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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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Cypher to Classroom:
An Ethnography and Choreographic Reading on Teaching and Learning and
Embodied Hip Hop Pedagogies *Otherwise*

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Critical Dance Studies

by

Maïko Le Lay

June 2020

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Imani Kai Johnson, Chairperson
Dr. Jacqueline Shea Murphy
Dr. Begoña Echeverria

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The Dissertation of Maiko Le Lay is approved:

Committee Chairperson

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Cypher to Classroom:
An Ethnography and Choreographic Reading on Teaching and Learning and
Embodied Hip Hop Pedagogies *Otherwise*

by

Maïko Le Lay

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Critical Dance Studies
University of California, Riverside, June 2020
Dr. Imani Kai Johnson, Chairperson

This ethnographic research on embodied hip hop pedagogies bridges the fields of dance studies, hip hop, and education. This dissertation sheds light on the transgressive possibilities of embodied hip hop pedagogies, a curricular and pedagogical model I developed, which resists traditional Western teaching and learning systems by placing students' realities at the center and capitalizing on the multidisciplinary, kinesthetic, and engaged nature of hip hop culture.

In this dissertation, I perform choreographic readings of Western pedagogical and institutional spaces such as missionary buildings or classrooms and participate in action research in schools in the Inland Empire. I am particularly interested in the tensions between hip hop and Western hegemonic epistemologies. My analysis focuses on how bodies navigate their agency in these Western institutional spaces and how they resist and challenge such spaces through movement and hip hop.

This research introduces the concepts of choreography of the classroom and critical moving and reinterprets the concept of the *otherwise* through a new valance (*otherwise* cypher, call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*). The overall aim of this dissertation is to improve the current Eurocentric and disembodied culture of education through hip hop and movement. Embodied hip hop pedagogies can help future scholars, educators, and community leaders connect with students through popular culture and non-static teaching and learning. By placing hip hop—an African diasporic and once marginalized culture— and movement at the center of the curriculum, this research helps legitimize non-dominant knowledges, challenges the Cartesian mind and body split, and revalidates people’ s identities, narratives, and bodies.

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Dedicated to Muxu

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INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I illustrate how students and teachers can achieve critical awareness and counter the Western education system by choreographing teaching and learning and by implementing hip hop culture in the existing curriculum.

Young generations play a pivotal role in shaping our world. It is therefore important to help ensure that more students feel like their cultural knowledge, experience, and identity matter to their educational institutions. My research draws together tools from Critical Dance Studies, Hip Hop Pedagogy, and Autoethnography to provide an analysis of the way that embodied hip hop practices constitute an innovative pedagogical model which can complicate the current culture of education in the United States, which is based on a belief in the Cartesian mind and body split and Eurocentric ideas. The education system tends to favor texts and hard sciences, rather than, as discussed by Madeleine R. Grumet, understanding teaching as “ embedded in cultural meanings, sedimented in history, and reinforced by ideology and emotion” (Grumet 249). This invisibilization of culture and disconnect between body and schooling are concerns expressed by many educators, such as Aysha Upchurch, lecturer at Harvard Graduate School of Education: “What’s happening right now is that we’re trying to school brains as if they’re not attached to bodies — bodies that carry rich and complex histories, as well as joy and trauma” (Upchurch qtd. in Harvard GSE)¹. In the same interview, she

¹ Boudreau Emily, Pajares Elio. “Moving toward meaning: How hip-hop and movement create a critical pedagogy”, GSE news, May 2020. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/20/05/moving-toward-meaning>. Accessed May 2020.

mentions that conversations about movements should happen at all age levels; but instead she noticed that students had a ““break up” with movement and their bodies at some point” (Upchurch qtd. in Harvard GSE)². This research is invested in showing the importance of the role of the body and movements in teaching and learning in a classroom. I also argue that teaching and learning about *other* epistemologies, such as the ones found in hip hop culture (e.g. each one teach one philosophy, creativity, cypher etc.), and connecting these cultural phenomenon to our embodied selves, disrupts current curricula, educational institutions, and therefore, the world.

My passion for the study of embodiment and pedagogy through hip hop started as a young bi-cultural woman who discovered hip hop culture upon reaching adulthood. At a young age, I realized the intricate relation between knowledge, space, power, and movement, and was already negotiating my movement agency and identity in various pedagogical spaces. As a French and Japanese child, I was raised with strict Asian traditions in a Western world (France and Belgium). At home, I was never Japanese enough, and I was often asked to be still to show discipline. My formal education clashed with the education I received at home. At school, I was often mocked by my peers and misunderstood by my school institutions for my beliefs and non-traditional behaviors, and thus never fully fit in. In other words, I knew that I had to be, know, and move in accordance with the school’s demands and those of the authority figure in my home. I learned to negotiate my Japanese and European identity, but because of my struggle

² Boudreau Emily, Pajares Elio. “Moving toward meaning: How hip-hop and movement create a critical pedagogy”, GSE news, May 2020. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/20/05/moving-toward-meaning>. Accessed May 2020.

growing up in a bi-cultural setting, I became curious to see how I could move, be, and know in a totally different cultural environment, such as those found in hip hop. Throughout much of my life I have been interested in hip hop culture and how it compares to the cultures in which I was raised.

During my college years, I became involved in the hip hop street dance community in Paris and attended my first freestyle training sessions in a gym in a poor neighborhood outside of Paris. The kind of pedagogy and ways of being, knowing, and moving in that space were nothing like I experienced growing up or in academia. I was attracted to the energy and the knowledge produced in the space, as well as the implicit consensus that we were all building something together and sharing with one another. In the gym, movement and sharing with others were key. Dancers experimented with new moves and created an unusual conversation with no dialogue. The knowledge they were sharing was invisible. Yet, there was something, some energy that continued to stimulate their knowledge production and transmission. While more advanced dancers mentored beginners, their mentoring supported us finding our own identity and style. I was encouraged to use my cultural background and my other dance techniques to add my own “sauce.”³

Thus, through my involvement with hip hop, I realized at the age of eighteen that certain communities (such as the hip hop community) and pedagogical spaces (such as the freestyle training session) practice knowledge differently than that which I experienced at school or home. I remember thinking that I wished my schooling and home education

³ Metaphor: A similar expression can be found in Spanish: “salsa.” Adding your own sauce in French refers to adding your personal touch or style.

experiences were more like this. I wished there were more pedagogical spaces where people were encouraged to experiment, try, fail, or succeed; where students are accompanied by a community of passionate mentors; where other ways of moving, knowing, and being than the traditional ones, were allowed. I use the term traditional to cover standard classroom practices of stillness, quietness, Eurocentric knowledge, hierarchy between embodied and theoretical knowledges, teacher as omniscient knower positioned behind the invisible wall separating them from their students, and the lack of connection between what/how knowledge is taught and students' realities.

I started asking myself if the kinds of bodily awareness experienced in the freestyle session could also be experienced in institutional schooling settings. This is when I grew interested in learning more about the connection between hip hop, movement/body, and education, as well as the purposes of using alternative pedagogical approaches in various educational spaces. My first master's thesis examined the socio-cultural context of the Senegalese music industry, and my second thesis engaged microfinance in Western Africa, in which I discussed the impact of globalization on Western African cultures. Both theses helped me understand how cultures different from the ones I grew up in share knowledge differently and the inevitable tension between Western art and financial institutions and Western African traditions. Indeed, I noticed in my research the importance of community, peer-sharing, mentorship, and informality, and how Western institutions try to change these African ways of doing and force assimilation.

In light of these experiences, this autoethnographic research on embodied hip hop pedagogies addresses the kinds of cultural disconnect and disembodiment found in most

K-12 and higher education classrooms in the Inland Empire of California, and in Western institutional spaces generally. At the center of this dissertation is hip hop—a once marginalized culture founded by Afro-Latino youth communities in the streets of New York City—and the body, both historically rendered invisible especially in traditional educational scholarships and societal discourses. My passion for hip hop led me to research how hip hop can be of benefit to standardized learning. But life experiences were not the only factors that impacted my choice to use hip hop as a transgressive and pedagogical lens in my work: mentoring the next generation of practitioners is key in hip hop culture. Indeed, hip hop is inherently linked to education and the promotion of youth empowerment notably through the “each one teach one” ethos.

In my dissertation, I perform choreographic readings of Western pedagogical and institutional spaces including missionary buildings and classrooms and participate in action research in schools within the Inland Empire. I am particularly interested in the tensions between hip hop and traditional Western epistemologies. My analysis focuses on how bodies navigate these Western institutional spaces and how they resist, transgress, or challenge such spaces through movement. I ask the following questions: How do Western institutional spaces impact people’s bodies and movements? How can embodied hip hop challenge Eurocentric educational and societal norms? In other words, I analyze what bodies, movement, and kinesthetic knowledge can do, looking especially at spaces where movement is traditionally not the primary mode of knowledge production and transmission such as the classroom. Here, hip hop is juxtaposed with embodiment and performance to raise awareness about what movement can do even in institutional and

restrictive spaces such as the classroom. Because of the intersection between bodies, spaces, knowledge, and power, I intend to determine how people, including myself, negotiate the overlaps and divergences between Eurocentric pedagogies and alternative ones such as hip hop.

Finally, this research looks at the possibilities and tensions of embodied hip hop pedagogies and therefore acknowledges the complex relationships and sometimes contradictory realities inherent in this praxis. I aim to understand how these tensions can be sources of new knowledge and possibilities. Ultimately, this research promotes other ways of being, knowing, and moving in Western systems in our society, and therefore the world. I tried to achieve this goal by positively impacting the schooling experience of students in the Inland Empire, which is where my University is located, and where I grounded my praxis for the past few years.

Methodology:

My research is constituted by a wide range of methodologies and sites. As part of my fieldwork, I have conducted 43 interviews; participated in 19 hip hop events varying from academic conferences to hip hop battles; taught 6 short- and long-term classes in classrooms and 6 short- and long-term hip hop dance classes in studios⁴; and observed and participated in 10 hip hop classes (in both classrooms and studio settings) between February 2018 and March 2019.⁵ My research is primarily based in Southern California—more particularly in Riverside, in the Inland Empire. The academic

⁴ In some classes, I only met students once or a few times while others were ongoing

⁵ Complete list of sites in appendix p. 334

performance in Riverside and in the Inland Empire are lower than the state and the nation's average⁶ and there is a high rate of poverty. Their public schools, including higher education institutions such as the University of California, Riverside (UCR)⁷, are constituted of a majority of underrepresented minorities, predominantly serving Hispanic and Latino students⁸. When I first visited schools here, I was transported back to my childhood because of the disconnect between the student population and the curriculum content and pedagogy. Thus, my aim was to find a method based on cultural background, identity, performance, popular culture, and mentorship which would provide transformative teaching and learning experience for the Riverside youth and their teachers. Furthermore, I participated in various performance and pedagogical spaces in the area because I valued the connection between UCR and the community, and how they impacted one another.

This work also gave me the opportunity to travel overseas and practice embodied hip hop pedagogies globally, notably in the United Kingdom and Tanzania. These field work experiences support the primary focus of this dissertation by giving me insights into how practices that originated in the U.S., such as hip hop, are interpreted and practiced in different parts of the world, and how my teaching, my embodied experiences, and the body of my cultural knowledge may impact students embodied and cultural experiences in settings different from those I am familiar with in Riverside. To understand how differing cultural knowledge impacts pedagogy, analyzing moving bodies is relevant to

⁶ Data about Riverside' public schools' academic performance,

<https://www.caschooldashboard.org/search?location=Riverside%20&year=2019&search=>

⁷ UC Riverside is considered one of the most diverse public universities in the nation

⁸ Data about Riverside County and Riverside in California, "Poverty Rate & Raking", <http://www.datause.io>

my study. These international experiences helped me grow as an educator since I had to cater my pedagogy to diverse learning communities with different interests and backgrounds. However, I must acknowledge that the short time spent at these locations was not enough to deeply engage with these communities' different epistemological orientations to the world. I may have overlooked important socio-cultural/political implications of teaching embodied hip hop pedagogies in such places.⁹ Still, these experiences enabled me to understand how hip hop operates both locally and globally and informed me about the glocal quality of embodied hip hop pedagogies.

Each chapter utilizes a different set of methodologies depending on the context of that aspect of the research, which will be iterated in the chapter introductions. In other words, the degree of my observation, participation, and involvement differs considerably depending on the spaces I am analyzing. Indeed, participating in a dance workshop differs from observing a classroom or attending a conference. However, the main methods used throughout the dissertation are choreographic reading, action research, and ethnography including interviews and autoethnography.

Interviews:

The in-depth interviews helped me understand how issues of race, experience with hip hop, cultural background, and shared knowledge intersect with people's environments. I interviewed a wide scope of positionalities, from teachers, organizers, and practitioners who have granted me access to their spaces, to adult-aged students.

⁹ In a future rendering of this research, I aim to explore the subject of teaching and learning embodied hip hop pedagogies internationally further by engaging more deeply with the complexities and implications of such praxis as a French and Japanese woman travelling to different countries/communities.

Although one major aspect of my work aims to revalidate teachers' bodies, I recognize the power dynamic that can emerge by looking only at one side of the pedagogical context. Instead, I evaluate how teachers and students perform together, perhaps similarly, or differently.

Autoethnography:

Autoethnography is a qualitative method born out of postmodern inquiries in the sociological and anthropological fields, questioning what legitimate research means, and which offers a voice to personal experiences (Wall 39). Even though autoethnography is more established today, some still debate the validity of the data due to its personal nature (39). According to Dr. Ashley Durham, author of *Home with Hip Hop Feminism: Performances in Communication and Culture*, autoethnography constitutes “an embodied method and a writing practice that examines the social self within culture” (Durham, SAGE Publications, 2017). In other words, the researcher-self becomes an object of analysis (e.g. memories, interactions, places, etc.) and reflects on how culture shapes the self and vice-versa, thus critically reflecting on issues of positionality, power, and shared experience (Durham, SAGE Publications, 2017). The primary interventions of autoethnography in scholarship are challenging early ethnographers invested in objectivity who act as omniscient researchers, making claim about the ‘other’, representing ‘reality’, while ignoring the power of the researcher (Durham, SAGE Publications, 2017). Autoethnography is invested in the value of up-close knowledge and subjectivity as critical mean for reflection. Based on reflexivity, autoethnography broadens the perspective of what legitimate knowledge means in academic discourses.

I chose to use autoethnography because I was intrigued by its promising approach to narrate emotions and evocations, making room for vulnerability. More particularly, I was drawn to the fact that the act of writing or the art of representing the research, matters as much as what has been gathered and how. Using the body as a tool to make sense of culture was essential here because my bi-culturality, gender, academic status, experience with hip hop, and embodied experiences considerably inform this research.

However, I must acknowledge the personal biases and reflect on the process of writing an autoethnography as qualitative research. It is therefore important to note that the unique proximity with the study—the personal reflections, positionality, and investment in the research—can also sometimes become challenges. Indeed, doubting the credibility and formality of my research has sometimes led me to want to dissociate myself from it. This dissertation engages the difficulties of navigating academic research as an autoethnographer engaged in hip hop advocacy¹⁰. By choosing autoethnography as my primary method of analysis, I made a perhaps unconventional, but conscious choice to participate in expanding the horizons of what academic research can be.

Choreographic Reading:

Choreographic reading constitutes a multimodal and dance-centric analytical method, which is at the intersection of body, movement, knowledge, space, and power.¹¹

¹⁰ This conversation is a thread throughout the dissertation.

¹¹ I borrow the term choreographic reading from Christine Michelle Sahin, PhD graduate in critical dance studies from UC Riverside, who used this term in her dissertation on Cairo's contemporary raqs sharqi scene, which explores the myriad ways raqs sharqi engages with the precarious political and economic transformations Egypt has been experiencing since the 2011 revolution. Her choreographic method is an effective and nuanced dance-centric analysis in research and writing. Sahin's choreographic reading encompasses the analysis of the circulation of bodies within and outside spaces and the multi meanings of spaces. Similarly, I use choreographic reading to understand how diverse bodies navigate different spaces and how they challenge and/or participate in the power structure present in them.

In dance studies, choreographic analysis often refers to the analysis of dancers' movements, energy, props etc. at a performance or social dance setting, which in turn, can be put in conversation with dancers' socio-political/cultural contexts. In this project, I use a similar dance-centric approach to analyze how dancing and non-dancing bodies navigate different spaces, which are not necessarily performative spaces. Put differently, I value the idea that movement analysis can be conducted everywhere, even in spaces that traditionally do not consider movement as central to their function such as classrooms and conferences. However, unlike common choreographic analysis, I do not always look at the specifics of the movements and their techniques.

I performed a choreographic reading of spaces where knowledge production and transmission is intentional, such as classrooms, conferences, and dance studios. I also conducted research in spaces where knowledge production and transmission are not the most obvious or the primary purpose, and/or where it is approached differently from the knowledge produced and transmitted in more traditional Western institutions, such as hip hop concerts, performances, or cyphers. Some spaces I observed were performative, where movement is the primary medium of knowledge transmission (dance studios, battles, freestyle sessions etc.), and others were spaces that I call pedagogical, where embodied knowledge is traditionally not the primary medium of knowledge transmission (conferences, lectures, classrooms etc.). I examined a broad scope of spaces because I am interested in understanding how different spaces, cultures, and contexts can impact pedagogy and moving bodies, and vice-versa.

I use choreographic reading to understand how moving bodies investigate and interact in different performative and pedagogical spaces centered on hip hop culture and transforming the status-quo. My research seeks to understand how moving bodies in these particular spaces resist traditional¹² ways of being, knowing, and moving. By analyzing the pedagogy, the physical, socio-economic/political contexts around the space, and experiencing the embodied knowledge present in the space, I aim to understand the intricate relation between hip hop, movement, knowledge, space, and power.

Action Research:

Action research is qualitative and action-oriented, usually used in social sciences and education (Herr and Anderson 1). It is an engaged research method seeking transformative changes and critical reflection, and often uses narrative style. This action research takes place through praxis, combining practice and theory to collaborate with local teachers and students to effect positive change. In chapter 3, I discuss my experience as a guest middle school teacher in Riverside. Like most action researchers, my goal is to contribute to my research setting (i.e. the Inland Empire school community) and enact organizational and institutional change. Indeed, I hope that teachers will use more culturally sustaining and embodied approaches to teaching in the future and promote its value, and that the school will welcome such pedagogies and practices. Not only is my goal to empower community of the teachers and students in Riverside but to empower myself and to grow professionally by not being afraid to think and “do” outside the box. According

¹² As mentioned earlier in pages 2 and 3, I am concerned with these standard Western classroom practices: Eurocentric knowledge, stillness, quietness, hierarchy between embodied and theoretical knowledges, teacher as omniscient knower, lack of connection between what/how it is taught and students’ realities.

to Donald Schon, I am what the field calls a reflective practitioner as I “learn to learn” about my practice and therefore become a better practitioner/teacher (qtd. in Herr and Anderson 34). In other words, chapter 3 provides not only information about the action (the art of teaching and implementing embodied hip hop pedagogies) but also information regarding how I developed professionally and personally in a new professional context.

Literature Review:

The theoretical framework of my research is based on four politically engaged bodies of literature where concepts of space, moving bodies, power, and knowledge intersect and complicate one another. I have defined them as: Space, movement and power; Culturally sustaining pedagogy and hip hop education; Teacher’s body and performance; and Knowledge *otherwise*. All of the authors I engage problematize and challenge the generative epistemic order of Western Supremacy in some capacity. Together, these bodies of literature allow me to expand the definitions of call-and-response and cypher, connect them with embodied hip hop pedagogies, and reflect on my practice as autoethnographer in and out of the classroom.

Space, movement, and power:

Theories on space can be found in many fields such as geography, urban planning, or architecture, but, for my research, the most relevant works are ones that discuss human agency in spaces. As is common in Critical Dance Studies’ engagements with space, I focus on the works of French philosophers Henri Lefebvre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Michel de Certeau. I also borrow from hip hop and performance

studies scholar Naomi Bragin to discuss the relation between physical space and the resistive power of movements.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre argues that human bodies possess limited agency in public and private spaces because the spaces are constructed by governments and capitalist corporations in ways that control humans' actions, choreographing our submission to their commercial and political agendas. He argues that spatial organizations and regulations are so embedded in our societies that sometimes humans are not aware that their movements are monitored or limited. While Lefebvre's work illuminates my understanding of how spaces enforce behavior, my conception of how humans interact with space is inspired by *Phenomenology of Perception* by Merleau-Ponty. He argues that the body is what perceives the space first via its kinesthetic knowledge and the five senses, and not the brain or intellect. We become what we are, as social beings, through our bodies' reaction to our environments; in that way, our body has agency. However, since the environment itself is constructed to fulfill certain agendas, we ultimately become a product of our space. Merleau-Ponty theorizes that humans may perceive that we have control over our bodies and gestures, when in fact, we perform practiced movements, which are instituted by spatial constructions and larger political and capitalist institutions.

Lefebvre and Merleau-Ponty's theories may not be applicable to all spaces, especially because different cultures impact the ways various space will be constructed. For example, Japanese schools have different characteristics than American or French ones. However, their discussion of space and power is useful to my work because their

theories are based on Western (French) constructions of space and freedom of movement and my research looks at the intersection of Western (schools/classrooms/conferences) and non-Western (hip hop events/performances) epistemologies and spaces. They provide a theoretical point of view from which to analyze types of power dynamics present in Western spaces, and perhaps understand how some spatial settings of educational sites, such as classrooms, can affect bodies and their movements.

In “Walking in the City,” de Certeau complicates Lefebvre’s main argument that space holds power over the body: according to de Certeau, the walker (i.e., the body in motion), activates the space and creates an ensemble of possibilities. For example, Paris could be considered simply an urban location with many buildings, but it also contains a majestic idea of romance and picturesqueness because of what walkers have made of it. de Certeau says: “He [the walker] makes them [the streets] exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them, and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements” (98). The walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else; he gives meaning to the space (98). In this way, the body can create, revive, and give meaning to space. However, because of the construction of spaces discussed by Lefebvre and Merleau-Ponty, the walker still walks in ways that are culturally defined and controlled. They don’t have full agency over their movements. But, de Certeau illuminates the fact that, for example, however much a classroom can be restrictive, students could, through embodiment and negotiation, provide meaning to their learning space.

In addition to de Certeau, politically engaged dance scholars inform my work and complicate the more binary spatial/power dynamics suggested by Lefebvre or Merleau-Ponty. For example, Naomi Bragin's dissertation "Black Power of Hip Hop Dance: On Kinesthetic Politics" looks at the significance of dance improvisation in the black radical tradition. Her chapter "Shot and Captured: Turf Dance, YAK Films, and The Oakland, California, R.I.P Project" shows how turf dancers occupy the policed and busy streets of Oakland. Bragin argues that the dancers convey a political message through their collective improvisation and exposure of their black bodies to passers-by, police officers, and the critical audience on the internet. Their works show how, despite the restrictions imposed by society, performances can be political acts as dancers move in controlled spaces. My dissertation follows Bragin's lead in examining how dancers and students reinvent institutional and restrictive spaces and practice freedom of expression.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy and hip hop education:

Advocates¹³ of more diverse and inclusive teaching and learning practices would concur with me that in most schools today, greater emphasis is placed upon Eurocentric content and academic achievement, with less time devoted to embodied realities (Lynn Marvin and Adrienne D. Dixson 2013, Kate Hoskins and Bernard Barker 2014). In other words, students' schooling environment is detached from their bodies, and their cultural identity due to the Cartesian mind and body split. Indeed, the Western education system has not changed much in one hundred years and can sometimes clash with who we are,

¹³ For further information see: *Handbook of critical race theory in education* by Lynn Marvin and Adrienne D. Dixson; *Education and social mobility: dreams of success* by Hoskins, Kate and Barker, Bernard as well as authors like Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Kimberle Crenshaw, Winifred Montgomery, Gwen Lawrie.

how we move, and what we know. For example, students are still expected to sit quietly in their desks facing their teacher placed at the front of the classroom perpetuating a top down approach to learning without consideration of students' positions.

a. Deficit thinking theories:

Hip hop pedagogy emerged in response to institutional and systemic issues in society and in education, such as deficit thinking theories, which have notably been discussed by Richard R. Valencia, Lila L. Bartolome, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva¹⁴.

Valencia explains that deficit thinking is based on the idea that minority students are less capable of performing well academically because of structural, cultural, and for some, even genetic reasons¹⁵. Deficit thinking can be enacted in the classroom when teachers in don't pay attention to students of color or assume that they cannot learn. These practices impact the ways both students and teachers can interact and share knowledge in meaningful ways. In *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, Bartolome, writes that teachers who "uncritically follow school practices that unintentionally or intentionally serve to promote tracking and segregation within school and classroom contexts continue to reproduce the status-quo" (414). She asks teachers to use their roles as educators not to maintain this system of oppression silencing students from minority groups and critically reflect on issues they reproduce (414).

¹⁴ See *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States* for more information on the intersection between color-blind racism and education.

¹⁵ For further information on deficit thinking see: Lois Weiner, Douglas E. Foley, Martha Menchaca.

Deficit thinking is rooted in American society and are perpetuated at the district level in the education system. For example, Valencia argues that schools are “teaching to test,” which neglects the learning process and looks simply at test results, denying students opportunities (149,150). Furthermore, these practices validate the need for students who perform poorly academically to be placed in at-risk schools, which receive unequal resources, and force poorly performing students to fail (108-109, 125). Bartolome explains that these pedagogically discriminatory strategies are so embedded in society that they became invisible and do not appear racist, though they end up perpetuating racism and inequality in schooling:

Schools, similar to other institutions in society, are influenced by perceptions of socioeconomic status (SES), race/ethnicity, language, and gender (Anyon 1988, Bloom 1991, Cummins 1989, Ogbu 1987). I believe that the present methods-restricted discussion must be broadened to reveal the deeply entrenched deficit orientation toward “difference” (i.e., non-Western European race/ethnicity, non-English language use, working-class status, femaleness) that prevails in the schools in a deeply cultural ideology of White supremacy (Bartolome, 414).

Bartolome and Valencia ask teachers to be vigilant about their deficit oriented thinking and practices because they impact classroom dynamics considerably. This theory demonstrates how American society perpetuates racism through the implementation of institutional strategies that aim to handicap certain populations. Deficit thinking is the opposite of what hip hop pedagogy preaches because it makes biological or cultural

excuses to explain why some students fail rather than believing in and supporting the talents of these students.

The authors discussed below engage with the kind of cultural and identity disconnect experienced by most students today and push their readers to reform education. While I ground my research in their theories, I aim to expand upon them by adding the body and movement as critical components of analysis to students and teachers' schooling experiences and realities.

b. Culturally sustaining pedagogy:

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) is a concept coined by H. Samy Alim and Django Paris, professors in the field of education and hip hop (Alim and Paris 1). It is inspired by culturally *relevant* pedagogy, a movement founded by Gloria Ladson-Billings in 1995 whose research on critical race theory and the education of Black children has become ubiquitous in educational circles. Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* laid the groundwork for these two more recent movements. Freire condemns the “banking style of education” which constitutes an “...act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (72). In this framing of education, students can only be filled and store deposits, completely ignoring creativity, transformation, and students' knowledge (72). In that scenario, the students are empty of knowledge, thus justifying the teacher's existence. The paradox, here, is that students also hold knowledge and participate in the pedagogy. However, due to this oppositional environment created in the banking education, students never discover that they educate the teacher, solidifying their place in the hierarchy of academic institutions (72).

CSP critiques such deficit thinking theories about students of color still present in our scholarship and society and aims to make more visible non-dominant ways of being, knowing, and moving in the classrooms. Like their predecessors, by creating CSP, Alim and Paris call for schooling to be a site to critique dominant power structures and sustain the cultural ways of being of communities of color (4, 6). However, they moved away from the term “relevant” because the term does not capture the necessity to ensure the continuity of cultural and inclusive practices at schools as well as in students’ communities (4). The word “sustaining” particularly resonates with my work: as a practice-based researcher, I aim to teach embodied hip hop pedagogies that are not only relevant for the urban youth of the Inland Empire but can be sustainable and implemented long-term by schooling institutions. This means that the curriculum must not only be “relevant” but achievable and perpetuated. It must be interesting enough and show valuable benefits to all including teachers and school administration for them to be part of this project and eventually become advocates for it; otherwise, the model won’t persist. Furthermore, one of the goals of embodied hip hop pedagogies is to connect students and teachers’ lived realities with the curriculum. It is therefore crucial to create bridges between both worlds (academic and community) and maintain constant sustainable partnerships between the two.

Adopting CSP seems urgent especially since students of color are a majority in U.S public schools since 2014 (Strauss qtd. in Alim and Paris 6). It is therefore pertinent to question traditional schooling practices and move away from White middle-class norms that deny the languages, cultures, and pedagogies of communities of color, such as

the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge and Western classroom culture (6). On this subject, Timothy Jones asks, “What if, indeed, the goal of teaching and learning with youth of color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms but to explore, honor, extend, and, at times, problematize their heritage and community practices?” (qtd. in Alim and Paris 101) Finally, one of the missions of CSP is to also critically reflect on the sometimes-problematic longstanding cultural practices of communities and call for reworkings while celebrating progressive, social justice-oriented movements (12).

c. Hip hop pedagogy:

Hip Hop Pedagogy, also commonly referred to as hip hop-based education, is a recent field of study developing alongside critical race theory and as a critique of deficit thinking theories in education (Akom 2009). Rooted in critical thinking theories (Freire 1968) and transgressive educational practices (hooks 1994), it was developed because of the lack of culturally relevant pedagogies and cultural competency displayed by teachers working in low-performing inner-city schools (Emdin 2016). In other words, hip hop pedagogy emerged as a response to the disconnect between students’ lived realities and those of their teachers, their curricula, and the pedagogy (see Emdin 2016, Runell and Diaz 2007, Petchauer 2013). It is based on the idea that, by using cultural tools that students are more familiar with, such as hip hop elements (e.g., djing, emceeing, breakdancing, graffiti writing), they will be more engaged and can therefore perform better academically. Hip hop pedagogy is actively implemented by educators. However, there are only few scholars (most of whom are based in the United States) who research

this topic (Gosa 2012). Many non-profit organizations have taken the lead on implementing hip hop-based education to improve inner city youth's schooling experiences, such as the Hip-Hop Association Inc. (NY) or Words Beats and Life (DC).

Petchauer and Hill, authors of *Schooling Hip Hop: Expanding Hip-Hop Based Education Across the Curriculum* (2013), mention in their introduction that hip hop-based education flourished as soon as the early 2000s. Hip hop education is used to “simply” mean the use of hip hop elements while teaching. Petchauer and Hill critique this narrow focus and published their book to encourage scholars to consider practices such as sampling, battling, and freestyling, because to them, they “reflect unique sensibilities and worldviews that are not only endemic to hip-hop but are also applied by adolescents and young adults in everyday life” (3). They invite researchers and practitioners to forge meaningful connections between hip hop and other disciplines, even those like mathematics or science, which are usually considered culturally neutral (3). The editors introduce the need for deeper aesthetic, epistemological, and theoretical engagement with hip hop as a holistic cultural movement. In other words, “instead of looking at hip-hop as content or a product to be utilized for an educational purpose, educators and theorists look at hip-hop as a cultural form that produces organic ideas, epistemologies, and dilemmas that can inform teaching and learning” (28). Despite the fact that the authors promote new pedagogical perspectives as well as moving away from the traditional focus on the English language using the educational benefits found in rapping, the majority of hip hop education is still centered around rapping and literacy rather than embodied hip hop knowledge.

Therefore, critical to my dissertation are works that analyze hip hop pedagogy from a more kinesthetic point of view. One such example is found in Petchauer's article, "I Feel What He Was Doin': Urban Teacher Development, Hip-Hop Aesthetics, and Justice-Oriented Teaching." He explains the importance of kinetic consumption in pedagogy, arguing that kinetic consumption is the combination of two modes of being that are indispensable in hip hop but not acknowledged by the mainstream educational system: the use of affect (as opposed to the permanent use of pure objectivity and logic), and the use of kinetic response (movement) as opposed to silence and sitting still (30). He suggests that teachers use hip hop culture not only at the content level, but also at the aesthetic level; not only looking at what a hip hop element is, but what it does and how it relates to broader worldviews.

In *For White Folks who teach in the Hood ... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education*, Christopher Emdin writes that the main gaps that exist between teachers and students are due to the misunderstandings that arise from white people's cultural assumptions about other races, ethnicities, and cultures. He cites an example that demonstrates this misinterpretation: Emdin asked a high school student why she was sent to the principal's office by one of her white female teachers; the student responded that her teacher always thinks she arrives late to class and does not come prepared because she does not have her book with her. However, according to the student it is quite the opposite, as she is in front of the door when the bell rings and one of her classmates shares a book with her. The student could not afford to purchase the book, but she made sure she had access to it; she also thought that being in front of the door

demonstrated her enthusiasm. The teacher did not see things the same way. This is an example of a cultural gap between the student's standard of living, the teacher and the school's expectations, resulting in the teacher losing a student that enjoys the class, and the student losing the chance to learn (19). The problem seems to be that teachers have not been trained to see the deep connections that exist between urban experience and school performance. By acquainting the educators with the kinds of racism that they can consciously or unconsciously produce in their classroom, Emdin helps the field of hip hop pedagogy reduce the gaps between teachers and students.

In parallel to articles being published in this growing field, and the increasing number of educators practicing hip hop pedagogy in their classrooms, hip hop education has developed considerably on the internet. For example, Professor Bettina Love—an African American woman, fan of hip hop, who used to be an urban school teacher—is the author of *We Want to Do More than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* and numerous articles in urban education journals. However, the number of online viewers for her TEDx videos would suggest that she is probably most well-known to a broader audience for her internet presence. In the videos, she discusses how she overcame the disconnect between teacher and students by implementing hip hop rhythms and students' cultural references in elementary classes. She also posted videos of her teaching her “Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice” courses to 5th graders¹⁶. I view her postings as evidence of a conscious choice to share her pedagogical

¹⁶ These videos will be discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation.

style with the public, and therefore make it as accessible as possible to urban youth educators, parents, and anyone who has access to the internet.

Another example of a hip hop education online resource is #HipHopED, a twitter page (now movement) co-founded by Emdin that engages in live tweet conversations weekly. Every Tuesday, he posts a prompt where hip hop educators are invited to respond for an hour. He calls the chat platform a “cyber cypher” because “it is structured like a hip-hop cypher—where participants form a circle and exchange with each other fluidly. [...] where energy is generated by one individual, and then picked up by another with a goal of keeping the energy going” (Emdin 7). Like Love, Emdin seeks to create a conversation about hip hop pedagogy amongst those practicing it in urban settings and disseminate it nation-wide for educators or artists to improve hip hop education and urban youth’s schooling experience.

In his more recent book, *#HipHopEd, The Compilation on Hip-hop Education: Volume 1: Hip-hop as Education, Philosophy, and Practice*, co-edited with Edmond Adjapong, Emdin mentions that the #HipHopEd philosophy pushes beyond institutions valuing hip hop texts and towards a more radical position that does not seek permission and/or validation from schools (2-3). He critiques the fact that existing hip hop scholarship “functions within a paradigm that is rooted in a desire for acceptance from those outside of the culture” (2-3). He demands for hip hop to be and to enact education. In sum, #HipHopEd is a socio-political movement that utilizes both online and offline platforms and aims to disrupt the “oppressive structures of schools and schooling for marginalized youth through a reframing of hip-hop in the public sphere” (1).

Lastly, one growing concern in hip hop pedagogy is the problem of authenticity, or who has the right to teach and use hip hop culture as part of their pedagogy. These questions have been raised by Decoteau J. Irby & H. Bernard Hall in *Schooling Hip Hop: Expanding Hip-Hop Based Education Across the Curriculum* and by Travis Gosa in “Is Hip Hop Pedagogy, Another Hustle?” Their concern is with educators who have no prior experience with hip hop and who are disconnected from their students’ realities, but who implement hip hop in the classroom and consequently appropriate the culture or teach hip hop wrong, doing a disservice to the community and the students. An example of this situation has been illustrated on a *Saturday Night Live* sketch, “Substitute Teacher,” where a substitute teacher fails to connect with his students miserably because he drops accents, discusses subjects he is not familiar with, and uses stereotypical examples that a previous substitute teacher had already used, thus becoming redundant and condescending to the students.¹⁷ In chapter 3, I will briefly address how my embodied hip hop pedagogies model can be accessible to as many teachers and students as possible, while respecting hip hop culture, as well as admitting that adapting a curriculum and pedagogy to a specific student population is not easy and takes research, practice, and collaboration. Working *together* over time, being conscious about culturally-sustainability, acknowledging shortcomings and the lack of historical and cultural knowledge, and inviting hip hop artists, can help alleviate this issue.

¹⁷ “Substitute Teacher.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Saturday Night Live, 18 February 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBQ5YILNGXE&t=61s>

While the hip hop education field is working to implement changes in pedagogical approach and curricula, I noticed that the mind/body split is still present in hip hop pedagogy scholarship. Indeed, most works emphasize the implementation of hip hop elements that are based on the use of English language, such as rapping, graffiti writing, or analyzing lyrics. One of my contributions to the field would be to raise awareness about the use of alternative forms of knowledge production, such as embodiment, in the classroom space. According to KRS-ONE (2004), “Rap is something you do, hip-hop is something you live” (qtd. in Emdin and Adjapong 40). In other words, hip hop is more than music, beats, and words. Thus, hip hop pedagogy should not only embrace the emceeing element and instead engage with the full culture of hip hop, therefore critically reflecting on rap-centrist approaches (Emdin and Adjapong 30, 40). My hope is for a hip hop pedagogy that embraces other ways of being, moving, and knowing in the world, and thus becomes a pedagogy where bodily agency is practiced and learnt through critical thinking and embodied knowledge.

Teacher’s body and performance:

In this section, I review texts that do not yet, to my knowledge, belong to a well-defined field of study. They are works that, I contend, look at pedagogy from a critical dance studies lens, and therefore, bridge education and dance scholarship. The authors I analyze in this section look at teaching as a performative act; critically reflect on instructors’ bodies in the classroom, the lack of acknowledgement of personhood and devaluing of embodied knowledge; and discuss how instructors’ pedagogy and/or identity can be impacted by their students or their institutions.

Most education scholarship usually discusses students' academic performance or disparages pedagogical styles not adapted to the student population. Yet, as dance studies scholars and dance teachers are aware, embodiment is part of the process of teaching and learning and should not be disregarded. Thus, I attend to the work of scholars who discuss teachers' embodiment to understand the power dynamics I encountered in my research sites. Here, authors reflect on how teachers' bodies can impact the pedagogical environment in the classroom.

Teachers' bodies tend to be rendered invisible or marked by their students and the institutions, contributing to a complex power dynamic. Holmes and Freeman write that the teacher is attached to "an apparatus, the body, whose purpose was simply to transport her ideas and intelligence to the classroom" (4). This refers to the idea that students and institutions forget that teachers are holistic beings (i.e., people with a life outside teaching, a body they need to take care of etc.) with stories and cultural backgrounds that they bring into the classroom. They add:

Visible and/or invisible, the body can transform both the teacher's experience and classroom dynamics. When students think the teacher's body is clearly marked by ethnicity, race, disability, size, gender, sexuality, illness, age, pregnancy, class, linguistic and geographic origins, or some combination of these, both the mode and the content of education can change. Other, less visible, aspects of a teacher's body, such as depression or a history of sexual assault, can have an equally powerful impact on how we teach and learn (7).

These quotes suggest that the institutional representation of the teacher as someone detached from emotions, cultures, histories, whose primary job is to provide knowledge rather than taking care of students, perpetuates the erosion of their personhood. In other words, adopting a banking style of education (Freire) reproduces the disembodiment of education and detachment of teachers as embodied and emotional beings. Finally, the position of the teacher, whose upright posture is located at the front of the class, places them in a vulnerable position even if they perform as a figure of authority, complicating the traditional power dynamics between students and teachers: “ So, perhaps our bodies, for all their silence, do have something to say. Perhaps what we carry into the classroom physically - our way of carrying ourselves but also the ways in which our bodies have carried us or let us down - is just as important as the books and syllabi that we carry in our hands and the theories and ideas we carry in our heads” (Scott Andrew Smith 32).

Teaching can be a political act against invisibilizing teachers’ bodies and against elitism in academia:

It is fascinating to see the ways erasure of the body connects to the erasure of class differences, and more importantly, the erasure of the role of university settings as sites for the reproduction of a privileged class of values, of elitism. All these issues are exposed when Western civilization and canon formation are challenged and rigorously interrogated (hooks 140).

In this dissertation, I am invested in understanding how my embodied self in terms of gender, culture, race, positionality etc. impact the classroom dynamics and academia more broadly. By showing the role that my body plays in the way that teaching

and learning happens, and the moments when my position as a young-female-petite teacher made me feel vulnerable in the classroom, I complicate the traditional understanding of the power dynamics in the classroom. Teaching becomes a political performative act where teachers' bodies in motion navigate and impact the space and others. My ideas around teaching as performance are inspired by bell hooks. She states:

Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts [...]. To embrace the performative aspect of teaching we are compelled to engage "audiences," to consider issues of reciprocity. Teachers are not performers in the traditional sense of the word in that our work is not meant to be a spectacle. Yet it is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning (hooks 11).

hooks advocates for *working together* in the classroom to change the status quo in the education system as a means of opposition to the "banking system" of education (Freire). Both hooks and Freire critique this narrow-minded form of teaching because it does not account for students' realities nor leave room for creativity, movement, or other epistemologies. For hooks, teaching constitutes a resistive act against curricula derived from a Eurocentric perspective. What interests me the most is the *how* of *working together* and what it means to *perform* as a collective in the classroom. To understand this, it is important to view the teacher as a performer who calls for engagement, participation, and action from other teachers, their students, and perhaps, the world. Then, we must acknowledge that the teacher is a body in the classroom, a body with its own

history that influences students' development, not just intellectually but also how students perceive reality beyond the classroom (hooks 137). Whereas Freire was primarily concerned with the mind, inspired by Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, hooks emphasizes the importance of wholeness in pedagogy: a union of mind, body, and spirit (hooks 14). Indeed, hooks strives for students and teachers to see each other as "whole" human beings, who learn knowledge not only from books but knowledge about how to live in the world" (14). Building on the idea that the body has its own history, in "My Body/Myself: Lessons from Dance Education," Susan W. Stinson reminds us that our teaching bodies are personal, social, political, and culturally constructed, and therefore "there are no universal truths which derive from them" (163).

Bridging dance and teaching together makes sense. Like dancing, teaching requires moving the body in a space in a meaningful way as expressed by Stinson : "I have found that my body is, in a sense, a microcosm of the world, and thus a laboratory for understanding its meaning. I concur with Kenneth Shapiro (1985), who writes that the body is "the ground of metaphor" (p. 155)" (160). The body to be "ground for metaphor" means that it "speaks" for elements in life and therefore can communicate knowledge and *be* knowledge. Embodiment should also be accounted for in pedagogy: teachers, and the classroom population in general, can use pedagogic ways of being that are both verbal and non-verbal to create a sense of aliveness and liveness (Berman and Aoki 7).

However, currently, logocentrism prevails in education. Our current education system is dominated by beliefs such as to know something is to be able to put it into words. The problem with this sentiment is expressed by Joseph Tobin in "The Disappearance of the

Body in Early Childhood Education:” “The problem I have with the phrase “use your words” is with the unstated but implied clause that follows: “use your words *and not your body*” (Tobin 117).

