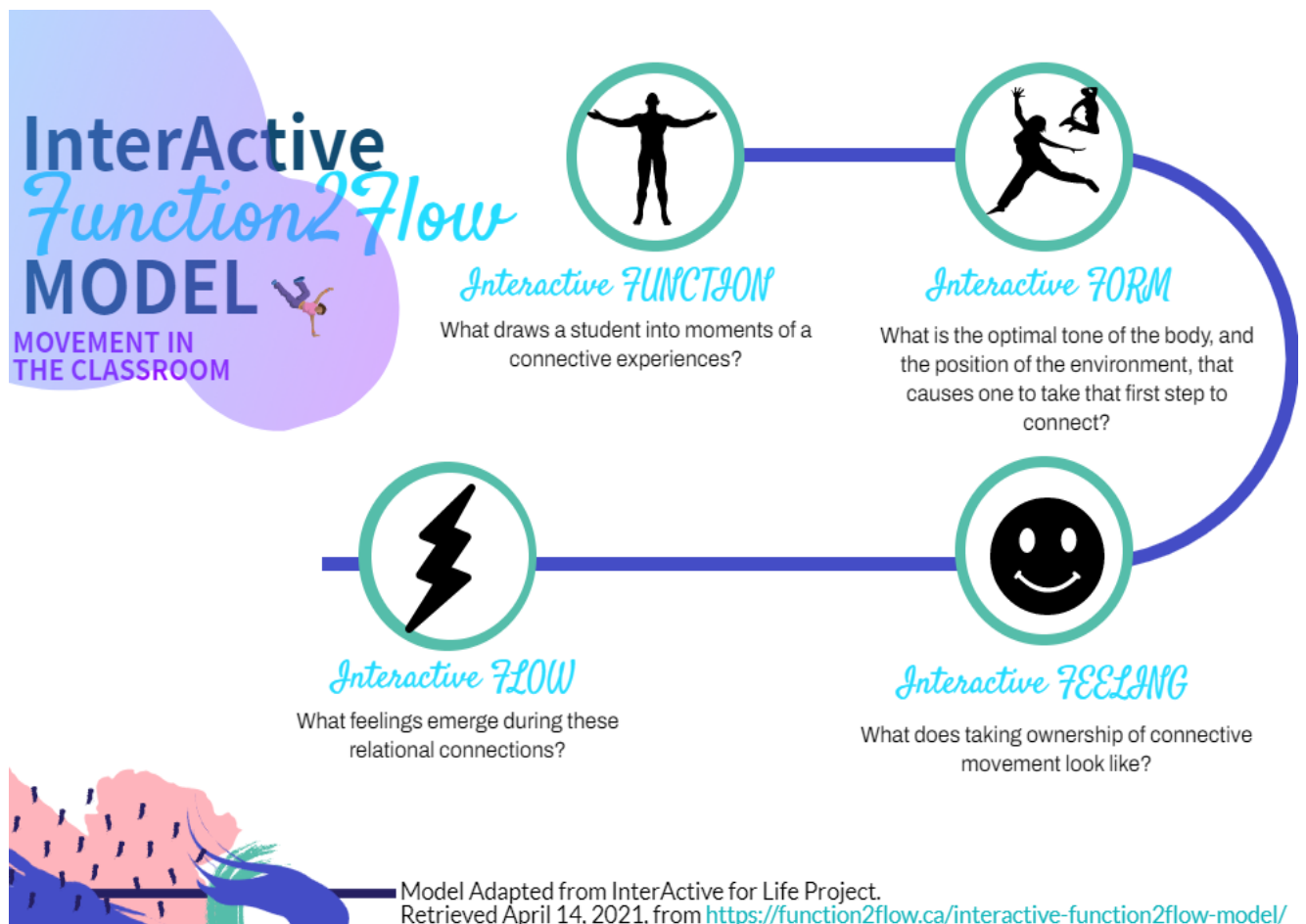
Grooving in the Classroom

The motto "Each One, Teach One" is an anthem for my teaching pedagogy. Inspired by its Hip-Hop origins referring to the responsibility of mentors to pass along their knowledge about the culture to the next generation, the motto encompasses my relational connection to movement and dance as a teacher (Iglesias, 2019). This motto guides my pedagogy which encompasses my passion, skill, and Bronx-rooted upbringing, where Hip-Hop culture was vibrant and dance was the outlet that connected me to the community.