Like the authors in the literature review, I am invested in advocating for knowledge produced and carried through movement, and therefore for the validity of embodied knowledge in the classroom. The act of implementing non-traditional and engaged curricula, and raising awareness about embodiment in the classroom, is a transgressive act because it resists the banking system of education by using alternative knowledges and transmission processes, thus pushing the boundaries of what knowledge can be and what a classroom space can be beyond their more traditional Western definition. In other words, embodied pedagogy enables students and teachers to move, be, and know differently than the ways they were traditionally asked to by the institutions.

Knowledge *Otherwise*¹⁸:

Ashon Crawley and Karyn Recollet, two out of the four authors discussed below conceptualize the term “otherwise”. All the authors, including Imani Kai Johnson and Halifu Osumare, challenge the more linear-thinking Western epistemologies and challenge the invisibilization of marginalized bodies. Authors in this sub-section use metaphors to portray how invisible energy works and how there might be other

¹⁸ The field of Afrofuturism also informs my non-linear understanding of time, space, and how people share knowledge in hip hop and institutional spaces. This genre was born as a resistive and creative response to African diasporic struggle and questions issues of race and identities in modernity, and the current socio-political status-quo. Afrofuturism is known as a field of new possibilities: it puts black bodies at the center of the narratives and imagines alternative realities and better futures. In future iteration of this project, I aim to look at how Afrofuturism is interwoven with hip hop pedagogy. They both are not limited to, but contain: non-traditional and new epistemologies, resistive praxis, empowerment and Afrocentrism, and a multidisciplinary nature. Both Afrofuturism and hip hop pedagogy represent a constellation of possibilities due to their ability to create something new from the old, transform the status-quo, and embrace an epistemology and way of being that go beyond materiality.

understandings of time, space, and connections outside of the Western realm for which there are not, in Western vocabulary, words to describe these kinds of knowledge and performances. The metaphors developed by the four authors in this section help me formulate my own concepts of *otherwise* cypher, cloud, call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* which will be defined in the next sub-section.

Ashon Crawley's *Blackpentecostal breath: The aesthetics of possibility* makes visible non-dominant cultural aesthetics that are at the intersection of knowledge production and performance of resistance. How I counter Eurocentrism is largely inspired by his concept of "otherwise possibilities", defined as the "act of infinite alternatives to what *is*" (2). I am particularly drawn to his vision of the "otherwise" as a non-linear, plural, collective because he accounts for the importance of thinking imaginatively of infinite alternatives that are not always determined by institutional norms. As part of his formulation of "otherwise possibilities," Crawley also discusses the concept of "otherwise movement." Rooted in the context of black performance and social action, "otherwise movement" calls for a non-normative choreographic encounter or strategy that must be shared with others, decentralizing organizations to give voice to Black people. By activating "otherwise movements", Black dancers critique the normative world enabling conversations about possible otherwise ways to be in the world (Crawley "Otherwise movements." *The New Inquiry* 19 [2015]). "Otherwise Movement" is a demand to act outside of the box. This concept demands radical change which is grounded in the plurality inherent to black performances.

Karyn Recollet is an Indigenous feminist scholar whose work intersects with issues of settler colonialism, indigenous futurity, performances, new media, and hip hop¹⁹. I am drawn to her work because of its overlapping concepts of spaces, *other* movements, remixing, and social justice.

In her article “Gesturing Indigenous Futurities Through the Remix”, Recollet offers a choreographic reading of a digital remixed video called *Ay Oh Stomp* (2012) created by Vancouver based multi-media art collective Skookum Sound System. She argues that the ways popper iGlide holds and releases, Kwakwaka’wakw dancers travel through their choreographies, and the digital remixing of shifts and loops, intervene in “settler colonialism’s disappearances and erasures, to illustrate the ways the video (particularly its activations of dance, movement and gesture) mobilize ongoing Indigenous presencing into futurity” (91). She executes a decolonial video analysis, which critiques the present and ventures into the beyond towards an “imaginary future attentive to the past” (91). Inspired by Crawley’s “otherwise imagining,” Recollet calls these types of choreographic possibilities “gesturing futurities” where dancers “jumps scales” into “otherwise spaces” out of colonial cartographies, complicating Western understandings of times, spaces, and dancing (99). Indeed, “gesturing indigenous futurities” suggest that dancers are dancing in multiple “otherwise spaces” with “otherwise beings.”

¹⁹ Recollet is interested in “new Indigenities produced in urban hub spaces as they shape solidarity movements and social activism” (University of Toronto, biography).

I am also interested in Recollet's concept of the activated space as a collective imaginary for radical imagination and social change. In her article "Glyphing decolonial love through urban flash mobbing and Walking with our Sisters," Recollet's concept of "creative solidarity" represents new ways of building consciousness; she examines the creation of indigenous hubs through new spatial geographies of resistance developed by activating space. Similar to Crawley's concept of "otherwise movement" as collective social action, the indigenous performances Recollet highlights, discuss the presence of others in the frame who may be passerbys and people who are not necessarily aware of indigenous culture, erasure, or identity. She mentions how dancers also invite non-visible beings when performing otherwise, which emphasizes the decolonial and social action goals of these performances. Recollet's research offers alternative understandings of temporal and spatial awareness such as the ways bodies' kinesthetic awareness and movements are connected to spaces they activate and/or are activated by.

In *Dark Matter in Breaking Cyphers*, Imani Kai Johnson unpacks historical, cultural, and political information present in the ritual cypher, as well as extra-phenomenal forces. According to her, the cypher contains inexact, unofficial, and 'not-entirely-Western' forms of knowledge which are cultivated by the breakers (14). In physics, dark matter is "the non-luminous material glue that holds together galaxies and "appears" only by way of its gravitational influence on surrounding visible matter (X [2]). The cypher as dark matter is a ritual cypher that contains an invisible extra-phenomenal dimension, which comes through in collectiveness and movement making, and teaches participants social and individual responsibilities within the collective (25).

This metaphor acts as an umbrella for the unseen elements of cyphers such as their multidimensionality, invisible energy and material forces, as well as the invisibilization of Africanist aesthetics globally (X [2]). Indeed, she argues that despite the depths of material forces demonstrated by Africanist aesthetics such as those embedded in hip hop and their epistemic qualities, Africanist aesthetics and people who contributed to their creation and development, often remain invisibilized.

She demonstrates that the cypher is not simply a circular geometrical structure, but a combination of multiple dimensions such as people, histories, energy that impact one another. These dimensions can impact not only the dancers present in the circle but dancers globally, cultivating a connection between dancers and the communities (Johnson [2] 78, 85). She writes for example, that some breakers stated that a “circle’s energy has gotten them to dance though they had not planned to or stopped them from dancing when they already were” (29). In other words, her project explores the force of the invisible as incalculable energy and as ‘other’ unseen influences (29). Moreover, the dark matter metaphor shows the cultural and embodied information traveling where it is not being formally recognized as such even though Africanist aesthetics are being circulated globally, under conditions of anti-blackness.

Central to Johnson’s definition of the cypher as an epistemic and global ritual, is her concept of aural kinesthetic, which is the infinite, simultaneous, visceral, and improvised response between music and social dance in a given space. In other words, she argues that music and social dance should no longer be analyzed as two separate entities but as one. In her discussion of call-and-response in music and dance, Johnson

demonstrates that aural kinesthetics not only engage with the sensory aspect but also recognize that “social dance practices are kinesthetic forms within the all-encompassing aurality of an environment” (27), in this case, the cypher. Put differently, aural kinesthetics account for the complex socio-historical/political layers present in African diasporic performances, blurring the gap between performance practices and everyday life practices (21).

In *The Africanist aesthetic in global hip-hop: Power moves*, Halifu Osumare discusses multiplicity and connections through her discussion of the intercultural body, a body that recognizes the connections between African American artistic expressions and other Afrodiasporic art forms. Due to its multicultural influences (global and local), the intercultural body performs unity, uniqueness, and globalization all at once. Osumare explains how, today, the intercultural body is informed not only by its local experience, but also by global influences. To her, this phenomenon is hip hop: an international communication between people using the same culture. Osumare explains that international communication is understood by hip hop dancers who know the foundations of hip hop and the Africanist aesthetics that come back over and over in hip hop culture.

The intercultural body can also represent connective marginalities, a concept also developed by Osumare, which she defines as the performance of global/shared social inequities and oppression experienced by people from various cultures. Connective marginalities depict the social dichotomies between black/white and self/other (63) as this concept demands for questioning our place in the world and our relation to others.

The authors portrayed in this body of literature complicate normative ways of thinking about how marginalized bodies should move in a space. They use metaphors or coin their own concepts (otherwise, dark matter, intercultural body, connective marginalities) perhaps because there are not, in Western vocabulary, words to describe performative practices that recognize the potentials of non-Western epistemological possibilities in Western places.

Main Concepts and Key Terms:

There are five concepts I develop in this dissertation: *otherwise* cypher, cloud; call-and-response *otherwise*; knowledge *otherwise*; choreography of the classroom; and critical moving. The latter two will be explained in chapter 2 and 3. These concepts are inspired by the transgressive, non-normative, non-linear, interconnected, and performative works discussed in the “knowledge *otherwise*” body of literature in my literature review (i.e. Crawley, Recollet, Johnson, Osumare).

These three concepts serve to represent my personal ideologies and kinesthetic responses gathered throughout my experience with hip hop culture and my fieldwork. I have noticed in my academic trajectory²⁰ and my experience with hip hop, that it is very hard to describe how one feels when doing/being hip hop. I realized that our language has limits: our lingo does not account for the kinds of kinesthetic experiences present in these hip hop settings. To describe my kinesthetic realities, I had to transcend Cartesian

²⁰ As a hip hop educator struggling to place words onto my experience; and similar testimonials from other scholars in informal conversations, and bodies of literature

understanding of time and space, the mind and body split, and position myself outside these Western constructs.

The *otherwise* cypher and the cloud metaphor: (i.e. the space/the where)

The *otherwise* cypher²¹ is the global space encompassing multiple other interconnected spaces where *other* kinds of possibilities are enacted, which are non-hegemonic, transgressive, performative, kinesthetic/energetic, visible and invisible, local and global, all at the same time.

a. Cypher in hip hop studies:

Traditionally, the dance cypher is defined as the circle formed by participants taking part in call-and-response with the dancers inside the circle who showcase their moves. Even though movements performed in the cypher can be choreographed, the cypher exists in the moment, and draws its force through improvised call-and-responses.

The term cypher has been adopted by various hip hop organizations, academics, and educators to signify a space where knowledge is shared in similar ways as in a performative cypher. For example, as discussed earlier, #HipHopEd is a Twitter chat platform, also called the cyber cypher, where educators from all around the world share ideas to improve the learning experiences of their students. This example shows that when not referring to the “traditional” performative cypher, the term cypher can represent

²¹ Unlike call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*, where the term “otherwise” comes after the words, I placed “otherwise” before the word cypher. In call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*, “otherwise” is a descriptive adjective differentiating them from “regular” call-and-responses and knowledges. In the *otherwise* cypher, the “otherwise” is part of the name of the concept.

a space where knowledge is shared and exchanged through communication strategies similar to the ones found during call-and-responses enacted in cyphers.

Most hip hop studies scholarship concentrates on the performative action inside the circle. My understanding of the cypher is inspired by scholars such as Johnson, who complicate this narrow vision by not only analyzing the visual and active participation happening inside the cypher but by also looking at what is around the cypher to ultimately expand the roles of participants of the cypher and their impact in the world.

b. *Otherwise* cypher as cloud:

The *otherwise* cypher is multiple, interconnected, reciprocal, and highly kinesthetic. It is difficult to describe these types of occurrences simply with words. So, to illustrate my vision of the *otherwise* cypher, I use the imagery of the cloud. The cloud is multifaceted; the two ideas I am inspired by are the weather and online clouds.

Traditionally defined, the cloud— as a natural component in our space— is an aerosol suspended in our sky consisting of droplets. It is present, yet not entirely tangible, as one cannot touch or grasp it, and the crystals that constitute the cloud itself are not visible until it produces rain. Furthermore, the cloud is also not a singular entity, but rather an ever-connected association of liquid mass in the air. It is ever-growing, never ending, sometimes visible, sometimes invisible when it disappears from the human’s eye into the depth of our atmosphere. I am also interested in using the metaphor of the cloud in technological terms, as in the internet cloud. The e-cloud is an infinite data storage “space” constituted by multiple other clouds. Each cloud is individual yet part of something bigger, and ultimately part of the Internet, which itself is a platform with no-

limit on the exchange of knowledge. Similarly, the image below shows that a cloud is inherently constituted of multiple other clouds thus representing the idea that knowledge is inherently multiple, like the *otherwise* cypher. This image showcases how ever-growing networks of clouds form the larger cloud. This cloud helps visualize concepts such as Osumare’s intercultural body or connected marginalities because it shows the way hip hop has traveled and interconnected people globally. The kinesthetic cloud does not promote hierarchy but reciprocity; the exchanges and the connections are more democratic, like in a cypher.



Picture 1: Source: “Vector Cloud Background (eps)”, *Freepik*. 2018

My vision of the *otherwise* cypher comprises all the elements of the cloud. The *otherwise* cypher is inherently glocal (both local and global), and thus multiple. It is local to the participants in a given space, and global because through kinesthesia, it reproduces itself. Because of reciprocity, no one or no knowledge is more valid, legitimate, or important than the others. They all impact each other, and ultimately, work together as one. In short, people in the *otherwise* cypher are always part of something, connected. The knowledge exchanged in a given space travels and impacts broader collectives of people who create and recreate *otherwise* cyphers of their own. Once the kinesthetic

knowledge is put out there in the world, it is there forever, like data on the internet, or a cloud in the sky. Even invisible to the human eye, the knowledge is always going to be there in the atmosphere or on the internet.

Call-and-response *otherwise*: (i.e. the knowledge transmission/the how):

The *otherwise* cypher constitutes the space where call-and-response *otherwise* can be performed. In other words, call-and-response *otherwise* is the method of knowledge transmission, the type of exchange that is enacted in the *otherwise* cypher.

a. Call-and-response in scholarship:

Traditionally, call-and-response describes interactive musical techniques where musicians use patterns like those in human conversations; a vocal and/or instrumental musical phrase serves as the call and is answered by a different music phrase. This technique is used to create an exchange among musicians, other performers, or with the audience members. Call-and-response is deeply rooted in African diasporic musical practices. It emerged in sub-Saharan Africa and spread throughout the Americas during the Transatlantic slave trades, considerably impacting the development of African American music such as jazz, rhythm and blues, gospel, soul, and more recently, hip hop (American History USA).

Call-and-response has then been adopted in dance and hip hop studies to signify similar encounters with movements and performances so it can refer to parts of the body that “answer” another with a counter/encounter (Gottschild 4). Call-and-response practices are very common in hip hop culture but are predominant in performative settings such as the hip hop cypher.

b. Call-and-response *otherwise*:

Call-and-response in the *otherwise* cypher constitutes an embodied exchange, *another* kind of performance. These knowledge transmissions can happen between people physically in the space (the *otherwise* cypher) through performative acts of calling and responding in the space. But knowledge transmission can also be activated by people communicating with other non-visible beings who belong to different times and spaces, through kinesthesia and extra-phenomenal rituals (Johnson). For example, in “Otherwise movements,” Crawley discusses how black performers choreograph bodies present in the space, as well as with bodies/entities from other socio-cultural and geographical contexts and times (2015). In this case, call-and-response is both an individual and collective praxis. It is individual because each dancer can invite their personal ancestors, feelings, or historical events into the *otherwise* cypher. It is also collective because the space is the mix of all these energies gathered in a given cypher, socially, historically, and perhaps politically connected with different similar spaces across the globe communicating together via kinesthesia. The more one calls, the more answers one receives and the more the knowledge is shared. Once the call is out there in the world, it is shared in hope to be answered by someone, somewhere. Ultimately, through the multiple acts of calling and responding, call-and-response *otherwise* aims for knowledge to be accessible and shared broadly, like in a peer-mentorship process. Therefore, call-and-response *otherwise* follows the “each one teach one” ethos of hip hop culture.

Call-and-response *otherwise* is inscribed in places that do not always follow Western epistemologies such as the Cartesian rules of physics and what is visible or

tangible. While the Cartesian rules state that lines, planes, gravity etc. are real and that one should not rely on intuition or not believe something to be true unless it is obvious or scientifically proven, the *otherwise* cypher constitutes an alternatives space where bodies share meanings through transnational and sometimes invisible networks through call-and-response *otherwise*. Call-and-response *otherwise* is used throughout this dissertation to capture engaged and performative acts associated with knowledge transmission in diverse spaces and represents the kind of teaching and learning that I aspire to enact for my embodied hip hop pedagogies.

Knowledge *otherwise*: (i.e. the knowledge content - the what)

We saw above how the *otherwise* cypher corresponds to the multitemporal space where call-and-response *otherwise* can be performed. In short, they are the “where” and the “how” of knowledge transmission. Knowledge *otherwise* constitutes the content that is shared during the call-and-response knowledge transmission process, the “what.” Knowledge *otherwise* is a knowledge that is non-hegemonic and centered on embodied realities, performance, and mentorship values.

Knowledge *otherwise* can be produced and transmitted via call-and-response *otherwise* between people present in the same space, but also beyond that physical space, glocally, through kinesthesia. I use knowledge *otherwise* throughout this dissertation to signify the kind of knowledge that contains multiple simultaneous streams of knowledge and promotes both individuality and togetherness, thus one that challenges traditional ways of being, knowing, and moving.

Preview of embodied hip hop pedagogies:

My embodied hip hop pedagogies model is inspired by the concepts discussed above. I aim for the classroom space to possess the qualities of the *otherwise* cypher; the teaching and learning to be performed like a call-and-response *otherwise*; and for the content to be knowledge *otherwise* even if it is invisible or not considered legitimate. My adaptations of the *otherwise* open the possibility for schooling institutions to teach and learn differently, and deconstruct the current, more disembodied, static, and Eurocentric culture of education.

Intervention:

My work intervenes both in the fields of dance studies and education by 1) assessing what kind of knowledge is considered valid and where, 2) investigating performative and classroom spaces, 3) expanding the spaces where embodied knowledge can be analyzed, 4) evaluating the pedagogical possibilities present in both fields, and 5) using mixed methods from multiple fields thus creating an interdisciplinary research project. Bridging critical conversations around inequalities and lack of cultural connection with kinesthetic knowledge, brings out a new dimension to this interdisciplinary scholarship.

Dance Studies:

My research contributes to diversifying dance scholarship, as I argue that an Afrodiasporic dance style such as hip hop should have the same value in academia as Western dances such as ballet or modern dance. Hip hop dance classes are extremely

popular in academic institutions. Yet, students usually cannot major in hip hop dance. Since dance studies originated by analyzing Western-style dances performed on concert stages, my research on embodied hip hop pedagogies in the classroom broadens the scope of dance analysis into unconventional spaces. In other words, one of the main interventions of this work is using dance studies as analytical lens in spaces that traditionally do not employ choreographic readings, such as the classroom. By looking at the knowledge from dance spaces and non-dance spaces together, I aim to show that movement carries knowledge and thus can be used as a pedagogical tool in other areas.

Another intervention is liaised to my multilayered understanding of what constitutes a hip hop cypher and call-and-response and where can it be performed. By combining my embodied hip hop pedagogies model with the *otherwise*, I expand their definition to englobe their global pedagogical and kinesthetic values. Ultimately, I show that a cypher can be created and is valid anywhere, even in a classroom.

Finally, a critical question in the field of dance studies asks how one writes about dance, whether it is a stage performance, a choreography, or a social dance. It is quite difficult to write about the body in motion without falling into the trap of using too much literal or scientific description. How to transfer dance meaning on paper has been part of an ongoing conversations in the field. Quite frankly, writing about dance constitutes a real challenge for dance scholars. However, in this dissertation, I argue that teaching, learning, and being an ethnographer are performative acts because they are constitutive of meaningful movements. Indeed, in this project, I attempt to write about these modes of non-dance as though they were dance, adding a layer of complexity to the act of writing.

Here, I am writing about embodied experiences which are traditionally not considered dance from a dance studies perspective.

Education:

While hip hop pedagogy is based on the usage of all four artistic hip hop elements (emceeing, djing, breakdancing, and graffiti writing), the nascent scholarship on hip hop pedagogy is dominated by works that interact solely with emceeing and graffiti writing, in other words, elements where language and writing are the primary tools of expression. By neglecting breakdancing, hip hop pedagogy participates in the typical hierarchy of knowledge found in many Western institutions. My work, by putting movement at the core, addresses the ways in which hip hop pedagogy replicates Western academic hierarchies. In sum, this work aims to show that movements are everywhere, even in spaces which are traditionally not considered dancing spaces.

As a dance scholar and teacher, I also advocate for other forms of embodied knowledge (such as cultural background, identity, status, gender, race, and feelings) to be considered legitimate and employed in teaching spaces. As Liora Bresler mentions in *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds: towards Embodied Teaching and Learning*, “embod[iment] has profound implications for many areas of society, but particularly for education and the ways we think about how children learn, how teachers can teach, and how schools could be organized” (7). And so, there is an urgent need to examine how “somatic learning connects to larger socio-cultural and socio-political surroundings and understand how embodiment encompasses thinking, being, doing and interacting within worlds” (7). By centering bodies in the classroom, my work aims to diminish the

Cartesian mind and body split present in education and make hip hop pedagogy more aware of embodied knowledge.

Most education research focuses on students more than teachers. Therefore, a major contribution of my research to the literature is my examination of the impact of teachers' bodies, movements, and performances in teaching and learning.

Mixed Methods:

The variety of methods and the ways and the spaces I use them in, contribute in diversifying dance studies and education. I believe that dance scholars can learn from action research, typically used in social-sciences and education, to enact change through praxis. This would expand the benefits of embodied education to non-dancers. Education scholars can learn from choreographic reading by looking at the classroom spaces and teachers/students' bodies differently. In short, by analyzing teaching and learning in a classroom with a dance perspective, and by studying the connection between body, movement, knowledge, and power in Western institutional non-performative spaces, I bridge these fields to create an interdisciplinary project.

Outline:

My dissertation is composed of three chapter-cyphers. I title my chapters, chapter-cyphers because they operate like *otherwise* cyphers where call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* are enacted.

The first chapter-cypher explains how choreographic analysis of selected hip hop events led me to understand what hip hop movement can do in restricted Western institutional spaces. I look at events such as the Festival of Rhythm held at the Riverside

Municipal Auditorium, where normally, certain kinds of movement are expected of participants. Although hip hop dancers complied with the “ideal” construction of the theatrical space at first, they created cyphers everywhere, ignoring the presence of the stage. Exploring the actions created through call-and-response *otherwise*, this chapter-cypher shows that there is room to reclaim institutional spaces such as the classroom.

The second chapter-cypher constitutes an ethnographic study of Professor Rickerby Hinds’ *Hip Hop Theater* classes and of Tasha Iglesias’s *Hip Hop Education and Sport* classes, both of which I participated in at the UC Riverside. This chapter-cypher is also informed by a choreographic reading of Professor Bettina Love’s *Hip Hop Education for Social Justice* classes, which are accessible to view as videos on YouTube. I discuss the unique ways teachers and students navigate the classroom spaces; introduce the concept of choreography of the classroom; question the role of embodiment and socio-cultural capital in hip hop education; and ultimately describe how the three educators complicate Eurocentric ways of being, knowing, and moving through call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* in K-12 and higher education settings. I then explain how their pedagogies influenced my own pedagogical practice.

In the third chapter-cypher, I combine what I learned from my ethnographic experiences gathered in chapter-cyphers 1 and 2 to design my own embodied hip hop pedagogies. I detail my process of implementing my embodied hip hop pedagogies in Riverside and reflect on the successes and challenges of such endeavors by analyzing the institutional limits and the role of my body in the teaching and learning environment. I also explain my concept of critical moving, which is inspired by the works of Paulo Freire and

bell hooks and combines critical thinking, social justice, and the whole body (identity in terms of race, gender, and feelings and movements).

The three chapter-cyphers resemble the metaphor of the cloud because they are interconnected and part of a bigger cloud, this dissertation, which is the result of multiple connections, interactions, and exchanges in and of itself. The chapter-cyphers feed each other and operate together; they are essential parts of a bigger map. They are *à la fois* unique (i.e. have their own specificities) and similar because they all aim to understand the possibilities and challenges of teaching and learning *differently*. The concepts developed in this research are not just concepts; they became the structure, the skeleton of this dissertation, and the way I conducted this research. They are subjects of study, writing framework, and research praxis at the same time. This dissertation is hip hop. Through performance, social action, mentorship, and critical thinking/moving, this project seeks to create an embodied hip hop pedagogies model that can connect more people together and ultimately create a global embodied hip hop pedagogies cypher.

CHAPTER - CYPHER 1

Autoethnographic Experience of

Call-and-Response and Knowledge *Otherwise*:

Choreographic Readings of Hip Hop Events

Introduction:

In this chapter-cypher, I analyze how call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* manifest in hip hop spaces. Through a choreographic reading of four hip hop events, I analyze how spaces, moving bodies, and knowledge participate in and challenge traditional ways of being, moving, and knowing. In other words, I look at how institutional structures impact moving bodies but also how hip hop can counter these spaces and formal practices, and the tension arising from this spatio-cultural clash. Ultimately, my findings demonstrate that hip hop constitutes legitimate knowledge that belongs in formal spaces such as the classroom. Lastly, I present a list of critical lessons I learned from hip hop events which are useful for my personal exploration and creative process of furthering my embodied hip hop pedagogies.

Methodology:

This chapter-cypher is the result of a combination of methods including choreographic reading, autoethnography, interviews, field-notes, post-event reflections, and images/discourse analysis from event flyers, pictures, and social media advertisements.

a. Choreographic reading:

Here, I perform choreographic readings of four hip hop events: the Festival of Rhythm at the Riverside Municipal Auditorium; The Floor Improv Day at Los Angeles Union Station; an Ice Cube concert at Del Mar Thoroughbred Horserace; and the 3rd annual Hip Hop Education Conference, “Can't Stop Hip Hop: The Education Movement - a success” at Harvard Graduate School of Education in Boston, Massachusetts.

I participated in many more hip hop events during my fieldwork²². These four events serve as representative examples of the kinds of experiences and analysis that happened in other spaces. I selected these four events because each possesses a different purpose: freestyling and battling; dance learning; entertainment; academic learning. Their distinctiveness in purpose helped me evaluate how bodies move and what kinds of knowledge transmission processes can occur in different spaces. What these four events have also in common is the fact that they were all organized in “unlikely-hip hop” places: an old missionary building; a train station; a horserace; Harvard University. By using the term unlikely, I do not mean to create a clear-cut opposition to the West and dismiss hip hop’s intimate relationship with Western institutions. By “unlikely hip hop space,” I refer to the idea that these spaces would probably have not considered hosting a hip hop event, and by extension, democratizing their venue to people of color practicing Afro-diasporic performances before hip hop’s popularity and recent institutionalization. It is indeed the boom and “mainstreamization” of hip hop that pushed cultural services such as the

²² List of sites in appendix p.334

Western Boot²³ country and line dance club located in Southern California to merge their country dancing and music with hip hop culture. The owner explained to me how this eclectic combination was extremely controversial at first. But by diversifying the array of dance and music offered in the club, a new and more progressive crowd started to come. And eventually, the base customers became more open to sharing their dance floor with other dancers. Ultimately, engaging with hip hop at the Western Boot increased the diversity of the community that dances at the club and opened them to new approaches to dancing. In my analysis, I am particularly interested in looking at the clash between the codes and epistemologies associated with these institutional spaces and hip hop ways of being, knowing, and moving.

b. Autoethnography:

This chapter-cypher is primarily an autoethnography. I follow the definition of autoethnography by Aisha Durham as the study of the researcher's culturality and all that encompasses in relation to their subjects' culturality. Thus, analyzing my embodied experience in these spaces matters because it shows how my bi-cultural, scholar, and educator- self interprets embodiment, hip hop, and education. I use the concepts of call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* to reference the ways of being, knowing, and moving in hip hop events according to my autoethnographic experience.

²³ The name of this site has been changed to protect the owner's and workers' identity. Interviews were conducted on site on November 1, 2018.

c. Interviews:

This chapter-cypher is informed by interviews with participants whom I would categorize as hip hop organizers. These organizers merge hip hop with practices that are usually associated with institutional Western cultures such as a book club, journalism, and dancing at a University. These interviews add to my analysis about meeting points and tensions between Western and hip hop epistemologies, and how performing hip hop can challenge the normative discourses and practices organized in Western spaces.

I wanted to complement my autoethnographic analysis with interviews from event participants. However, because of the importance of reflection and self and communal learning in my research, I wanted to find a constant, someone I could follow-up with to learn about their embodied and pedagogical experiences over time. I therefore decided to interview my husband, Siddharth Agarwal, who accompanied me to multiple events during my fieldwork, including two out of the four events in this chapter-cypher. Born in India, he grew up listening to American rap and has attended hip hop concerts in India. However, he never was exposed to hip hop dance. The main reason for interviewing him was to gather information about his in-the-moment and post-event perception of kinesthesia, agency, and hip hop knowledge from a non-hip hop-practitioner view. My dialogical exchange with him helped me assess the broader impact of these events.

Outline:

Each choreographic reading of a hip hop event corresponds to a different case-study. I identified three common themes: 1) Space impacts participants; 2) Participants reclaim their bodies and spaces; and 3) *Otherwise* cypher. These themes aid me in

analyzing my autoethnographic role and in discussing the controversial clash between hip hop and Western epistemologies present in these spaces. I also perform a cross-analysis to understand how these events inform my vision of embodied hip hop pedagogies.

Overall goal:

The purpose of this chapter-cypher is to explain what choreographic readings of hip hop events can bring to my embodied hip hop pedagogies. In order to achieve this, I base this chapter-cypher on theories of space from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Henry Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Naomi Bragin. I show how participants in the hip hop events (including myself) tend to, at first, partake in the traditional codes associated with Western spaces but soon challenge them through their individual and collective embodied participation in hip hop culture. So, we will see how, in the context of hip hop events, moving bodies both participate in and challenge traditional Western ways of being, moving, and knowing, but ultimately reconstruct the spaces.

Another overarching goal of this chapter-cypher is to reevaluate what constitutes legitimate knowledge in hip hop, in education, and therefore in our society. For example, performances are at the core of hip hop; in mainstream schooling systems, movement and embodied realities are usually discarded from the main curriculum or considered extra. I advocate for the importance of embodied knowledge through the concept of knowledge *otherwise* used here as a larger metaphor to represent the idea that however small or big movements, people, or knowledges are according to societal standards, they all matter and impact one another and participate in a constant call-and-response blurring and challenging the preconceived hierarchy of importance.

Case Study #1:

Festival of Rhythm at the Riverside Municipal Auditorium

Introduction:

I attended the Festival of Rhythm, a hip hop event on February 17, 2018, organized in Riverside Municipal Auditorium as my first fieldwork experience. The all-day freestyle event was hosted by 1212 Sessions which is an organization that promotes all artistic forms of hip hop culture, and which is “an Inland Empire based group that provides events for art, dance and music enthusiasts” (1212 Sessions). The event consisted of breaking, popping, and freestyle battles as well as other hip hop and non-hip hop events such as graffiti painting, informal cyphers, booths, food etc.

Since this was my first autoethnographic experience, I arrived there not really knowing how to document the experience, so I started writing what I saw and felt. I was of course, the only person scratching notes. I scrutinized the space and participants, and therefore would not have considered myself a traditional hip hop event participant. Right off the bat, I positioned myself as a researcher.

The Riverside Municipal Auditorium usually schedules concerts or sit-down dinner events, and not hip hop battles. What struck me the most was the clash between Western and hip hop ways of knowing, moving, and being in the freestyle event. For example, the first thing I noticed was the contrast between the hip hop music, with beats blasting on huge speakers; the smell of street food; the nightclub-like lighting; and the dancers’ attire and attitude with the formal, missionary style of the old monument. The Riverside Municipal Auditorium in downtown Riverside is made with old rocks,

expensive looking antique features, and is protected by metallic black fences. I therefore decided to focus on how the construction of the event space impacted participants and pushed them to participate in traditional ways of being, knowing, and moving in the space, before they eventually reclaimed their agency through their embodied practices.

Theme 1: Space impacts participants:

One place the impact of the infrastructure of the Riverside Municipal Auditorium was visible on participants, was the outdoor patio. There was a bar in the center of the space, with stone benches placed at the four corners of the square patio overlooking the bar. I read this architectural structure as a purposeful and capitalist approach to encourage people to consume. The event organizers also placed the art booths and food vendors around the bar in such ways that one could not avoid them while going to the freestyle dancing/emceeing area of the patio. My observation in the outdoor patio is that event organizers and the Auditorium created more room for consumerism rather than embodied hip hop practices. The space to perform was constrained; consequently, hip hop dancers' movements were restricted and impacted.



Picture 2: Le Lay, Maïko. "Riverside Municipal Auditorium Outdoor Patio during Festival of Rhythm with vendor booths, bar, and micro cypher in the back", 2018

To further the subject of embodied negotiation in restricted space, Kelvin²⁴, a UCR hip hop dance team leader communicated to me how having to practice hip hop outdoor (in between trash cans, in a narrow space between two buildings, between a parking lot and the food court), has shaped the team's choreographies and pedagogies. For example, they must train without mirrors, the food courtyard's speakers is usually blasting music, and students passing by disrupt their original intentions. Furthermore, the dirty concrete floor may contain screws, hurting dancers, thus forcing them to adapt their choreographies and pedagogies to the challenges of the space. Because the micro dance cypher at the Riverside Municipal Auditorium was tucked between the bar, a barbecue grill, and multiple booths, dancers had to negotiate their movements in relation to the outdoor space, which reminded me of Kelvin's experience at UCR.

Inside, in the main hall, the contrast between hip hop culture and the mission-style formality was also apparent. The concert hall is a typical proscenium performance space, with a stage in the front on one side of the proscenium arch, with seating where audience members usually sit on the other side. No surprise, at the Festival of Rhythm, almost every participant was sitting on the red velvet seats, checking their phones in silence, waiting for the battle to start. Despite the DJ playing music, the atmosphere was very formal and quiet, very unexpected for a hip hop event. My observation in the concert hall was that participants were acting as if they were at a non-hip hop event, sitting comfortably in the back of the room, and waiting for artists to come up on the proscenium stage. I read their actions as complying with the typical ways of behaving in

²⁴ The name of the interviewee has been modified to ensure their anonymity. Interview conducted on July 11, 2018.

Western concert halls, perhaps because these behaviors are considered the norm and are deeply embedded in people's cultural lives. So here too, the infrastructural setting of the space impacted participants' movements and actions.



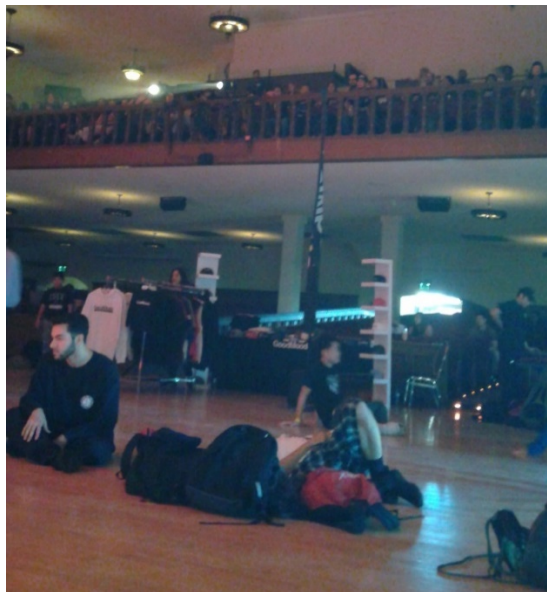
Picture 3: Le Lay, Maiko. "Riverside Municipal Auditorium indoor hall during Festival of Rhythm with red velvet seats in the back, open floor at the center", 2018

We saw two examples of spaces (outdoor patio and indoor concert hall) that limited participants' movements, thus taking over the goal of the event: dancing, freestyling, cyphering, and connecting. I will now describe instances where dancers reclaimed the space and challenged the normative way of being, knowing, and moving.

Theme 2: Participants reclaim their bodies and spaces:

I was first tempted to go sit with everyone else on the comfortable red velvet seats in the back of the room while waiting for the battle to start. But then, I remembered Johnson's ethnography on hip hop battles where she explains how much an ethnographer learns when not choosing the easy and comfortable option, and instead becomes part of the cypher because of the energy and improvisations that happen in these times and spaces. So, I undid what I would have "naturally" done and plucked up my courage to go wait in the middle of the concert hall. After a few minutes of me awkwardly sitting in the large empty dance floor, a few people joined me. Some bboys started warming up next to

me and created small practice circles. They stretched, threw aside their backpacks, wore their accessories and attire, created training circles etc.. Rather than separating ourselves by moving up and away onto the proscenium stage, we built our circle amidst the audience thus transforming the space into a more embodied hip hop one. After some time, it seemed like myself and these bboys attracted other participants to do the same. People sitting on the red velvet chairs started to get up and move closer to the dance floor. The bboys stretching next to me and I were unconsciously forming a larger circle, which ended up becoming the circular border of the hip hop battle cypher. The concert hall was no longer formal, quiet, and empty. It became animated, energetic, and full of kinesthetic exchanges in preparation for the big battle cypher. Our moving bodies restructured the space, making the space our own while adapting it to our needs. In short, myself and others deconstructed the original purpose of the concert hall space because we started to move with more agency and thus engaging with knowledge *otherwise*.



Picture 4: Le Lay, Maïko. "Other dancers and I creating the circle/cypher for the battle in the middle of the formal-looking indoor hall. We can also perceive an informal micro cypher in the back representing how dancers deconstruct the space", 2018

I was amazed at how much the space I had first entered changed simply with the presence of moving bodies reshaping and creating new spaces (such as small circles) within the space. Although some parameters (such as the architectural structure of the building, the event set up, the usual types of programs scheduled in the auditorium, and perhaps one could argue, the monument's missionary history) could have disciplined and controlled people's actions, dancers and participants for the most part resisted these parameters, thus challenging the traditional ways of being, knowing, and moving in this Western institutional space. By recreating the purposes and the construction of the space, they increased their agency from a docile body to a resistive dancing body.

Theme 3: *Otherwise cypher:*

This event constitutes an *otherwise* cypher enacting call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* in several ways. First, the multispace reminds us of the interconnected cloud. At Festival of Rhythm, even though each room/space was physically separated, they were in sync, they operated as one as if moving bodies communicated together via kinesthesia.

Second, each room became inhabited with energy when bodies started entering the rooms. Bodies attracted more bodies. Movements attracted more movements. The more people started engaging in the space, the more micro cyphers started to be created and the more call-and-responses *otherwise* were animated. Dancers and participants were engaging in call-and-responses not only with each other but with the space, the atmosphere, the emotional baggage they brought to the event. The space started to feel fuller, not just with the number of bodies, but with the tension, activation of energy, and

per Johnson's words, material forces. Finally, by sharing knowledge *otherwise* through micro cyphers, flowing between the indoor and outdoor space as one, in the mission-style building, dancers transgressed what it means to move in such spaces.

Third, the *otherwise* cypher challenges what kind of knowledge matters in these spaces and therefore in society. At Festival of Rhythm, the main event advertised²⁵ and anticipated was the breakdance battle. It almost felt like anything else, such as the freestyling happening or this little boy in the picture below feeling like a superhero under the red light in the middle of the concert hall, did not really matter. People would speak about the "main" battle; all the other things scheduled will be moved around to make sure the breakdance battle can accommodate the most participants; people seated on the red velvet seats and checking their phones did not seem to have much interest in the other things at the event since they were all waiting for the breakdance battle to start.



Picture 5: Le Lay, Maïko. "A little boy feeling like a superhero seconds before the "main" / breakdance battle starts. This picture represents *what else*, the *other/alternative* happenings at a hip hop event", 2018

The *otherwise* cypher shows that actually all these other things, these "little" things, these things that people pay less attention to, matter as much as the breakdance

²⁵ The MC would count down the time before the start of the breakdance battle; postings throughout the event focused on the schedule of the breakdance battle, the table with the sign-in sheet for the battle was placed right above the stairs for everyone to see.

battle because they are reciprocal, they impact one another. I contend that the sensation felt by this little boy has an impact on what is going to happen in the cypher because our bodies' energy travels. Johnson mentions in her work on breaking cyphers that the continuity of the circle/cypher depends on the energy activated by its participants. So here too, the breakdance battle at Festival of Rhythm depends on how people feel and move in the space. And the way they feel and move in that space, in the moment, is informed by a myriad of embodied realities from their past and present. Even though the event's main focus was the breakdance battle, the battle was informed by tons of other *otherwise* cyphers, call-and-responses, and knowledges, perhaps less visible, and yet vital to its existence, functioning, and continuity.

The "little" things, seen and unseen provided substantial contributions to the overall experience; different kinds of energy were present in each space, and yet, they all flowed together as if there was a common consensus. The energy flowing was positive, communal, transgressive, and creative like a response to the physical and restraining structures present in the space.

Festival of Rhythm case-study conclusion:

In this section, we saw how participants at the Festival of Rhythm first complied with the traditional way of being, moving, and knowing in the mission-style municipal auditorium. However, eventually, moving bodies transformed the restrictive and formal spaces to make them their own. While the primary focus of the event was the breakdance battle, I contend that all the people and movements who helped reshape the event space were equally significant because they are all connected through the *otherwise* cypher.

Case-Study # 2:

Floor Improv Day at Union Station, Los Angeles

Introduction:

The Floor Improv Day is a series of weekly dance and music workshops, followed by an open-floor improv session organized on Sunday afternoons in June 2018 in Union Station. The events were organized by the Open Floor, a non-profit whose mission is to “engage underserved youth in the art of improvisation to encourage self-empowerment through movement, dance and music, fostered by a multicultural artistic community” (Open Floor). Curious about how hip hop dance workshops could be brought to a place such as Union Station, I attended the Floor Improv Day on Sunday, June 10, 2018 with my husband, Sid. The primary reason I invited Sid to join this event was to complement my autoethnographic analysis with another perspective. I wanted to learn about how a participant who has no dance experience, who is not very familiar with hip hop or performance, and who is a person of color would experience the Floor Improv Day in terms of teaching and learning *otherwise*. Gathering knowledge about how a person with a very different cultural and artistic background experience saw the event was essential because, as a future hip hop educator, I must cater my pedagogy to diverse students with diverse interests. And so, although the primary methods of investigation I use in this chapter-cypher are choreographic reading and autoethnography, reflecting upon Sid’s experiences helped me anchor my own perspective within the diverse collective experiences of others, and to forget the other participants moving in the space.

Theme 1: Space impacts participants:

While approaching the Floor Improv Day event, the tune I heard was not the kind of music you would usually hear in a train station especially not in renowned²⁶ ones such as Union Station, Los Angeles. While the station is usually infused with classical or jazz music, I heard hip hop and Latin beats. It took me a few seconds before my body acclimated to this new musical experience.



Picture 6: “Union Station Los Angeles Gallery,” accessed in September 2019, <http://unionstationla.com>

We are finally there, standing in between the waiting area and the gallery aisle. There is no entrance fee or sign-up tables stopping us from jumping directly into the popping workshop taught by a famous L.A based popping dancer. Because of its open floor policy, students from all ages and groups, from curious attendees like Sid, to professional dancers, but also, passersby, travelers, and homeless people wanting to have a good time, aligned behind our instructor and did their best to follow his steps.