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Critically tapping into my meaningful experience has inspired fruitful revelation. Hip-Hop provides a space for relational moments to occur. Even within this COVID-19 context, we had moments where we can feel on the relational flow and the connective nature of movement interaction. Experiencing the “feeling of seeing” (Lloyd, 2017) through a phenomenological scope helped me find the internal rhythm and understand the beauty of the culture, allowing me to rethink instructional approaches. I have analyzed the forms, feelings, and flowing of a series of existential moments as I feel for the meaning behind building relationships and staying connected during the COVID-19 context in a dynamic, personal, and universal way.

Figure 4. *Interactive Function2Flow Model: Movement in the Classroom Edition*



I want to promote the importance of interactive connection through movement by

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presenting my research at various academic events and professional development workshops. In doing this I can show others the meaningful experiences of connection. Dancers can connect using a series of linked movements to create an expression. The bodily twists, rolls, and slides create shapes of moving art. However, before the dancer can stretch and expand through space, they must choose to move. I encourage teachers to question: What draws a student into moments of a connective experiences? What is the optimal tone of the body, and the position of the environment, that causes one to take that first step to connect? What does taking ownership of connective movement look like? What feelings emerge during these relational connections?

As a researcher, I have realized that connection has no structure or formula but requires time and relational engagement to emerge. As a graduate student at the University of Ottawa, I have also been able to extend my studies in the areas of pedagogy and academic scholarship. As a dancer I have understood that Hip-Hop dance has the power to connect others through its *polyrhythmicity* and *polycentricity* (Chang & Hogans, 2021; Durden, 2017). Teachers hold the key to unlocking connective experiences in movement and learning. My vast living experiences, have helped me develop a deeper understanding for pandemic pedagogical connection.

Teaching is not only done in school settings, but takes place everywhere, every day, in every moment we are living. I have learned by looking at the body, specifically the teaching body, that it has the ability to communicate a language understood by others without anyone saying a word. Dancing does not only happen when music is playing, as we dance in every movement we make. Whether it be a simple walk, struct, run, crawl, stretch, turn, or reach, our bodies are in constant movement; thus, we are constantly dancing, constantly growing, learning, and thriving.

van Manen declared that research may have a “transformative effect” on the institutions in which the research was conducted, the participants, and the researchers themselves (van Manen,

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2016, p. 163). Through motion I sensed the various forms and feelings that manifest and the possibility of experiencing connectedness, otherwise known as flow. I have encouraged my participants to reflect on pedagogical connection in their praxis within and beyond the pandemic. I hope that this thesis has helps dancers, scholars, and teachers develop a better understanding of connection, and how it can be felt, sensed, and experienced through Hip-Hop dance with others.

The Feeling of Oneness

A dancer's relationship to rhythm is an essential part of everyday life.

We have a daily rhythm in our steps,

Breath,

And movements.

But...

We do not always take the time to listen to the rhythm that moves us.

Although we are all experiencing the pandemic globally

And feeling individual effects,

We collectively face setbacks due to its constraints.

The postures and gestures of our bodies

Shape the vibrational rhythm of our movements,

Tethering and uniting us,

Generating a feeling of

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Oeness.

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¹It is important to address the orthography of the term *hip-hop*, as it varies in the vast scope of literature (Alim, Ibrahim, & Pennycook, 2009). In the article it will be addressed as *Hip-Hop*.