The open floor policy and the eclectic music were markers of non-traditional ways of being, knowing, and moving in a space such as a train station. However, the

²⁶ In 1972, Union Station was designated as a Los Angeles Historic–Cultural Monument and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 quoted from website: <https://www.unionstationla.com/history>

dance class followed traditional Western dance studios codes of teaching and learning. The popping instructor was counting and demonstrating some moves in the front, while participants were lined up behind him trying to copy his moves. The physical construction of the gallery aisle at Union station shaped the way teaching and learning occurred in the space. The rectangular shape of the gallery aisle guided the instructor to place himself parallel to the band and long wall. He was placed in front of the lines of students as an authoritative figure. This physical demarcation between the instructor and the participants created a hierarchical power dynamic.



Picture 7: Le Lay, Maïko. “Dance class at Union Station,” June 2018

Interestingly, despite the open floor policy and the importance placed on improvisation by the organizers, the pedagogy and the structure at the start of the dance class resembled a common dance class in a Western dance studio. I believe the physical configuration and the purpose of the space pushed teachers and participants to follow more traditional Western epistemologies and ways of moving and being in the station.

Theme 2: Participants reclaim their bodies and spaces:

a. Dance lines vs. cyphers:

While the dance workshop started slightly stiffer like in a dance studio, it soon became more informal. Participants transformed the spaces and shifted what teaching and learning can look like in the train station.

As attendees shifted to a less linear organization, students helped generate a fun spirit, assisting each other. “Usually, everybody is very protective of their personal space. Here, the other person lets you in in their personal space” (Agarwal). As observed by Sid, people were keen to dance close to another and share not only their space but their in-the-moments feelings and mood with each other. I experienced these types of exchanges when I would make an eye contact with a participant across the room, then smile and nod at each other communicating with our eyes and sways.

After the workshops, students started to improvise partaking in a call-and-response with the musicians: the instructor popped when the drummer hit; my hips swung side to side on the rhythm of the beats; everyone’s groove fueled the percussionists’ hands to play faster. Slowly, people watching and standing at the extremity of the walls started approaching. They eventually helped build a large circle formed by dance adepts, enthusiasts, and the musicians. The usually cold large rectangular, high ceilings building was now filled with warm moving bodies eager to freestyle. We could not tell this was a train station anymore. Micro cyphers were popping within the larger cypher, and yet there was unity within that diversity: “[...] it was really different and yet the same” (Agarwal).



Picture 8: Le Lay, Maïko. “Freestyle circle and a dancer showcasing his moves at Union Station” June 2018

b. Dancing hip hop as political act:

While attending to the ways participants of the Floor Improv Day reclaimed their agency and spaces, I must discuss the implications of organizing a hip hop dance workshop in an institutional space such as a train station.

Organizing a hip hop event in a train station is quite unusual. “I was dazzled: people were dancing at a station, at a public space, with live music playing [...]” (Agarwal). Hip hop dancers across the world often practice in stations or in the underground because of the lack of accessible training spots, but it is rare to find a planned event organized legally in such a public space. Indeed, our capitalist state responds to performative acts in public spaces with hyper policing which reasserts the limited use of public spaces imposed on certain bodies, and especially black bodies. André Lepecki addresses these kinds of limitations on the body in “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the task of the dancer.” In his article, choreopolitics is the term he coins referring to choreographing protest, which is the ultimate political task of the

dancer. Choreopolitics is the embodied demand to move freely in response to choreopolicing, which he defines as “the way in which the police determine the space of circulation for protesters and ensures that everyone is in their permissible place”²⁷ Per Lepecki, choreopolicing is implemented in order to “de-mobilize political action by means of implementing a certain kind of movement that prevent any formation and expression of the political” (Lepecki).

For most practitioners of color, remaining unseen and dancing away from institutional/formal spaces is a question of freedom vs. jail, or even life and death. Perhaps, the fear of punishment is now so embedded in hip hop culture, especially for minority communities that practitioners don’t even think or desire to tackle such institutional space. They perhaps have unconsciously and/or consciously dissociated themselves and their practices from such spaces. Was the Floor Improv Day a form of political demonstration against the regular police choreography asking for order and obedience in Union station? I unfortunately did not have the chance to ask this question of the event organizers. However, from my point of view, the action of organizing hip hop dance workshops in this space—not just any kind of dance workshop, not ballroom or ballet which might be more accepted by large Western cultural institutions, but freestyle hip hop cyphers—constitutes a political act.

I also wonder: by organizing hip hop dance workshops in a train station, does the Floor Improv Day participate in formalizing hip hop dance? When is it tolerated or even

²⁷ Lepecki, Andre. “Choreopolicing and Choreopolitics. Or the task of the dancer. *Communaute des Chercheurs*, accessed in January, 2020. <https://communauteschercheurssurlacommunautewordpress.com/choreopolicing-and-choreopolitics-by-andre-lepecki/>

uplifting to dance hip hop in a public space and when is it criminal? Whose dancing bodies are approved to dance hip hop in such institutional spaces vs. whose are not? By organizing hip hop dance in such institutional space, do organizers reproduce issues of appropriation? These are questions that showcase the complexity of moving as transgressive and counter act in our current society.

Theme 3: *Otherwise* cypher:

There are two ways that the Floor Improv Day performed call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*, following the principles of the *otherwise* cypher.

One: Sid mentioned that “the event was evolving according to the mood.” What was happening and how were influenced by this invisible energy created by the moving bodies conversing. The synergy of the members of the group influenced one another, like in an *otherwise* cypher. It was invisible, yet, Sid and I were aware of it. Participants in the circles were in conversation with the musicians, with each another, and with dancers in the neighboring circles as well. It was like a communal effort to re-choreograph the space. Dancers were connected and moving in call-and-response, in sync with each other, and “getting connected on a very deep level” (Agarwal) like in the *otherwise* cypher.

Two: Another example of attending to the principle of the *otherwise* cypher would be how a participant would really be “feeling it” and be in total sync with the beat of the music. They were “feeling it” so much that their energy would move to the persons next to them, and next thing you know, their energy travelled like a wave in the ocean across the room. From two, three people, now a crowd of people performed the same

moves with the same vibes, in absolute tandem. Like Sid, we all let go of the fact that we were in a station, our inhibition, and that we were all strangers to each other.

Three : throughout, there was a very welcoming vibe due to the “each one teach one” and the “come as you are” philosophies of the event. “I immediately felt like dancing when I saw people dancing, even though I am not a professional dancer. I did not feel the inhibition or too shy. [...] I just went with the flow” (Agarwal). I must nuance my argument here because this event was made possible because of the partnership between the L.A Metro (primary sponsor) and cultural organizations such as the Floor Improv and was somehow contained to a set time frame within a specific space in the station. As mentioned earlier, hip hop is not welcomed everywhere. I doubt that blasting hip hop music and freestyling at Union Station would go so well on a regular day. Indeed, it is a well-guarded space with security and unspoken rules as to how to move in the station. The accessibility of the event (public, all levels, free) created a diverse environment and promoted the communal aspects of hip hop to a broad audience who were caught by surprise with all the dancing happening in the station’s waiting room.

Floor Improv Day case-study conclusion:

Dancing bodies at the Floor Improv Day rechoreographed Union Station. Their pedagogy, synergy, fuel, and movement not only transformed what the space looked like architecturally, but also the flow, the mood, and the air in the room. It was not the same space anymore. The transformations happening within these short classes showed me that students and embodiment can reshape a curricular plan, that teaching and learning can

happen anywhere, even in a train station, and that moving bodies can repurpose a rigid space and make it their own.

Finally, for the span of a few hours, the gallery of Union station was a site of Africanist exchanges where kids, seniors, travelers, and homeless people alike were learning and choreographing the space together. In other words, freestyle, call-and-response, cyphering, “each one teach one” etc. were essential aesthetics of this workshop creating *another* kind of teaching and learning at Union station. Participants may have not recognized that they enacted Africanist aesthetics, through call-and-response, “each one teach one”, and freestyling. This raises the problem that Johnson points out when using dark matter as a metaphor: What are the implications of participants “doing but not necessarily knowing” they perform hip hop? What are the implications of people *thinking* they don’t support hip hop when in fact they do? And what is the relation between “doing but not knowing” and the invisibilization of Africanist aesthetics in global hip hop?

Case-Study # 3:

Ice Cube Concert at Del Mar Thoroughbred Horserace

Introduction:

When Sid and I heard that Ice Cube was performing on September 3, 2018, at a horserace in Del Mar near San Diego for only \$6, we jumped on the occasion. I could not believe it: Ice Cube? 6\$? Horserace? It was quite unexpected, but I was very intrigued by this curious combination. I was not sure if I was more excited about seeing Ice Cube perform for the first time, the low price, or attending a horserace.

Waiting for *the* day to arrive, I still could not wrap my head around the fact that Ice Cube, an icon of gangsta rap, would perform at a location such as a horserace. Growing up in Europe, a horserace meant super British, super bourgeois and elite; a place where people wear huge hats and drink champagne at their unaffordable table. In other words, a horserace was something for the upper-class and I thus never thought I would get to experience one in my life. However, I also knew that American events are often less formal than European ones; people dress rather more casually than in Europe, making it hard for me to dress for the occasion. How do you dress for a hip hop concert and a horserace without standing out to either the concert folks or the horserace regulars? To be on the safe side, I wore a jumpsuit that could pass for both casual and chic and brought an oversized hat!

Theme 1: Space impacts participants:

In this sub-section I discuss how the event space not only impacted people's movements and agency but rendered the class split amongst Ice Cube's fans and horserace betters more visible.

Once we parked, Sid and I had to follow a well-trodden trail to reach the arena, sharing the pathway with customers coming in and out the horserace. People walking alongside us from the parking lot to the arena were mostly people of color wearing caps, jeans, relaxed outfits and were tattooed and pierced. Simply by their looks, I could make out that they principally came for the Ice Cube concert, and attending the horserace was either secondary or a must-go-through passage to reach the concert. The opposite flow of people walking from the horserace to the parking lot looked very different: they were all

white, wore what appeared to be expensive clothing such as dresses with heels for women, and shirt, suits, and leather shoes for men. I should not judge a book by its cover, but the class split was obvious during this short walk. This split is rather uncommon at hip hop events since most people dress with comfortable clothing (although not necessarily inexpensively) and all attend the event for the same purpose. The tension between Western and hip hop epistemologies was very visible and palpable. The crowded pathway increased this unease making us look at each other with a certain judging glare. I did not know if I should enact Europeanist aesthetics when I was passing the posh crowd such as adopting a more upright posture with my chin up, or if I should keep playing it cool. In short, the spatial arrangement requiring hip hop fans to go through the horserace, created strange embodied reactions and thus shaped our movements and sensations.

The infrastructure also impacted my identity and movements; I found myself negotiating between my hip hop and Western self. A \$6 ticket obviously does not get you a seat; the ticket mentioned “stand by pole”. My hip hop self said “f*** that, let’s find a seat.” For the sake of better visibility and experience, we needed to blend in for a second. We tried to enact how wealthy customers would carry themselves in such place and pretended we were betting on a horse, acting with confidence and our chins up. So, after we fooled everyone, we grabbed a seat with a great view. After my first racehorse experience, my second unique experience was about to begin. It was time to act more hip hop (and thus more myself) to join the line for the Ice Cube concert at the other side of the arena.

Scheduled at a horserace, I had imagined the concert to be organized at a small, cocktail-party-like club with a grass or sand floor with palm trees and parasols around us. I was surprised when I entered, alongside thousands of other people, an enormous ugly concrete parking lot. Going in was also an affair: there was only one narrow entrance and exit for the thousands of attendees and entering required going through a security check point with metal detector and bag check. I wondered why for Ice Cube's concert, fans had to go through a mandatory security check when no one at the horserace was searched. Despite Ice Cube's recent fame as an actor in family friendly films, did his history as an icon of gangsta rap influence this set up? Was it a class or race discrimination or simply a different kind of venue requirement?

All in all, the structural organization leading to the concert forced me and other participants to enact certain kinds of movements and reactions: feeling judged in the pathway; faking horse bidding; and policed at the security checkpoint. The infrastructure rendered more visible the clash between hip hop and Western epistemologies as well as the power dynamics between the hip hop fans and the horserace institution and betters.

Theme 2: Participants reclaim their bodies and spaces:

In this sub-section, I describe how despite the dangers and worries occurring in the concert, attendees performed solidarity. From an individual experience, the concert became a collective praxis.

Sid and I saw people from the front rows finding their way through the thick crowd, exiting the concert, proclaiming things like "the concert is cancelled y'all," "Ice Cube isn't coming." At some point, we heard rumors that a shooting occurred. A

shooting?! Blocked by people on every side, we felt stuck and clueless, but these could only be rumors after all. We started looking left and right, up and down, frantically looking at our phones for more information to make sense of what was happening; it looked like the authorities had disconnected all networks. Fear and uncertainty were controlling our movements and emotions. We could have left too but there was this unspoken strong feeling that we should all stick together, keeping each other safe.

We (Sid, myself and attendees nearby) got worried. After 2.5 hours of wait the concert finally started even though nobody received any information about the delay. It is not until after we left the concert that we learnt from the local news that there was indeed a shooting. An Ice Cube's fan who was refused entry because tickets were sold out, got upset and started shooting in the crowd by the ticket sale booths. A police officer on the premises got hurt but the gunman eventually got neutralized.

We all could sense something was not right. The Las Vegas shooting²⁸ happened only a year ago; the tragic attack was fresh in our minds. But we felt trapped. There were too many people to move fast, and the exiting area was very far and too narrow. If people were to *really* start panicking, we knew that the situation would escalate very quickly. However, somehow, we transformed this anxiety into something positive. During the wait, Sid and I found each other even closer both physically and emotionally to the strangers near us; even though we could not make out their faces in the dark it felt as if there was a common agreement that “we are in this together”.

²⁸ On October 1, 2017, a man opened fire on a crowd of concertgoers on the Las Vegas Strip. Nearly 60 people were killed and nearly 870 were injured.

Reclaiming our agency and space at the concert happened through building solidarity. A new collective practice was built among people near us.

Theme 3: *Otherwise cypher*:

Rethinking and disrupting the traditional hierarchy of importance and performing call-and-response are the two ways my experience at Ice Cube's concert is connected to the *otherwise cypher*.

a. Hierarchy of importance:

Before I heard any rumors about the shooting, while waiting for Ice Cube, I became cranky; I was envious of people who remained in the arena and decided to enjoy the concert from the comfort of their balcony seat; "but they are missing the whole concert experience," said Sid. He had a point: the wait helped me focus on other things than Ice Cube. I started noticing things, which normally would not be considered important or made visible but were essential part of the concert experience. The smell of spilled beer, cold tobacco, and greasy hot dogs and churros became overwhelming, and the sound of the trains and the helicopters policing us from above became louder and louder. The horserace arena had not been as highly policed even though alcohol was more abundant, which speaks to the racialized and class dynamic and disparity present at the hip hop concert attended by mostly people of color vs. the horserace attended by relatively wealthy white folks. I had not anticipated these things to be part of my ethnographic concert experience. This brings up the question what *else* is there? At the Festival of Rhythm, the center of attention was the dance battle. Similarly here, what would be considered important would be the concert. However, I started paying attention

to all these *other* things, which usually would be considered less essential. They made me re-question what constitutes valid knowledge.



Picture 9: Le Lay, Maïko. “Food stalls and hot dog, beer, and cigarette smell,” September 2018

The long wait and the infrastructural organization of the event helped me realize the importance of all the *other* embodied experiences. Taking a step back from the focus of the event (i.e. the concert), transformed my experience of the event. This new realization gives more power to embodied realities and therefore to people, and questions what constitutes essential vs. non-essential realities. In sum, by analyzing what *else* is happening at the Ice Cube concert, paying close attention to the other embodied experiences in the space, I challenged the traditional hierarchy of knowledge, which focuses on the stars and the performances vs. people’s embodied performances.

Considering how the incidental elements of these hip hop events had effected my experience I began to ask how non-curricular elements such as a students’ emotions, the weather, or a political event might impact the teaching and learning happening in the classroom?

b. Call-and-response *otherwise*:

The longer the wait, the more connected attendees, Sid, and I started to feel. This connection continued to increase once the concert started:

We could not see each other in the dark, only Ice Cube was illuminated by the colorful screen behind him. And yet, even though audience members could not see each other, we were close, moving differently and yet in unison. Our jumping, shaking, stomping together, gave each other energy, and created this larger wave that bounced between the stage and us. Like in the cloud, we were all feeding off each other's joy and dancing, and reciprocated that throughout the concert space even in the invisibility of dark. We were all embodying different emotions, performing different kinds of movements, and yet, it really felt like we were in sync. We were a unit. Even though the primary purpose of our visit was to hear Ice Cube, it became much more than that. It was about the communal experience. At least, this is what Sid and I remember the most.

Ice Cube's concert case-study conclusion:

At the beginning of the case-study, I explained how the structural and policed organization of the horseshoe at the concert controlled my movements and behaviors. Then, I explained how attendees and I reclaimed our agency and spaces by building solidarity. Finally, I showed how our call-and-response *otherwise* rendered more visible the other kinds of embodied knowledge present in the space, thus challenging the traditional hierarchy of importance between the star of the concert, Ice Cube, and his fans.

Case-Study #4:

3rd annual Hip Hop Education Conference –

Can't Stop Hip Hop: The Education Movement - a success

Introduction:

When I got accepted to present at “Can't Stop Hip Hop: The Education Movement - a success”, a conference organized at Harvard Graduate School of Education and held in one of the university’s original old buildings, on April 6, 2019, I got the giggles. One, because of the name of the host institution, naturally²⁹, but also because I had a preconception that an institution such as Harvard, would not offer urban education programs such as hip hop education classes. Clearly, I was wrong since they have an archive dedicated to hip hop. However hip hop is relatively newly institutionalized there, and this was the first time the Harvard sponsored this conference.

I choose to perform a choreographic reading of this conference for a few reasons: I am interested in the tension in the meeting between hip hop culture and an elite Western academic institution; how can the academy reinvent itself by joining hip hop and education together; what does it mean to bridge institutionalized education with hip hop through a conference; how might we critically reflect on the power dynamics between these two entities; and what arises in a discussion about how attendees were participating in a call-and-response *otherwise*.

²⁹ Growing up with a Japanese mother for whom education was not only a priority but a point of pride, I grew up hearing about how prestigious and out-of-reach certain academic institutions, such as Harvard, were. So, presenting at Harvard felt like fulfilling my mother’s dream and achieving the impossible. Moreover, Harvard is known to be extremely hard to enter due to its prestige and high cost.

Theme 1: Space impacts participants:

I noticed that there was a real effort made to include embodied practices in the conference. As a dancer and scholar, Aysa Upchurch (alumni, current lecturer at the Graduate School of Education, dancer, activist), the main organizer shared with me the enthusiasm she felt upon reading my presentation abstract pointing out the disembodiment in education. In a recent interview³⁰ with the Harvard Graduate School of Education's news, she noted the disconnect between bodies and education and reiterated the fact that physical is political:

Educators need to check how we might have imbibed unnecessarily problematic practices around movement. I had one student who put it like this: She said we can't talk about movement in education because then we'd have to talk about bodies." We can't talk about bodies in education because then we'd have to talk about race and gender and class and white supremacy. And no one wants to *really* do that because it's uncomfortable and may mean upending a lot of the traditional methods of schooling" (Upchurch qtd. in Harvard GSE news).

Despite the building's regulations and old infrastructure, Upchurch accommodated me (and other movement artists) with a flexible classroom space where desks and chairs rolled, lights could be dimmed, and one of the walls could be taken out

³⁰ Boudreau Emily, Pajares Elio. "Moving toward meaning: How hip-hop and movement create a critical pedagogy", GSE news, May 2020. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/20/05/moving-toward-meaning>. Accessed May 2020.

for more floor space etc. This allowed for a less traditional presentation which included movement, a cypher, and critical conversations between the attendees and myself. By making embodiment a priority and organizing the conference around improvisation and embodied art as knowledge, Upchurch challenged the traditional conception of an academic conference by expanding the types of presentation an academic space can host and provide a transformative teaching and learning experience: “There is an opportunity for those of us in spaces of power and access to think about how we can design learning to honor that and not just make those informal experiences an aside” (GSE news).



Picture 10: Le Lay, Maïko. “Micro cyphers during author’s presentation. Flexible chairs and seats, retractable wall,” April 2019

With that said, I would like to offer a friendly critique in the way the schedule was organized. Probably for easier transition and organization purposes, all scholarly presentations were the first in the program and were scheduled simultaneously in different rooms. Even though I was happy to present early and be able to enjoy the rest of the conference without stressing out about my presentation, I could not help but think about how the more “academic” things were scheduled at the beginning. The message

that this program sent to me was that “important” or alternatively, more “boring” and “static” knowledge should be scheduled first, and the more performative and fun activities are secondary and therefore can be scheduled later in the day when people are more tired and less attentive. On the other hand, this organization could also be read as if for attendees who arrive later in the day, it is okay to miss the scholarly portion creating a separation between scholarship and practice. Furthermore, the fact that all scholars were presenting in the same time meant that we did not have the opportunity to learn about each other’s work which could be a missed opportunity for future collaboration or critical feedback. Unfortunately, to me, the structure of the program reproduced traditional hierarchy of knowledge present in academia, where texts and oral presentations precede other kinds of knowledge transmission processes.

Theme 2: Participants reclaim their agency and spaces:

After climbing up the brick stairs towards what looks like an East Coast villa with a massive American flag hung on the wall, and opening the glass doors, what I saw was not what one would expect to see in an old prestigious building: people running around wearing bright blue turquoise t-shirts with the huge logo: “Can't Stop Hip Hop,” with boom boxes, teenagers, and donuts! Just stepping inside the building, the atmosphere changed drastically: from a cold, foggy, and quiet environment, I entered a warm, exciting, multisensorial space centered on hip hop.

Hip hop journalist, Manny Faces³¹ mentioned during our interview that while hip hop is linked to education it is still confined in academic circles. This is one of the reasons he started to broadcast knowledge about hip hop online, to make it more accessible to the general public. One way Upchurch decentralized knowledge was through inviting high school students, educators, performers, and scholars to exchange and collaborate. After regrouping all the attendees in the amphitheater, she shared that one of the main reasons for organizing this conference was to “decolonize the academy.” As a former graduate student, she remembered sitting in the seats we (attendees) were currently sitting in, thinking about how she could make this space and her program more aware of hip hop and the crucial place of urban youth as leaders in education and in the community. She is now the director of HipHopEx, a “collaborative lab for high school and graduate students to experience, explore, and experiment with hip hop arts in education” (Upchurch). Upchurch’s strategy to “decolonize the academy” and place hip hop at the center of the narrative was to provide space for improvisation, performances, and teenager voices. The formal-looking amphitheater was transformed throughout the day by breakers, emcees, and graffiti artists who staged their performance on the “lecturer stage” at the front of the room.

During lunch, presenters were invited to eat, gather, and network together in a conference room. I could not help but notice the clash between the design and architecture of the room and the purpose of the conference and our bodies. As soon as I

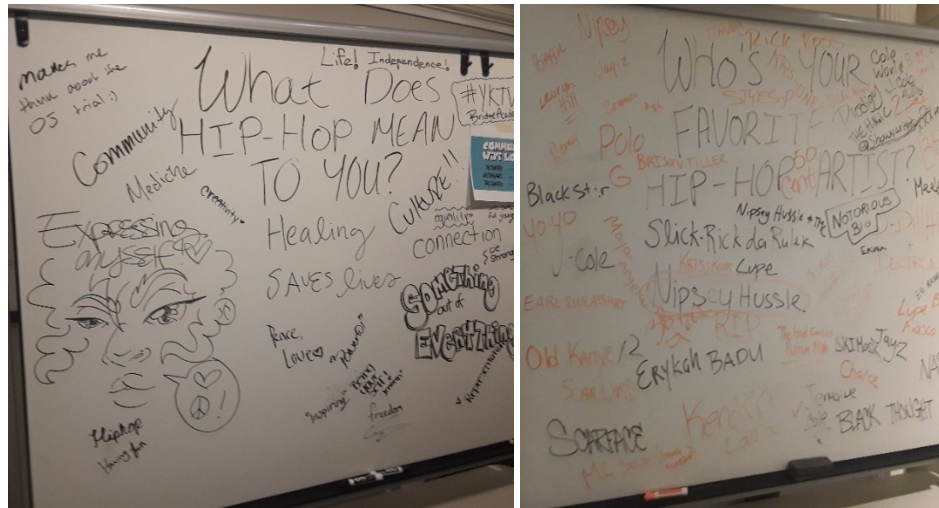
³¹ Manny Faces happened was one of the attendees of this conference as well as the Show & Prove 2018 hip hop conference organized by my chair at UC Riverside. Our phone interview was conducted in September 2018.

stepped into the room, my sneakers got caught in the thick gold and red European-looking carpet laid throughout the room. From top to bottom, wood and crown molding framed the four corners, with portraits of all the (white) deans of the college spaced between on the walls. It felt like they were gazing at us, a majority of people of color; I could sense that everyone else was also feeling awkward eating in front of these staring paintings, especially knowing that, there is big a chance that most of the past deans would not have allowed such a conference to take place in the building and might have forbidden people of color from studying at Harvard.

After a few minutes everyone adjusted to the strange atmosphere and the room was no longer about these paintings and the over-sized chandeliers above our heads anymore. Instead the DJ's playlist and his collection of disco and funk records became centered, along with hip hop books displayed on the tables, and ultimately, reinventing what the academy can look like.

Theme 3: *Otherwise* cypher:

Call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* were at the center of the conference. A white board placed in the hallways invited attendees to write about their favorite hip hop artist or what hip hop meant to them. Throughout the day, teenagers, performers, and scholars wrote/drew/graffed on the board. Despite not knowing who wrote what and when, at the end, the board was filled with diverse answers as a result of a collaborative and creative endeavors made by people from all backgrounds and generations. It was like we were all interacting through the white board medium, in different spaces and times, but for the same purpose of creating an ephemeral but impactful art.



Picture 11: Le Lay, Maïko. “Creative hip hop white boards at Harvard GSE,” April 2019

Another time call-and-response *otherwise* happened was during the performances. Performers and audience members were bouncing energy to each other, like in a cypher: performers showed and proved, and audience members reacted with encouraging sounds, claps, and shout outs. But unlike the circular cypher, the exchange was frontal and more unidirectional due to the concert stage setting, which speaks to one of the structural limitations of restructuring the university. Instead of formal conclusive remarks, Upchurch decided to open the floor for the audience members giving them a chance to respond to the call of the conference attempting to “decolonize the academy.” One response came by organizing volunteer attendees in four groups: graffiti artists, breakdancers, emcees, and DJs and asking them to perform, instead of telling, what they gleaned from the conference and what hip hop and education should look like. The groups created art—a rap, a graffiti, and a dance— in the hallways, outside of the amphitheater. This way of sharing our experiences demonstrated that language and speech are not the unique ways to communicate knowledge, and showcases that

knowledge can be produced anywhere, even outside of the classroom space. In a similar vein, the founders of the Hip Hop Book Club based in Dallas, Texas informed me during our interview³² that wherever their event was organized, whether in a lecture hall or vinyl store, recreating the liveness and entertaining element of hip hop was essential to their organization. And so, facilitating a conversation about hip hop required a sense of performing together and choreographing the space in conjunction with their movements, expressions, and the ones of their participants.

By reinventing the closing remark session into a collaborative, multidisciplinary, and reflexive performance, Upchurch followed a similar logic, challenging the traditional notions of conference organization and knowledge delivery in the academy.



Picture 12: Le Lay, Maïko. “Group of young middle school girls ready to perform in the Harvard Graduate School of Education Amphitheater. This image represents how hip hop dancers and the organizers are deconstructing the space by enabling other kinds of knowledge, such as embodied performance to be part of academia and the traditional-colonial looking schooling institution,” April 2019

Can’t Stop Hip Hop case-study conclusion:

Through organizing diverse call-and-response *otherwise* during this conference, Upchurch explained to the public how she sees hip hop as knowledge. Organized at the

³² Interview conducted on October 5, 2018 online.

junction of hip hop, transgression, and embodied knowledge, “Can’t Stop Hip Hop: The Education Movement – a success” used the tenets of hip hop of solidarity, community building, “each one teach one,” and the call-and-response aesthetic *otherwise*. The conference was a congregation of different scholarly bodies convening for the same purpose and so, participants reshaped the academic space and rethought what kinds of knowledge belonged in the institution. The inevitable clash of culture made visible by the infrastructure of the building but also the organization of the schedule demonstrates that legitimizing hip hop is an ongoing process which is difficult even for renown advocates and activists such as Upchurch.

Cross Analysis of Case-Studies:

After analyzing four different case-studies independently, here I aim to bring them together as one. I first briefly summarize my findings by theme, then I offer a list of pedagogical findings. Finally, I discuss how my findings at hip hop events connect to my vision of embodied hip hop pedagogies.

Summary:

a. Theme 1: space impacts participants:

At the beginning of each hip hop event, participants’ movements were impacted by the infrastructure and/or idea behind the Western space in some shape of form.

The spatial organization in the outdoor space of the Riverside Municipal Auditorium during Festival of Rhythm pushed participants to consume at the bar or at booths rendering the access to the freestyle dance and emceeing area more difficult. In

the concert hall, participants were seated in the red velvet chairs in the back of the room, as if they were waiting for a more traditional performance to happen on stage.

At Floor Improv Day in Union Station, the dance workshops first resembled typical Western dance studio classes where students line up behind the teachers, creating a separation between the two. This hierarchical organization occurred notably because of the shape of the gallery hall but also because of the expectations regarding how to move in an institutional space such as a train station.

At Ice Cube's concert at the horserace, the pathway leading to the concert passed through the hippodrome. The inevitable interactions between Ice Cube's fans and the horserace elites created strange kinds of judgmental glares and feelings on both sides. Furthermore, the fact that there was no security check at the horserace but was a one at the entrance of the concert, choreographed or marked Ice Cube's fans movements and experiences in a political way.

At Can't Stop Hip Hop organized at Harvard Graduate School of Education, the ideology behind an academic conference impacted participants and speakers, presenters, artists. Indeed, the structure of the schedule, which had all the "traditional" academic presentations at the beginning, prevented speakers/presenters/artists/workshop leaders from attending each other's presentation and connecting. Ultimately, the schedule promoted an implicit message that "important academic" knowledge should come first so we can be done with the serious things, and the "fun" presentations can be scheduled later when more attendees have gathered.

Participants' movements were impacted differently at each hip hop event. However, every event space's structural organization and underlying ideology impacted participants at the beginning of the hip hop events.

b. Theme 2: participants reclaim their bodies and spaces:

We saw above how participants' movements were impacted by the Western institutional spaces. My analysis also showed that after some time, participants challenged the traditional expectations of how to move in these spaces and started moving differently, more hip hop in a sense, thus reclaiming their bodies and spaces.

In the concert hall at the Riverside Municipal Auditorium, the room transformed from a cold, static environment to a warm, embodied, and creative space after a few breakers and me moved away from the red velvet seats and took advantage of the empty dance floor to create mini cyphers.

At the Floor Improv Day, students shifted the learning dynamic from "learning in a line behind the teacher" to one that was more communal and improvisational. The deconstruction of the lines enabled participants to get closer, dance together, create impromptu cyphers, and ultimately, perform call-and-responses *otherwise*.

At Ice Cube's concert, participants reclaimed their spaces and bodies showing solidarity in a time of danger. The wait transformed from an individual experience to a collective praxis showing solidarity.

At Harvard, conference's attendees transformed the Western and formal amphitheater into a hip hop space where improvisation and call-and-response were prevalent. During lunch, presenters resisted one of the conference rooms filled with

portraits of white men looking down on bodies of color through dancing and playing music unapologetically.

Participants at the hip hop events reshaped what Western institutional space can look like and questioned how they can move in these spaces, thus deformatizing these spaces through improvisation and call-and-response *otherwise*.

c. Theme 3: *otherwise* cypher:

Elements of the *otherwise* cypher (mentorship, interconnectivity, reciprocity) were enacted at each hip hop event differently.

At Festival of Rhythm and at Ice Cube's concert, one of the ways the *otherwise* cypher manifested itself was when I, among other participants, felt that the battle cypher or the concert, which were considered the main attractions of these events, were simply part of the overall cloud. In other words, I challenged the usual hierarchy of knowledge present in Western institutions where embodiment is at the bottom of the ladder. At the Floor Improv Day, the "each one teach one" mantra of hip hop culture combined with the ways dancers were communicating kinesthetically through improvisation, enacted call-and-response *otherwise*. The type of call-and-response *otherwise* that marked me the most at Can't Stop Hip Hop was when participants were exchanging information on the white boards in the hallways throughout the conference. The act of writing and reacting by participants at different times showed how exchange *otherwise* can happen in a Western academic space.

In sum, *doing* hip hop at each event transformed the spaces and their impact on moving bodies. Part of *doing* hip hop, then, constitutes challenging the epistemological

norms of these Western spaces by moving differently and enacting call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*. Theme 2 and 3 showed the potential of hip hop to restructure Western institutional spaces and understand hip hop as knowledge. So, my hypothesis is that *doing* hip hop in classrooms can undo some of the Western hegemonic practices as well. After presenting other pedagogical findings from my fieldwork at nineteen hip hop events, I will discuss how I plan to connect my findings at hip hop events to my future embodied hip hop curriculum and classroom.

Other pedagogical findings at hip hop events:

I offer a list of pedagogical observations from attending nineteen hip hop events throughout my fieldwork, which influence my own practice as a teacher-scholar and my embodied hip hop pedagogies. These elements are not cutting-edge; they have been associated with hip hop culture forever, which only reinforces their beneficial use for other teaching and learning places such as K-12 and higher education classrooms.

- **Active Participation:** conquering my doubts and fear during my ethnographic research, showed me that hip hop must be experienced through action and participation, like showing and proving. Secluding myself in a dark corner would not cut it. Being and moving in the moment, in the action, were what made each hip hop event a unique learning experience.
- **Individual and Communal:** each hip hop event was designed and conducted in such way that participants would have the opportunity to show and prove themselves, their knowledge and personal contribution, who they are, and assert their place in the event and in the society. However, before, during, or after this personal showcasing, always

comes a time where the event is about the group. Whether one participates in a call-and-response in a cypher or converses in a panel discussion, one of the main unstated goals for the event is to nurture the community. The individual and the communal are reciprocal and feed one another which often leads to the development of a deep sense of caring, encouragement, and positive attitude towards one's peers.

- **Respect for Pioneers/Elders:** despite the incredible technical, technological, and cultural evolutions hip hop has experienced over the years, there is still a deep respect for the creators of this cultural phenomenon, the people who came before us, and their contributions/inventions. At every event, pioneers receive special attention and place, and their experiences are validated and often used as historical knowledge. For example, at the few battles I attended, member of the jury or not, when the emcee sees a pioneer or one of their older mentors, they would offer a special thanks and narrate the person's contributions to and accomplishments within hip hop culture.
- **Youth Empowerment:** I believe one reason respecting elders is such a central component of hip hop is because they protected and mentored their youth, and so young people developed a deep respect for their elders. With hip hop comes a sense of protection and duty of leading the next generations. Therefore, hip hop is inherently linked to education. Taught verbally or through practices, critical lessons about non-violence, positionality, etc. are transmitted to the youth alongside resources and motivation. Hip hop is a culture that provides access to a variety of knowledge through different platforms thanks to its multidisciplinary and globality. The youth always have a special place at hip hop events. This can be seen by the organization of kids-

only battles, youth-led panels and round tables etc. which give youth space and opportunity to exchange, collaborate, and shape the future of hip hop.

- **Mentoring and Giving Back:** mentoring happens when more experienced practitioners share their knowledge with beginners or when practitioners with different backgrounds exchange and create cross-disciplinary collaborations. Mentoring is so important because there is a desire to expand hip hop beyond connoisseurs to the world. Also, as discussed in the previous point, giving back is an essential part of hip hop culture notably due to the hip hop motto “each one teach one” where mentors teach mentees who themselves become mentors one day, and fulfill the pedagogical cycle by receiving and giving back, growing the community of practitioners.
- **Daring:** daring, for a lack of better word, is probably the most important lesson I have learnt in the field. Hip hop is not a culture where one can rest on their laurels. It is a culture where practitioners are challenged to take risks which sometimes involve going against the norms and the rules to dare doing something different. This often results in a cultural clash which can become innovative, radical, and pioneer ideas. I witnessed hip hop events organized in a church, a hip hop book club organized in a record store, and a krump dance-theater play organized at UCR. All to say that hip hop reinvents itself every day and is not afraid to break conventions to provoke critical reflections for the greater good which is part of producing knowledge *otherwise*. Daring can also mean transforming a challenge into an opportunity. This is directly linked to the history of hip hop, when for example, breakers did not have a space to train, they would use apartment lobbies, basketball courts, gyms, or the streets to practice despite the

regulations; or DJs scratching and mixing old records to create new songs and organize block parties in the absence of practicing and dancing spaces for the hip hop youth.

- **Life-Skills:** I observed a list of skills that are, according to me, important to develop in one's life, especially transitioning from a teenager to adulthood. This list is not exhaustive, but they are the primary life-skills which were apparent during the course of my field research: public speaking, archiving, researching, problem solving, staying positive, mentoring, caring, developing creativity, leading, respecting, questioning.

From hip hop events to classrooms:

In this sub-section, I synthesize by theme how my choreographic readings of hip hop events inform my vision of the embodied hip hop pedagogies model, and how I plan to incorporate my main findings into the classroom.

a. Theme 1: space impacts participants:

My fieldwork observations relate to my work on embodied hip hop pedagogies because I am looking at bodies in the classroom space. Consider the hip hop event next to a classroom context. Let's juxtapose the classroom and the hip hop events and pretend that teachers and students can be compared with the hip hop events' dancers/participants. One of my hypotheses is that the classroom set up (from the setup of the chairs in a tight row, the position of the teacher always placed at the front of the classroom next to the black board where the absolute knowledge is supposed to come from, the silence mandated, or the lack of mobility imposed in a classroom, etc.) participates in the perpetuation of docile bodies participating in a labor economy. In such an environment, I believe that creativity is destroyed as well as the ability to learn effectively because the

space restricts moving/doing. Similarly, at most institutional performative spaces, such as the Riverside Municipal Auditorium, the setup is comparable: chairs are facing the stage where the embodied knowledge is supposed to come from.

The typical classroom way of being and knowing is so anchored in society now that when I try to undo these processes by implementing a different pedagogical style with more embodied hip hop practices, I often find myself against a wall, both literally and figuratively. Indeed, physically, the four walls of a classroom restrict my movements and tend to dictate where to stand, where to teach, and therefore, diminish my freedom of movement and sources of inspiration. When I want to challenge these physical and structural constrains, it is other institutional barriers that make teaching and learning differently quite difficult³³. Both students and teachers are not ready to re-practice the way they have been told to be in the classroom. Similarly, some participants initially sat in the red chairs facing the stage. But I am interested in looking at how myself and other hip hop educators attempt to implement different pedagogy styles to 1) make people critically reflect on their agency and bodies in motion in a given space, and 2) actively shift the traditional ways of teaching and learning in the classroom. As I demonstrated in my choreographic readings, the knowledge produced is highly connected to how a space is constructed, and how bodies can or cannot move. Thus, I must analyze how the spatial construction of a classroom impacts students' and teachers' ways of being, knowing, and moving.

³³ This topic will be further explored in chapter-cypher 2 and 3.

b. Theme 2: participants reclaim their bodies and spaces:

Doing *something different* in an institutional space is what matters. Embodied hip hop pedagogies are built on social justice, diversity, and embodied realities. The main purpose is to deconstruct institutions. However, as a future hip hop educator, I must recognize that undoing Western hegemony in the academy cannot happen in one day. Like Upchurch, I must start by choosing an institution where hip hop is much needed, but which is also open to new pedagogical approaches. Then, I will design a feasible project—organizing a workshop, a working group, or a conference—to make the project grow over time. My experience at the conference in Harvard and at other hip hop conferences or events during my graduate school journey showed me that working against the academy is not the solution. So, whether I like it or not, at this stage of my career, I must work *with* and *around* the academy to improve it. That’s hip hop: navigating the system and making the best out of a bad situation. This is how I will be able to reshape the institution and enact change sustainably.

c. Theme 3: *otherwise* cypher:

I witnessed “each one teach one” moments which disregarded any kinds of hierarchy based on experience or fame. I think this is a model to be used in the embodied hip hop pedagogies classroom. At the end of the day, students truly learn something when the teacher tries to connect with them and therefore values interconnectivity over hierarchy, age, knowledge etc. The hip hop events showed me that teaching and learning as call-and-response *otherwise* can happen anywhere.

As a student for the past twenty-five years of my life, I have been told and I unconsciously believed that going to school was about learning subjects. The teaching was the main purpose and what mattered. Over the years, however, I realized that going to school was less about the content of the curriculum, and more about learning about life through the interactions with other students, teachers, administration etc. Going to school, became a self-learning experience, almost like an autoethnography where I reflected on my positionality within the collective. School impacted me not only because of the academic content, but mostly because of the social experiences which led to long-lasting friendships and systems of support. Embodied hip hop pedagogies should capitalize on these other kinds of teachings that are more embodied and culturally sustaining.

Despite the incredible embodied sensation felt during the battle (Festival of Rhythm), dance class (Union Station), concert (Ice Cube), and my presentation (Harvard), the associated experiences were the most memorable and impactful. I participated in a call-and-response *otherwise* and shared feelings and energies. This kind of kinesthetic knowledge is what I aspire to create in the embodied hip hop pedagogies classroom, which is not only about what is taught, but how. And the how here is the combination of all the embodied experiences shared with the other bodies in the room similarly yet differently.

All in all, the embodied hip hop pedagogies curricular and pedagogical model must account for the way the school and the classroom are constructed and the ways they might affect teaching and learning. This model will also provide room to challenge Western epistemologies and institutional structures by, for example, performing in the

classroom. Finally, the primary goal of embodied hip hop pedagogies is to enact the *otherwise* cypher in the classroom. This can happen through peer-mentorship and group work and making hip hop education both the knowledge and the pedagogy.

Critical Reflections:

I offer a reflexive passage about what I learned about myself during the fieldwork conducted at hip hop events. I critically assessed my autoethnographic procedures as an effort to reflect on the difficult and sometimes biased labor of the researcher, too often rendered invisible in scholarship discourses.

I love teaching and I feel quite comfortable in a setting when I must present, talk in front of an audience. In a classroom or in a dance studio, I feel confident, prepared, and assured that I am good at what I am doing and am relatively proud of what I have to offer to students. However, I found myself extremely shy and doubtful at the hip hop events I went to in the past one year and a half regardless of their size or purpose (battle, panel, conference, performance). I felt misplaced as if I did not belong to the space. I believe the reasons for this lack of confidence are:

Back in Europe, I had a group of artists and a community I knew who would invite me to events or to perform. At every event I went to, I would always find familiar faces and feel comfortable jamming with them. Since I came to the U.S, I had to not only create a whole new network of friends to support me in my daily life, but also form a professional network from scratch. I found that quite difficult especially with the cultural gap between my colleagues and myself. Indeed, especially in my early years of my PhD, I would often be mocked for my lack of knowledge regarding common American references and

therefore always felt like an outsider to the U.S. hip hop circle. I did not have the guts to inform people about the fact that hip hop elsewhere is different and yet still valid. I had not had the confidence to revalidate my experience. So, I decided to assimilate by learning about hip hop in America.

I also used to apologize for my lack of knowledge about hip hop in the U.S or not knowing one of the iconic dance moves that appeared in a U.S neighborhood such as the “Nae Nae” which went viral online. Looking back at these thoughts and reactions, I realize that these practices were not only indicative of my shyness and “feeling ashamed”—that comes from my Japanese side of my identity—but also are highly tied to my gender performance. Indeed, as discussed by Schumann and Ross in their 2010 study³⁴, women apologize more than men especially because their threshold for perceiving offensive behavior is lower than their male counterparts. I now believe that my international exposure to hip hop is a blessing and can only enrich my teachings and others’ perspectives, but it has been a process for me to accept this cultural difference and affirm its legitimacy.

The question of authenticity is one of the most heated debates in hip hop culture since its commercialization, its progress into new generations and new schools of thoughts and practice. In the U.S, alongside questions of authenticity and legitimacy, marginalized identities, socio-economic status and politics of race are associated with hip hop culture. Sometimes, I catch myself attempting to assure people of my credibility by self-affirming

³⁴ Schumann, Karina, and Michael Ross. "Why women apologize more than men: Gender differences in thresholds for perceiving offensive behavior." *Psychological Science* 21.11 (2010): 1649-1655.

that “Yes, I discovered hip hop in the streets, performed in the freezing cold or scorching heat for hours for pennies, rented a 200 sq. apartment-studio with three other dancers where we would hear gun shots at night, and trained with African immigrants in the most underprivileged areas of Paris and its outskirts telling me stories about their upbringing, struggles, and life back home. And yes, I am a mixed-race woman who grew up with a single mom who worked her a** off to provide the best for me and expose me to dancing”. However, despite having experienced some of the “street cred” experiences associated with the early days of hip hop culture, I can never, never, really understand what it means to breath hip hop as an American. And so, in circles and situations where issues of races, ethnicity, and class are raised in U.S hip hop culture, I feel out of place.

I have heard people identifying me as a woman of color in California. As an international student struggling financially and stuck in a job market reluctant to visa-holders, I do feel like a minority among other academics or practitioners. However, I don’t identify as White, or Asian, or woman of color, in that sense, meaning in the deepness of its definition in the U.S context. No one can simply transpose these terms coined specifically for the U.S population and their socio-political experience on me. Even though I know I should reaffirm my identity, it is hard sometimes to find a place and a voice in U.S hip hop circles because I don’t want to overstep my boundaries, discuss experiences that are less relevant for the audience members around me, and risk commandeering the space. This racial and socio-economic ambiguity is certainly taboo and affects my confidence in teaching and researching about hip hop. My doubts about my right to teach hip hop education as a non-US-born hip hop practitioner also relate to the larger issue of

authenticity present in hip hop education discourses. How can non-hip hop practitioners teach hip hop education³⁵? The ethnographic research helped me understand my differences and use challenge as an opportunity. Accepting the cultural and knowledge gap was a big step that pushed me to collaborate with local educators and artists and create more curricular space for students to share their experiences in the classrooms.

In closing, autoethnography is not easy. It has been *à la fois* an introspection where you rediscover your inner darker and brighter self and exposure your vulnerability to practitioners, scholars, and readers. Autoethnography is a process that started in the field, which continues on paper. My bigger realization is that the individual impacts the communal and vice-versa, and therefore there is nothing too small or too personal to matter. It matters because I matter. Everyone can make a difference. This autoethnography is about retelling the stories, mine, the ones of the laboring bodies and advocates of hip hop culture who historically have been and continue to be invisibilized. This chapter-cypher and dissertation are a form of homage to the disembodied, the ones whose histories, cultures, memories, and bodies have been historically erased from the canons, books, or media both in hip hop culture but in the world culture and who deserve to be fully present through kinesthesia in an institutional space such as the classroom.

Conclusion:

In this chapter-cypher, I performed choreographic readings of four hip hop events. Each case-study was independent, but all possessed common themes. These themes enabled us to understand how Western institutional spaces impacted hip hop events'

³⁵This subject will be explored in chapter-cypher 3

participants; how participants challenged the normative and capitalist way to move in these spaces by doing something *different*. Then, I demonstrated how the four events constituted *otherwise* cyphers, which performed call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*. This latter theme enabled me to gain insight into ways we can question what and who constitutes valid and important knowledge and the *other* ways knowledge can be shared in various spaces. The second half of the chapter-cypher was dedicated to understanding how my findings from these events can become sources of inspiration for my embodied hip hop pedagogies model. Finally, I also discussed what I personally retained from these autoethnographic fieldwork experiences as a researcher and educator.

In conclusion, I believe there is nothing more powerful than an art form or a culture to be able to speak to one's life, and hip hop does that. I truly believe that a meaningful education is an education about life. The goal of this chapter-cypher was to reevaluate what constitutes valid knowledge in hip hop, education, and in our society. I now can affirm that, to me, valid knowledge is the self, which cannot be dissociated from the body at its full capacity (movement, identity, emotions), and how it navigates the spaces, the community, and therefore the world. Ultimately, this chapter-cypher demonstrates that hip hop constitutes legitimate knowledge that belongs in formal spaces such as the classroom.

CHAPTER-CYPHER 2

Hip Hop as Education and Knowledge *Otherwise:* *Choreographic Readings of Hip Hop Education Classes*

Introduction:

In this chapter-cypher, I perform choreographic readings of hip hop education classes led by influential hip hop and education practitioners: Rickerby Hinds, Bettina Love, and Tasha Iglesias. This chapter-cypher examines what embodiment can mean in hip hop education settings and analyzes the role and impact the teachers' bodies and their choreographic choices have on their pedagogy. This chapter-cypher unpacks how the diverse practices of embodiment in the classrooms are deeply intertwined with teachers' lived experiences and relationality to hip hop philosophies such as "each one teach one" as well as socio-cultural markers such as race, gender, and academic status.

In the previous chapter-cypher, I discussed the ways hip hop events' participants both participated and challenged traditional ways of being, knowing, and moving in a Western institution. Here, I also examine the impact of school institutions and Western epistemologies on teaching and learning bodies and how the three teachers participate in, overcome, play with, or challenge these barriers. For example, all three teachers use a high level of embodiment in their classroom; however, the fact that movement is knowledge is not always taught to their student body. In an interview, Aysha Upchurch, hip hop ed lecturer at Harvard said that reflection and analysis should accompany

movement because: “Hip-hop is a critical lens for understanding the world. There’s a reason why the movements look the way they do” (qtd. in Harvard GSE news)³⁶.

I argue that this lack of communication renders kinesthetic knowledge invisible, thus reproducing some of the typical hierarchy of knowledge and disembodiment present in education. Their hip hop educational praxes therefore, like hip hop’s role in academia more broadly, participate in a complex dynamic between resisting and participating in the U.S. education system. Finally, I explain that teaching and learning hip hop education constitutes a call-and-response *otherwise* transcending our traditional understandings of space, time, and knowledge production.

Hip hop and the academy:

While many educators are interested in and/or already using hip hop in their classrooms, the elements of hip hop are not only alternative, innovative, or creative pedagogical tools to transmit knowledge. Like Emdin writes in *The Compilation on Hip-hop Education. Hip-hop as Education, Philosophy, and Practice*, hip hop is the knowledge. It is reductive to dissociate the artistic elements from their social, political, economic, and cultural scope, and simply use them as a method of pedagogical delivery because they are “cool,” “new,” or “speak” to the urban youth. Like Petchauer writes in *Schooling Hip-Hop*, we have moved from the first wave of hip hop education, which was mainly based on rap pedagogy (the use of rap-making to increase literacy), to the second wave, which not only considers the lyrical aspects of hip hop but also considers both the

³⁶ Boudreau Emily, Pajares, Elio. “Moving toward meaning”, GSE Harvard News, <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/20/05/moving-toward-meaning>. Accessed May 2020.

performative techniques of hip hop elements and their socio-political/cultural contexts as knowledge making (3). The evolution of hip hop culture shows that the artistic elements develop in conjunction with the social, political, economic, and cultural realities of a given time and space. We know that the birth of hip hop culture is rooted in social justice, linked to movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, and events such as the Bronx fires³⁷. Thus, a more complete way of using hip hop education is to link the elements with their histories, people, and therefore social justice, ultimately showing that hip hop culture matters both as a mode of knowledge transmission and content.

Common academic stereotypes about hip hop such as violence, thug life, hypersexuality etc. are still present today, making it difficult for hip hop to find its legitimate place within academia, a reality portrayed in this quote from Tasha Iglesias, at the time, doctoral candidate in Ed.D at Cal State Long Beach and lecturer at UCR:

I applied to a Sociology program at San Diego State University with the objective of studying Hip Hop for my master's thesis. At the time, SDSU would not support my topic, and convinced me to study the labor movement. I ended up giving all of my Hip Hop books to a cohort member in the class under me. [...] I realized, at the time, that I did not have the right "academic words" to articulate the magic of Hip Hop. I didn't have the confidence to push back on the stereotypes my Professors had either. [...]

³⁷ Between 1970's and early 80's, 97% of the building in the Bronx (New York City) burned down or were abandoned. Whereas official narratives are still unclear until today, many journalists and documentaries put the blame on arson caused by landlords or tenants wanting to collect insurance money and on poor NY City governance of this low-income primary Hispanic and African American neighborhood.

This quote demonstrates how the academic stereotypes of hip hop resulted in Iglesias being pushed to study something the academy recognizes as political and social justice-oriented (the labor movement) instead of hip hop. Another example of a similar issue has been brought up by Jaamal Rahman, founder of the Rap Force Academy in the Bay area in Northern California during our interview³⁸. He explained that he created his organization because he was very popular with the youth and he could make a living out of teaching the connection between rap and education. However, he shared that it was challenging at first for him to be accepted by teachers or parents saying things like “I don’t want my kids learning that” etc. This second quote from Iglesias shows a beacon of hope: there are people and spaces in academia that are open to other kinds of knowledge and value non-traditional knowledge-making:

I still remember my one-on-one interview with a Professor at CSULB. I was asked about the last book I read. At the time, I was reading about Hip Hop for pleasure, and with hesitation cited the book I was reading about Hip Hop. I was so scared that the University would look down on me because of my engagement with the culture. The Professor shook my hand and stated that this was the first time he had ever talked about Hip Hop in a graduate applicant interview. I left that meeting concerned, but also proud that I was authentic in that moment.

It is therefore important to keep pushing for hip hop education to be recognized and to make it more visible by advocating for its validity.

³⁸ Phone interview conducted on October 19, 2020.

The place of hip hop in academia is ambiguous. Indeed, the social justice imperative of hip hop clashes with the neoliberal imperatives of academia. Among academics, there are two main schools of thoughts about hip hop in education. Some argue that hip hop belongs in academia because it challenges the system, others argue that it participates in it. Indeed, as mentioned by Harmanci in *Hip Hop within and without the Academy*, academia primarily needs hip hop for economic reasons because courses on hip hop are attractive to the young generation of students and help with diversity quotas. What Brandon Aitken, hip hop dance lecturer at UCR (and one of the first persons to teach hip hop at UCR) mentioned during our interview³⁹ revalidated Harmanci's theory. He said, "they [institutions] would offer hip hop as PE credit, and entice hip hop to attract people to their dance programs, but don't take it as a strong academic curriculum." But Aitken also nuanced his previous statement: "Having hip hop in the academy is twofold: yes, it helps with student growth but it also helps the hip hop community grow." Indeed, having hip hop in academia helps bring more awareness about the culture and "de-stereotype" it to a larger audience.

Hip hop education therefore exists in a complex conundrum between transgression and participation. Rahman's story demonstrates this ambiguity, and perhaps the need for hip hop educators to "work with and around the system." One year, he applied for his rap pedagogy curriculum titled "Hip Hop MC Curriculum" to be recognized by the UC System, but his application got rejected immediately. He applied again with the same curriculum but with a different title: "Spoken Word Acting" and his

³⁹ In-person interview conducted on November 5, 2018 in Riverside.

proposal got accepted. This shows two things: one, that administrators were not against his curriculum but the fact that it was associated with hip hop, which speaks to the negative images surrounding hip hop culture in academia; and two, that Rahman had to “speak more academic” and switch the language describing his teachings in order to be recognized. I echo Aitken who affirmed that hip hop belongs in academia, because I personally believe that despite the unofficial reasons for the presence of hip hop in academia, hip hop plays a pivotal role in diversifying the institution.

Hip hop, education, and me:

My journey of making the case for hip hop in education started when I joined the Critical Dance Studies program at UCR. I first encountered hip hop education classes through YouTube back in 2015. During my first year of graduate school at UCR, I discovered that, unlike Belgium, France, or Japan in the early 2000s, the United States already had a field of study that paired hip hop culture and education. Naturally, I googled “hip hop classes” to uncover more. The first attempt was unsuccessful: the only links that would appear were dance studios in the Inland Empire which offered hip hop dance classes. I was surprised that I would come across local ads despite my generic word choice in the search bar (Google was probably filtering information based on my location). After the first unsuccessful attempt, I typed “hip hop education classes”. Suddenly, by adding one extra word – “education” – the results were no longer local or dance related. This time, I discovered a gold mine of information on hip hop education (HHE), also referred to as hip hop pedagogy (HHP), primarily from the East Coast. More importantly, I found the visual expression of the hip hop education classes I had pictured

in my head since I was a teenager in the form of a YouTube video: “Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice,” taught by Dr. Bettina Love. This realization was pivotal not only for developing my graduate school research, but also for teaching me as an aspiring educator how to effectively use embodiment in the classroom, how to teach hip hop in a K-12 setting, and how to understand the role of the internet in hip hop education.

Soon after my Google and YouTube experiences, I opened an email with an intriguing subject line: “Free: Hip Hop Theater Workshop.” I decided to attend without knowing what to expect. As it turned out, this workshop was one of the most influential events of my grad school career. I met Professor Rickerby Hinds, a pioneer in Hip Hop Theater. I had the opportunity to travel with him to the U.K for a research trip, and I consider him one of my mentors.

Beyond these early successes, it has been tough to find allies of hip hop education in the Inland Empire, let alone hip hop studies scholars. At UCR, I was lucky to be surrounded by Rickerby Hinds and relatively new faculty hires at the time, such as Dr. Liz Przybylski in the music department, and of course, my dissertation chair, Dr. Imani Kai Johnson. However, most hip hop educators or scholars are based in the East Coast, and most conferences or events are usually organized in Chicago, New York City, or Washington D.C. While the West Coast hip hop education community is growing, it is still small and relatively dispersed. During our interview⁴⁰, hip hop educator Casey Wong spoke about this isolation and pointed out the paradox that hip hop dance was not more developed in San Bernardino, CA (one of the largest city in the Inland Empire):

⁴⁰ In-person interview conducted on October 4, 2018 in Los Angeles.

Space is very limited in New York, there isn't very much space to dance. In San Bernardino, space is available. It is the largest county in the United States. So there should many ways to engage hip hop and dance in San Bernardino [...] But San Bernardino is very invisible in the large scheme of hip hop. [...] Famous rappers or NBA players who say they are from L.A, they are actually from the IE. [...] Hip hop is more restricted in SB vs. L.A, New York, or Oakland because there are less venues to perform, less recording studios, and concentration of people. Hip hop needs an audience (Wong).

This quote shows the lack of visibility of the hip hop community present in San Bernardino. Similarly, I was surprised to learn that there was a Krump scene in San Bernardino. I got to know this because I saw a Krump theater play created by Hinds. Krump and other hip hop forms of expression in the I.E remain in certain neighborhoods and communities. They are not as visible as they would be in a place like Los Angeles, probably, as mentioned by Wong, because of the lack of opportunities and funding for arts in this region. But perhaps, the I.E hip hop community wants to preserve their art form and not render it as public or mainstream. The creativity of San Bernardino, and by extension Riverside and the Inland Empire, may have been invisibilized because of its proximity to Los Angeles. I therefore hope that this research will put Riverside on the map and show Riverside community that hip hop is there and is worth learning about.

In California, hip hop scholars and educators are primarily located in Los Angeles or in large cities in the Bay Area. During graduate school, I did not possess a vehicle, so going to Los Angeles or even meeting with people on the other side of town was very

difficult. For someone who wanted to root her research in the Inland Empire, I felt quite isolated because I had to rely on the few resources present in the area, with myself (an HHE early learner) *doing* the work.

Consequently, I was very excited when I learned that hip hop education was coming *to me*. Iglesias was going to teach a lecture on “Hip Hop, Education, and Sports” at UCR. Her trajectory from being a hip hop lover to a hip hop educator/scholar inspires me. She explains: “I navigate Hip Hop the same way I follow proper APA format; I view the foundation as theory and cite the pioneers and practitioners. I will never find the right citations within academia to articulate the power of Hip Hop but can always find the right lyrics or movement to show academia why I value Hip Hop.”

Through meeting Iglesias and others like her, I came to realize that through this research, I not only observe the effect of embodied hip hop pedagogies, but also built a network of passionate scholars and educators who overcame institutional limits and fight for the legitimacy of hip hop. Indeed, even though hip hop education is growing in popularity every day, it is still a small sub-field which seeks recognition at the institutional level. During a webinar⁴¹ organized by the Hip Hop Special Interest Group (SIG) of the American Education Research Association (AERA), the panelists reminded attendees to subscribe to the membership and to keep participating in their activities to provide support, otherwise the SIG might dissolve. Therefore, researching and teaching hip hop education not only impacts the immediate recipients of the pedagogy and people

⁴¹ AERA Hip Hop Theories, Praxis, and Pedagogies Webinar Series Part 1, March 5th, 2019

locally, but also whole fields of study with educators, students, and scholars globally counting on every hip hop education advocate to promote and legitimize it.

Methodology:

In this chapter-cypher, I use choreographic reading, a dance-centric method of analysis, in conjunction with pedagogy and curriculum analysis to perform a comparative analysis between three case-studies (Hinds #1; Love #2; Iglesias #3). Using choreographic reading to conduct research in a classroom is unconventional both in dance studies—where scholars usually analyze dancing bodies in performative spaces— and in education fields. However, looking at the classroom as performative spaces and teachers and students as dancers and choreographers revalidates the role of embodiment in education. Additionally choreographic analysis allows for an examination of the impact of institutions on teaching and learning bodies. Merging methods from different fields brings a new interdisciplinary dimension to my analysis. This chapter-cypher is also informed by interviews conducted with hip hop educators, Iglesias, and sixteen students from Hinds’ hip hop theater class⁴². My role as an ethnographer and the analysis had to be adjusted for each case-study. Indeed, I had to adapt my methods to the time spent in the classroom, affinity/knowledge about the educator’s work, number of interviews etc.

Outline:

Each case-study contains: an introduction discussing my relationship with the educator, the sites, the research approaches; a choreographic reading of the hip hop educator’s classroom and pedagogy; and a critical discussion about the depth of the

⁴² Their names have been modified to ensure their anonymity.

research. Each case-study is independent; however, I have identified three common themes among all case-studies:

Theme 1: Teaching and choreographing space: movement and space go hand in hand: dancers move in a given space (street, stage theater, studio etc.); so, do teachers and students in the classroom. It is therefore relevant to analyze teaching and learning from a choreographic perspective. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that teaching and learning constitute a highly embodied process containing diverse choreographic choices from both teachers and students. For the purpose of this dissertation, I focus on Hinds', Iglesias', and Love's choreographies of space. To reassert the role of space and embodiment in teaching and learning, I introduce the concept of choreography of the classroom, which will also be examined in chapter-cypher 3. I also argue that the three teachers challenge institutional spatial boundaries through their mode of carrying themselves in the space as well as by expanding the teaching and learning space beyond the classroom, therefore connecting teaching to choreography and social justice.

Theme 2: Teaching social justice and teaching as social justice: in the context of this chapter-cypher, social justice means reasserting invisibilized bodies and reaffirming what body and movement can do in academic setting; and purposefully implementing socio-political/historical knowledge about hip hop culture in the curriculum thus allowing critical reflective conversations. Taking these two steps towards making education less homogenized, constitutes an act of social justice to me. Across all case-studies, I describe how Hinds, Love, and Iglesias incorporate social justice teachings in their curriculum through hip hop elements, and by purposefully doing so, practice social justice, thus

bringing the praxis inside the classroom. Each teacher's practice of social justice differs but also have commonalities. And so, for each case-study, I ask: how does the educator introduce the history of hip hop in the curriculum; how do they reenact hip hop history through embodiment; how do they raise socio-political awareness; and what is the role of empowerment in social justice? I argue that their engaged pedagogy is a form of call-and-response *otherwise* between the teachers calling for action and raising awareness, and the students responding via *doing something*, moving, and participating in their own way.

Theme 3: Embodiment in the classroom: this theme analyzes the place of embodiment in Hinds, Love's, and Iglesias curriculum and pedagogy. Can hip hop and teaching be dissociated from embodiment? The framework of this research is rooted in the ideas that "education is being" (Berman and Aoki XI) and that Western society and education are forgetful about the concept of "being." I will discuss the different meanings embodiment can reveal in Hinds', Love's, and Iglesias' respective spaces and pedagogies and explicate the correlation between *being* and *doing* hip hop using the "each one teach one" mantra of hip hop culture. This last theme reiterates the diverse ways embodiment was enacted in the two previous themes while also analyzing politics of embodiment.

The chapter-cypher ends with a cross-choreographic reading/comparative analysis and a post-research critical reflection. The final critical conversation questions the role of hip hop, embodiment, and autoethnography in the academy and how can I conduct such interdisciplinary research in the current academic context.

Overall Goal:

The main goal of this chapter-cypher was to help me identify how to do hip hop education to best prepare me for the challenge in the next chapter-cypher: creating and teaching my own embodied hip hop pedagogies. After my fieldwork in these three classes, I have identified three common themes (Teaching and Choreographing Space; Teaching Social Justice and Teaching As Social Justice; Embodiment in the Classroom), which I should emphasize in my version of embodied hip hop pedagogies. Furthermore, because hip hop education is counterhegemonic in nature, another goal of this chapter-cypher is to understand how the three educators push the boundaries of normative education and teaching settings by using hip hop culture and performance as pedagogical tools while remaining full participants of their respective institutions. The information gathered during my analysis of Hinds', Love's, and Iglesias' classes paired with my pedagogical and political findings from the hip hop events, constitute the pillars of my upcoming embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum and praxis.

Case-Study #1:

Rickerby Hinds – Hip Hop Theater Classes – Spring 2018 – UCR

Introduction:

Rickerby Hinds' Hip Hop Theater classes are offered every year in the Spring at UCR. His signature class attracts anywhere between seventy to eighty students. In 2018, students met twice a week for two hours over eleven weeks in Studio 411, a black box studio with a small stage and retractable seats, sometimes used as a public performance space. Hind's syllabus was roughly divided in three parts: week 1-2: introduction to the

historical and socio-political context around hip hop culture; week 3-6: introduction to theater via the four artistic elements of hip hop; week 7-11: hip hop theater making and performance. The syllabus was created so that students would learn about hip hop culture at large, before the course would culminate in a hip hop theater performance utilizing the knowledge gathered throughout the quarter.

My role as an ethnographer in Hinds' class was quite unorthodox. I was not a traditional graduate student conducting research since we had already known each other for a few years. I had taught multiple freestyle workshops for his classes, and I was assisting him at that time in an official capacity to organize a research trip to the U.K. Despite that, we had not formally discussed my role as an ethnographer in his class. Due to our professional relationship, my role was complex. I qualified myself as being a student participant, an observer/researcher, and an unofficial teaching assistant all at the same time. During my fieldwork at hip hop events, I had the liberty to choose how to research, how to move, and how to challenge typical Western epistemologies associated with a given space. In Hinds' class, however, as an observer, I sat in the back corner of the studio and took fieldnotes quietly, thus complying with traditional expectations associated with my role as a graduate student researcher. In a way, the power dynamic present between Hinds (as a faculty), and myself (as a student-researcher), paired with institutional expectations of how to be in a classroom, impacted the way I conducted research in Studio 411. There was an unspoken agreement that as a graduate student observer, I should not partake in the theatrical activities and should instead let the undergraduate students take advantage of them.

As a student participant, however, my role was much more “active.” I draw attention to the word active because, ironically, I would not physically move. I would participate actively in group discussions by providing my personal reflections on the subject at hand. As a more advanced student in dance studies, Hinds appreciated that I provided different perspectives. My role as the unofficial teaching assistant became more apparent towards the end of the program when students started creating hip hop theater performances for their final project. First, I taught a freestyle workshop during the week dedicated to learning about the “Breakdance Element,” which helped them understand how storytelling can happen even without words. Put differently, my workshop raised awareness about meaning-making through movement. In preparation for their final show, my knowledge of stage performance and choreography came in handy as Hinds asked me to coach students, particularly the hip hop dance group. This role enabled me to advance my research by offering extra credit to students in exchange for participating in an in-person interview about their experiences in the class. Because of my diverse roles in the class, my presence was always noticed by both the students and by Hinds. Hinds would always stop by my chair to acknowledge my presence or make a joke, while students would either ask for advice or sense the power dynamic and not talk to me.

In sum, in the context of Hinds’ Hip Hop Theater classes, my role as a field researcher was threefold (observer/researcher, student participant, unofficial teaching assistant). Therefore, my post-fieldwork reflection of this experience also contains multiple perspectives: outsider, insider, autoethnographer. Traditional ethnographic academic research demands consistency in method and application. However, my

multilevel participation provides a unique analytical angle echoing my ideas of knowledge *otherwise*, where teaching and learning—and by extension, researching—are deeply rooted in non-linear, improvisational, and transgressive embodied realities. I must add that my proximity (i.e. professional relationship) with the research subject (Hinds) considerably impacted my analysis of this case-study. It is only after critical feedback from my committee members and reflection during the editing process, that I was able to nuance my analysis of Hinds' pedagogy and classes. This is to say that researching about people, and especially people we know, is extremely complex and requires a great deal of personal reflections; time to digest the research conducted during the fieldwork; diverse perspectives on the matter; and acknowledgement of the researcher's biases.

Theme 1: Teaching and choreographing space:

a. Walking-and-chatting ritual:

As mentioned earlier, the hip hop theater classes were organized in a black box studio rather than a traditional classroom: there was a small stage facing retractable chairs. This particular course is hybrid in style, combining both lecture and practice-based elements. Hinds began the curriculum by teaching some basics about hip hop culture: the four artistic elements and some historical context. During these more lecture-based portions of the course, Hinds usually stood in the middle of the stage, similar to a lecture conducted in an amphitheater. However, his "lectures" differed from traditional ones in a few ways, therefore challenging traditional choreographies of teaching.

Before instructing, he started with a walking-chatting ritual with the students. He would climb up and down the narrow stairs leading to each row of seats and check how

his students are doing, cracking a joke or two along the way. In my experience, lecturers arrive right before the start of their class, hurry to set up their screen and mic, and start diving into the content right away. On the other hand, Hinds took as long as needed to perform the walking-chatting ritual, making sure that each student got a little bit of attention; in other words, their presence was acknowledged prior to starting the class.

Students appreciated this extra step, this act of caring: “I appreciate Kerby’s style of teaching. [...] I enjoyed the environment of the class he created, by Kerby’s presence and interaction with everyone”⁴³ (Kim). My interviews showed that students wished that their other courses would involve more interpersonal exchanges such as the ones found during Hinds’ classes. However, can this walking-chatting ritual be done anytime, anywhere, and by anyone? I ask this question because it is important to understand the fact that Hinds is a full tenured professor with years of teaching expertise who is very well-known at UCR and in the Riverside community; who is a trained playwright; who is teaching a relatively manageable group size (in comparison to 500 seats lecture halls) for a relatively long period of time (2h two times a week); and therefore, has the ability to divulge these levels of confidence, care, and fun in ways that perhaps other teachers can’t. Indeed, as a female teaching assistant, it would have been difficult for me to implement such ritual in my classrooms for a couple reasons. First, discussion sections only last fifty minutes and are scheduled once a week. To really help students digest the materials from their lectures, teaching assistants tend to use every single minute of the class to review the lectures. In this case, a teacher’s positionality in the academic ladder

⁴³In-person interview conducted with Kim, student from Hinds’ Hip Hop Theatre Class on June 14, 2018.

and their power to control the timing of their curriculum and pedagogy can have a considerable impact on the teaching and learning experience of the students. The other reason is gender and age related. As a female teaching assistant in my twenties, I have learnt that being informal and implementing more interpersonal exchanges in classroom settings can have negative effects such as students thinking I am their friend, leading them to undermine my authority by attempting to negotiate their grades or flirting during class, by emails, or during office hours. And so, as much as I want to create a more comfortable and personal classroom environment, some embedded institutional and societal realities impede this move.

Following the walking-chatting ritual, Hinds' second choreographic ritual was a short meditation exercise where everyone was instructed to close their eyes and "re-center" themselves. The purpose of this meditation was to put aside the hustle and bustle of our lives, being "disconnected from encumbrances" and focus on "fully being present here and now" to get the most out of the two hours of the class, which was built not as a banking system pedagogy (Freire) but rather as an experience-based pedagogy and whole-body pedagogy (hooks). Part of "fully being here and now" also meant paying attention through active participation. A student mentioned how this beginning exercises helped her focus: "He asked us to put our phones away and be in the moment, like being Zen. It was very important to me, to detach from the outside world and focus to what we were doing in class. I took this very seriously" (Kelly)⁴⁴. In other words, unlike most lectures where sitting still and taking abundant notes on paper or on computer are

⁴⁴ Quote from an interview conducted with Kelly, a student in Hinds' Hip Hop Theater Class on June 15, 2018.

necessary, Hinds' philosophy for success was to leave the process of writing and reading at home, and instead to take breaks, discuss, and practice in class. A couple students compared Hinds' pedagogy with their other classes: "In English, I have to present technically [...]. [Here], rather than using a pen on the paper, you are saying it out loud yourself" (James). Liliana said that Hinds class was different since "We don't have a textbook to go by, it tripped me up a little bit [...]. We had to apply what we saw on the videos and online readings in the skits. We did not take the normal road: you create a PowerPoint and that's all. You really do here, expand your ideas, incorporate movements, specific sounds [...]"

In this case, choreographing space is about defining physically how to be in the classroom (re-centered – fully being here and now) and what kinds of teaching and learning occur in a classroom versus outside of the classroom, making the classroom space as creative and participatory as possible.

b. Outdoor as teaching and learning space:

Choreographing teaching and learning for Hinds meant choreographing outside the classroom, outdoors. During the last third of the program, students were focused on creating hip hop theater plays for the final show. Recognizing the spatial limitation of the black box configuration for group work, Hinds expanded the classroom to the outdoor space, transforming the indoor space into a rehearsal and mentoring space, and the outside into a student-led creative/expressive space. Groups of students would spread everywhere under the sun from the grass in front of the Psychology building to the shade of the Business department's arch and then come back together inside the studio as one.

Two students expressed their enthusiasm working with this spatial arrangement: “I like the idea of going out to be creative and come back in to do something new” (Jay); “Working outside was definitively refreshing. [...] Stepping out allows creativity rather than [staying in a] restrictive academic setting in a classroom” (James).

During the interviews, most students discussed how working outside broke the monotony found in regular lectures since students were not “held confined” or “boxed.” They noted the choice increased their agency because “[he] let us do whatever we want [outside], what we feel was right” (Zora). By repurposing the outdoors, a non-academic and more informal space, Hinds expanded the definition of institutional instructional space, challenging where teaching and learning can occur. However, not everyone has the power, or choice to bring knowledge outside even if they want to. For example, when dance battles were the subject studied during a class I was a teaching-assisting for, I asked my students to form crews and a jury and create a short choreography to reenact a hip hop battle. Limited by the classroom space, students danced in the hallways surrounded by multiple classrooms. During the entire creating process, I was anxious that teachers would come out of their classrooms and ask my students to leave or stop and confront me for my unconventional teaching method. As a young teaching assistant, I was terrified of the consequences. Yet, I still went through with it. Kelvin⁴⁵, a former member of the UCR Collective Faction hip hop dance crew stated during our interview⁴⁶ that Collective Faction’s dancers do not have the right to rent rooms or spaces to practice

⁴⁵ This interviewee’s name was changed to protect their identity.

⁴⁶ Interview conducted online on July 11, 2018.

dance with music during the day. Their trainings have therefore been organized in the evening on the side of the food court plaza to avoid any conflict and policy violation. These examples remind us of André Lepecki's work on choreopolicing discussed in chapter-cypher 1 when referring to the ways in which dancing hip hop in Union Station, Los Angeles constituted a political act because bodies of color performing Africanist Aesthetics in institutional spaces can be policed and punished. And so, returning to Hinds' outdoor ritual and the question of ability or right, on the one hand, as a famous and tenured professor, Hinds had the power to bring knowledge outside and was safe from institutional repercussions. However, as a man of African descent, I think it was bold and daring of him to have taken the risk to position himself in a delicate situation.

The rituals and the use of the outdoor space broadened the perspectives of what teaching and learning can look like in higher education settings. They reconnected the act of teaching and learning with the whole embodied experience notably because students learnt through active experiences and not passive knowledge absorption. However, these two choreographies of teaching are intertwined with issues of power, race, and gender and can be difficult to maneuver in academic institutions.

c. After class space and time:

Space and time outside the formal classroom space/time were also important to Hinds' pedagogy. Many people, whether they were students or artists benefited from his time and mentorship. For example, his artistic projects always involve his students or recent graduates because he wants to provide them with opportunities and real-life experiences.

In the context of his hip hop theater class, I perceived his teachings occurring outside of the classroom and time allocated to his class as choreographing pedagogy. While most teachers would pack up their belongings and leave right after the end of their class, Hinds would stick around for at least half an hour to one hour (if not longer) to chat with his students. One of his former students, whom Hinds and I travelled to the U.K. with, told me that their collaborative relationships started during one of these after-class walking-and-talking moments, which opened up doors for him to the world of theater and media. I interpret this informal walk-chat between Hinds and one student as a call-and-response *otherwise* because the kind of teachings and learnings that was happening in these spaces and moments were non-normative and challenged the rigidity and formality of academia. Furthermore, the interaction that occurred outside of the classroom impacted this students' academic and career growth showing the interconnectivity and ever-growing phenomenon associated with call-and-response *otherwise* and the cloud.



Picture 13: Source: “Vector Cloud Background (eps),” *Freepik*. 2018
In Hinds’ case, teaching about hip hop happens beyond the classroom through informal conversations and collaborations, expanding the definition of what teaching

means and where it can happen. Unlike a robot, he does not turn off being a teacher as soon as the class is over and step out of the classroom. But I know, for example, that my fellow colleagues or faculty with young children could not, even if they wanted to, stay longer after class. Again, positionality is deeply intertwined with possibility in the context of teaching and learning *differently*.

All in all, for Hinds, teaching and learning are personal and extended beyond the formal space and time of the classroom. My fieldwork and interviews showed me that mentoring the next leaders of tomorrow is an integral part of his teaching and that it does not stop in the physical classroom space.

Theme 2: Teaching social justice and teaching as social justice:

I have noticed that learning about theatrical techniques was crucial, but perhaps, secondary to learning about what hip hop is *really* about: social justice and reasserting the value of bodies. In this section, I will discuss how Hinds uses four aspects of embodied performance as vehicles for social justice: personal performance, *Birthmark*, *Dreamscape*, talent show.

a. The role of embodiment in teaching hip hop history:

Hinds started his class by situating hip hop in history. Realizing that young generations of students associate hip hop mostly with current rappers and TV shows, he explained the socio-economic context around the birth of hip hop. According to Hinds (and many hip hop historians/scholars), the Bronx fires in New York City in the 1970s played a pivotal role in the emergence of hip hop. The level of poverty and struggle experienced by African American and Puerto Rican youth in the Bronx pushed them to

come together and become politically involved through art. Hinds enacted how the first DJs organized block parties, aspiring MCs/poets/rappers dropped rhymes, dancers responded to musical cues, and visual artists to express themselves through graffiti.

This introduction to hip hop history did not happen through lecturing in the traditional sense: it was more alive. Hinds took advantage of his skills as a storyteller to communicate histories about hip hop kinesthetically, which helped make the past an essential part of the present. Instead of using slides or videos, he used embodiment such as extended hand gestures or different tones and performed the emergence of hip hop. Watching this performative teaching, it was like Hinds was there, sensing the heat from the buildings burning around him, or the waves of the music from the boom boxes bouncing from the walls in ruins to his bones, and smelling fresh paint coming out of the spray cans. I could almost see the fires through his eyes, hear the revolutionary tunes through his ears, get high on aerosol. I felt historical archives of the Bronx burning. But that was me. I study hip hop for a living. I wonder if his students felt the same way. Did they fully grasp the context in which hip hop emerged? Does it matter?

Whether students felt the way I did about Hinds' portrayal of hip hop history or not, they were captivated; they reacted to his presentation with embodied responses such as nods, small movements, etc. This is interesting because Hinds was not in New York when the Bronx was burning. He was narrating some historical facts he reinterpreted. Indeed, Hinds immigrated from Honduras in the 70s, yes, during the boom of hip hop, but to California. The information he learned about the early days of hip hop in NY, combined with his personal embodied experience of hip hop culture on the West Coast,

transformed this historical knowledge into a visceral experience, at least, to me. It is important to recognize that not everyone can do that; not every teacher is a trained actor or storyteller. The fact that he is an Afro-Latino man in his forties adds layers to his embodied gestures and narration of the past. I could not do the same thing without losing credibility and culturally appropriating.

Historicizing hip hop through performance also involved Hinds' personal experience with hip hop culture. He transmitted knowledge from his past through his play *Birthmark*, which his students were asked to go see. *Birthmark* is a biographical play starting with his arrival to the United States from Honduras, the important role of hip hop in his teenage development, and the identity negotiation between his Honduran culture and newly discovered American culture. The décor, script, and costumes, from the four wheels rollers, to the repetition of the song "Rappers' Delight" by Sugar Hill Gang throughout the play, helped students experience how hip hop impacted their teacher's life and what hip hop looked like in California in the seventies and eighties.

In this sub-section, we saw how performance constitutes an essential vector to share knowledge about the past, enabling students who were not there to understand, at least partially, the socio-historical context in which hip hop emerged. This shows two things: one, that when possible, using embodiment for knowledge transmission is equally or more effective than normative teaching styles. Instead of using a white board, PowerPoint, or text as canvas, Hinds relied on his performative skills to demonstrate his own history and that of the pioneers of hip hop; he validated performance as a legitimate teaching and learning method. Two, starting with the history of hip hop culture is a form

of social justice because it acknowledges the legacy of marginalized groups and their impact in today's young generation, and hip hop and mainstream cultures.

b. Socio-political performance as social justice:

A crucial aspect of hip hop education is raising awareness about socio-political issues associated with hip hop culture. Hip hop was founded as a response to the racial, ethnic, and economic struggles faced by urban populations in New York City and other cities across the country. Hip hop cannot be dissociated from the stories of people who fought for it to be legitimized. In a similar vein, hip hop pedagogy aims to raise awareness about injustice in our society and in hip hop. We will see here how Hinds uses performance as a means of reflecting on contemporary U.S societal issues.

The primary tool Hinds used to raise awareness about current socio-political issues was the performance of one of his plays, *Dreamscape*. *Dreamscape* is a hip hop theater play inspired by the story of Tyisha Miller, a young African American woman from Riverside, California, shot twelve times by the police while lying unconscious in her car. By showing this play to his students and organizing a post-performance Q&A session with the two actors, Hinds provided a space to discuss difficult systemic issues such as police brutality and racial profiling which are relevant both within the Inland Empire region and globally.



Picture 14: Screenshot of the video of *Dreamscape* performed at Rose Bruford College, London (U.K),

April 17, 2018

The Q&A organized after *Dreamscape* can be considered a call-and-response *otherwise*. In terms of format, this Q&A resembled a traditional Q&A setting where the audience members or the moderator start with a question, the actors/playwright answer, and a conversation is created between people on the stage and in the house. The show is extremely emotional. Whether or not one is sensitive to issues of police brutality, the show is constructed to make you think. The Q&A gave students an opportunity to digest the difficult emotions of the play and discuss the issues it raised.

What I refer to as call-and-response *otherwise* here is from a teaching and learning perspective. By showing this play, Hinds generated a call—perhaps a wake-up call—about diverse societal issues. Perhaps Hinds thought that wake-up call was necessary, especially in a bubble like academia, which may cause students to forget or ignore that these things can happen to young people like them, next door. The show shook the audience, like when someone shakes our shoulders to wake up. The immediate audience embodied/affective reaction of remaining silent, with a gasp still hanging in their lungs; pointing out this isn't right; trying to understand how such scenario can happen in their college town; or eager to ask questions, constitute physiological responses to the play. I interpret this call-and-response *otherwise* as a critical pedagogy generated by the teacher which is kept going through the students' voices and expressions.

Organizing a showcase of *Dreamscape* and a Q&A is socio-political in multiple ways. First, bringing performance into the curriculum as valid knowledge challenges the hierarchy of knowledge in academia where embodied knowledge is considered of lesser importance. Second, Hinds made visible bodies and injustices that are invisibilized by the

society through performative action. As an instructor and playwright, Hinds used his most powerful tools, pedagogy and performance, to support social justice. The performance combined with the liveliness of the Q&A makes this an embodied teaching act. Suddenly the subject matter of police brutality was not a faraway, but something close to students. Hinds therefore used embodied hip hop as medium to help critically reflect on social issues in an impactful and memorable way, different from the usual texts, new articles, or television.

c. Empowerment: the talent show:

Another way social justice can be enacted is by empowering people, especially those who have historically and systematically been disempowered. UCR is a Hispanic-Serving Institution and one of the most diverse public universities in the nation. The demographics of Hinds' class depicted this diversity: approximately, 40% of students were Hispanic, 30% were Asian American, 15% were African American, and 15% were White⁴⁷. In such a diverse environment, students have experienced varied walks of life prior to arriving at UCR. Educating such a diverse student population requires not only acknowledging their diversity but letting them share their stories. In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks mentioned that it is indeed important to acknowledge these students' histories: "If professors take seriously, respectfully, the student body, we are compelled to acknowledge that we are addressing folks who are part of history. And some of them are coming from histories that might be threatening to the established ways of knowing if acknowledged" (139). One of the hip hop mottos is empowering young

⁴⁷ Approximate percentage based on fieldwork notes and interviewees' ethnic and cultural identity.

folks through mentoring. Hinds' way of empowering his students was through recognizing their bodies, and identities. Whereas academia and institutional settings in general often purposefully put aside personal matters and embodied knowledge, or consider them taboo, Hinds did the opposite: he made them visible and part of the main knowledge. He let students "tell" their stories through all five elements of hip hop.

The first two classes served as a talent show, where all students were invited to come to the stage, introduce themselves, their hip hop name (the inner hip hop stage name everyone always wanted to have, Hinds said jokingly and seriously), and showcase their talent using one of the hip hop elements they felt most connected to. Some students danced; others drew a graffiti on the whiteboard or passed around a painting; others created a beat, rapped, sang. The array of artforms represented in these two classes was impressive especially because many students were not theater majors; they chose to take Hinds' class as their elective class. Without this introductory activity, nobody would have guessed, simply by sitting next to each other, that some of them were photographers, fitness enthusiasts, MCs, fashion designers, etc.

When Hinds asked his students why they thought this activity was organized, they responded that it was to help them get to know each other; establish their own identity; acknowledge their own creativity instead of underestimating themselves; understand that something like freestyling in front of people is *doing* something etc. What first appears to be a simple school talent show has multiple empowering purposes: it provides the opportunity for each individual to interpret hip hop elements in their own way using their personal experience and cultural background. Learning about their peers' passions also

helps establish a network, where they can now affiliate themselves by creating interests' groups, leveraging their strengths and talents, and perhaps even build friendships, and therefore feel surrounded by a diverse community of supporters and learners. Finally, because hip hop is not very visible in the Inland Empire, activities such as this one shows that hip hop is in fact present in Riverside and practiced by its youth community.

This activity promotes the hip hop motto of “come as you are.” Indeed, when describing their experience in Hinds’ class, many discussed the fact that his class was a safe communal space where no one was judged and where process was valorized over results, whereas “[...], in a typical academic class, you have to show the final product and it better be good. Here, mistakes are embraced, something may not be perfect, might be imperfect, but it is still great, still perfect.”⁴⁸ Multiple students described the class as a space of exploration and self-representation “The role of student is to express themselves what the best way they can, [...] or support the person you are inside. [...] [He] let you be who you are and does not let you hide. [...] it allows everybody from different backgrounds to be together as one and work off of each other. [...] use your skills in whichever way that you can.”⁴⁹ Another concept that came up many times during the interview is the sense of community that Hinds’ classes created: “He emphasized collective movement in one way or the other [...]. We were unified even if we did different things [...]. In the end, he brought us together, as one cohesive unit. [...] We felt so close, we felt comfortable, like the glue element” (Liliana)⁵⁰. These quotes show that

⁴⁸ Quote from interview conducted on June 8, 2018 with Arielle, a student in Hinds’ Hip Hop Theater Class

⁴⁹ Quote from interview conducted on June 11, 2018 with Zora, a student in Hinds’ Hip Hop Theater Class

⁵⁰ Quote from interview conducted on June 15 with Liliana, a student in Hinds’ Hip Hop Theater Class

students felt validated as an essential part of the hip hop theater community. The classroom became a space for personal exploration through performance. By placing the body and community at the forefront in his class—literally on stage and at the start of his curriculum—Hinds showed the connection between embodied knowledge, academia, and self and communal empowerment.

In this sub-section, I demonstrated how Hinds’ performative teachings from the history of hip hop, to *Dreamscape*, to the talent show, all contributed to enacting social justice and reasserting the centrality of bodies. In other words, his curriculum was a form of embodied social justice. Teaching through movement is also social justice because it is undoing the static and disembodied nature of academia. With that said, I must reiterate that Hinds’ positionality, curriculum content, and training positioned him to successfully deploy embodied social justice in his class.

Theme 3: Embodiment in the classroom:

Here, I will reiterate the different kinds of embodiment that happened in Hinds’ classes using new and aforementioned examples. This last thematic section showcases the diverse array of embodied practices used in Hinds’ pedagogy and evaluates what embodiment can mean in a classroom and the role it can play in hip hop pedagogy. Indeed, as a dance scholar performing choreographic readings of hip hop education classes, my interpretation and analysis of Hinds’ class demonstrate a high level of embodiment. However, I will discuss how in some instances, the impact of embodiment was not made visible to the students, thus complicating call-and-response *otherwise*.

Above, we saw how including performances such as the students' talent show, *Birthmark*, and *Dreamscape* were integral parts of Hinds' pedagogy helping to raise awareness about the historical and socio-political context around hip hop and empowering his students. I also explained Hinds' ability to teach the history of hip hop unconventionally, communicating history more kinesthetically using his performative skills. In theme 1, we saw how he performed walking-and-chatting rituals which choreographed his teaching and learning. All of these pedagogical choices and praxes are highly personal and embodied. They are directly speaking to his embodied realities and those of his students. Yet, I feel that the connections between the curriculum content and his students' embodied realities were not pushed forward as much as they could have been. In other terms, the impact of embodiment was not purposefully communicated to students. In fact, my interviewees struggled to answer my question about the role of movement or what movement meant in the context of Hinds' class at first. I wondered why students could not easily answer this question even though movement was everywhere in his class. I wonder how meaningful was embodiment in Hinds' hip hop class if the students were not fully aware of it?

Another example of this lapse can be seen during the week dedicated to the breakdancing element of hip hop culture. Hinds always had guest dance teachers instruct hip hop dance class since he is not a dancer himself. Since I have known him, I have had the opportunity to teach several two-hour freestyle dance workshops. My insider knowledge of Hinds' pedagogy and theatrical practice enabled me to cater my workshop towards helping students with moving for theater and therefore preparing for their final

show. I usually create exercises that will help them understand that movements have meaning and therefore stories can be “told” without words. After freestyling individually and collectively, participating in a crew battle, and dancing in a *Soul Train* line, Hinds takes up the reins at the next class by instructing students to remember my class where they learned to embody stories, and create a short, embodied story without words. The next class taught by Hinds focused on creating short plays using movement exclusively. In this process the dance workshop became part of a two-step learning process where students could first recognize how bodies can move and how they contribute to meaning making, before applying that knowledge and experience into hip hop playmaking. However, I don’t remember this *doing* of the body, the purpose behind meaning-making through movement being explicitly communicated to students even though creating plays without words emphasizes embodiment as a powerful source of meaning making and challenges traditional concepts of knowledge production and transmission. It is clear that hip hop dance, freestyle, and hip hop performances have a central place in Hinds’ class and that he advocates for them to be legitimate part of the academy and theater. However, I wonder to what extent, not purposefully mentioning and/or leave room for students to reflect on the role and impact of embodiment and performance in his class, somehow, perpetuates the disembodiment of education. In this scenario, call-and-response *otherwise* is happening through improvisation and knowledge *otherwise*, but only works partially because it is not communicated meaningfully and broadly.

Hinds case-study conclusion:

Hinds taught knowledge *otherwise* by using socio-political issues and performance at the center of the curriculum. Over the course of my quarter-long ethnography at Hinds' hip hop theater classes, I learnt that hip hop pedagogy is not singular and static. It is *à la fois*, movement, performance, reflection, and socio-political awareness. My biggest finding was that teaching hip hop pedagogy is an act of social justice and that social justice is centering bodies. Hip hop pedagogy is thus a critical and reflexive pedagogy of the self in the society, with embodiment at its core. Yes, embodiment was highly present in Hinds class but not always acknowledged as a meaning-making and knowledge carrier praxis. Like Hinds, many hip hop educators I have encountered, use a high intensity of embodied practices in their classrooms, but do not seem to recognize its value of *doing*. Perhaps this lapse takes place because unlike me, they are not trained dancer and scholars who know how to analyze movement and its impact. This brings up questions about the accessibility of embodied knowledge for non-dancers/dance studies educators, as well as the invisibilization of embodied, and in hip hop's case, Africanist Aesthetics practices in education.

Hinds' hip hop theater classes challenged the Eurocentric and disembodied nature of education by implementing hip hop and performance in his curriculum. Indeed, almost all students I interviewed commended his creative, non-hegemonic, and more personal pedagogy, which differed from their other classes at UCR and their prior experience with learning. However, I must bring light to the diverse socio-cultural factors enabling Hinds to create such a learning environment. One, his status as tenured and famous faculty both

at UCR and within the Inland Empire community, and his years of practice, gives him more power to teach in innovative manners without justifying his pedagogy or fearing consequences the way, for example, a young teaching assistant would. Two, as a professional male storyteller, he carries himself and teaches with extreme confidence and a strong projecting voice, which can have an impact on the ways students perceive him and his pedagogy. All the students I interviewed, praised him and enjoyed his class tremendously. I, myself, before the editing process of this dissertation, only saw the positives aspects of his teachings because of my professional relationship with him. I don't mean to undermine his work and talent here whatsoever. It is undeniable that he reached this level of connection with his students because of years of labor as an artist and educator but I need to nuance my previous, more unilateral analysis of his classes.

As explained by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, he acquired a set of cultural and social capital which may have helped him reach his current status to teach hip hop education and undo certain Eurocentric and disembodied institutional practices at UCR. Social Capital is defined as “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”⁵¹ (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 119). Similarly, Cultural Capital can be defined as the cultural assets of a person such as education, skills, dress, style of speech etc. that someone possesses due to the class they

⁵¹ Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc JD Wacquant. *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. University of Chicago press, 1992.

were born into or acquired overtime through their social networks, work etc. Bourdieu argues that a person's social, cultural, (and economic) capitals determine their social mobility. If we transpose Bourdieu's theories onto Hinds' case-study, we can imagine how being a teenager in the U.S when hip hop emerged, being a male faculty, and renown playwright and master elocutionist were important parameters that enabled him to create a *different* kind of teaching and learning environment.

Bourdieu focuses primarily at the correlation between class and social mobility. But it is important to acknowledge the intersectionality between race and gender as well. Indeed, as an international female graduate student balancing between the time necessary for my ethnographic research with sustaining myself financially, having limited teaching experience, and having to think about how students may misinterpret my informal, friendly, and more embodied teaching-style, I must face that I do not possess the capital and tools to teach a hip hop education class the way Hinds was able to. The issue of race, here is quite complex. On the one hand, Hinds African descent helps him connect with the diverse population at UCR. There is a lack of representation of faculty of color, especially black-skinned faculty (as expressed in "The Missing Black Faculty"⁵² and other studies (Inside Higher Ed)); his appearance indirectly sends a message to the youth that he is connected to blackness and hip hop through his lived experience which may empower certain students such as Val: "having so many black people, including the

⁵² Flaherty, Colleen. "The Missing Black Faculty", Inside Higher Ed, August 2017. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/08/22/study-top-public-universities-finds-limited-faculty-diversity-and-yet-signs-progress>. Accessed May 2020.

teacher in the class, is not normal. It's encouraging, refreshing [...]."⁵³ Unlike me, for example, who is petite, white skinned, with a French accent, and therefore, who do not, "scream" hip hop to my student based on first impressions. However, as a black-skinned man, Hinds is a minority both at UCR and in the society with all the realities that are attached with being a minority in the U.S and in the world.

Finally, my multiple roles as an ethnographer (observer/researcher, student participant, unofficial teaching assistant) helped me gain diverse insights about this fieldwork. Being involved during the classes enabled me to experience firsthand the effect of Hinds' pedagogy and content of study. Experiencing the pedagogy for myself enabled me to better understand the information students would communicate to me during the interviews, even though my experience may not have always been the same as the students in the classroom due to my multiple roles and the power dynamic.

Case-Study #2:

Bettina Love – Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice – YouTube

Introduction:

Picture the traditional classroom: students are all seated, staring dutifully at the teacher who stands in front of the classroom. Order, routine, hierarchy. Bettina Love's class is the complete opposite: she instructs students to move and participate in a lively call-and-response through music, dance, poetry...

Dr. Bettina Love is an African American Assistant Professor in the Department of Elementary and Social Studies at the University of Georgia, Athens. Her research focuses

⁵³ Val, Hinds' Hip Hop Theater class' student. In-person interview conducted on June 14, 2018.

on how urban youth negotiate hip hop music and culture to form social, cultural and political identities. She is known for her talk “Hip hop, grit, and academic success” given in 2014 at TEDxUGA, and for her books, *Hip Hop’s Li’l Sistas Speak* and *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*. Love is also a founding board member and the chair of the Kindezi Schools located in Atlanta, which are Charter elementary schools focused on small classrooms, art-based education, and diversity. The Kindezi School Group’s model is inspired by the Kindezi philosophy. According to the schools’ website, Kindezi is a Bantu word meaning “holistically schooling other people’s children with love and an eye to the future of our village” (kindezi.org). The website states that they have become some of the top performing schools locally and statewide.

Love uses her personal background and passion for hip hop in her teaching. I had the chance to briefly talk to her over the phone prior to attending her lecture at Scripps College⁵⁴ in January 2019. Our short conversation confirmed my analysis of her pedagogy which is rooted in individual and communal development. What is apparent from her online teachings and her 2019 lecture are the ideological influences of cultures from the African continent in her praxis. She deconstructs Eurocentric ideas by valuing social justice and alternative forms of knowledge production such as dance and movement, hence, participates in the creation of knowledge *otherwise*.

My analysis of Love’s hip hop education classes is primarily based on my cross-choreographic readings of “Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice,” a

⁵⁴ Daring Us All to Teach for Justice, Martin Luther King Commemorative lecture at Scripps College, January 29, 2019

10-session-long YouTube video series that she uploaded in 2013. Each 3 to 10-minute video shows moments of her 5th grade class taught at the Kindezi Elementary School. I chose to conduct a close-up reading of the following excerpts that I see as the most moving in Love's class and as key moments in her pedagogy:

1. [Sitting Cypher/The Message](#) (00-1.08) from session one
2. [Dance and Drum Freestyle](#) (1.43mn-2.21mn) from session two
3. [Dance Cypher](#) (2.19-5.00) from session five
4. [Stereotype](#) (1.50-7.15) from session nine

Conducting choreographic reading of video recordings is one of the main methods of movement analysis in dance studies. Because of the ephemeral nature of performances, analyzing non-live events allows for a detailed examination of movements. I merge choreographic reading of video with critical race and gender analysis to reflect on issues of gender, race, and power in the context of Love's classes.

My role as a researcher for this case-study is considerably different from case-study #1, where I physically participated in Hinds' classes and collaborated with him for an extended time. In this case-study, I am not an ethnographer in-the-field in the traditional sense of the term. I am not sitting in Love's classroom but analyzing videos a few years after they were taken. I contextualize these materials with my study of other online pedagogical platforms such as the Kindezi website, Love's personal webpages (Facebook, [bettinalove.com](#), [getfreehiphopcivics.com](#)) as well as years of archival research and literature review on Love. My choreographic reading is also fueled by my autoethnographic reflections about my experiences with these materials.

Theme 1: Teaching and choreographing space:

a) Spatial diversity and cypher in the hallway:

Traditionally, a classroom space is delineated by four walls, in a rectangular shape, like a box. In Love's classroom at the Kindezi school, one wall is missing from the equation. A big projector screen serves as the marker to separate the "classroom" from the hallway. My guess is that a pop-up classroom setting has been created in a multipurpose space allowing for instructors like Love and other after school program teachers to have their own space (as opposed to using another teacher's classroom) with flexible seating arrangements and more room. After watching these videos a few times I realized that Love's classroom was not like others and that she was probably teaching after the regular instructional hours. In the videos, you can see a custodian picking up the trash, and someone who appears to be a parent peeking their head behind the screen. The classroom, I realized, was in an open space.



Picture 15: "The screen behind Bettina Love separates the hallway from the classroom," screenshot from *Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice - Session one*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bY9WB2klivQ&t=1s>

In traditional classroom settings, the location of the screen and/or the whiteboard is where the “important” knowledge resides and where the learning content is projected⁵⁵. This is usually in the front of the classroom where the teacher stands. In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks discusses the relationship between the construction of the classroom; where the teacher stands in the space; how they present themselves, and how they are perceived by their students; and how the teaching and learning can occur in the class (137). So many times myself, I had to think how to stand, how to sit, and what to wear to be read as a cool teacher without undermining my authority.

While Love also uses the screen to project her material, depending on her spatial needs, the screen can come up, clearing more space. In some K-12 classrooms⁵⁶, teachers design the space inventively to break down the monotony about what kind of knowledge is produced in a designated location. They create small spaces within the larger space; each having its own function. For example, there could be a book reading corner delineated by bookshelves, a relaxation corner delineated by pillows and carpets, or a laboratory/craft corner delineated by cardboard boxes. This allows for students to experience different moods, creativity, energy levels, behaviors, movements, and kinds of

⁵⁵ bell hooks and Tina Kazan, two authors discussed in my literature review, mention this point in their work on placement of knowledge and the relation between space, movement, authority, and power in the classroom. Also, this point is inspired by my personal teaching experience teaching. I frequently organize an embodied activity where I ask students (from K-12 to higher education) where power resides in the classroom. Most times, students proclaim that power is where the tech and white board is and where the teacher stands.

⁵⁶ These spatial arrangements examples are highly inspired by my interview and visit at schoolteacher, M. H.’s classroom. She explained how she choreographed the space in such ways that each sub-space had a different purpose and enabled students and herself to explore different teaching and learning avenues. My experience as a Gluck Fellow and instructing dance in numerous k-12 institutions in the Inland Empire for the past 5 years, helped me assess what choreographing K-12 classrooms can look like.

learning depending on the space they are located in. These small spaces, although not enclosed by doors or walls, or usually fixed for an entire year or longer.

Loves pushes the concept of space diversity even further. She frequently diversifies how the classroom looks by shifting where the “important” knowledge is located, thus giving students the opportunity to become the knowledge producers and breaking down the hierarchy between students and teachers. For example, during the dance and drum playing freestyle in session one, Love moved away from the screen to get closer to her students and participated actively in the freestyle session, shifting the location where knowledge is held from the front of the room to the back of the room. With this move she also shifted how knowledge should be taught from an upright standing position to a more informal free flowing moving one.

On other occasions, she made the space work for her and her students, rather than letting the space dictate how and what kinds of knowledge can be taught. For example, in sessions four and five, she removed the desks and chairs and kept the screen up to let students perform their rap creations or dance in a cypher, making the hallway and the classroom into one big space. In session five, Love and the guest dance instructors⁵⁷ organized a cypher with the students which took place in this hallway. At one point, Love jumped into the cypher, becoming a student and an equal participant, disrupting the expected hierarchy between teachers and students while challenging the classroom spatiality. She brought the cypher out of the classroom into a hallway between other classrooms, a space dedicated to passage. This forced an awareness on students and

⁵⁷ They were uncredited in the videos or in the credit section on YouTube.

passersby that encourages them to be receptive to dance and music. Furthermore, by bringing the cypher out into the hallway to expand the classroom space, Love showed that learning can happen anywhere.

In addition, Love choreographs other “cypherizations” in her classes. For instance, her call-and-response pedagogical strategy is one aesthetic of the cypher: the discussion circle at the beginning of class where students respond, “Never Give Up!” to Love’s question “What’s the message?” is one aspect; the hip hop dance cypher discussed above where students and teachers show off their moves while cheered by their peers, is another. These examples show that the qualities present in a cypher are reproduced in her pedagogy whether an actual circle/cypher is created or not. In other words, Love does not always physically embody the cypher circle in her classroom; however, her pedagogy unpacks various aspects of cyphering throughout. Therefore, the acts of cyphering are often present but not always physicalized. This poses the question: can a cypher happen in a classroom without a circle? The response is, yes, through call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*. Call-and-response *otherwise* constitutes the pedagogy that combines the diverse embodied knowledge transmissions processes that can happen in a cypher such as your personal and communal identity- kinesthesia- emotions. Thus, call-and-response *otherwise* is the pedagogical tool to engage the cypher within the classroom.

Love’s diverse acts of cyphering highlight an intimate relation between being, doing, and space. Dancing and moving are equivalent to learning power relations in the world, which, per indigenous performance scholar, Karyn Recollet, create new ways of

being in a traditionally rigid and institutional space such as the classroom. By activating knowledge through movements and awareness of bodies in the space, Love teaches her students to resist the mainstream and fight for their rights. I read her endeavor as one of social justice because she values the doing (taking action) and the moving as much as the traditional learning. Cyphers also prioritize doing and moving: visible or not, a cypher has the power to create solidarity both in and out of the space, disrupting the understanding of linear time and space, and rather, acknowledging the multiplicity of energy, and learning (i.e. cloud).

By purposefully reorganizing the classroom spaces—making them bigger or smaller, using more or less materials, shifting location, transforming the rectangular shape of the classroom, and moving in the classroom with her students— Love temporarily destroys the invisible wall separating the teacher and the students and shows that teaching and learning can happen anywhere. Through these choreographies of the classroom, Love resists Eurocentric praxis as she reshapes the physicality of the classroom space from a confined rectangle to a malleable and movable circle; she redefines the relationality between teachers and students by acting as a teacher, facilitator, and student herself; and uses the cypher as a space to “stand up for your rights.” These acts deconstruct the Western idea of knowledge by valuing alternative forms of knowledge production through dance and movements, and thus demonstrate how Love’s hip hop pedagogy embodies knowledge *otherwise*.

Before we move on to the next sub-section, I must acknowledge that Love had the authority to shift things around. Similarly to Hinds who was sometimes considered the

campus star both by the institution and his students, Love is not just any teacher: she is the founder of the Kindezi School and she is a full-time professor in a renowned university who was probably also conducting research and/or expanding her portfolio through these classes at Kindezi. Furthermore, she had time and space to store the desks and chairs because she was teaching after the regular classroom times as an after school program instructor and had full control over these lessons. These elements combined likely gave her the space, time, and power to create an “ideal” classroom environment and go all in with her pedagogical approaches. Indeed, a lot of teachers may not feel able to enact these pedagogies because they are required to teach certain materials and because of systemic issues about how they retain their positions and are promoted might limit them from similar experimentation. Furthermore, as I will discuss in chapter-cypher 3, my positionality as a guest instructor teaching during regular instructing hours considerably limited the ways I could teach my own pedagogical model.

b. YouTube and accessibility:

For Love and for a lot of hip hop educators, online platforms constitute an essential part of their pedagogical practice where ideas, conversations, and social actions happen⁵⁸. Love shares knowledge and builds a community through virtual channels thus making her teachings go beyond the physical classroom space and class time restriction and expanding the call-and-response *otherwise* worldwide.

⁵⁸ For example, #HipHopEd, the “cyber cypher” on Twitter discussed in the introduction, is a famous weekly chat platform reuniting hip hop scholars, artists, and educators founded by Christopher Emdin and Timothy Jones.

By uploading the videos of her classes online, Love shares her pedagogy to the hip hop education community and calls the world's attention to a different kind of teaching and learning that is participatory, small-sized, open to feedback, and oriented towards the success of black youth. It is rather rare for people, especially ranked faculty, to openly share their knowledge and resources. For viewers like me, however, these videos can be a crucial entry point into hip hop education and a real learning experience. Via YouTube, Love's teachings are no longer limited to her students and her classroom. Other teachers or students can take advantage of her teachings, free of charge. Love participates in disrupting the traditional economy of knowledge by giving a wide net of people access to hip hop pedagogy.

So why for free? What is to gain? While I am sure her intentions to spread the "Message" are genuine, these videos and other online interviews and talks increase her visibility to the academic and non-academic world, and thus, lead to invitations to present and promote her books. Teaching 5th graders at the Kindezi school is obviously not how Love makes money, but as a former elementary school teacher, she truly believes in the importance of teaching the youth. I believe that her online presence has enabled her to get more gigs and make a better living (in addition to be a renowned faculty member at the University of Georgia). This has also helped the hip hop education community to become more well known, grow, and more importantly for its social justice messages to be communicated globally, beyond the classroom space. Therefore, the videos on YouTube serve a double role: both promotional and educational, helping Love and her hip hop education community to receive recognition both locally and internationally; this

reciprocity resembles the *otherwise* cypher and the cloud, where everything is interconnected. Love choreographed the digital space by making the choreography of the physical classroom space an online knowledge platform and literally bringing/uploading social justice onto the web.

Inspired by Love's intention of sharing information to a larger public, during the Covid-19 quarantine, I started my own YouTube channel⁵⁹ with dance and workout videos for kids and adults to help people move in their homes. This experience gave me even more appreciation for Love's online videos. By putting our crafts and ourselves out there, our pedagogy and bodies are exposed and open for judgement and misinterpretation. The video editing suggests that Love chose the best pedagogical moments to post online. Despite that, as a Black gay woman, I find the presentation of her work and herself so openly on the internet very courageous. I also find her students also courageous since they can easily be identifiable. Even with the few YouTube video views I have gathered so far, I feel like my identity and my life are not as private as they used to be, and that my female body is in a much more vulnerable position than before notably because people can post feedback and strangers can get in touch with me through email and social media.

In this sub-section, I described how Love pushed the boundaries of what space means and how to teach in that space, and thus ultimately expanded where and how knowledge can be taught and shared. Her pedagogy was also glocal, like the *otherwise* cypher. Indeed, because her pedagogy was shared online, people from different ages,

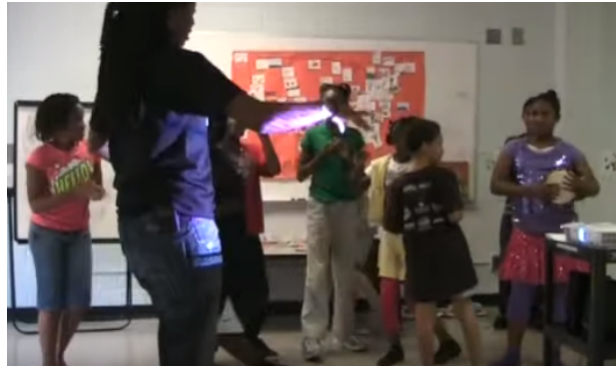
⁵⁹ YouTube channel name: Tanuki Dance

backgrounds, nationalities, and walks of life have access to the classes. Choreographing the classroom in Love's class reasserts the important of movement, especially movement of ideas. Here, teaching and learning constitute moving bodies in the space and moving knowledge beyond the physical borders of the classroom to reach a global network. By so doing, she rendered her body and pedagogy, as well as her young Atlanta students accessible to the world, enabling their embodied knowledge to reach more people and travel through time and space (i.e. the cloud). Rendering colored bodies visible can be risky in multiple ways from misinterpretation to physical harm. And so publishing these videos on YouTube was an act of social justice.

Theme 2: Teaching social justice and teaching as social justice:

a. The role of embodiment in teaching hip hop history:

Love's ability to push the boundary of what time and space mean in the context of her classroom can also be seen in session two where Love connects past knowledge to present day hip hop and society. Love connected the origins of hip hop back to West African griots. "[...] The beat that you guys love so much, you don't even know why you bang it so much [...]" (Love, 00:00:51-00:01:06). The griots, she explains, were drummers, poets, storytellers, and keepers of cultural history, reporting important information about their communities since centuries ago. Rappers, therefore, are "modern day storytellers" (Love) since they, like the griots, share their realities using beats, rhymes, and other poetic techniques. After her explanation, Love organized a dance and drumming freestyle introducing her students to the art of beat-making.



Picture 16: “Dance and drum freestyle in the classroom”. Screenshot from *Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice – Session two*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTyBCh8GICk&t=291s>

During this freestyle, some students were dancing while others were playing various drums. Love was swinging her body and gesturing and vocalizing to the tempo of the main beat. Pausing the more lecture-style presentation to start a freestyle in the classroom does a few things. First, experiencing the art of beat-making by actually making/performing the beat helps students understand this art more profoundly. It is no longer an abstract artform which exists in the computer, which can be played and paused as pleased. Performing the art of beat-making demonstrates that it requires technique, creativity, and therefore needs someone to make it happen. It shows that it is an artistic and human endeavor which can sometimes be forgotten or taken for granted especially by younger generations of students who were born in the high technological era. This in-class freestyle session also enabled students to experience with their own bodies how something from a different time and space (ancient African griot art) is relevant in today’s hip hop. In other words, this exercise enabled them to reflect on how the past informs the present, and therefore, should not be forgotten, like in the *otherwise* cypher.

However, I wonder how much of the role of embodiment has explicitly been articulated to her students? The video has been edited in a way that we move directly

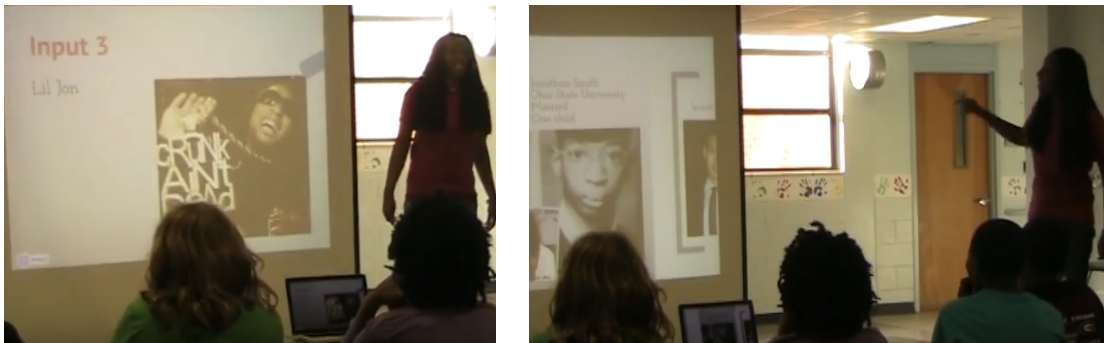
from the more “traditional” teaching part, directly to the dancing. In this edited version, Love does not mention the impact of embodiment. I do not know how much of the impact of movement has been taught by implication vs. explicitly. I am not saying that she did not teach about the message behind movement because I do not know the full scope of her class. I can simply observe that it was not made visible in this video even though it is valuable.

Although many teachers know about the importance of embodied performances, they sometimes do not make the connections purposeful to their students. How could Love have shared about the importance of kinesthetic knowledge and learning to 5th graders? Moving in the classroom is a first step towards embodied pedagogies. But is it enough? Seeing Love and Hinds not explicitly explaining the role of embodiment reminds me that I must make a genuine effort to emphasize its importance to my students because I truly believe in embodied knowledge and also because I have been trained to understand how movements carry knowledge.

b. Teaching about racial stereotypes: Trayvon Martin:

I discussed how Love used the historical context of hip hop to teach social justice. Here, Love connected social justice to a contemporary socio-political context. Just as Hinds showcased his play *Dreamscape* to point out socio-political issues such as racial profiling and police brutality, Love also implemented a unit on racial profiling and the dangers of stereotyping with her 5th graders. As part of that unit, she discussed the tragic assassination of Trayvon Martin, a teenage African American boy from Miami. Martin was fatally shot on February 26, 2012 in Sanford, Florida when visiting his family, by the

neighborhood watch man who reported him as suspicious. He was wrongly profiled as dangerous because he was Black and wearing a hoodie. To demonstrate further how stereotypes related to clothing, social behaviors, and skin complexion affect our society, Love showed a picture of rapper Lil Jon and asked the students what comes to their mind while looking at the picture.



Picture 17: “Picture of rapper Lil Jon as a rapper and as B.A graduate in the background”. Screenshots of the video *Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice - Session Nine*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t28Xvrpp-3I>

Students automatically noticed the gold chain and teeth, and the Ray Ban glasses. Next, Love showed a picture of Johnathan Smith, aka Lil Jon wearing his college gown. Loves reaffirmed that he is a college graduate who went to a “really good institution,” and pointed out that, students and most people, would never think that because of the stereotypes we have (Love, 00:03:10-00:05:23). Then, she showed a picture of a white man wearing a suit and tie and asked her student a similar question. The 5th graders noticed the “seriousness” of his look and were very surprised to learn that he was a rapper too. “He does not look like a rapper!”, one student said [...] “You did not see that coming” she added, [...] “We put people in these boxes [...]” (Love). Here, rap and fashion were used to demonstrate how students, and the society at large, are trained to stereotype people as bad, violent, non-educated based on their appearance. At such young

ages, they were critically reflecting on their actions and verbalized the injustice of their mistakes to their teacher and to others.

Choreographically speaking, at the beginning of the lesson when students jumped to conclusions, they also literally jumped up out of their chairs: they were raising their hands so high to give an answer that they stood out of their chairs. However, seconds later, when Love showed the slide where Lil Jon looked more “serious” in his college gown, even through my computer screen, I sensed that the energy of the room changed. The space moved from a hyped, “I got the right answer” thrill, to something heavier. For a few seconds, students had to internalize what just had happened: they had stereotyped. They misjudged a person based on looks which had a fatal consequence for Trayvon Martin. They started looking at each other, nodding, and timidly admitting that they were too quick in judgements. Their bodies slowly regained confidence.

Love created a choreographic play within the curriculum with pictures and critical questions to guide her students. The back and forth lured her students in but also helped them realize their mistakes more profoundly. Originally, her tone and very teacher-like gestures trumped her students into thinking they were right. Indeed, nothing in the way she demonstrated her slides seemed out of the ordinary, until the next slide appeared. She used performance to help students reflect on their actions and those of society.

This teaching and learning moment had multiple levels because both students and Love admitted to being victims and perpetrators of stereotyping. By pointing out that issues in society, such as stereotyping, start with young people in our community and children who are taught to profile through institutional and informal processes of

enculturation, she addressed systemic problems in education. The act of telling, retelling, thinking, and rethinking, and moving in the moment, constituted an intergenerational social justice call-and-response *otherwise*.

c. Empowerment: never give up:

Unlike most young children, Love's 5th graders were invited throughout the program to share their ideas and opinions, and even pick the topic and content of one of their last courses. But what inspired me the most was a ritual performed at the beginning of each class: Love and the students sat in a circle called the "Afternoon Cypher," where the most important "Message of the Day" was relayed in preparation for the rest of the class. At the beginning of the program, the message was "Never Give Up." Once everyone was seated, she "open[ed] the floor" and offered students the possibility to interact, ask questions, and participate. Engaged in a call-and-response, Love asked loudly: "What's the message"? And students shouted: "Never Give Up!" repeatedly. This video passage of session one is very powerful. Creating a physical sitting-and-talking cypher at the beginning of her class reinforced Love's overarching principles and connected everyone in that moment and in that space. Through this lively interaction, Love stated that they matter and that, despite the difficulties in their lives or what they might hear in traditional schooling settings, they should not give up. As the call-and-response continued, the voices in the circle became louder and louder and students appeared to feel a greater degree of affirmation the more they engaged in this collective praxis. The repetition of the message in the "Afternoon Cypher" builds individual confidence but also demonstrates that one is not alone.

The call-and-response resists traditional Eurocentric educational praxis because the students' input is key. It is not one sided or top down, rather, an exchange of reactions that keeps the knowledge flow between the instructor and students. Also, using this format drawn from African American culture leaves a mark, attempts to resist, and empowers. By asking her students to raise their voices while affirming the message of the day, Love restates that their participation matter, both as students and Black youth.

Empowerment can also be seen through Love's acts of cyphering her classroom (through call-and-responses aesthetics or dance circle), which enact resistance because they stress the idea of creative solidarity (Recollet). In "Gesturing Indigenous futurities through the remix," Recollet argues that choreographing constitutes "[...] an attempt to challenge the inherited coloniality of solidarity discourse as social practice through the production of spatial/symbolic arrangements that mobilize a radical turn towards relationality, difference, and interdependence." In session one, Love tied the origins of hip hop to Western African Griots. She offered students the opportunity to listen to hip hop, a music genre that they are familiar with, and gave them the chance to play the drum and activate the beat to move their bodies freely. She connected historical knowledge with their cultural background and embodied knowledge to help students understand the process of artistic creation. This improvisation transforms the space into a place of experimentation and exploration, where students can reflect on their place in society, rhythm, poetry, and dance individually and collectively. This, to me, creates Recolletian solidarity as it enables students to gain awareness about the self and other bodies in the space, as well as in society. While there is no physical circle, the space is still inclusive.

Love facilitated the improvisation by emphasizing the beat of the hip hop song, without monopolizing the physical and power space (i.e., taking advantage of her role as a teacher, being placed higher on the hierarchy in the traditional school setting), thus, disrupting colonial hierarchy of the classroom and empowering her students.

To conclude this sub-section, let's go back to reflect on why Love's classes are titled "Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice". "Real Talk" signifies that Love's classes consist of critical conversations. The first part of the title indicates the need to dig deeper and to acknowledge the good and the bad; it is about realness. The second part of the title showcases that for Love, teaching hip hop education is an act of social justice. Not simply because most of her topics are social justice oriented, but because reaffirming bodies, teaching the roots of hip hop culture, and doing things differently is counterhegemonic. Her classes act against the monotony and Eurocentric aspects of K-12 education.

Similar to Hinds, there are three ways social justice was enacted in Love's classes: through reenacting history, raising socio-political awareness, and empowerment. Whether students were dancing, performing a call-and-response, or reflecting on a rapper's physical appearance, knowledge was either transmitted through the body or was about the body.

Theme 3: Embodiment in the classroom:

In "Real Talk: Hip Hop Education for Social Justice," embodiment was plural: dancing and improvising; call-and-responses; moving furniture; movement of the teacher in the classroom; reflection on complexions and stereotypes. Also, we saw earlier how

she used performative techniques to lure her students to an assumed answer before making her point about the societal issues around stereotyping. So embodiment constitutes an essential part of her teaching strategy as well as the choreography of the classroom. While embodiment and performative practices are highly present in Love's classes, I wonder to what extent their *doings* are clearly explained to her students? How much is Love aware of the impact of embodied processes? Watching Hinds and Love it appears to me that they are using embodiment and movement strategically. However, in my choreographic reading of their classes, I have not been able to find a time and space where the reasons behind using embodied teaching were explained. Obviously, no teacher can explain every single pedagogical decision, but because embodiment is already rendered invisible in institutions and in society, I believe that part of doing social justice and *really* reasserting the value of bodies in the education is making visible to students the role bodies have within the learning process. This starts in the classroom, with the teachers' and students' movements in the space.

Love further demonstrated her commitment to embodiment by dancing and dedicating a unit to the breakdance element. In session five, Love invited an uncredited guest artist⁶⁰ who is a bboy and popper to class. She structured that class in such a way that they were co-teaching for the first part and organized a freestyle cypher together with students in the second part. Love recreated the synergy of the cypher by interacting through motions and energy with the space and her students. This attempt to produce

⁶⁰ Interestingly, this guest artist was not credited in the video nor in the credit section. Oftentimes, artists, especially dancers' contributions are invisibilized through the erasure of their names as they are considered at the bottom of hierarchy in art.

knowledge *otherwise* in the classroom— as she let improvisation, popular culture, flow, energy, and feelings into a space that usually only values strict discipline, organization, and rationality—recreated, again, a new way of being in a space. Indeed, in traditional schooling, non-disciplined behaviors are usually forbidden. Students from a minority background are often unfairly punished if caught dancing or raising their voice, and black youth are affected disproportionately.

Let's take a closer look at the first section of her breakdance unit. She had a clear agenda: the goal of this class was to show the correlation between movement and education. With the help of the guest artist executing bboying moves (toprock, prep, flare), she explained how science (physics in this particular case) is involved: "[...] pushing off of this, to now get here, and that is the Mo?" Students scream: "-mentum!" (Love, 00:02:50-00:02:55). The dance demo showed students that knowing about science is important for bboying because a dancer cannot execute these moves without applying scientific knowledge. In short, the message was that movement is not "just movement" so to speak but is valid knowledge because of the science behind it.

As much as I appreciate Love revalidating the importance of movement in the classroom, as a dance scholar and advocate about the power of movement, something slightly confuses me about her approach to promote movement in education. Stating that bboying has a place in education because it is science promotes the wrong kind of message. Bboying should be recognized as art and legitimate culture in education and in our society for what it is, and not because science, a more traditionally legitimized field, has to do anything with it. Or at least, it should be considered both art and science.

Arguably, everything is science, and therefore, so is dance. Love designed movements around an academic content which is something Aysha Upchurch advocates for: “If my gym teacher and science teacher had worked together, I would definitely remember that content more [...]. We can experience Newton’s Laws and inertia. If students could walk around or stand or explore something with their bodies, it might deepen understanding and help everyone feel more connected to their bodies in a positive sense.” (Upchurch qtd. in Harvard GSE news). Going back to my argument about the possible lack of communication about the role of embodiment in Love’s videos, in the same interview, Upchurch reminds us that it is important for students to understand “how their bodies work to produce that movement” (Upchurch qtd. in Harvard GSE news), hence the importance of teaching and connecting movement to learning more broadly.

Yet, Love’s audience is very young, and her pedagogy is age appropriate. I also believe that the role of physics in bboying is a good subject especially in a context where the teacher tries to demonstrate how some physics properties manifest themselves in the world, and what better way to do this than through the use of dance and hip hop, a culture that speaks to the urban youth. However, especially in a high school or higher education setting, I would strongly encourage teachers to attempt to break away from the temptation to justify the importance of art and culture by putting them side by side with concepts that are more recognized in the public eye and by academic institutions such as science. Indeed, if poorly interpreted, it keeps reiterating that art and culture matter only when they have a role in other kinds of subject fields such as science.

In sum, while movement constitutes a crucial component of Love's pedagogy, her approach to embodiment comprises both successes and contradictions. On the one hand, by engaging with many embodied performances in her class, she participates in knowledge *otherwise* where students are empowered to show and prove their moves and experiment. On the other hand, by using science to valorize movement or not purposefully explain the meaning behind movements, Love may occasionally reproduce the hierarchy of knowledge often found in academic institutions.

Love case-study conclusion:

Unlike the other two case-studies, this one is unique because it is a choreographic reading of videos; I was not physically present during the classes. While I was able to argue for the level of embodiment and performativity in Love's videos, the time and space that separates me from the teaching and learning happening in the classroom inevitably can create doubts. The videos are only three to ten minutes long which suggests a great deal of "directors cuts". What else happened in these classes will always be unknown. I can only account for what I can see in the videos. I don't have the full context which is why I performed both a close-up and a cross-videos choreographic reading. These videos were uploaded in 2013, seven years before the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic and accompanying quarantine, so before online learning became a necessity in many Western schooling institutions. As this shift inevitably changes the future of teaching, it becomes important to question how can hip hop education translate through the screen?

I want to end this case-study conclusion by saying “chapeau bas”⁶¹ to Bettina Love. I would like to state how fantastic it is to instill so much critical thinking and moving to young 5th-graders. Love’s classes resemble college-level discussion sections with her own embodied and hip hop touch. The way she interacts with her students, asks critical questions, and lets them participate actively in the making of the hip hop curriculum is quite inspiring. I find her extremely bold and courageous to discuss issues of social justice in relation to hip hop and teach knowledge *otherwise* with such young students and to share her teaching online; especially because of how parents or the school board may react. Indeed, understanding knowledge *otherwise* requires a certain level of maturity because of its personal and communal critical reflective aspect. Self-exploration in relation to others, and not being afraid of teaching and learning differently are not easy. I sincerely believe that there is no minimum age to learn how to be yourself, how to be in the society, and to learn respect and critical thinking.

I must acknowledge that Love was able to create such pedagogical environment because of her positionality (as founder of the Kindezi Charter School and University professor); the size of the class; and the financial means of the school. I will discuss in the next chapter-cypher how I tried to implement a similar pedagogical model in a K-12 school but how the institutional, financial, and positionality-related limitations rendered this mission extremely challenging.

⁶¹ French for “hats off”

Case-Study # 3:

Tasha Iglesias – Hip Hop, Education, and Sports – Winter 2019 – UCR

Introduction:

I first met Tasha Iglesias in December 2018 at Show and Prove 2018 (S&P18), a hip hop studies conference at UCR chaired by Imani Kai Johnson. Iglesias organized a very interactive and embodied workshop on hip hop pedagogy. She had us (the attendees) start with a *Soul Train* line where we introduced ourselves while dancing through the cheerful human wagons. Her original approach to presenting a workshop impacted me considerably. But what really stood out the most to me was when she told all attendees that she would share with us all kinds of resources if we email her, which I promptly did.

In December, I had no idea that I would meet Iglesias again. A month later, I was at UCR seated in front of Iglesias for an hour, as she provided me tools, contacts, and readings to support my dissertation writing process. As it turned out, she had been invited as a lecturer to teach a highly demanded “Hip Hop, Education, and Sports” course offered in Winter 2019 by the Education Department at UCR. My participation in Iglesias’ classes was short: I only attended two of her lectures in addition to meeting with her prior to the start of her class, chatting with her on Facebook or by email, or in the hallways. I was not able to conduct further fieldwork with Iglesias due to my work schedule (I worked part-time in Graduate Division organizing events which made having a regular fieldwork schedule difficult).

For traditional academic standards, my fieldwork time in her classes would probably be categorized as insufficient and therefore not be considered an “objective”

study. I was upfront with Iglesias about the time limitation of my study. She then showed me her syllabus and suggested that I attend the two classes that would probably be the most relevant and interesting to me: introduction to hip hop education and rap pedagogy. In this case-study, my own limited experience does not position me to analysis her work deeply. However, the information gathered during the limited fieldwork experience equipped me to support other analysis in this chapter-cypher. Indeed, despite the limited physical interaction I had with Iglesias and her class, I learned a great deal because her teaching does not stop in the classroom. Her role as teacher, colleague, and advocate for hip hop went beyond her lectures. In this case-study, I draw not only on the two classes I observed, but also on evidence gathered throughout Winter 2019 on various platforms such as the interview we conducted, our informal conversations, and her online posts and videos about her course. I am aware that attending two lectures is not enough to conduct a deep ethnographic study. Which is why, I do not consider this case-study to be a stand-alone ethnographic research. My research on Iglesias belongs to my larger ethnography on embodied hip hop pedagogies because 1) it supports the findings from Hinds' and Love's case-studies, and 2) it helps validate my argument about the relationship between embodied hip hop pedagogies and the reconfiguration of academic spaces.

The "Hip Hop, Education, and Sports" class is a popular class that meets twice a week from 6:20 PM to 8:00 PM. While it is offered every year, the education department has had trouble finding lecturers proficient in teaching such a course due to its juxtaposition of subjects. This speaks to the fact that these subjects are usually isolated when discussed in University settings. But the popularity of this class shows students'

interest in this kind of interdisciplinary topic. The lectures were conducted in the Life Sciences Building. The classroom was located at the end of a narrow hallway where skeletons of animals, taxidermies, and fossils covered the walls on both sides. The classroom is a large rectangle filled with rows of individual desks units with chairs attached. Because the class was scheduled not only late in the evening but also when it was dark and cold outside, I was surprised by the high attendance and energy.

My role in the context of Iglesias' class was plural. In the classroom, my presence was acknowledged as a PhD candidate conducting research in the space. Unlike the hip hop theater studio, I would sit in the middle of the front row, close to the white board. Despite positioning myself like a student, my role was purely observational and clearly defined as a researcher: I listened to Iglesias and her students, took, per Iglesias' request, some pictures during the activities, and chatted with the TA and Iglesias while students were working. We developed a professional but informal and fun communication style, which I believe has not only to do with her personality but with Iglesias' involvement with hip hop culture and practice of hip hop's saying such as "each one teach one." I was also continuously gathering all the information she would provide me outside the classroom, either in the hallways or online.

Theme 1: Teaching and choreographing space:

a. Rap pedagogy:

Iglesias overcame the structural rigidity of the classroom through activities where she choreographed the space. During her speed rap pedagogy exercise, she disrupted the frontal, "everyone faces the white board and the instructor" arrangement by creating

small groups standing or sitting in circles and expanding the instructional space to include the hallways. The activity consisted of small groups rotating to the next spot (marked by a letter pasted by Iglesias on the walls in advance) every ten minutes to either analyze a rap song or create their own rap, like in a speed dating.

The fact that these small groups worked in circles as well as the cyclical nature of the exercise reminded me of a cypher where individual and collective contributions mattered. In choreographing the space this way, Iglesias made the content of her activity related to hip hop and made it done *through* hip hop. By facilitating such a dynamic exercise going beyond the walls of the classroom, Iglesias stepped back from instructing (in the traditional sense of the term), and let students create and reflect together independently. She deconstructed the traditional teacher talks and student answers dynamic by creating a form of call-and-response *otherwise* built on trust where she, as the teacher, “called” by creating a movement-based activity, and students “responded” by engaging in critical cyphers, freestyling, and moving in loops in and out of the classroom.

While I connected the dots between groups working in circles moving in cyclical manners and the aesthetics present in the cypher, this was not communicated to the students. The call-and-response *otherwise* happened in Iglesias’ class based on unspoken trust built between Iglesias and her students without explicit explanation of the process.

b. Facebook and accessibility:

Like Love, Iglesias takes advantage of online resources to share knowledge and practice hip hop pedagogy beyond the classroom space. By so doing, she enlarges the

space where teaching and learning can happen, redefines the classroom as a physical space, and ultimately, expands what choreographing the classroom means.

After the Show and Prove 2018 conference, Iglesias and I connected through Facebook. I was immediately impressed by how she uses her personal Facebook profile to promote hip hop culture and education and to communicate with practitioners and scholars almost daily. What stood out to me was how she uses Facebook as a teaching and networking platform. Through reposting, event promotions, shout outs to colleagues, or brief explanations why she is posing with a hip hop practitioner in a picture (sharing their story), she builds the hip hop community and keeps them engaged on social media.

During her tenure at UCR, she posted short videos of her students' creations on Facebook, whether they were rapping or coming up with a board game. These types of posts showcase her passion for teaching and how proud she is of her students, but also help aspiring scholars and teachers like me, to get inspired by her experience built over the years of practice as a hip hop educator. Similarly to Love, Iglesias' posts help to "keep the momentum going," like a call-and-response *otherwise*, to share her knowledge with her followers, and ultimately to create a space for educators, artists, students, and the general public to become more sensitive to hip hop education and connect.

I witnessed a form of digital choreographing, whose primary purpose was to re-center people's bodies, contributions, and stories. What I mean is that despite the virtual nature of her actions on Facebook, her pedagogy was still centered around reasserting bodies and making personal connections a priority. For example, she acknowledges most comments left by followers by following up with a question, quickly commenting, or

sending an emoji. She also affirms her students and herself by posting about their pedagogical contribution. I am not an expert in social network analysis. However, I observed how an online video/conversation posted by Iglesias gained popularity thus rendering her pedagogy more visible to diverse audiences and at a larger scale. Hip hop pedagogy can be effective without a physical space; in a digital environment such as Facebook posting, reposting, commenting etc. can act as revalidating personal and communal praxes. Iglesias practices call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* as she reinvents the spaces and methods with which hip hop pedagogy can happen by combining choreography and the digital world.

In this sub-section we saw how Iglesias redefined the physical boundaries of a classroom by enabling her students to learn by literally stepping in and out of the classroom, like a choreographic performance; and by making her online social media a hip hop education resource and a networking platform, generating knowledge both locally and globally, like in the *otherwise* cypher.

Theme 2: Teaching social justice and teaching as social justice:

a. The role of embodiment in teaching hip hop history:

Hinds used his performative skills to reenact the Bronx burning and Love organized a freestyle to engage with the history of hip hop. Iglesias used a different embodied performative strategy to bring the past into the classroom. She invited guest-speakers bboy Lil Cesar from the Inland Empire and bboy Kid Freeze from New York, who are both bboys from the early days of hip hop. Unlike Love or Hinds, Iglesias' students did not dance in the classroom, but were introduced to people who were part of

building breakdancing and hip hop more broadly in their respective communities. These students were able to engage in a live conversation with people who were and continue to be important actors in bboying, and therefore experience hip hop not only on screen or through archived and static images, but through personal testimonies.

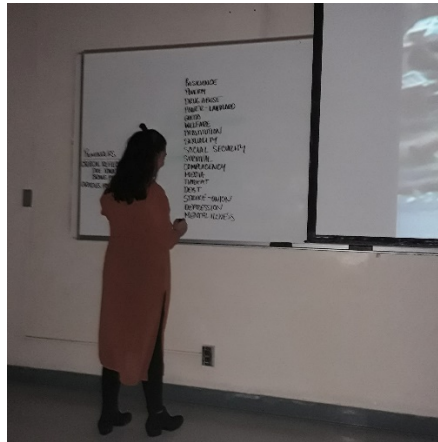
Embodiment was a vehicle to transmit knowledge in a couple of ways. First, she chose to invite bboys to be an active part of her curriculum. When current college students think of hip hop, they think of music. Some can name a few rappers such as Jay-Z or Dr. Dre because they are highly mediated. But instead of increasing the visibility of rap artists that were already visible to her students, Iglesias decided to teach the history of hip hop through the lens of pioneer dancers. It is through the dance, and not music—an art form that is more commercialized, mainstream, and institutionalized—that she explained the evolution of hip hop. Also, instead of simply showing a video or discussing the history of hip hop from a textbook, Iglesias brought people with firsthand experience into the classroom. This act of inviting a dancer's body to be part of the curriculum says that their history/story matters in an institutional space such as the college classroom. Therefore, embodiment here means elevating the art of bboying as valid knowledge and capitalizing on *real* and present people's embodied knowledge. Movement and the body activated the history of hip hop in a particular way, yes, perhaps, in a very personal way, but also a way that makes the connection between hip hop, education, and history more palpable, more real, and therefore, more embodied. The level of revalidation of personal histories and the body constitutes an act of social justice because it challenges the disembodiment present in education caused by invisibilization of marginalized stories.

b. Raising socio-political awareness: rap pedagogy

In addition to inviting bboys into the classroom space, Iglesias organized a unit on rap pedagogy which consisted of analyzing the lyrics of different artists. For non-connoisseurs, hip hop music can be considered cool simply because it is popular or serves as good club music because of its dynamic beat. However, by dissecting each verse and analyzing the lyrics with a critical lens Iglesias not only showcases the artistic ingenuity of some artists, but also really helps bring forward the autobiographical (individual) and socio-political (larger-communal) elements represented in the rap song, and therefore shows the social justice message behind these lyrics. In this case, critically analyzing rap lyrics helped students dig deeper into the meaning behind the words and provided them an opportunity to change their opinions about rap music. Even though this unit focused on texts, the fact that she organized it cyclically (i.e. going in and out of the classroom and groups working in circles), and the fact that she critically analyzed the embodied realities of these rappers, helped connect the unit to embodiment in some capacity.

On another occasion in Iglesias' class, rap pedagogy was used to critically reflect on issues in hip hop culture. She played the clip of the song "The Message," from Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, which is a classic rap that many people would recognize. Upon first listening, students seemed happy to hear a familiar song and probably to see the clip for the first time. However, it was not until Iglesias asked students to listen to the lyrics more carefully that they started to realize how some topics invoked in the songs such as sexism and heterosexism are serious. Iglesias used rap pedagogy in two different ways but for the same fundamental goals: to challenge students

to confront their own stereotypes of hip hop culture and to demonstrate that hip hop contains socio-political issues that need to be addressed.



Picture 18: Le Lay, Maïko. “Iglesias writing students’ comments about the song and clip.” January 2019.

Hip hop pedagogy is complex because it aims to put the benefits of hip hop culture forward and is also used as a critical tool to point out the issues present in hip hop and in society at the same time. I believe that discussing larger societal issues such as stereotyping and racial profiling in conjunction with hip hop culture provides students with a critical lens from both sides of the conversation and allows them to visualize how these issues are played out in their lives and in the culture they participate in. Through rap pedagogy and critical reflections, Iglesias raised socio-political awareness.

c. Empowerment: inclusion:

Even as a mere participant-observer, I felt empowered in Iglesias’ classroom because of her culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. Iglesias retains this mentality: “When I was a student, I did not make any connection with the materials and my life. I like to teach, so I make sure the material is relevant to you!”

The moment that struck me the most when she asked the class, “What kind of power do you have in education?” After letting a couple of students answer, she asked the same question to the little boy behind me—who appeared to be the son of one of her students—who proudly answered thus feeling empowered and as if he belonged in this adult class. He was also invited to participate in the next activity where students were throwing and catching a small soccer ball with different numbers corresponding to questions related to hip hop and their lives. This moment was a true learning experience for me as an aspiring teacher. I thought to myself, “Everyone, truly, everyone in Iglesias’ classroom is welcomed and treated as a student.” This was a pedagogical discovery because although I have read and heard multiple times about the need for making the classroom a more inclusive space which can accommodate student-parents’ needs, it was the first time I witnessed a teacher not only providing a seat to the child, but also letting him be part of the learning process and active participant within the classroom. This welcoming and inclusive action was empowering to the young boy, his mother, and the other students who may one day be in a similar situation and now have had the opportunity to see how a teacher can effectively support a student-parent in an institution which still lacks fundamental support for this particular student population⁶².

By inviting bboy pioneers of hip hop culture who discussed their trajectory and development of the culture, and by questioning the lyrics of one of the earliest and most iconic hip hop songs, Iglesias shows that teaching social justice requires critically

⁶² I am familiar with issues student-parents face in the UC system. In my role as the former Graduate Student Association Executive Vice President, I founded the first Grad Parent Task Force and drafted a report in 2018 based on a survey completed by graduate student parents at UCR.

addressing the evolution of hip hop culture. Challenging some aspects of hip hop is part of teaching social justice where students are pushed to reflect on their positionalities and cultural practices. Finally, Iglesias cultivating an inclusive classroom environment showcases the concept of teaching as social justice. Based strongly on movement, inclusion, and empowerment, her hip hop pedagogy participates in social action.

Theme 3: Embodiment in the classroom:

Embodiment in Iglesias' classroom was threefold: creating group activities involving a cypher's aesthetic; bringing hip hop pioneers' bodies into the space; and challenging stillness, which we will discuss next.

a. Embodiment and institutional politics:

Iglesias' lecture classroom was typical of an old university building: the shape was rectangular, individual chairs and desks were placed in linear rows one behind the other, the lighting was either too bright or too dark, and the tech worked only half of the time. Like me, as a dancer, Iglesias likes to move, to create opportunities for students to get out of their chairs, but the narrow rows and the overall configuration of the room did not make it easy. During break time where she instructed students to "get up and walk around", we started a conversation about the layout of the classroom as I pointed out the fact that the chairs and desks were not mobile. She said that she in fact tried to get a different classroom but then decided to make this one work for her. "If I was tenured, I could get whatever I want, but as a lecturer, you get what you get." I added: "This is hip hop, it is about making the most of what you have. Dancers did not always have access to beautiful studios." "Yeah," she replied, "When you learn hip hop in a gym, you don't

have tech and a white board, you learn by doing. I'm intentional about not using too much tech in my class." Iglesias originally wished for a classroom where students had more freedom to move to challenge how bodies are constricted in academia and how teachers are afraid to involve movement in their curriculum. Iglesias acknowledged the larger institutional power structure in place when she could not switch the classroom space to adapt to her original pedagogical needs. Instead, she used the institutional barriers as sources of inspiration to do something different and prove that the existing spatial and structural constraints will not stop her from being a creative and culturally responsive teacher.

I bring here Moncell Durden's voice (associate professor of practice in jazz, hip hop, and improvisation at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles) to contrast Iglesias' experience. During our interview⁶³, Durden shared the ways he implements embodied practices in his classroom: "Sometimes we are up, we make a circle, we group desks [...]. Sometimes I take them down to the dance studio because you have to embody to understand how it feels in your body. [...] It must be interactive because we have different learners; kinesthetic learners, listeners, visual learners etc. [...]. We cover all the modes of learning." Moving is essential in Durden's pedagogy and helps students with diverse learning abilities. This is definitively what embodied hip hop pedagogies are all about. I also chose this quote because it shows that one pedagogical strategy Durden chooses to connect the content taught in the classroom to movement is "tak[ing] them [his students] down to the dance studio." In other words, this quote

⁶³ In-person interview conducted on October 4, 2018 in Los Angeles.

shows the limitation of the classroom space to engage in meaningful embodied practices, which pushed him to use the dance studio. But it also shows that, unlike Iglesias, as an associate professor, Durden had the power to extend his teaching space to a studio, which was not an option for Iglesias. This speaks to my argument about the deep connection between positionality and possibility when engaging in call-and-response *otherwise* in and institutional space. Furthermore, the “taking students down to the studio” shows the proximity between the two spaces; the studio is only steps away from his classroom. I have been to the Glorya Kaufman School of Dance several times; Durden and I even conducted our interview there. So I can testify about this proximity. In comparison to a public University such as UCR, USC is a private university with much more funding and resources. Entering the USC school of dance for the first time, I was blown away by the beautiful studios, flexible classrooms, and “five stars hotel-like” lobby areas. It is a fancy space, to say the least. Furthermore, as Brandon Aitken mentioned to me, USC is one of the universities of Southern California with the most hip hop teachings because they received an endorsement from Dr. Dre and other music producers. My point is that having institutional support is an undeniable factor in creating a meaningful embodied hip hop teaching and learning environment. Even, let’s say, Iglesias was given access to a dance studio, it would have been nearly impossible for her to combine classroom and studio teachings because 1) they are simply not enough dance studios at UCR; 2) they are usually not accessible to faculty outside of the dance department; and 3) they are located too far away from her classroom. Iglesias and Durden do not have the same infrastructural means and therefore do not engage with embodiment the same way.

Despite the physical restrictions, Iglesias provided opportunities for students to be physically active during her lectures to combat the static nature of learning in academia and the typical notion of how a classroom should operate.

b. Challenging stillness:

One way Iglesias avoided constant stillness was by organizing a break in the middle of the lesson. She broke down her lecture in two sections. In the first part of her lecture, she lead a discussion with some reminders, and in the second part, moved on to organizing an activity such as the speed rap pedagogy or a hip hop and sports board game. The half-point break enabled students to stand up, walk around, and chat amongst themselves. Her activities were also designed in such ways that physical activity was involved. Students were moving across the classroom to write on the board; standing in small circles and throwing a soccer ball at each other; or moving from one spot to another in and out of the classroom which is out of the ordinary especially in a higher education setting. So, Iglesias designed her curriculum and pedagogy around movement and did not let her content get in the way of moving in the classroom. Instead, she came up with activities that would serve both her content and desires to implement physical activity.

In sum, embodiment had a significant role in Iglesias' pedagogy as she adapted her curriculum to make moving a priority. In other words, she choreographed teaching and learning to give movement a place in her classroom and enabled her students to learn differently, challenging the stillness present in traditional Western education settings. With that said, similar to Hinds and Love, during my two classroom observations, Iglesias did not necessarily point out her pedagogical reasoning for the movement

activities in her classroom. She told me, after I pointed out the restrictive classroom space, how she was purposeful in keeping this classroom set up and working around it. However, this was not, I think, communicated to her students. I do think though that, this extra step of clarifying the meaning of embodiment in her pedagogy to the young adults, would have helped them make new connections, critical reflections about their positionality or the role of hip hop in academia. Indeed, the meaning behind embodiment is not something that is clear to most people because education has been dissociated with embodied knowledge for so long. And so, I think that when educators are aware of the power of kinesthetic knowledge, they should share it with their students. But, as I will discuss in the next chapter-cypher, this is far from being an easy task.

Iglesias case-study conclusion:

My short fieldwork at Iglesias' "Hip Hop, Education, and Sports" classes helps to support my thematic findings from Hinds' ethnographic research and Love's video choreographic readings. Indeed, the lectures and the few encounters I had with Iglesias emphasized that hip hop pedagogy was plural, embodied, and deeply rooted in social justice. Right off the bat, Iglesias' agenda for her classes was clear: students will be pushed to participate in social action and think critically about hip hop and education. The level of trust and deep care Iglesias held for her students was very apparent. She was more than their instructor. Her pedagogy in and outside the classroom showed that one of her main goals was to impact her students' lives positively. Her curriculum and pedagogy were designed in such ways that her students would experience different educational content and build new skills such as creating a rap or game (i.e. classroom content),

networking, or interviewing. I know that she spent a long time really thinking about the pedagogy, seeking originality for the delivery of the knowledge that was embodied, entertaining, and relevant to her students' generation. Buying four soccer balls for her "peer sharing" exercise and coming up with a smart cyclic structure for the in-and-out of the classroom rap pedagogy activity require a lot of prior organization. Her dedication to make these classes "not just a typical class" was evident. However, although her effort to create a transformative and embodied classroom experience was very apparent, I don't think she communicated the role of embodiment in her classes *per se*.

We need more educators who really put themselves in their students' shoes and think/create/teach from their perspective. The limitations present in the education system often does not permit for such dedication, time, and learning. However, by challenging these systemic realities, Iglesias activated knowledge *otherwise*. The combination of the socially engaged agenda with the diversity of pedagogical tools Iglesias incorporated in her course constitutes call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*.

Cross-analysis of the case-studies:

In this section, I perform a comparative analysis of Hinds', Love's and Iglesias' case-studies. The sites, objects, and methods in each case-study are extremely divergent. However, I identified three common themes amongst them. For clarity purposes, this section is also structured by the same three thematic areas. After learning about the specificities of each case-study earlier, it is relevant now to look at them side by side to understand how as a whole, they impact the field of hip hop pedagogy, challenge and/or participate in Western epistemologies of the education system and activate knowledge

otherwise. After summarizing my cross-thematic findings, I will focus on the pedagogical findings which are a source of inspiration for my embodied hip hop pedagogies model. Finally, I pose the questions: how to *be* and *do* hip hop in academia. This section constitutes an opportunity to recall the key outcomes of each case-study and ask new critical questions. Cross-analyzing also indicates the interconnected nature of this research. Even though each class was independent from each other, they all come together as one *otherwise* cypher in this dissertation and inform my overall vision of the embodied hip hop pedagogies model.

Theme 1: Teaching and choreographing space:

In the case-studies, I analyzed how the spatial construction of a classroom impacts classroom participants' ways of being, knowing, and moving. Just as hip hop pioneers have challenged traditional ways of partying and training, our hip hop pedagogues also have repurposed the classrooms. Hip hop dancers and educators move in this in-betweenness of sorts: between resisting the predetermined limits of space and being “victims” of institutional barriers. This seems to be a complex conundrum.

I believe all three teachers have successfully resisted the institutional power held over their bodies and those of their students. Indeed, despite the infrastructural challenges of traditional teaching and learning spaces, they have choreographed their classroom space in ways that work for their curriculum and pedagogy, and ultimately benefit their students. Not only does the choreographer have a say about what happens in the choreography, they can also choreograph in/with the space. Choreographing the classroom then is assessing the space, and despite its difficulties, from a choreographic

point of view (small, crowded, narrow rows, electric cords on the floor, carpet, static boards and furniture etc.), take on the challenge to make the space work for your choreography, your vision of the pedagogical experience.

I don't think looking at spatial performative patterns in the classroom is enough to fully grasp how and why people move, because movements in the classroom are culturally and socially constructed. Indeed, I believe that the way one moves in the classroom is deeply connected with one's identity and positionality in society. I looked at how instructors choreograph their classroom and how their identity (in terms of race, gender, and power) impacts what and how they are able to do that. Although this analysis is not the direct focus of my research, I looked at which teachers' bodies performed certain performative acts and why. We saw how as tenured faculty, Hinds and Love had more leeway as to how and where they could teach, as opposed to Iglesias, as an invited quarter-long lecturer. I also discussed how as a recognized man and storyteller engaged in hip hop from his teens, Hinds had acquired social and cultural capital to create fun, embodied, hip hop teaching and learning environments. All three educators are faculty of color whose movements and behaviors in Western institutional spaces are limited and policed⁶⁴. And so, for them to be challenging these spaces and sharing their embodied pedagogy *do* something. Teaching hip hop pedagogy is extremely political.

Can knowledge be contained in the classroom? After observing Hinds, Iglesias, and Love's classes, I realized that teaching and learning about hip hop education happens

⁶⁴ This article mentioned earlier discusses the disproportionate number of faculty of color, and especially Black Faculty: "The Missing Back Faculty" by Colleen Flaherty published on Inside Higher Ed.

in and out of the classroom. While I already discussed how all three teachers expanded their physical instructional space beyond the classroom, I now refer to the more abstract teaching space dedicated outside of their official teaching time as ‘outside-the-classroom’. In other words, their curriculum and pedagogy are built in such ways that students, regardless of their ages, can expand their knowledge and practice of hip hop beyond the schools’ walls through mentorship, and individual and/or community praxis. I demonstrated how the teachers used ‘outside-the-classroom’ channels and spaces to convey their teaching about hip hop and education, and how these abstract spaces constitute an essential part of being a hip hop pedagogue. These examples started the conversations about the institutional limitations of traditional teaching and learning methods. Because of the different mediums used to expand their teachings, the call-and-response has a larger impact than the classroom and the students. The teaching “touches” more people, expanding the call-and-response to a global one, like the *otherwise* cypher.

This section was dedicated to the role and impact of teaching and mentoring outside of the classroom. For Hinds, his teachings outside of the classroom occurred in a variety of physical spaces, mostly on the UCR campus but also in places where students received professional opportunities. Love’s and Iglesias’s extra teachings spaces were virtual, taking on YouTube and Facebook. Once again, I demonstrated that teaching hip hop education is a resistive act and therefore a form of social justice. More broadly, I demonstrated that legitimate knowledge such as hip hop culture can be created and transmitted anywhere, in the streets, in a gym, in a studio, or in a classroom.

Ultimately, what choreographing space does is challenge the Cartesian mind and body split. Indeed, as discussed in the introduction of this dissertation, in traditional classroom settings, the mind, the intelligentsia, is supposed to be disconnected from the body. In that scenario, students must remain still and quiet while brains absorb knowledge. Choreographing the classroom counters this idea by allowing students to learn through their whole bodies. By enabling them to stand up, move, go outside, and perform, choreographing the classroom enables hip hop educators to reconnect the act of teaching and learning as a whole-body experience.

Theme 2: Teaching social justice and teaching as social justice:

In this theme, I described how Hinds, Love, and Iglesias incorporated social justice teachings in their curriculum but also by purposefully doing so, practiced social justice themselves, thus bringing the praxis inside the classroom. I argued that their engaged pedagogy is a form of call-and-response *otherwise* between the teachers calling for action and raising awareness, and the students responding via *doing something*, moving, and participating.

My cross-choreographic reading of Hinds', Love's, and Iglesias' hip hop education classrooms demonstrates that teaching hip hop education is social justice because teachers: (1) help legitimize hip hop in their curriculum; (2) focus on the histories of the forgotten and marginalized; (3) view hip hop through a critical lens and participate in making hip hop better; and (4) make empowerment a key factor of their pedagogy when the educational system fails to recognize people of colors' contribution to the world (i.e. deficit thinking and invisibilization)

a. The role of embodiment in teaching hip hop history:

All three teachers started their curriculum/course with the history of hip hop culture, though their points of origin differed: Bronx Fires for Hinds; West African Griots for Love; DJ Kool Herc's Performances for Iglesias. Others may choose to discuss the Transatlantic slave trade, jazz or reggae music, etc. Pinpointing an exact date and location for the origins of hip hop is reductionist. Indeed, as Paul Gilroy argues in his book *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), contrary to common limited nationalist discourses about race, ethnicity, and culture, black diasporic cultural and intellectual production are not the result of a single geo-politic unit, but rather, a hybrid mix of African, Caribbean, American, and British cultures and contexts all at once (6). Hip hop, rooted in African American history, is the product of multigenerational and multi-spatial embodied realities (33). Thus, these three different points of origins chosen by the teachers are not wrong. All these events are relevant parts of hip hop lineage and history. They made a geographic and chronological choice adjusting to the context and the time limitations of their course.

Starting the course with the history/ies of hip hop not only frames the rest of the curriculum with a particular event in history as a point of departure for other historical events which may require critical analysis, but also grounds the students with a certain kind of socio-political and cultural message. In my short teaching experience, I also realized that starting the curriculum with the origins of hip hop and later moving onto discussing hip hop today or other related subjects is effective from a pedagogical perspective. Indeed, whether we love or hate hip hop, it is a culture worth learning about

because of its origins (rooted in African American and Puerto Rican culture and struggle, and marginalization) before its global evolution. As Iglesias expressed to me, “Hip Hop is a culture that you must engage in, and it is a culture that requires knowledge of its foundation and respect of the pioneers. Had I come to the culture from academia first, I would have never represented the culture in an authentic, respectable way.” Starting with the roots, the founders and communities, and the original philosophies behind the culture, helps students understand how and why it evolved to what hip hop is today. Furthermore, most of the students I encountered in my classes, and in Hinds’ and Iglesias’ classes, who disliked hip hop, did so because of stereotypes, misconceptions, and lack of awareness about its history and meanings; after learning of its roots, however, students gained respect for the culture and even, for some, started to become engaged in hip hop in a more meaningful way. K. a student from Hinds’ class expressed, “I am more opened to it, [...] I have a bit more respect for what it is. [...] Before I did not give much thought.”⁶⁵ Similarly, Liliana shared how before she “thought [hip hop] was what the media shows you, like rapping, making these funky beats, things that lead you to fame, money, girls, and stuff, without knowing what goes into that. [...] I realized after taking the class it is so much more, it is part of Culture. [...] People who were the founding fathers of hip hop, they created it so that people would not fight or kill themselves. [...] All these different things, I did not know [...].”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Quote from interview conducted on June 14, 2018 with K., student in Hinds’ hip hop theater class.

⁶⁶ Quote from interview conducted on June 15, 2018 with Liliana, student in Hinds’ hip hop theater class.

Starting the course with the origins of hip hop does not necessarily mean that the curriculum is built chronologically or is linear. Indeed, all three teachers have also taken the approach to focus on each artistic elements of hip hop which inevitably creates a cycle or back and forth between contemporary hip hop and its origins where the past informs the present and the future. Like a call-and-response *otherwise*, the curriculum is multidirectional.

In sum, as an introduction, it is effective to start a course with the origins of hip hop, especially to provide context to those who, once like me, did not know much about hip hop culture other than what the media portrayed.

All three teachers used embodied performance as a vehicle to transmit knowledge from a past time and space into their classroom. Hip hop emerged before the internet but luckily, we have images of what hip hop looked like as well as early practitioners who are still alive and who can pass on the knowledge about hip hop of their time. In addition to providing a 2D visual experience through fractions of documentaries, images, and texts that represent the earlier period and context, all three teachers provided an active, present, embodied experience. For example, after explaining who West African Griots were, Love organized a dance and drumming freestyle to introduce her students to the art of beat-making. This in-class freestyle session enabled students to experience with their own bodies how something from a different time and space (ancient African Griot art) is relevant in today's culture (hip hop) and therefore how the past informs the present. To me, bringing the past into the classroom through embodied practices is a form of call-and-response *otherwise* that enacts social justice. Put differently, using embodiment as a

way of reasserting the value of marginalized bodies and their histories in the classroom space challenges the current culture of education based on Eurocentricity and disembodiment. Acting towards educational change through movement constitutes a form of embodied social justice.

Unlike Love, Iglesias, and Hinds, I did not grow up in the U.S in the seventies with hip hop. However, I try to bring hip hop history in the classroom through embodiment by explaining *Soul Train*⁶⁷ and its impact on African American communities and hip hop and recreate our own version of the *Soul Train* line with my students. My level of proximity to the origins of hip hop culture is less than Love, Iglesias, and Hinds; I therefore learn from other educators and bring my more contemporary experience with hip hop culture as historical and embodied knowledge to my students. So, it is not simply that I learn about the use of embodied pedagogies but that I am learning through the embodied pedagogies. My experience of learning evidences that these embodied pedagogies are meaningful, that they have the possibility to transmit knowledge effectively, to the extent that I can become a hip hop pedagogue myself in the future.

Love, Hinds, Iglesias, and I use different strategies to teach about the history of hip hop but we all have a similar goal to revive a portion of history for students to experience, in an embodied and lively manner, giving students a glimpse of what hip hop used to be like.

⁶⁷ *Soul Train* was a dance and music television program which started airing in the 70's. Performers were in majority African Americans who showcased their moves notably during the Soul Train line, a human locomotive where performers dance down the line of people towards the camera. This show was crucial in the history of the African American media and hip hop as it was one of the first time that African American performances were broadcasted at such a large scale.

b. Raising socio-political awareness:

Before I discuss how the teachers incorporated these social justice teachings, I will include a few anecdotes that speak to and deconstruct the knowledges of hip hop that different students/practitioners/educators bring to the classroom:

As a teenager and young adult, like most of Hinds, Iglesias, and Love's students, I used to participate in hip hop culture (dancing and listening to songs) without really knowing what it was. I knew it was cool because the popular boys in my middle school were breakdancing and wearing baggies and caps, thus going against the school's rules—which I loved—and I could drop a few French rappers' names that were popular on MCM (the French MTV). Like most non-connoisseurs, I thought hip hop was the representation I saw of gangster culture, money, and women in bikinis. It was not until my college years and my involvement in the street dance community in Paris, that I gained interest in hip hop's origins and socio-political context.

I open this sub-section with this story because unless one lives in a socio-cultural context where hip hop constitutes an essential part of their upbringing/background, they likely won't know what hip hop really is about without a considerable amount of research. Indeed, the images and information about hip hop that are readily accessible do not give a comprehensive representation of the culture. For example, at the beginning of Hinds and Iglesias' courses, students were surprised to learn that hip hop included five core elements (dj, emceeing, breakdancing, graffiti, knowledge). And for most students, their knowledge of hip hop was limited to the recent popular rap artists. Unless hip hop

was an intricate part of a teenager's upbringing, it is rather rare for someone to know the history of hip hop at a young age and there is nothing wrong with that.

I had an interesting conversation with the attendees at my talk during the Show and Prove 2018 conference. Before I dove into my research presentation, I introduced myself quite at length because I think that it is important for conference attendees to learn more about the human being behind the research and understand the story behind how they were brought to engage in such research and practice. I shared with the audience what was my "Aha" moment with hip hop, the sort of divine introduction to hip hop culture, which led me to who and where I am today: during my first freestyle training session in a gym in one of the poorest neighborhoods outside Paris, I experienced for the first time a teaching and learning environment that agreed with me, where I could be who I was and where my bi-cultural background and my various dance trainings were embraced. It was my first encounter with the "each one teach one" mantra of hip hop.

At the conference, I asked attendees to move in the conference room until I said: "Freeeeeeeeze!" Next, I asked the frozen bodies to share with people next to them what was their own "Aha" moment with hip hop. After a few minutes of small-groups chats, I brought it back as a larger group, and asked a few audience members to share their observations. Moncell Durden, renowned hip hop practitioner and lecturer in the dance department at USC shared that until recently, he always believed that hip hop could not be dissociated from blackness, i.e., Black people's identity, lifestyle, and culture. During an interview conducted earlier that year, he told me: "I grew up in a community where everyone was dancing from 2 to 82 years old. Dancing was everywhere, in parks,

playgrounds, skating rings, schools, clubs etc. [...] To me, it's not so much about hip hop but more about social and cultural upbringing, what blackness is to me rather than what hip hop is to me. Hip hop is derivative, it comes out of blackness, our experience, cultural identity [...]. Hip hop is just a new name for what African American people have been.”⁶⁸ At the conference, however, he added to his preliminary comment by saying that through the “freeze exchange” and others like it, he slowly came to the realization that, for communities other than African American from (certain) urban settings and upbringings such as his students, foreign practitioners, or other scholars like myself, hip hop does not necessarily mean blackness, nor does it come “naturally, ” and that there was a point of entry into hip hop culture which was dissociated from their upbringing and cultural background.

This piece of information matters in the context of the choreographic readings of Hinds,’ Iglesias,’ and Love’s classes because their students are from a generation that have been passively immersed in hip hop culture through popular media but did not grow up or experience the beginnings of hip hop culture in the same way their teachers did. Of course, generation cannot be the only parameter to consider while referencing one’s proximity or knowledge about hip hop. Indeed, going back to Durden’s point, despite race and class-based assumptions that imagine a link between urban black youth and hip hop culture —which, by the way, is one of the main arguments about the relevance of using hip hop education in urban youth setting, that it speaks to the youth of such community – the students in all three of my case-study classes were surprised about the

⁶⁸ In-person interview conducted on October 4, 2018.

five elements, suggesting that none of them were aware of these histories. Because each individual has had a different connection to hip hop, it was important for the teachers to teach some of the fundamental aspects of hip hop culture (the five elements and the history of hip hop culture), before delving into its larger socio-political implications.

c. Empowerment:

In a society where a majority of the education system is built on deficit thinking theories for people of color, it is essential to reassert our diverse student population's identities and realities in the classroom. In contrast to deficit models, as Iglesias explained, "Hip Hop creates a sense of belonging and can develop one's cultural wealth," which she stated can increase retention rates in higher education. In other words, part of the teachings organized in Hinds, Iglesias', and Love's courses are built in conjunction with personal and communal empowerment. To them, social justice does not only mean teaching about social issues, but helping their students critically reflect how these issues affect them and their communities as well as reaffirming the power of their voices as individuals and community members.

Their teachings demonstrate the empowering nature of hip hop education and highlight that education and critical thinking do not always come from, nor solely belong, in the classroom space but that education can be found in individuals' homes and communities⁶⁹. Although the ways each teacher practiced empowerment may have differed, they all had in common the use of creativity and movement in the classroom. In

⁶⁹ According to Dr. Mizuko Ito, learning that happens outside of the classroom such as at home, online, or in the communities is valuable and legitimate. Such learning is called connected learning. According to Ito, schools should capitalize on connected learning as students feel more inspired by such learning and can directly connect their learning to their future career interests.

other words, students possessed agency to “dictate what the class was going to be”⁷⁰. Their active participation challenged the teacher-student hierarchy as well as the static and silent setting found in traditional education systems, and therefore, constitute a liberating and empowering praxis, and participated in knowledge *otherwise*.

Hinds’, Love’s and Iglesias’ affirmative messages and motivating attitudes, instead of being dogmatic and punitive, were essential parts of the empowering process. What really helped students to feel empowered was their freedom of choice, creativity, and movement. Students were trusted not to be simply passive listeners, but active knowledge producers whether through their ongoing invitation to share ideas and opinions, their creation and movement in the space, or their class presentation or final show. Hinds’, Love’s, and Iglesias’ curriculum was built in such ways that individual identities were revalidated by the teacher and a safe collective of peers. Even though students seemed unsure at first about what the classes were going to be, after only a few minutes, they already seemed relieved and empowered to explore knowledge *otherwise*.

Theme 3: Embodiment in the classroom:

Hinds’, Love’s, and Iglesias’ hip hop education classes were highly embodied however, the value of kinesthetic knowledge was not explicitly taught. I argue that hip hop and pedagogy should not be dissociated from embodied knowledge and that there is a need to render their connections more visible and purposeful to help legitimize kinesthesia in the education system.

⁷⁰ Quote from interview conducted on June 5, 2018 with Kim, a student in Hinds’ Hip Hop Theater Class

Even in the most traditional of educational settings, movements occur, and it is a pity for educational institutions not to learn more about what potential such movements hold and mean. For instance, in his ethnographic study of middle school classrooms, Ben Rampton argues that teaching and learning are whole-class performances, because students as audience members and participants are part of the performative project (62). To him, teaching and learning refer to bodies that perform and interact with energy, which is only possible when acknowledging that students and the teacher are embodied beings interacting with one another, with agency, as opposed to immobile or presence-less bodies. In addition, students are culturally expressive beings and performers who find ways to choreograph the classrooms even if the pedagogical style of the classroom does not intend to build on embodiment and popular culture. Rampton suggests that students' use of their body through humming and singing popular songs in his middle school class, has a direct effect on the teaching and learning environment because in urban areas, it is common to grow up with popular/hip hop music, and so the students' lived experience comes in the classroom and facilitates the dynamics of the teaching and learning occurring in that space. Not only is an embodied experience occurring, temporality (past and current lived experiences) also impacts the teaching and learning, thus making them a cultural and full-bodied experience (211).

Each educator developed a unique approach to embodiment and they all undoubtedly challenged the disembodiment and immobility of traditional education. However, did they truly place the body at the center of their pedagogy? As a participant in their pedagogy, my answer is yes. I moved, I was moved, so did the students. But as a

dance scholar, I still wish for the role of embodiment in their pedagogy to be placed further forward, especially because it is usually so hidden. In my conversations with them, it was clear that hip hop was not only part of their practice but who they are: “I am Hip Hop” (Iglesias) thus testifying to the role of embodiment in their life and pedagogy. Perhaps, then, because performance is such a big part of hip hop and because embodiment is so embedded in their everyday life, kinesthesia became a given to them, which may have caused them in return, to forget to mention its importance to students.

The three educators activated call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* by pushing students to participate in self-and communal exploration, to connect their bodies and movements to real life phenomenon, thus connecting knowledge in the classroom to who they are, as well as how they move and learn in the world. However, call-and-response *otherwise* worked only partially because the value of kinesthesia felt slightly secondary.

Being and embodying hip hop philosophies:

The possibilities and limits of “each one teach one” in academia:

“I could spend a lifetime explaining why Hip Hop belongs in the academe. If people understood what real Hip Hop is, what it means to be Hip Hop, and how impactful this culture is, they would be actively advocating for Hip Hop as a general education course. [...] Hip Hop lives and breathes in the community, academia is still learning how to be culturally relevant and responsive and Hip Hop gives them all the tools necessary to do

this.
I am Hip Hop”
—Tasha Iglesias⁷¹

⁷¹ Quote from interview conducted online with Tasha Iglesias on August 16, 2019

Here, I discuss how Hinds, Love, and Iglesias *are* hip hop in their classrooms by embodying core hip hop philosophies such as “each one teach one.” I argue that by practicing these pedagogical and life philosophies, the three teachers challenge institutional limits within the education system.

After observing all three teachers, I noticed that they *are* hip hop in and out of the classroom. My observations conducted outside of the typical classroom/instruction time demonstrated that the educators live by these principles especially through the “each one teach one” philosophy. In other words, they do not simply wear the hip hop educator’s hat when they enter the classroom; hip hop is not something they just do inside the classroom, but rather a lifestyle. The examples shown below describe how teachers go above and beyond to advocate for hip hop and their students even outside of their workspace. Their engagement manifested during our conversations and with other students, or online. Hip hop culture and the positive educational values it instills constitute an essential part of who they are and how they are. Dan, a college student interviewed in Dr. Emery Petchauer’s book, illustrates the embodiment of hip hop culture very well: [...] to me, it’s like breathing. You don’t say ‘I love breathing,’ you know what I’m sayin’?” (54). By using breathing as an example, a vital natural action of the body, Dan shows that hip hop can be visceral; hip hop is part of his physiology and is necessary to live. In short, hip hop is more than a simple practice, it is part of who you are. So, what does *being* hip hop in the classroom look like?

As discussed earlier, educating about hip hop is to embrace its roots, history, and to be critical about hip hop. Moreover, hip hop educators tend to adopt a social justice

and empowerment angle in their pedagogy which can be associated with ethos such as “come as you are” and “I am because we are.” So, part of being hip hop is valuing all these aspects that come with hip hop culture and transmitting them to the students.

One of the most famous hip hop philosophies is “each one teach one” which highlights the peer-mentorship present in hip hop culture. Every time I meet with Hinds, I learn about a new student he is mentoring, a new artist he is taking under his wing, or new projects he is supporting. He may not be able to teach a specific hip hop element or a skill, like his emcee, DJ, breakdancer, or graffiti writer colleagues would, but his dedication to mentoring others by giving time, space, emotional and professional support, is how he embodies the “each one teach one” philosophy of hip hop culture.

While “service” is one of the pillars of public university professorship, the amount of time and energy Hinds dedicates to mentoring his students goes much beyond his regular duties as a faculty member. Obviously, the need for mentoring is there; his students and the artistic community of the Inland Empire need it. While he finds his job and mentoring fulfilling, the education system places a disproportionate amount of invisible labor of faculty of color (Matthew)⁷². This study as well as my personal experience being mentored by faculty of color, have shown that faculty of color spend more time mentoring their students than their white counterparts. Faculty of color disproportionately help marginalized students because they feel they need to fill the gap due to the lack of support and representation in the current education system. An African

⁷² Matthew, Patricia A. “What Is Faculty Diversity Worth to a University?” *The Atlantic*, 23 Nov. 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/11/what-is-faculty-diversity-worth-to-a-university/508334/>.

American student of Hinds mentioned that it was refreshing to be in a classroom where they feel they belong because it was about hip hop, an Afro-diasporic culture, because they were more black students in the classrooms than they ever saw on campus, and because they had an Afro-descended faculty for the first time in the course of their studies at UCR. However, studies and conversations with faculty of color have shown me that the extra service work can sometimes turn into a burden or even lead to depression because of the energy, passion, and personal attachments put into the mentorship. This poses the questions to what extent does “each one teach one” work in academia? Can it? Indeed, due to the current structure, peer-mentorship is considered an extra duty and perceived of lesser importance than curriculum teaching even though, it seems according to my interviews, that it is one of the learning strategies our youth thrives on the most. Therefore, mentorship is practiced sometimes at the expense of the mentors who are taxed by the amount of responsibilities on their shoulders.

Caring is how Hinds practices “each one teach one” in and out of the classroom. In this scenario, if we look at the institutional response, call-and-response looks more like a call-and-non-response. By engaging in extra service work, Hinds has started the call. However, as of yet, the education system has failed to respond with adequate resources and support systems and to the need for mentorship and alternative pedagogical strategies. So, in this way, Hinds’ call has not been answered, thus not fully functioning.

The institutional response has been a non-response, but that does not mean there is no response at all. For instance, students responded by their active participation and post-course reflection during the interviews; I responded by taking up the educator’s

teachings. Put simply, “each one teach one” can be practiced by saying: “it is meant to be shared to the world.” When I bumped into Hinds on campus and shared with him the news that I was going to teach at a middle school in Riverside and shyly asked him if I could use some of his hip hop theater activities with my future students, he replied, “That is so great! Of Course! It is meant to be shared, not kept with me!” His enthusiasm and willingness to pass down his knowledge to me and to other students proved how he lives through the “each one teach one” principle and engages in a call-and-response *otherwise* at a larger scale, a scale that goes beyond the physical classroom and his students.

Mentoring can happen one on one, where a mentor helps a mentee practicing a move, a music set and so forth. But mentoring can also be at a larger scale, especially in our digital age. As seen earlier, Love and Iglesias use the internet as pedagogical platform. I believe that sharing their knowledge to a broad audience via YouTube and Facebook is an act of mentorship and builds a perpetual network of mentors and mentees. Love also created a website, getfreehiphopcivics.com, which compiles free pedagogical resources about hip hop to be used by practitioners, educators, or students. Their willingness to give unconditionally constitutes the proof that they practice what they preach and truly *are* hip hop in and out of the classroom.

Hip hop cannot be dissociated from performance; every hip hop element is performative and inherently involves people. Performance, more than being a hip hop philosophy, simply is hip hop. So, to go back to the role of embodiment in Hinds, Love’s, and Iglesias classes and its occasional invisibilization, an area where hip hop educators can learn from dance studies’ scholars and dance practitioners, is how to communicate

about the meaning behind movement in their classes. Hinds, Love, and Iglesias are already doing the work: all these classes involved a lot of embodiment. However, I believe that by adding an explanatory layer to their embodied practices, they would help legitimize the power of dance in academia and in the world.

Finally, as a hip hop ethnographer, mentor, and teacher myself, I have the responsibility to *be* hip hop in and out of the classroom. This is one of the reasons why I perform the hip hop ethos of giving credit, of naming the pioneers, and including their contributions and voice. It is my way to thank people who gave their time to this research. I consider it my job as a hip hop community member to perpetuate this ethos.

Doing hip hop in academia: identity negotiation in formal setting:

How to *be* or teach hip hop in the academy? The “academization” of hip hop—in other words, the study of hip hop by academic scholars— is part of an ongoing debate as it is considered a way of opening opportunities to study hip hop in an interdisciplinary way while also confining it to the academy. On one side of the spectrum, hip hop studies are considered by some to be a “new sociology” with a positive effect of globalization because the study of hip hop allows a more bottom up, grassroots approach than traditional ones (Snell and Soderman 80). On the other side, according to Harmanci “universities may need hip-hop more than hip-hop needs universities” (Snell and Soderman 78) because universities’ agenda is to reach urban populations, which is problematic but may have been one of the entry ways for hip hop to be programmed into academia. So, is hip hop’s arrival in academia good or bad? Again, we are faced with a conundrum of participation in the system while combatting it at the same time... Being

an academic comes with certain unspoken rules and ways of being which come from Eurocentric and Western values for education such as stillness, discipline, hierarchy, emphasis on written and spoken words, formality etc. and these can sometimes be antithetical to *being* hip hop which values different approaches such as bottom-up, collective learning, multidisciplinary, social justice, etc. Our teachers did not learn hip hop at school, in a formal institution. Hip hop was part of their upbringing, their culture, who they were at home and in their neighborhood. Yet, they decided to teach hip hop in an academic institution to make a difference. According to Iglesias, a bridge needs to connect the two “worlds:” “I am making it my life’s work to create a bridge between the [hip hop] culture and the academe. Both need to authentically represent the other with a focus on empowerment of our underrepresented, underserved population.” Iglesias embodies this bridge, which she explains, can only be meaningful if educators both focus on students’ empowerment and represent each other’s culture accurately. So, as an aspiring scholar and hip hop educator myself, I wonder how can I work in both worlds?

During her first class, one of the first things Iglesias told her students was something along the lines of, “the way you see me dressed now, this isn’t really me. I dressed like this [formally] because it’s my first day. But you will see, throughout the weeks, I will get more comfortable and you will see me in baggy and cap real soon.” Iglesias adjusted her clothing to appear more “academic” and fit in the traditional formal dress code associated with academia. In a way, one could argue that she code-switched between her hip hop self and her academic self. Code-switching in hip hop can be defined as a “balancing practice between the “street” life and the values attached to that lifestyle,

and the life and values gained by civil rights, such as upward class mobility and is a common practice for hip hop practitioner due to the difference in terms of images, expectations, values, practices ... between the hip hop world and the academic world” (Clay 5). Whereas code-switching comes with negative connotations (loss of street credibility, authenticity), for some, code-switching is a survival mechanism; youth tend to adopt this identity-strategy to move up socially *and* be part of their black community (Clay 2012, Perry 2004, Jeffries 2011). They address oppression and opportunity in a double manner perhaps because, opportunity, today, is linked to adapting to colonial and capitalist ways of being and knowing. Code switching is directly related to larger U.S’ systemic issues. On the one hand, hip hop participants want to keep it real, but by doing so, may inevitably participate in the reinforcement of stereotypes associated with hip hop culture. They want to feel respected and to belong to both realities. On a similar note, during one of our informal conversations, Hinds confided to me that working in academia required one to “play the game,” meaning that in order to pay the bills and teach what you like, you need to follow certain rules and be ready to give up some level of freedom.

Love’s books, talks, and lectures, are inspired by abolitionist theories and her pedagogy is structured around the idea of restructuring the education system using bottom-up approaches to education such as hip hop. Love broadcasts her ten-sessions class on hip hop education for social justice, and she is the chair of the Kindezi Schools. She certainly aims to resist traditional schooling. However, as a full-time assistant professor, how often can she teach this class? Is it in the permanent curriculum? Can it be taught by any teacher? How does the Kindezi School’s position as a charter school, and

the need to comply with state testing, impact the extent to which knowledge *otherwise* can be enacted in the classroom? I believe that Love's work can be life changing. My goal here is to point out some potential limits of hip hop pedagogy and the Kindezi charter school model belonging in a complex conundrum between participation in and deconstruction of Western dominant practices.

Charter schools, like other public K-12 schools, are free for students and are mostly funded by the state. However, they differ from public schools because their management and organizational charts are independently run by businesses, parents, individuals etc. In other words, charter schools are granted greater flexibility in their operations but must follow some institutional regulations such as upholding the promises made in their charter and academic results. The schools usually serve students who “have similar demographic characteristics to students in the local public schools and accept students them by random”⁷³. (panamericancharter.org) At first glance, this seems like a model that resists mainstream traditional schooling and aims to empower the population it serves. If we dig a little deeper, though, we notice that charter schools can easily fall under the mainstream education capitalist economy. The states are not held accountable to provide quality education to their population. If businesses create the charters, the curriculum may reflect capitalist ideologies. Charter schools can fundraise, and therefore, partake in an economy of donations where wealthy organizations or individuals donate to lower their taxes. Because they are accountable for grades, charter schools must primarily focus on academic performance. Finally, because charter schools do not possess the same

⁷³ “What is a charter school”, accessed on March 2020. <http://www.panamericancharter.org/>

state-wide organization and curricula, the schools must engage in branding and marketing, thus participating in the capitalist economy of image and media. Therefore, although charter schools, including the Kindezi School, may have been created to find freedom of action and develop innovative strategies to serve their population better, they are included in the capitalist economy, which can complicate their original intentions to resist traditional schooling practices. This effect shows that it is complicated to move out of this big economic system and truly delink from Western epistemologies.

The Kindezi School's model is inspired by the Bantu philosophy of "holistically schooling other people's children with love and an eye to the future of our village"⁷⁴ (kindezi.org). On the one hand, most pedagogy draws inspiration from other philosophies; on the other hand, privileged groups often appropriate philosophies of other cultures without fully understanding them. I find intriguing the blending of the Bantu village philosophy with the American urban youth reality of schooling. This blending combines African American schools funded by the United States and located in a "first-world" country, with a Bantu way of teaching. I mean to point out the issue or complexity of combining two extremely different realities.

Furthermore, the Kindezi Schools' website states that their model is successful because the students perform very well at State and National tests: "In the 2014-15 school year, the Milestones test results indicated that the students enrolled in Kindezi for one year outscore their peers at APS and Georgia. However, students enrolled in Kindezi for two or more years outscore their peers new to Kindezi by almost 20 points" (kindezi.org).

⁷⁴ kindezi.org accessed in March 2018.

The missions on the website mentions that scores are not the principal focus of the school, however, it seems that performing well academically according to traditional Western educational standards is still very important if not a priority. There is a disconnect between the Bantu philosophy which is not constructed under the Western idea of curriculum, and these statements regarding performance achievements of the Kindezi Schools. This reminds us that despite the transgressive educational practices, schools are funded by government or donors who value a capitalist reality. The Kindezi Schools co-exists within that dichotomy between participation and deconstruction of Western systems, like most hip hop education. So, looking at both the mission statements and the metrics of the Kindezi Schools, the connection between their model and the Kindezi philosophy seems a bit thin. Perhaps the Kindezi philosophy is genuine, but on the website, only Western ideals of success are promoted; no Bantu markers of success are mentioned. It appears that to fit in a Western world, the school had to be marketed and conform to a degree to these western standards. To sum up, the Kindezi Schools seem to co-exist within the dichotomy between normative and non-normative systems.

Do these instances make our three teachers complicit with the system? For any engaged teachers who are critical of the education system or our society and politics, working in an institution that reproduces some of the things they are critical about, is a delicate terrain. In the meantime, the world would not change without these teachers and activists who change the status quo by exposing how things operate in upper administration and hierarchies. How to be a hip hop educator in an academic institution is a controversial subject and something with no crystal clear answer. Hip hop education

being fairly new, I believe most teachers are still in the midst of discovering what it means for themselves, and each individual experience is unique and not generalizable to all educators. These examples show that being a hip hop educator is not a simple task because one must negotiate between two worlds: hip hop and academia, which are not yet in sync due to their past and heritage. However, thanks to educators that are not afraid to step in both worlds, students now see what hip hop in academia can look like.

Pedagogical findings from hip hop education classes:

In this sub-section, I present the five key pedagogical findings from my analysis at hip hop education classes, which I will consider when developing my embodied hip hop pedagogies curricular and pedagogical model in the next chapter-cypher.

a. Otherwise cyphers can happen anywhere:

My analyses showed that my concept of the *otherwise* cypher can happen anywhere. Whether it is online, outdoors, in the hallways, or in a classroom, the imperatives of the *otherwise* cypher (i.e. embodied; peer-mentorship; transgressive) can be organized in different spaces. These kinds of call-and-responses *otherwise* may not always work, however, there is a possibility to experience teaching and learning in new ways if the opportunity is given. Thus, as a future educator, I should create openings for the embodied hip hop pedagogies to be performed in the classroom and beyond.

a. Challenging institutional boundaries:

I have learnt that being a hip hop educator means being okay with challenging the institutional systems at times whether this is done by rearranging the classroom space (choreographing the classroom), spending more time on a given embodied activity than

expected even if it does not always fit with standardized or prearranged curriculum plan (improvisation), deciding not to evaluate students through traditional grading methods but through performance, or including critical reflections about our positionality in relation to the society at large. However, it is important to recognize the power of institutions on our teaching bodies and practices. So, we must be aware of the in-betweenness in which we must navigate, between being a transgressive educator and being part of the academy.

According to theorists of space such as Merleau-Ponty and Lefebvre, spaces are extremely regulated and monitored, and therefore control our bodies and agency. So, in a given space, our freedom of choice is an illusion. They argue that large institutions such as governments and large companies have the monopole in creating public and private spaces in ways that benefit them or serve a purpose of their choosing. All in all, we become the product of the space. When we apply the theorists' argument about the lack of agency to the context of this research, we must explore the power held by the school institution, the classroom, the teachers, and the students. Indeed, the typical classroom way of being and knowing is so anchored in society now that when I try to undo these processes by implementing a different pedagogy style with more embodied practices or involving hip hop culture, I often find myself against a wall. Both students and teachers may not be equipped to re-practice the way they have been told to be and know in the classroom. As an ethnographer and teacher, I have had to adjust to the restrictive spaces in all K-12 and higher education classrooms I have been to. Whether I was teaching/observing in a hip hop theater studio at UCR, in a kindergarten in Jurupa Valley,

or in a hut in Tanzania, the spatial design restricted my ability to teach. I remember this specific instance, in my early teaching assistant days, where I was tired of the rows of desks and inhabited classroom feeling. It just did not make sense especially teaching a “dances, cultures, and contexts” course not to move and experience the teachings live. With the help of my students, I moved the desks and chairs to make more space for students to create a dance and a beat together using anything they wanted in the classroom. Naturally, students started to bang on the walls, step on the chairs, or stomp on the floor. A few seconds in, the teacher in the next room came to complain. Well, it was my mistake not being considerate enough of other classes. But this experience also showed me how classrooms structures and designs do not support knowledge *otherwise*.

For my research, I am interested in looking at how hip hop educators attempt to implement different pedagogy styles to drive people to critically reflect about their agency and bodies in motion in a given space, and to actively shift the traditional ways of teaching and learning in the classroom. I believe that what knowledge is produced is highly connected to how a space is constructed, and how bodies can or cannot move. Examples such as my own inability to dance and create music in the classroom show as a TA show that these parameters are highly influenced by positionality and status, as well as gender, race, and other socio-cultural markers.

b. Bodies and personal stories matter:

The three hip hop education classes demonstrated my hypothesis that embodied realities matter and are key to teaching and learning effectively. My interviews and observations showed that teachers and students feel more connected to a given content

when it speaks to them. And one way that it can speak to them is to make the content directly connect with their personal backgrounds and lives, such as bringing forward personal narratives into the curriculum. Also, my fieldwork showed that collaborating with different people helps bring other histories/stories into the space, diversifying the Eurocentric and disembodied education system. Furthermore, collaboration is essential because one person (the teacher) cannot know-it-all. It is therefore crucial to bring other experts into the space to diversify the knowledge and not appropriate hip hop.

c. Social justice-oriented teachings:

I have observed that teaching hip hop pedagogy is not simply about teaching the four artistic elements of hip hop, or the history of hip hop. The message behind these teachings are social justice-oriented and empowering. Through mentorship, collaborations, and community work, students and teachers can partake in making a difference globally while teaching and learning about hip hop education.

d. Being critical about hip hop, education, and society:

As educators trying out new pedagogical and curricular models, we tend to be very excited and discuss only the positive aspects of hip hop, schools, and our societies. We can become blinded by our own praxis and teachings. It is important to remind ourselves about the other perspectives, the other sides of the stories we encounter, and to not be afraid to critically reflect on them even when we truly believe in the benefits of our actions and teachings. Because of this, I communicated my observation that kinesthetic knowledge should be rendered more visible in hip hop, education, and

society. Indeed, academic settings could engage with embodiment more meaningfully and help reconnect teachers and students with their bodies and movements.

In sum, my choreographic readings of Hinds', Love's, and Iglesias hip hop education classrooms confirmed my hypothesis and demonstrated that embodied hip hop pedagogies should incorporate and practice the three themes discussed above: choreographing the classroom; teaching social justice and teaching as social justice; and embodiment in the classroom.

Conclusion and Critical Reflections:

Summary:

In this chapter-cypher, I performed choreographic readings of Hinds', Love's, and Iglesias' pedagogy from the following angles: curriculum, space, and embodiment. They pushed the boundaries of what education can look like by instructing beyond the classroom space, mentoring their students and their community using creative avenues such as social media, and using movement in their curriculum. These pedagogies are uncommon in the traditional educational system and therefore challenge the status-quo. The educators participated in call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* as they questioned educational norms, made room for personal and communal critical actions, and blurred the linearity of Cartesian time and space through kinesthesia. Furthermore, this chapter-cypher demonstrated that, as bell hooks said, "no education is politically neutral" (hooks, 37). Indeed, Hinds', Love's, and Iglesias' teachings were politically engaged, but also, we saw how their identities and status impacted the teaching and learning environment, thus reiterating the connection between embodiment and

education. However, by not communicating the role of embodiment in their pedagogy more purposefully, the teachers only partially challenged the status-quo around the invisibilization of kinesthesia in academia.

This chapter-cypher also touched on the complexity of being both a scholar/educator and a hip hop advocate. There is a thin line between challenging and participating in the institutional issues due to their dual roles. I am impressed by ways these educators navigate the system while being critical and engaged in social justice work. I commend them, especially not all being dancers, for experimenting with movement-based practices and choreography in the classroom, and thus allowing their students to learn differently.

Finally, I argued that teaching hip hop pedagogy constitutes a call-and-response *otherwise* not only because the three teachers used this particular hip hop aesthetic, but because call-and-response represents a metaphor for their praxis and larger impact. Did their call-and-response *otherwise* work? From an institutional perspective, we witnessed more of a call-and-non-response because their call for change has only be half answered. Indeed, despite their years of advocacy, the legitimacy of hip hop as education, the space and resources provided for them to really explore hip hop in the academy, are still relatively limited. But institutions are not all there is. Students and other witnesses of their pedagogy are also part of their call-and-responses.

Hip hop and autoethnography in the academy:

I might be the “black-swan” of academia. Some may view my research as not quite dance studies, not quite education, not quite hip hop studies, and not quite

ethnographic because I have not necessarily followed the traditional codes of scholarship in each fields. Instead, I decided to borrow diverse methods, literature, and ways of thinking from each field and create an interdisciplinary work.

The research conducted in this chapter-cypher used multiple methods: choreographic reading, participation and observation, interviewing, online resources analysis. The level of proximity with the subjects and the field study also varied considerably between case-studies, which shaped my data. The comparative analysis was not conducted between three similar sites, but I found common themes across each fieldwork site. Despite the diversity of methods, subjects, and locations, the way I conducted research and analyzed the information remained consistent: I took notes on what teachers and students said during class; I observed their movements and behaviors; I looked at the physical space of the classroom; I analyzed the pedagogy and content of the course; I considered information gathered at other spaces and times relevant to the research and discussed with people during the process. Although not the focus of this chapter-cypher, personal reflection was also a considerable part of this project since I put the knowledge gathered in the three case-studies in conversation with my positionality, savoir-faire, and inspirations as an aspiring hip hop educator. My methods and analytical tactics were plural which can be interpreted as controversial in academic discourses.

My multidisciplinary and unconventional (auto)ethnographic approach is purposeful; it constitutes knowledge *otherwise*. Indeed, undoing academic norms by revalidating my own perspective and experience, and using stories that are usually invisible in the academic canon, participates in a larger project of self and communal

exploration in the academic institution. Embodied hip hop pedagogies are therefore not simply the subject of my study but the *how* of my research. It is an ethnographic research method that places hip hop, body, space, and power at the center of critical reflections. So embodied hip hop pedagogies is a model for students, educators, and researchers who seek to disrupt the status-quo and challenge the Eurocentric and disembodied nature of current education. This is hip hop, the guiding force behind my multimodal methodology.

In her introduction of *Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*, Maylei Blackwell discusses the oral historian as the DJ who cuts and mixes and includes call outs. Similarly, my research embodies the hip hop philosophies of “each one teach one” and “come as you are”, and the hip hop dancer’s praxis. The two hip hop mottos have been reenacted when I exposed my identities and insecurities and used these vulnerable moments as valuable teaching and learning experiences.

Participating, observing and performing choreographic readings are parts of the hip hop dancer praxis. When I dance hip hop, I analyze my movements in conjunction with the space and the people I dance with, and my positionality in relation to these factors. So, my work is ethnography, dance, creating an embodied hip hop pedagogies all at once. My ethnography cannot be dissociated from who I am and from hip hop. Thus, embodied hip hop pedagogies are a multimodal concept including research, teaching, learning, hip hop, reflecting, and moving. And so, some may think that this research is unconventional and unsatisfactory. It absolutely is unconventional because this is the way I move, be, and conduct research. It is adequate because this research *is* dance studies, education, hip hop studies, and ethnography all at once. Through my multidisciplinary approach, I raise

awareness about other ways of doing research, which are not always deeply rooted in past regulations that are based on Western schools of thoughts.

The work in chapter-cypher 1 and 2 show that ethnographic research does not have to be singular but a combination of methods, ways of thinking, and analysis. Indeed, performing an ethnography is studying groups of people by participating and observing in the field and by adopting a cultural relativist lens rather than an ethnocentric lens.

In the context of this chapter-cypher, even if I did not spend an extensive period of time for each case-study, as a whole, I was “in the field” with hip hop educators and students for over a year. Instead of looking at each case-study independently, I cross-examined the different fields and subjects as a whole ethnographic work. This brings up the question, what constitutes an ethnographic site and who constitutes ethnographic subjects? There is no clear-cut answer to this; I think it all depends on the ethnographer’s role, mission, and where the research takes them in the process. I don’t think there is one way of doing “correct” ethnographic research. Rather, a good researcher is one that can adapt to the diverse circumstances and always think critically about their relationality to the work. Ethnography is a human experience. Life is improvisational, messy, and multidirectional. I don’t think that an ethnographic research can be as straight forward as a simple $a + b = c$ type of mathematical equation. There are many variables such as the researcher’s embodied practices that impact the data and vice-versa. Academia may have the tendency to question research that is not always logical and linear. But if you ask me, that is the beauty of working with humans. Things don’t always pan out the way we expect. It is in the cracks that lie the complex and intriguing parts of the research.

So, what does ethnography mean in academia? In my research, ethnography means trying something new, challenging the codes, and ultimately, being okay with whatever comes to me. The level of personal investigation in my research pushed me to question myself as a scholar and practitioner, and ultimately to become a better educator. In that way, I think I contributed positively to academic scholarship by expanding the definition of ethnography and improving my skills as an educator. The self, people, and their embodied knowledge should have a more prominent place in academia. Ethnography, therefore, is the area of study, which opens new research opportunities, ones that are perhaps more embodied, and therefore, more humane.

Final thoughts before the big leap:

So, the work continues. What do *I* do now? Not only have I seen how Hinds, Love, and Iglesias have impacted their students through their teaching, but I am a living proof of the longevity and impact of their call. I respond through this dissertation and by continuing the work. I built upon their work and keep practicing my teaching. Their pedagogies are a source of inspiration for my embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum which will be discussed in the next chapter-cypher, and I will keep advocating for the importance of knowledge *otherwise* in education.

As a dance scholar, where I think I can contribute to the field of hip hop education is through the purposeful use of movement and kinesthetic knowledge in the classroom. Carrying on the torch that has been passed on to me as a hip hop educator is an example of call-and-response *otherwise*. My future students and I are going to be forever

respondents of the calls started by these hip hop education pioneers, growing the community and the action globally and for generations to come.

In the following chapter-cypher, I discuss my embodied trajectory developing my embodied hip hop pedagogies model; how I combat the erasure of the body in school, and how I navigate being both hip hop and a scholar at the same time.

CHAPTER-CYPHER 3

Politics and Mechanics of Guest Teaching at Riverside Valley⁷⁵:

Choreographic Readings of Embodied Hip Hop Pedagogies Classes:

Introduction:

In this chapter-cypher, I critically reflect on my journey—my ups and downs—implementing and teaching a 10-week-long embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum as a guest teacher at the Riverside Valley Middle School⁷⁶ in Riverside, California. I shed light on the role of the teacher’s body and choreographic choices in and outside the classroom space to demonstrate that teaching and learning do not have to be restricted to one geographic space. Ultimately, this chapter-cypher attempts to critically address how the process of implementing the embodied hip hop pedagogies is impacted by traditional schooling norms and institutional limits. I put my praxis in direct conversation with systemic issues related to traditional Western education such as the ones already discussed in the previous chapter-cypher (i.e. Eurocentricity, hierarchy of knowledge, disembodiment, traditional mechanics of the classroom) to discuss how I was able or not to implement my vision of the embodied hip hop pedagogies at Riverside Valley. My approach is informed by contemporary culturally sustaining and hip hop education scholarships, the body of literature on teachers’ body and performance (i.e. literature review), and the findings in the two previous chapter-cyphers. However, embodied hip hop pedagogies differ from other hip hop education or culturally sustaining works because of

⁷⁵ The name of the school has been modified to protect teachers’ and the school’s identities

⁷⁶ Idem

the centrality of the body in the process and the way teachers and students become choreographers of their own performative space, the classroom.

Methodology:

My primary methods are autoethnography and action research, which is an engaged research method seeking transformative changes and critical reflection.

a. Autoethnography:

I analyze my personal experience as a guest teacher at Riverside Valley in conjunction with or in comparison to my personal background. I use a narrative style approach and consider my “in-the-moment” thoughts, feelings, minor observations, and socio-cultural biases to be relevant sources of information/knowledge. The tenets of autobiography included in this autoethnography are reflections of my own educational experiences in France and Belgium as the daughter of a Japanese mother, and my recent experience as a teaching assistant and dance instructor in Riverside. The tenets of ethnography included in this chapter-cypher are the social, spatial, political analysis of my participation and observation, the reflections of my teaching practices, and the feedback received from teachers throughout the fieldwork.

My autoethnographic process comprises the action of designing and implementing the curriculum at Riverside Valley and my taking of notes during my fieldwork. The notes are comprised of quotes from teachers and students, information about how the class went, a list of unexpected things, how I felt, and how I navigated through various situations. Usually, I would quickly type these notes or memos during brief pauses in class; in-between classes in the hallway; at the staff lounge during my breaktime between 4th and 6th

period; or when I was on my way home. I used this note-taking strategy (i.e., typing on my phone in-the-moment or right after each class) primarily because I did not want to forget details about my day, to the degree possible, how I felt at a particular moment or during a given situation. Indeed, I realized many times that once I had reached home and reflected on my day, I would tone down in my notes and in my head, how upset, happy, confused, or frustrated I had been. I also took a few pictures to remember particular situations and the physical classroom spaces. So, what is written here draws heavily on my fieldnotes. Teachers' and the school's names have been modified to protect their identities.

b. Action research:

As a guest middle school teacher, I was a practitioner researcher who was both an insider and an outsider. I had experience teaching in the Inland Empire, however not extensively and not in a middle school setting. Therefore, I was an outsider to the setting. In action research discourses, there is an ongoing debate about what constitutes evidence or data because of the possible hindrance of being both a researcher and the center of the research. The researcher lives in “a conflict that has been viewed as both an advantage and disadvantage” (Herr and Anderson 3-5). However, by collaborating closely with insider practitioners and community members (teachers, students, and the school institution), I gained varying degrees of insight about the project.

c. Performance and writing:

I prefer to reference the dual combination of autoethnographic process and product as “performing” an autoethnography. A performance echoes the idea of teaching and learning as social performance. Both teaching and learning can be communal, embodied,

and justice-oriented. By extension, the word “performing” depicts not only the act of teaching, but other aspects linked to performances such as creation, rehearsals, repetitions, and failure which are critical and embedded in performative processes. Thus, I do not consider this third chapter-cypher to be a finalized product which can be dissociated from the performative process of typing, retyping, reflecting, and re-reflecting. Nevertheless, I hope to be genuine and as true to reality as physically, psychologically, and culturally possible. Therefore, in addition to analyzing my fieldwork notes which were taken on the fly, I am writing this chapter-cypher only a few days after the end of my embodied hip hop program at Riverside Valley. I aim to analyze this autoethnographic research in the context of the visceral sensations, feelings, and details from my memory. To do so, while writing this chapter-cypher, I did my best to respect the authenticity of the fieldwork events by narrating almost all the embodied stories at length. However, during the editing process, I had to consider that this chapter-cypher is part of a dissertation, not a book. Some editing was necessary to make clear to my reader what issues I found most pressing.

About Riverside Valley⁷⁷:

Riverside Valley (or RV in short) serves approximately 800 7th and 8th graders⁷⁸. More than 90% of the student body is constituted of minorities students, of whom a large majority are Hispanic. +/- 95% of students are from low income families⁷⁹ and are eligible for free lunch. The school’s academic performance is lower than the state average.

⁷⁷ The name of the school has been changed to protect the school and teachers’ identities.

⁷⁸ Per the data found on the public school review website data:

<https://www.publicschoolreview.com/>

⁷⁹ Idem

Riverside Valley is one of the RUSD⁸⁰ schools that implement customized, personalized, and flexible learning⁸¹. The interest in embodied hip hop pedagogies among the teachers demonstrates the value placed on teamwork and collaboration, and students and teachers are highly encouraged to go on field trips, attend conferences, and take art classes. Riverside Valley also organizes many events where parents, students, and teachers interact to build relationships with the school's different communities. Teachers make a point during their classes to remind students about the "RV Way," which is the code of conduct promoted by the school. These philosophies and other positive messages are also posted all over campus. Finally, RV offers opportunities for students to be involved on and off campus through afterschool programs and fundraisers.

Definitions and concepts:

a. Curriculum and pedagogy terms:

It is important to differentiate between curriculum and pedagogy. The curriculum is the "what" of teaching. It can be defined as the agenda, plan, or list of course topics. The teachers at Riverside Valley would refer their curriculum as "lesson plan." The curriculum is the skeleton of every lesson, and it is usually prepared ahead of time to help teachers stay on track with their lesson goals and calendars.

I personally like to think of the curriculum as the choreographed part of teaching. A choreographer creates movement sequences that make sense to the overall choreography and puts their personal style/creativity/touch to perform in front of an audience; as the

⁸⁰ RUSD stands for Riverside Unified School District

⁸¹ More information on Riverside Valley implementation of customized learning can be found here: <http://uni.riversideunified.org/>

curriculum designer, I can control the content; I move topics around as I see fit, reviewing, revising, rehearsing, and adjusting them to my strengths and to the students' needs. I have full authority and ownership over my creation, and it serves as a reflection of me. Like most choreographers who think about the larger impact, message, or purpose of their creations, I can design the curriculum in ways that speak to my ideologies of life and hip hop culture such as social justice, and critical thinking and moving. However, I do realize that this definition has limits. Indeed, one can be a teacher but not a curriculum choreographer. For example, as a teaching assistant at UCR, I did not have the liberty to create my own curriculum; I was teaching someone else's ideas. Another example comes from public schools' K-12 teachers who must follow state and federal regulations regarding teaching content especially since students must take standardized tests. Positionality and status therefore, impact who can choreograph the curriculum and who can teach it.

In sum, to me, the curriculum constitutes one of the most choreographed parts of teaching and should contain its creator's ideologies, strengths, and originality. My concept of knowledge *otherwise* can be associated with the curriculum content as it corresponds to the other kinds of teachings that I would implement in my lesson plan such as embodiment and social justice.

Pedagogy, on the other hand, is a method or practice of teaching. It is the "how" of teaching—how the curriculum is delivered to the students. Pedagogy can be, to a certain degree, choreographed/prepared in tandem with the curriculum. However, from my experience, pedagogy is far more improvised than choreographed and can even sometimes impact the curriculum plan. In the introduction of this dissertation, I discussed my vision

of the *otherwise* cypher as a glocal cloud, a multi-spatio-temporal phenomenon linked to knowledge and beings locally, globally, and elsewhere, which can directly and indirectly impact what happens inside the cypher. Similarly, if the teacher in the classroom is represented by the hip hop dancer performing inside the cypher/circle, their performance can be impacted by the diverse spatio-temporal and embodied factors. Their pedagogy can also be impacted by knowledge shared in the classroom space, and their students. What happens in the moment in the classroom, whether it is questions from students, students' behavior, or the teachers' moods, can influence the way the curriculum gets delivered. So, unpredictable phenomenon can shift the way the pedagogy is choreographed often resulting in the teacher adapting their pedagogy to the situation⁸². And sometimes, going “off-course” with the pedagogy can also result in going “off-course” with the curriculum. All in all, from my experience, no matter how a pedagogy and curriculum are choreographed/prepared in advance, the teacher will end up improvising, making the act of teaching and curriculum building both a choreographed and improvised performance.⁸³ Call-and-response *otherwise* can be associated with pedagogy because it corresponds to the disruptive, kinesthetic, and peer-mentorship elements of teaching and learning. As opposed to the curriculum which can be dictated by institutions, school districts, or bosses, teachers usually have more creative leeway with the pedagogy because it is the *how* of teaching. However, we will see in this dissertation how pedagogy is highly influenced by

⁸² I will explicate this point further in the next sub-chapters.

⁸³ Idem

institutional limits such as space, time, and resources, as well as students, complicating the creative ownership of teachers on their pedagogies.

b. Choreography of the classroom:

*Teaching is beautiful man; it is like a dance*⁸⁴

Like Adjapong, author of “Performance as Pedagogy”, I believe that the art of performance—one of the core aspects of hip hop—can be transferred to the realities of teachers in the classroom (Adjapong and Emdin 49). As a dance studies scholar, I value the use of performative terms and ideologies to describe teaching and learning. I therefore view pedagogy as performance and reintroduce what I term “choreography of the classroom”⁸⁵. In a 2006 study, Polk mentions that one of the traits of effective educations is the act of performing. Polk identified this ability to perform as a trait that many effective teachers possess (Polk 23-29). Indeed, like performers and their audiences, teachers must engage with their students in a meaningful way by “performing well,” finding creative avenues, and stepping out of their comfort zone, even though, as human beings, it is not always possible, to be the best in every situation (hooks 1994). Furthermore, as bell hooks wrote in *Teaching to Transgress*, choreographing the classroom would help “come physically close, suddenly what I have to say is not coming from behind this invisible line, this wall of demarcation that implies anything that from this side of the desk is gold, is truth, or that everything said out there is merely for my

⁸⁴ Quote from hip hop educator Chris Emdin: “Finding Ways to Make Math Fun | Office Depot”, Youtube, Chris Emdin, Hip Hop Educator and Professor, April 18, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hp4wrMBZEMk>

⁸⁵ This concept was introduced in chapter-cypher 2.

consideration [...]” (138). In short, choreographing the classroom is also taking down the invisible wall between teachers and students.

Choreographing the classroom means interpreting the act of teaching as choreography and the classroom space as a performative space. As the teacher who plans a curriculum and a pedagogical strategy for the upcoming lesson or term, I, like a choreographer, can create a dance, a piece, an environment, a moment with an intention to impact my audience (in this case the students) in a certain manner. As the teacher, my intention is to choreograph teaching as a meaningful experience. Through my choreography of teaching, I can create moods, incite certain reactions, thinking ahead about how the students will respond. It is a bit like being a master of ceremony (MC) or Emcee, who gauges the audience interest and decides who performs next.

Choreographing the classroom is inevitably about choreographing the classroom space. Not only does the choreographer arrange how bodies will move within the space, they can also choreograph the space itself. I approached teaching like a site-specific performance. Even though at RV, I used the same four classrooms throughout the collaboration, my challenge was to transform the space to create a new choreography every time. In my experience teaching, I realized that transforming the learning space creates different reactions from the students and can control, to a certain degree, how the class is going to respond to. Little things such as dimming the light for the purpose of a certain mood, starting the lesson with music, or literally transforming the space by moving the desks aside and creating a circle, are choreographic choices that the teacher can control in order to create a desired teaching and learning outcome. As mentioned in

chapter-cypher 2, choreographing the space requires assessing the space, and despite its difficulties, from a choreographic point of view (small, crowded, narrow rows, electric cords on the floor, carpet, static boards and furniture etc.), make the space work for your choreographic vision of the pedagogical experience.

Choreographing the space makes teaching and learning less monotonous, and an exciting challenge for both the teacher and the students. In my experience teaching, I noticed that students enjoy change; for them it is like taking on a new adventure such as when dancers adapt their choreography to perform in a new space. Choreographing the space breaks students' routines, in a good way: students suddenly do not know where to sit, where to look, what to expect and seem therefore more eager to explore and engage in the new pedagogy. Entering a classroom that does not look like last time they stepped foot in it is exciting. Or, in the middle of lesson, to move, get closer to the teacher's board is also exciting if not frightening. Interestingly though, students also appreciate rituals and familiarity. For example, dancers who work with a choreographer are used to certain warm-up movements, ways of learning a choreography, and other rituals that are unique to the choreographer. Similarly, students get used to certain choreographies specific to their teacher and their classroom. It is thus important, as the choreographer, to respect this balance, finding the sweet spot, between creating a new performative space and respecting students' rituals in the classroom.

To a certain degree, the four RV teachers choreographed their classrooms. One teacher chose to integrate rolling chairs/desks, allowing students to roll to each other for group work or to swing side to side if they wanted. The other teachers would change

students' seating assignments every now and then to make sure they interacted with different classmates. They did not perceive their infrastructural or seating choices as choreography per se. However, they told me that they placed great importance in implementing different seating organizations because they wanted their students to learn to collaborate with as many students (in terms of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and class) and as many diverse learners (performance level or special ed) as possible. By doing so, they help their students develop long-term social skills.

My goal with my embodied hip hop pedagogies activities was to demonstrate to the teachers the extent to which choreographing the classroom can impact learning. Choreographing the classroom is about overcoming spatial and institutional challenges, making teachers more aware of their role as choreographers, and letting both teachers and students guide the use of space and the lesson plan.

c. Improvised choreography of the classroom:

I have learned that teaching comprises a great degree of improvisation. The ideal embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum was transformed, almost every week, and on the spot, because it is important to be flexible, read the room, and adapt to the situation. The teacher can choreograph, plan for a lesson on paper, but there will be always be unforeseen and out-of-control events that will occur in the moment such as students' reactions. The technical problems I experienced as a guest teacher are examples of moments where I had to quickly improvise and come up with a new lesson plan. For

example, for the AVID⁸⁶ class, I had anticipated that two weeks of preparation time for their oral presentation would be plenty. Turns out, even if the AVID teacher gave students extra time during the week, students were not ready to present by the originally planned date. We had to postpone the oral presentation by a week, and unfortunately, cancel the more “performative” last lesson I had planned. So, even though a teacher can guide students and facilitate the lesson to be timed and completed at a certain period, it is important to meet students where they are and adapt the curriculum accordingly. While originally, I wrote that the choreographer can control the curriculum of their classroom, the audience (i.e. the students) has a major impact on how teaching and learning will occur and be deployed in the classroom space complicating the traditional understanding of hierarchy and authority in the classroom.

As the choreographers, teachers have the ability to create opportunities for improvisation, where the students can express themselves on stage (in the classroom). The teacher should be open to experimentation and let go of the need to control the lesson and the space. I think that letting go of the control is liberating for both teachers and students who can explore and perform their identity in the moment. It is far from easy. But providing a space where “non-academic things” can enter the classroom and become part of knowledge, is embodied hip hop pedagogies. The possibilities of embodiment in the classrooms are infinite as people, feelings, emotions are evolving, moving, all the time. Like culture, they are never static. Improvised choreography of the classroom is

⁸⁶ AVID stands for “Advancement via Individual Determination.” It is the title of a non-profit organization which trains educators to improve college readiness for students, especially those traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

then a purposeful pedagogy where preparation meets flexibility, and where spatial architecture meets freedom of movement and expression. By enabling both in the moment and predesigned forms of expressions, improvised choreography can spark unexpected reactions, develop new pedagogical opportunities, and empower people.

As a teacher, improvised choreography occurred inside and outside the classroom as well. For example, I might zigzag around the tables in the classroom to change things in the moment. But improvised choreography also happened outside the class as I tried to find my way across the campus. RV has a corn-maze-esque building with infinite corridors which lead to rows of portable classrooms placed strategically around the recess/lunch/basketball courtyard. My choreographic ritual would be to go from point A to point B, across the recreation area and through its labyrinthine hallways. However, this performance of crossing the campus would always be an improvised one as I bumped into students saying Hi, wound up among students also going to their next class. During these travels between spaces, I developed different kinds of connections with students, more informal and embodied ones. We would pause a second to wink, wave, exchange a “what’s up”, or high five each other. These embodied practices helped students see me not only as a teacher figure but as a *real* person going through her day like any other human being. These unpredictable situations can seem minimal, but truly impact the classroom because they can alter my mood, give me new ideas, or simply make me late to the next class. These embodied exchanges also indirectly transformed my relationships with students since we developed *other* connections in the hallways. My teaching body in the classroom was informed by my body navigating the campus.

Finally, improvised choreography of the classroom is also acknowledging that movement can mean different things at different times and to different people. In chapter-cypher two, I discussed how embodiment happened differently for Hinds, Love, and Iglesias and that there were several ways to interpret embodiment in their pedagogy (using performative skills; making students move; dancing with students; analyzing bodies and positionalities etc.). Similarly here, perhaps in certain situations, bodies are not physically moving, but ideas, emotions, rhythms, words are, or the papers are moving across tables, moving between hip hop elements, between units... And so, it really means being okay with things playing out in the moment, even if movement does not happen as predicted. Ultimately, improvised choreography gives power to embodied practices in the moment and uses that energy towards building knowledge. However, paradoxically, we will see throughout this chapter-cypher, how the improvised nature of teaching and having to improvise in a space not meant to be flexible, will make it difficult for me to implement embodiment meaningfully at times, even though, embodiment is one of the central components of my model and main intervention.

d. Embodied hip hop pedagogies: an *otherwise* cypher model:

As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, my ideal and original vision of the embodied hip hop pedagogies model was in direct conversation with my concepts of *otherwise* cypher, and call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* where the *otherwise* cypher corresponds to the classroom space; call-and-response *otherwise* to the teaching and learning occurring in the classroom; and knowledge *otherwise* to the content/the

curriculum shared. The embodied hip hop pedagogies model was therefore meant to be glocal, mentorship-driven, highly kinesthetic, and socio-politically engaged.

Throughout this chapter-cypher, I will discuss how I was able to incorporate (or not) my concepts and therefore critically reflect on the accessibility and feasibility of these concepts in a *real* teaching and learning setting.

Outline:

This chapter-cypher is choreographed in three parts referred to as “Ready,” “Set,” and “Go,” taken from the three-step action performed by athletes before a race. The first section describes the processes and observations that occurred before I started teaching embodied hip hop pedagogies. In “Set,” I discuss the politics and mechanics of creating a curriculum that works (or not). The third section—the “Go”—explicates the complex realities of teaching and learning and analyzes the concept of improvised choreography at RV. I also examine how my teaching body as a non US-born, non-English native speaker, and petite woman navigates the academic space and negotiates with the ideal versus the reality. I conclude the chapter-cypher with a post-fieldwork reflection. Despite my resistance to thinking of teaching and learning as linear, I used a chronological organization (before, during, after) to structure my thoughts and help the reader to follow the steps of navigating the design and implementation of my embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum.

Overall goal:

The main goal of this chapter-cypher was to do and perform in real-life my concepts and ideas developed in the previous two chapters-cyphers. I wanted to see if my ideologies and findings, which conceptually worked great on paper, would work when

teaching and learning in a classroom, and then, be implemented into a sustainable pedagogical and curricular model. And so, this chapter-cypher helps bring to life these concepts and ideologies as well as evaluating their successes and challenges.

This chapter-cypher also contributes to academic scholarship by bringing forth the body, vulnerability, and critical assessment. Most education scholarship focuses on students and their academic performance, only including teachers to analyze their pedagogy (Berman and Aoki, Kazan). By spending time describing my pedagogical and embodied journey, I bring the teacher's body to the forefront of educational discourses. By placing the body not only at the center of the curriculum but also at the center of this fieldwork, this chapter-cypher examines overlapping realities linked to space, body, knowledge, culture, and power, thus stopping the dissociation of people's cultures and contexts from their bodies (Paris and Alim 9). I will discuss how issues of race, gender, nationality, status, experience, positionality are intersectional and impacted my teaching experience at RV. This chapter-cypher echoes bell hooks' endeavors introduced in *Teaching to Transgress*: "We must return ourselves to a state of embodiment in order to deconstruct the way power has been traditionally orchestrated in the classroom, denying subjectivity to some groups and according it to others. By recognizing subjectivity and the limits of identity, we disrupt that objectification that is so necessary in a culture of denomination" (139). And so, like hooks, by engaging with embodiment and hip hop in education, I aim to "speak about ourselves as subjects in history" (139).

As discussed in chapter-cypher two, part of doing hip hop education is not to be afraid of being critical about hip hop and how best to teach it. Hip hop pedagogy

scholarship is dominated by works that primarily discuss the benefits and successes of hip hop-based education. However, like H. Samy Alim and Django Paris, authors of culturally sustaining pedagogies, I believe that solely focusing on the positive aspects of hip hop pedagogy consequently neglects the challenges associated with its implementation processes (10-11). It is important to critically reflect on the liberatory and non-liberatory currents of hip hop education. Ultimately, simply celebrating hip hop pedagogy does not help aspiring educators to overcome the challenges they may experience, which is why I am transparent about my process and embodied realities throughout this chapter-cypher.

Another central goal of this chapter-cypher is to perform hip hop as research. Particularly here, I aim to practice the “each one teach one” and “keeping it real” tenets of hip hop. Highlighting the challenges I faced— showing the *real* politics, mechanics, and embodied processes of implementation— is all about “keeping it real.” Indeed, as hip hop educator Casey Wong mentioned during our interview⁸⁷, “the closer you are to yourself, the better hip hop educator you will be.” The way I built my curriculum and pedagogy using collaboration, co-teaching, and group work, represents the peer-mentorship spirit of “each one teach one.” Through this chapter-cypher, my goal is to help other scholars/artists/educators navigate the challenges of implementing their own embodied hip hop pedagogies in a school. Finally, this chapter-cypher aims to show that embodied hip hop pedagogies belong in schools. Despite the difficulties and shortcomings during its implementation, this model has value and should be rendered accessible, expanded, and practiced in K-12 schools in Riverside and globally.

⁸⁷ In-person interview conducted on October 4, 2018

Ready!

Politics and Mechanics of Collaboration Prior to Guest Teaching:

Introduction:

In this section, I describe all the steps, preparation, and labor that went into finding a collaborating school and sharing my embodied hip hop pedagogies model. Indeed, my model was never meant to simply exist on paper; I had to get it out there.

When I discovered hip hop pedagogy at the start of my doctoral program, I was an aspiring hip hop educator, looking at Bettina Love, Rickerby Hinds, Christopher Emdin, Emery Petchauer and others as role models. But advocating for hip hop education was not enough; part of the project was always to try it myself, put myself in their shoes, understand the limitations and opportunities of such pedagogy, and analyze hip hop education not just as a receiver but also as a teacher/creator/facilitator. I could not leave this curriculum archived and never taught. It needed to come alive, to be *real*.

The power of networking:

Guest teaching a brand-new curriculum does not happen in one day. There was a whole process before *the* process. This chapter-cypher would not have come to fruition without the support of members of the education community in Riverside whom I met at networking events, or when volunteering at after school programs, and to whom I would pitch my ideas. My efforts paid off when RUSD let me know that a few teachers from the Riverside Valley Middle School were interested in embodied hip hop pedagogies. I realized the seriousness and the extent of the task: before any partnership could happen, I

had to sell my ideas to the teachers. This meant I had to meet their expectations, have a real curriculum, and be prepared to teach in someone else's classroom.

I had my first meeting with the faculty I hoped to collaborate with in early fall of 2018. I met: Mrs. Brooks, a 7th and 8th grade AVID teacher; Mrs. Connor, a 7th grade World History teacher; Mrs. Sanchez, an 8th grade U.S History teacher; and Mr. Bowen, an 8th grade Science teacher. Mr. Bowen also performed the role of lead mediator between myself and the other teachers. He organized the preliminary visits and helped ensure throughout the process that our collaboration went smoothly.

Prior to beginning at Riverside Valley, I had visited many schools as a dance instructor as part of the Gluck Fellowship for the Arts⁸⁸. However, it felt different this time. First, the meeting with the teachers was organized when the school-day was over (after the 7th period) and so the campus and the classrooms were empty. Furthermore, unlike with the Gluck program where the teachers pre-approved my dance workshop and invited me to their classes, here, I had to pitch my embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum (which I had not yet implemented at a larger scale) in hope that one or more of the teachers would take a leap of faith to partner with me. The stake was bigger and thus, scarier. I wanted to impress them, but my curriculum plans were not fully determined yet. Fortunately, the reaction was positive! They were all interested in collaborating with me, but there were still no concrete plans. We concluded that it would be beneficial for me to come observe their classes first to gain a feel for how their classrooms operate, know what subjects are

⁸⁸ “The Gluck Fellows Program of the Arts is the premier arts outreach program at the University of California, Riverside and has been providing arts outreach to the greater Riverside communities for over 24 years. The Gluck Fellows Program of the Arts at UC Riverside brings talented UCR students into the most needed areas of the Riverside community to teach and perform the arts for free.” <https://gluckprogram.ucr.edu/>

taught, and have a better understanding of how their students learn prior to starting the embodied hip hop pedagogies program.

Classroom observations:

My role as a participator and observer provides information about how the teachers and the students operate which are all factors that contributed to designing an embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum that was both achievable and relevant for all four classes. As an action researcher, organizing the ethnographic step of observing the classes was essential to understand my research community and not dominate the space with my ideologies.

a. Mrs. Brooks Class: 1st Period – AVID:

I entered a dark and silent classroom where the only lighting illuminating the space came from students' computer screens. I learned later from Mrs. Brooks that the dimmed lighting was to calm her students and create a peaceful learning environment.

Students were working quietly on their online assignment. Students were only authorized to talk when Brooks asked a question. The responses were very-well choreographed: she implemented a system of hand gestures which corresponded to answers such as "Yes," "No," "I have a question," and "I don't know." Her classroom management informed me that she expected a high degree of organization.

Mrs. Brooks shares personal anecdotes and is very open about her upbringing. I can tell from the murals, pictures, and decorations in her classroom that she is loved by her students and the institution despite her strictness. Her strictness did not seem to be punitive and instead encouraged her students to learn discipline and hard work. Multiple times, she

reminded students of the importance of answering when a question is asked, almost as a metaphor of speaking up and voicing concerns within society and life. Despite her firm teaching style, she congratulated those who conquered their fear which showed me how committed she was to prepare these young teenagers to enter adulthood and succeed in their college life.

b. Mrs. Connor Class: 2nd Period – World History:

Mrs. Connor is a dynamic teacher who goes above and beyond for her students. She is very dedicated to creating a fun and engaging learning environment. For example, the first time I observed her class, she was wearing a monk costume and was performing with her students. Even though she does not have any choreographic experience per se, she was choreographing the classroom space and reinventing the traditional curriculum. It did not seem like her students truly recognized the value and the effort she put. I immediately suspected that she would be the one most open to the embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum. Moreover, unlike most classrooms at RV, students' desks and chairs in her classroom are individual moving units that permit students to roll to the sides, turnaround, or twist as they please. I was also impressed by her skill at finding free tools for teachers, or fun and instructional music and videos on various streaming websites such as YouTube to enhance student participation.

She informed me about the huge difference between 7th and 8th graders. I originally did not think that one year of age gap would make a big difference. But I learnt the hard way later that the way each group perceives their body, or their level of comfort with moving and collaborating were completely different. Connor would openly admit to

her students that she knows how they might consider an activity “not cool” and therefore be shy about trying something new. She would establish that her priority was that students try and that it is okay to fail, reiterating the importance of believing in yourself and embracing who you are.

c. Mrs. Sanchez – 3rd Period – American History:

During my first visit, Mrs. Sanchez was online quizzing her students about the first American Presidents and the Bills of Rights. It was a learning experience for me too since I am not particularly familiar with these topics as someone who migrated to the United States five years ago. Like Mrs. Brooks, Mrs. Sanchez has a well-designed system (or choreography) to catch her students’ attention. She uses numbers and counts which correspond to actions she expects from her students. For example, she would form a small circle with her hand and lift it up, to have a “voice level 0” or total silence. She would also count down “3, 2, 1” using both her voice and her hand gestures to request certain actions from her students.

For my second visit, she showed me a demo of the “community circle” activity she does with her students on Wednesdays. Everybody moved their desks to the side and placed the chairs in a big circle. She led the community circle by asking questions like, “Which is your favorite T.V. show?” while holding a stress relief ball that she would then pass to the person next to her. Each time a member of the circle received the ball, they could choose to answer, comment, or not to respond. Mrs. Sanchez also shared with me that whenever students are ahead of the program or too excited to work, she gives them the opportunity to “go for a walk” outside.

Lastly, I learned that she teaches dance at an afterschool program. It was nice to hear that one of the teachers was familiar with dancing. What I retain from my preliminary observations with Sanchez is that her awareness of embodied practices translated in her pedagogy. Indeed, the act of moving and choreographing the space was purposeful (use of counts, community circle activity, importance placed on moving, walking, and getting some fresh air).

d. Mr. Bowen Class: 6th Period – Science:

Mr. Bowen's 8th graders were learning about astronomy. Mr. Bowen used a rainstick, which is a small percussive instrument filled with beads and swung it to create a relaxing sound. His Friday classes would start with a 30 second online game/quiz and the announcements of best students/prizes of the week before he instructed them to work on their units on their computer. Because of the flexible learning program at RV, each student was working on different assignments depending on their learning pace.

Bowen would probably be what most students would qualify as a "cool teacher." He is friendly with his students, allowing them to walk in the classroom, talk to each other, sit on the desks etc. His classes were the loudest of the ones I visited, but it seemed to work well for him and his students. One of his priorities is to "let teenagers be teenagers" like he used to say, thus using their energy as a teaching and learning strategy instead of trying to channel or limit it. In my opinion, he was performing improvised choreography in the classroom and practicing the tenets of culturally sustaining pedagogy by letting students express themselves and not over controlling the space.

Observing the four RV teachers' classes accomplished multiple targets. One, it was important for students to be acclimated to my presence so that when I started guest teaching, I was not a total stranger to them. Two, sitting in the classrooms enabled me to have a better idea of their curriculum content so that I could adjust my lesson plan better in the future. Three, observing their teachings and their classroom space helped me understand if they were already participating in call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* in some shape of form and how they were choreographing their classroom. Finally, my intention with these observations was to grasp where students and teachers were at, and really get a sense of their teaching and learning environment, so that I would not end up taking over the space and reproducing top-down approaches to collaboration.

Other observations at RV:

The two preliminary visits at RV organized in the fall 2018 were essential to understanding how a middle school operates in the United States, particularly in Riverside, and to familiarize myself with the people I would be working with, the campus, and the classroom content. There are a few things that surprised me during my visits because my knowledge of the U.S K-12 system was limited.

a. Belgium vs. U.S public school systems and breaks:

In Belgium, schools are much smaller and therefore middle school and high school students are in the same building and under the same organization called “*École secondaire*” (secondary school) or “*humanités*” (humanities). My schedule in Belgium resembled a typical U.S higher education schedule, in that I would have a different

schedule every day of the week. It took me a while to realize that students at RV have the same classes every day and therefore see their teachers every day at the same period.

I was also surprised by the absence of breaks and the short lunch time allocated to students and teachers. Four minutes are allocated to students passing in between classes, and approximately 30 minutes for recess and lunch. In Belgium and France, school-days may have lasted longer, but I would have multiple breaks, and a two-hour lunch break. These play periods were essential for my growth and for building my social, intellectual, and problem-solving skills. Implementing more embodied practices in the classrooms suddenly became even more vital than I ever thought before.

b. Moving in Japanese vs. U.S schools:

I only attended a few classes in Japanese schools either in the weekends or during holidays. However, I know through my experience and the one of my mother how moving constitutes a priority in Japanese schools and in some Japanese companies. In both school and business settings, people's days would start with some movement exercises because Japanese society is built on the idea that if people are in tuned with their body, they will learn and work more efficiently.

In "Frog Boy and the American Monkey: The Body in Japanese Early Schooling," Daniel J. Walsh compares his son's U.S and Japanese schooling experiences after moving to Japan from the USA. He shares multiple anecdotes about his son and his Japanese classmates participating in athletics championships and describes how learning how to run, jump, climb, swim etc. are part of the Japanese school curriculum. He explains that Japanese culture values the idea of being "genki"—being fit, strong,

healthy, and physical—highly (102). Actually, “How are you?” in Japanese is said “Genki Desu Ka?”, which can be translated as how fit/strong/healthy are you today? And so, being raised with the “genki” ideology, I was surprised how little physical activities U.S public schools organize, especially in the Inland Empire. Bringing embodied pedagogy into Riverside Valley seemed even more important.

c. Schooling back in the day vs. presence of technology:

In contrast, I felt disconnected from my childhood experience when I learned that every student at RV is provided a computer. Teachers at RV rely heavily on technology, whether it is through computer programs, video projection, speakers etc. The absence of textbooks, notebooks, binders, paper, pens, heavy backpacks, all those material things attached to my memories of schooling, was disturbing at first. Probably due to the flexible learning program and the role of technology at RV, I never saw any of the four teachers teaching in the traditional sense of the term. When I and most people of my or previous generations think of teaching, we envision an instructor placed at the front of the classroom, dictating or writing notes on the blackboard with chalk, essentially lecturing for the majority of the lesson, before instructing their students to partake in exercises located on sheets of paper. In that traditional teaching and learning setting, students would generally take handwritten notes while trying to follow what their teachers were saying. At RV, students were listening to the voice in their software using their earphones, reading colorful short sentences on their computer, watching or creating videos, and typing on their keyboards. The pedagogical difference from what I experienced in the past was phenomenal. The difference terrified me, while at the same

time, I felt like the school was making an amazing effort to adapt education to their students' generation with increasing need for computer skills.

d. Absence of homework and hip hop ed scholarship:

The teachers informed me that they do not give homework to their students. The reason for this choice is that most of their students either help with their parents' family business after school, or do not have internet or other kinds of necessary resources to do their homework. I was a bit shocked by this information, recalling how many hours of homework I had to endure at their age in order to graduate high school but also recognizing how much these assignments were an integral part of my ability to problem solve, practice peer-support, research, and organize my schedule in a way that I could play and have fun once I finished my homework. But my upbringing was completely different and therefore not comparable to the students of RV. Their socio-economic context plays a pivotal role in the teachers' pedagogical choices.

Organizing embodied and collaborative work in the classroom and during their instruction times became even more relevant for students to have access to other types of knowledge and learning throughout their schooling. This reasserted the fact that embodied hip hop pedagogies need to happen in K-12 settings. A lot of hip hop education scholars do great work in their higher education classroom settings. But my fieldwork at RV, made me realize that only a portion of Inland Empire young students' will have access to higher education⁸⁹ and potentially have access to innovate and alternative

⁸⁹ Data show that 23% of Riverside's population over 25 years old have had some college-level experience: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/riverside-population/>. Accessed, April 2020.

pedagogies. It is therefore important to raise awareness about embodied ways of teaching and learning early on. There are many hip hop educators who teach hip hop pedagogy in urban K-12 settings. However, there are not many hip hop ed scholars, such as Bettina Love, who practice their theories in non-higher education settings. There might be some missed opportunity there.

e. Economy of teaching and learning:

Another pivotal discovery during these two preliminary visits is what I call “the economy of teaching and learning.” This refers to the monetary and non-monetary prizes, such as food or a right, that students can earn from their teachers when they win a competition, or in exchange for their participation, a right answer, a mutual agreement, overcoming a challenge etc. I saw the economy of teaching and learning taking place across all four classes in different forms. For example, Mr. Bowen has a stock of candies, chocolates, and chips which he offers to students who “did something well” according to him. Mrs. Connor would provide “passes” to deserving students which allow them to skip one of her classes to attend someone else’s workshop, class, or trip. To win one of these prizes, students were required to act and respond quickly. I found the act of using competition and compensation to enhance student participation and motivation very intriguing. During my schooling, students who were not participating were simply punished. It did not seem like we had a choice. Quizzes and exams were also taken very seriously. The only compensation for finishing them was earning a better grade.

Now that I have experienced it as a guest teacher, I realize the economy of teaching and learning is expensive for the teachers and labor intensive. It speaks to the

capitalist and consumerist nature of the American society. I will describe later how “doing” the economy of teaching and learning helped me during my program at RV and became an important part of the teaching process. However, at the end of my two visits, my opinion of this action was low. I felt that teachers would send the wrong message to their students, which is that, “You should learn/do things to be rewarded” instead of learning because learning is important, period. Motivating teenagers is hard but having access to free education which will result in helping them become responsible adults should be the main reason why students want to participate in school, instead of the prizes they could earn. Furthermore, the economy of teaching and learning promotes competition. I do believe that occasional healthy competitions can be empowering, but the overuse of competition reinforces the idea that education is a competition.

These observations are relevant in the context of my autoethnographic research because they show the cultural differences between myself and the RV students and teachers, and how they can impact teaching and learning. Without these preliminary observations, I would not have known about these pedagogical tenets that are either common to U.S K-12 education systems or particular to Riverside Valley. I may have been caught by surprise or done something wrong. Again, the preliminary visits were essential in building a collaboration that was based on reciprocal exchange and mentorship, like the *otherwise* cypher, as opposed to a top-down approach or hierarchy of knowledge.

Tenets of embodied hip hop pedagogies:

After my one-year fieldwork at hip hop events and the choreographic readings of Hinds', Loves', and Iglesias' hip hop education classes, I had an embodied hip hop pedagogies model in mind that combined my *otherwise* concepts, and the main findings from the four classes: choreographing the classroom, social justice, and embodiment.

The main tenets of my ideal embodied hip hop pedagogies are awareness of the value of kinesthetic knowledge; exposure to hip hop artistic elements; and engagement with hip hop culture as pedagogical tools and curriculum content. This curriculum should also allow full time teachers, guest teachers, and artists to share space and ideas; to push ourselves to go out-of-our comfort zone sometimes; to create art, expressing ourselves and showcasing our identities; and to practice social justice and empowerment.

Throughout the chapter-cypher, I discuss the feasibility of the original vision and reflect on the ideal vs. real curriculum. I included the word pedagogy in the title “embodied hip hop pedagogies” because the curriculum is not simply about learning about movement and hip hop culture; it is also a method. Here is what my embodied hip hop pedagogies model looked like at the time I was going to pitch it to the RV teachers:

- **Movement Practices:** moving more frequently in the classroom resists the fixity associated with teaching and learning. Instead of being seated for long hours, students are asked take part in physical activity. Studies show that frequent movement practices are ergonomically healthier, and have a direct impact on learning, memory,

productivity and efficiency, and therefore, performance⁹⁰. Moreover, teachers at RV used to tell me that middle school students tend to have an attention span of 15 minutes; therefore, it was important to switch activities frequently and not lecture for more than 15 minutes. Moving also deconstructs the rigid classroom space and makes it a creative, active, and fun environment. The type of movement can vary each day/class. Moving can be implemented by going to a different desk to work on a group activity, asking students to write on the white board, having them demonstrate something; brainstorming outside, or creating moves. Movement can be subtle and could only involve a few people in the classroom at a time. What really matters is making sure to get the body moving to enhance teaching and learning.

- **Critical Moving:** critical moving differs from simply including movement practices. I described above the need to move during the day. Here I aim to emphasize the need to fully focus on how the body is moving and why, make movement purposeful, and communicating its meaning openly. In other words, critical moving means using the body actively to seriously reflect on one's positionality in society and the world at large. I use critical moving to constantly ask what movement means and can do, and what/who knowledge is. By combining movement and curriculum content, critical moving addresses the Cartesian mind-body split and disembodiment present in most Western schooling institutions. Finally, critical moving can help break down the

⁹⁰ Studies I have read as part of my Healthy Campus Initiative Grant Project were: the 3four50 framework developed by the Healthy Campus 2020 and the following two articles:
<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2012/12/dont-just-sit-there>
<https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/related-illnesses/other-related-conditions/stress/physical-activity-reduces-st>

invisible wall separating students and teachers, thus debunking the idea of teachers as omniscient knowers⁹¹.

- **Hip Hop Artistic Elements:** hip hop cannot be taught only with books. I believe that—probably like most cultures—hip hop needs to be performed in order to be appreciated and understood. This curriculum makes it a point to introduce each artistic element (provide at least a brief history and overview of the techniques of DJing, Emceeing, Breakdancing, Graffiti Writing) and try them out. The goal is not to become an expert, but rather, to gain a feel for what it means to perform each element in order to connect it to embodied practices and larger socio-political issues. This curriculum is open to non-hip hop practitioner-teachers who desire to connect to their students. But teachers must be careful to teach the element *right*. This means, conducting research to provide verifiable information, learn about the socio-cultural contexts around the element, find activities built by practitioners, not to appropriate the practice, but most importantly collaborate with local artists. So, teachers don't necessarily need to have had prior experience or be good at the practice to bring it to life in the classroom. Again, the importance is to be sensitive to Africanist Aesthetics, the common values present in art forms of the African diaspora, and their importance in the world, introduce the hip hop subject, not master it. People would be surprised how much knowledge and talent students already have. When given the opportunity, students can create amazing art.

⁹¹ Critical Moving is inspired by concepts developed by bell hooks in *Transgressive Pedagogies* and Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In the previous chapter-cypher, I also discussed how embodiment was happening in hip hop education classes. However, the meaning behind the embodied activities was often not shared to the students, thus missing an opportunity to practice a truly reciprocal call-and-response *otherwise*.

They just need the right motivation and learning environment. So, the teacher's responsibility is to learn about the artistic element, connect it to students' identity and classroom content, and network with local artists to invite them in. Implementing the artistic elements enhances creativity and self or communal expression and provides a teaching and learning environment that prioritizes art, performance, and non-Eurocentric practices.

- **History and Evolution of Hip Hop:** due to its popularity, hip hop is part of many young people's lives in some way or another. However, it is important to remind youth of the historical circumstances that led to the emergence of hip hop. Also, this is a good place to teach about concepts such as cultural appropriation, trivialization, stereotypes, and commodification which impact Afro-diasporic cultures in the United States. It is necessary to discuss how hip hop evolved, globalized, and the impact of such expansion. This does two things: one, it provides the opportunity for students and teachers to embrace hip hop their own way and explore what hip hop means to them despite the generational and/or socio-cultural gap; and two, it provides the opportunity to learn about other societies and cultures whether they are local or international.
- **Core Hip Hop Philosophies:** There isn't a bible of hip hop listing all the tenets which hip hop is based upon. However, I think many people would agree that there are a few ideas derived from larger Afro-diasporic philosophies, societies, and cultures present in hip hop that most practitioners follow. I name here the ones that I attempt to practice and find particularly important to incorporate into embodied hip hop pedagogies: each one teach one; come as you are; I am because we are; do it yourself; respect of

elders/pioneers; show and prove; daring. These philosophies highlight communal practices, identity, embodied performances, and mentorship.

To sum, ideal embodied hip hop pedagogies account for the artistic and the larger socio-cultural/political/historical elements of hip hop culture, leaving room for pedagogical improvisation, creation, expression, and critical moving. These ideas are ambitious especially considering that I was to teach in a middle school classroom for only 50 minutes a week for a single quarter (10 weeks). I recognized that creating and teaching an such ideal model, would not be easy.

Ready conclusion and retrospective:

In this section, I discussed all the mechanics that took place before I started developing the embodied hip hop pedagogies program. These processes included networking to find a school, meeting RV teachers, observing their classes, and noting relevant information to consider when developing my program. The “ready” portion of my fieldwork was all about getting to know my ethnographic site and the people I would be collaborating with. I aimed to build trust and understand RV teachers’ mechanics not to step on their toes. The preliminary rapport building time was vital to the functioning of our future collaboration. Too often, ethnographers, even when they have the best interest of their research community, end up hurting them. Indeed, by wanting to improve their community, researchers implement changes without really understanding the community’s needs. And so, spending time observing my sites and community prior to implementing embodied hip hop pedagogies was an essential step for this research.

Set – Collaboration and Curriculum Development:

Introduction:

In this section, I elaborate on the complex and sometimes messy processes of developing a curriculum plan and a partnership with the four RV teachers. This section reveals to the reader the fact that however much a curriculum plan is set/choreographed, things don't always go according to plan. The ideal vs. reality topic will be further addressed in the next section of this chapter-cypher.

Processes of collaboration with RV teachers:

Based on my observations, the teachers and I decided that I would come teach at Riverside Valley every Friday starting January 11th, 2019, until their Spring Break on March 22nd, during the following periods: 1st period with Brooks, 2nd period with Connor, 3rd period with Sanchez, and 6th period with Bowen. Fridays seemed to be the best choice as it corresponded to the end of the week where students are usually more distracted and tired, and therefore, might be more welcoming of a new program. Furthermore, this would mean that teachers would have Monday through Thursday to complete their curriculum goals for the week. Brooks, Connor, and Sanchez chose the periods corresponding to the classes where students are either quieter or are faster learners and can afford to miss their regular Friday classes. Bowen, on the other hand, chose his 6th period class because students in this class are the most energetic, and he believed that they would enjoy the embodied aspects the most. So, the teachers chose the classes I would strategically intervene in depending on how they perceived their students' needs.

After the initial meeting with the teachers and my first classroom observation visit at Riverside Valley, I created a document containing a description of the type of collaborations I had envisioned we would be engaging with. I titled the two-page document “Co-teaching and Co-learning: a hip hop and embodied collaboration between students and teachers.” On the first page, I tried to summarize what co-teaching and co-learning mean in the context of the embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum, and provided a little bit of background information about hip hop education and why it is important:

This introduction to hip hop and embodied pedagogy aims to equip both students and teachers with new pedagogical tools based on hip hop culture and its artistic elements to increase active participation, broaden teaching and learning strategies, build stronger relationships, and empower students and improve their academic performance. This workshop constitutes a collaborative project between teachers and students who will explore together a new academic content (hip hop culture) and experiment with highly embodied teaching and learning methods inspired by the artistic elements of hip hop culture known as DJ'in, Emceein' (rappin'), Breakdancin', Graffiti, and Beatboxin'.

The course titled “Hip hop as social, political, economic and cultural vessel”, explores a variety of interdisciplinary and intersectional concepts which can easily be adapted or added to an existing history or socio-cultural class. However, we encourage students and teachers from other disciplines such as such as Mathematics, PE, English etc. to participate in this course because it is designed to develop teaching and learning skills and tools such as critical thinking/doing, creativity, mentorship, DIY, performativity... that can be used and transferred in any disciplines. Ultimately, this 20-weeks course introduces teachers and students to hip hop and embodied pedagogy and help them develop personalized teaching and learning strategies adapted to their curricula and needs.⁹²

I stressed the importance of learning pedagogical tools, mentorship, and the positive collaborative nature of the program between students and teachers. I also alluded to how it could be beneficial for students' professional and self-development. Additionally, the rest

⁹² The full document can be found in appendix p. 338-40

of this document explained the kind of collaboration I was looking for: one that narrows the gap/hierarchy between teachers and students. Ideally, teachers and students are co-facilitators of the curriculum, where students' knowledge and practices matter and are built into the learning process. This was to address what Freire terms the banking style of education and instead empower every person in the classroom. This concept could be implemented in various ways, but one strategy to make it happen is to think about ways teachers will also become learners (perhaps by having guest facilitators where teachers would participate as student) or providing opportunities for students to facilitate/teach/show what they have learned or the knowledge they already possess.

My vision was to develop a more inclusive, participatory, and democratic teaching and learning environment, like in a circle, where everyone matters. Though it may have come off as naïve—because of the number of pedagogical items and pre-supposed benefits—I wrote it with good intention. Having now collaborated with the teachers, I am almost positive that none of the teachers read this two-page document. I now know that it was a bit unrealistic to ask extremely busy teachers to read a document with so much text, especially coming from a newly introduced collaborator. During our initial meetings, RV teachers and I briefly discussed how the collaboration was going to move forward. I thought, at the time, that this document made the goals and mechanics of our collaboration clear, and that we were on the same page.

Our intended and ideal vision of our collaboration was: for the teacher to share with me their lesson plans for the next ten weeks so that I could prepare an embodied hip hop pedagogies lesson plan that best fit theirs; I would prepare content and pedagogical ideas

every week which we would then discuss/brainstorm together; teachers would prepare for my workshop by printing the handouts and setting up the technology on Fridays; teachers would be present and learn embodied hip hop pedagogies alongside their students; teachers would help me to survey the impact of embodied hip hop pedagogies with their students and themselves; at the end of my ten-weeks, teachers and I would discuss and practice ways they can use elements they learnt from the embodied hip hop pedagogies program in their everyday classes. As I will discuss later in the post-fieldwork reflection section of this chapter-cypher, only about half of our initial vision of the collaboration happened. My initial expectation of what teachers could do was off. This is mostly due to the time constraint we faced, which is caused by larger institutional and systemic issues.

Processes of developing a curriculum:

The preliminary curriculum⁹³ I designed, had two parts: Part 1: 10-weeks hip hop and embodied course and workshop; Part 2: Follow Up: Laboratory, Performance, Final Assessment. The syllabus was designed for a class that would meet for 10-weeks, for two hours, before starting the more laboratory and co-teaching aspect of the curriculum for another 10-weeks. I had no idea about what it entails to teach middle school students. Indeed, I assumed that a college-level discussion-section style class would work. I now know that unlike college-level students, middle school students need to work on a subject for a longer period. I needed to delve into each subject deeper and therefore go over each subject more than once a week. So, meeting once a week was definitively not enough because students tended to forget the past lesson and not to follow the thread from the

⁹³ Idem

previous week. The beginning of each lesson became a review of the previous week's course. Furthermore, I overestimated my capacity to achieve everything as a guest teacher working part-time at UCR and being a full-time PhD student. I could not perform the community-circle with the students nor teach some of the elements listed under each unit, especially since we ended-up meeting for one quarter instead of two.

I originally had planned to create four customized curricula to accommodate each teacher' subject. However, I did not have the time nor resources to create something so customized. I asked Emery Petchauer⁹⁴ for advice on this matter. He suggested creating one template-curriculum, where the main goals and activities are similar for all four teachers, but where small adjustments could be made to fit their subject. Every teacher was on board with this idea. Mrs. Brooks did not want to do the hip hop theater performance, so I created a slightly different program for her AVID class which focused on mentorship, college-level critical thinking/moving, and more social justice-related subjects.

Each week was dedicated to a hip hop element. I got the inspiration of using the four artistic elements as points of reference from Hinds' hip hop theater classes. This is an effective way to introduce students to the culture without placing emphasis on one element over the other. The fifth core element of hip hop culture, Knowledge, is an important component of the embodied hip hop pedagogies program. Activities around knowledge-of-self drove the curriculum, especially in Brooks' class where I had more liberty to teach content that was not attached to a pre-existing history or science unit. In

⁹⁴ Emery Petchauer, renown hip hop scholar and educator, provided recommendations during an online interview conducted on November 8, 2018.

my curriculum, knowledge means to embrace your identity and creativity; to practice critical thinking and moving; and to learn about the history of hip hop and its larger socio-political/economic/cultural impact. As an advocate for hip hop culture, I aim to destigmatize hip hop and show its possibility, original messages, and how its image is often damaged by the mainstream media. When I quickly surveyed the students orally at the end of our program, most students acknowledged that their opinion about hip hop changed. They had gained interest in the culture, which they previously either had no interest in or disliked due to the prevalent negative image portrayed by the media or their parents. Advocating for hip hop should not have been the primary goal for my embodied hip hop pedagogies, but I was driven by this challenge to make people and subjects often rendered invisible, visible.

Finally, the five core elements of hip hop culture are not only curriculum guidelines but also pedagogical guidelines. I use them to practice multidisciplinary in my classes, link the elements in my teaching, and remind myself that all these elements should be valued equally and therefore present in my classes:

- **Knowledge:** embodied by the critical thinker and mover who facilitates knowledge transmission and production.
- **Graffiti:** embodied by the graffer, focusing on creating messages that generate reflection.
- **Emceeing:** embodied by the emcee focusing on the speech, tone, and passing the mic to create reactions.
- **DJing:** embodied by the DJ who controls the rhythm and the atmosphere of the space.

- **Breakdancing:** embodied by the bgirl/bboy who moves the crowd and creates embodied and critical cypher/circles.

All in all, this 20-weeks curriculum/syllabus hits most of the ideas of the ideal embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum. But it is ideal for a reason; I realized that the “Co-teaching and Co-learning” document and the syllabus were too ambitious. This curriculum is not the one I ended up teaching at Riverside Valley in Winter Quarter of 2019. I will discuss later what curriculum content I taught, and how, despite preparing a curriculum in advance, this collaboration relied heavily on improvisation.

Set conclusion and retrospective:

In this section, I discussed the mechanics of developing a curriculum from scratch. I described the back-and-forth between my initial pitch and my second more thorough curriculum plan. This section also shows the key elements of the ideal embodied hip hop pedagogies model (performance; four artistic element; co-teaching and co-learning) and the intended collaboration.

This curriculum, engaging with performance, socio-politics, and collaboration, represents knowledge *otherwise*. Indeed, the content that would be taught is nothing like the traditional and standardized Western curriculum. It is non-normative, transgressive, and performative. Furthermore, via co-teaching and co-learning, I intended to create peer-mentorship practices and therefore perform call-and-response *otherwise*. However, as mentioned above, the “set” plans were ideal. I slowly came to realize that my concepts may not always work and may have limits under my fieldwork circumstances, in real life. I will discuss further below how I have navigated between ideal vs. reality.

Go – Embodied Processes of Teaching Embodied Hip Hop Pedagogies at RV:

Introduction:

In this section, I first describe my embodied processes of teaching the embodied hip hop pedagogies program week by week. These weekly descriptions attempt to analyze the complexities and implications of teaching such curriculum in a public school and evaluate the ways concepts of *otherwise* were enacted or not. Another central aspect of this section is to reflect on the ideal vs. reality and how my body and positionality impacted the teaching and learning environment.

Week 1: Introduction to embodied hip hop pedagogies:

I had experience teaching 50-minute discussion sections at UCR, and I am well versed in keeping time to achieve what I had planned. However, 50 minutes at RV went by much faster. Indeed, keeping the attention of young teenagers is more difficult than I had anticipated. All four classes had their own “styles,” and once I had the opportunity to get to know the students more, I planned my lessons and pedagogy accordingly.

a. Troublemaking as call-and-response *otherwise*:

First and third periods with Brooks’ and Sanchez’s students went smoother than second and sixth periods, with Connor and Bowen. I believe this is mainly due to the teacher’s styles, which reflected indirectly in my classes. Brooks and Sanchez are keen on discipline. Connor and Bowen would be considered “the fun teachers.” But these parameters may not be the only reasons why second and sixth periods were more challenging. My positionality and identity, institutional and societal issues, and counterhegemonies may be other possible reasons.

Several of the male students in Bowen's class vied for the title of "class clown." These students constantly made jokes, stood up, cut me off, asked irrelevant questions to destabilize me; in other words, they were challenging me. This type of behavior began in the first week and continued for weeks. At first, I would just let these things go, pretending I did not hear them by focusing on the students who were listening to the instructions. Then, I would lose my temper a bit; my patience had limits. I remember sometimes responding to these students, thus playing their game. Other times, I would deprive them from performing an activity, which would totally go against my teaching philosophy of embodied hip hop pedagogies. I did not handle this well. This situation took a toll on me. Week after week, I would feel bad about the way I handled (or did not handled) the situation and spend my time at home over-reflecting while biting my nails. Once I understood the patterns of how each class functioned, I was able to prepare myself to take on the energy present in each class and become the best teacher I could be for the situation. Despite the preparation, I would often be thrown off guard; my reactions would come out before I could really assess the situation and think of what I should say.

I am not an expert in teenagers' behaviors in the classroom. I do, however, remember my teenage schooling experience and how my male *camarades de classe*⁹⁵ would often challenge our teachers, especially newer and younger female teachers. I cannot necessarily compare my past experience with my current one or generalize these situations to all teenagers' schooling practices of course. However, perhaps there is a connection between the fact that I am a relatively young, female, and inexperienced K-12 instructor

⁹⁵ Classmates in French

and the way these students interacted with me. Speaking about how young female bodies are read, Tina Kazan wrote: “Though physically present, my body was not read as a teacher’s body. I looked too young; I did not look sufficiently “other” (2). At UCR, when my adult male students would adopt similar behaviors (being loud; taking more voice/floor space; constantly making jokes; overly challenging grades or assignments etc.) I would try to remind them about the way their words and actions can become problematic and can reproduce gender inequity. I would transform these challenges into teachable moments for the entire class. At RV, perhaps because I was not in my comfort zone, I did not have the guts to call the male students out, or more accurately, I did not even know, in the moment, how to react. I was not in control of the situation. Whereas in higher education settings, I had learnt to develop more confidence and tools to “manage” the classroom, I was still learning to apply these skills to the middle school population.

Originally, I was thinking of these students as troublemakers, making running the class more difficult. Later, I realized that acting out was probably their way of challenging the system. They clearly were doing *something* against being the “normal” or “perfect student” to say something. They were seeking attention because they were thirsty for the chance to do *something* different in the class and tell their stories. They were enacting their own version of call-and-response *otherwise* by calling attention and seeking my response, disrupting the traditional roles of the teacher/caller and student/responder. I thus switched my strategy with them and used their energy and performative acts to my advantage by asking them to demonstrate to the class, repeat what they said or did etc. By adopting a

more personal and embodied approach, I enabled all students to participate and understand the course in their own way.

I won't lie; at first, I preferred teaching in more disciplined classrooms, because my job was easier in such settings: students would listen when I was speaking, follow instructions, and participate in the activity when asked. However, a few weeks at RV made me rethink this. My embodied hip hop pedagogies enacting the cypher *otherwise* is about non-conforming, challenging the normative/static/Eurocentric classroom where order is placed on a pedestal. Unfortunately, I could not assess if these behaviors stemmed from students "being teenagers," and/or disrupting the system, and/or enacting gender discriminations. Probably a little bit of each. In the moment, at RV, I could not practice what I aspired to do until gaining a little more experience teaching middle-schoolers.

b. Personal introduction as call-and-response *otherwise*:

The main goal for this first week of class was for students to get to know me and get a feel for what we were going to do together for the next few weeks. It was important to be open about myself and tell them about my background, bi-culturality, and why I am where I am at today. G. Lynn Nelson writes in "Warrior with Words: Toward a Post-Columbine Curriculum," "If we're going to ask [our students] to share about themselves, I think it's only fair to share about ourselves" (qtd. in Paris and Alim 104). Indeed, I find it very important to be more open about myself to break down the invisible wall between teachers and students, and sort of let them closer. I find it paradoxical that both students and teachers don't know much about each other despite spending so much time together. Students probably spend as much time with teachers as they do with their parents, if not

more, and yet, students usually don't know much about their teachers. This is probably the result of the emotional distancing that people create when being in an institutional/formal space such as the school due to the disembodiment of education. So, one way to remedy this imbalance is for me to provide an introduction about myself that is longer and deeper than what we would expect in a typical academic setting. Through my experience teaching, I have realized that stories tend to speak to students and engage their curiosity. I try to let students know about my bi-culturality; my hobbies; events that marked me; and I am transparent about my story with hip hop culture. This introduction takes time but is much needed. When this intro is rushed, the relationship with my students feels rushed too. I experienced this firsthand during my first session in Connor's classroom.

The class was a total mess at first. Connor was not there, the sub teacher barely had an idea of what was going on, and the classroom tech was not ready. I brought my computer and all possible adaptors in preparation for this situation, but even then, nothing was working. At that point, I had already lost ten precious minutes of the class. As a result, I did not have the opportunity to properly introduce myself. Halfway through the class, I realized that the 7th graders had completely checked out probably because I started with the "must do." I then switched strategies: I went back to the slides where there was a picture of me in Paris in front of the Eiffel tower, and another picture of me, taken around the same age, in Japan wearing a kimono in the old streets of Kyoto. Now I got their attention. These pictures of who I am, and my journey engaged them. We needed that starting point prior to even talking about upcoming course content to gain familiarity and build a more personal relationship, otherwise, I would have simply reproduced the disembodiment that I critique.

My ability to switch gears in the middle of the class shows that I read the room and participated in a call-and-response *otherwise*. At first, because of the stress caused by the technological difficulties, I was teaching knowledge in the most normative way possible. But when I saw that this wasn't working, I introduced myself at length, and engaged with knowledge *otherwise* to draw students' attention back.

c. "Freezing" as call-and-response *otherwise*:

During our interview⁹⁶, Casey Wong, fellow hip hop educator, told me that the most important thing in teaching is meeting students where they are at and knowing about their reality. Taking his advice into account, I decided to "survey" the students' engagement with hip hop culture by asking who practices hip hop, listens to rap, what their parents think of hip hop etc. Then I organized the "Freeze" activity, an embodied activity where everyone in the classroom was asked to walk/move around the space until I said, "Freeze!" Once they froze, I asked them to form small groups with people around them and share their hip hop stories, similar to how I had described my journey with hip hop culture. This activity deconstructed the classroom space as students and teachers were asked to move around, under, and on top of the rigid desks. Also, because the "Freeze" could happen at any moment, students were grouped randomly which helped them interact with students they normally would not due to their assigned seating.

These activities helped students to become the knowledge makers and center teaching and learning to where they are at. My goal with these activities was to give students the opportunity to switch roles and experience what it is like to manage the

⁹⁶ Interview conducted in Los Angeles, on October 4, 2018

knowledge that is being shared, and thus practice call-and-response *otherwise*. They choreographed the classroom space through their embodied gestures, and told me what hip hop meant to them, and not the other way around.

d. Collaboration as call-and-response *otherwise*:

The introductory lesson also aimed to provide information explaining embodied hip hop pedagogies, and a summary of what we were going to do in the next few weeks. I listed a few guiding principles for our collaboration that I am summarizing here:

1. Treat hip hop with respect whether we like this culture or not.
2. Active participation, creativity, and expression require sharing energy, skills, and talents and thus coming out of our comfort zones at times.
3. Respect your work and others by encouraging each other rather than being judgmental. Review the materials, collaborate respectfully, and respect homework deadlines.
4. The pedagogical model will be like a college class with opportunities for students and their teachers to experiment with new teaching and learning strategies.
5. The program culminates with a hip hop performance where we will learn how to use performance as a form of knowledge making and new grading system.

Overall, I mentioned these ground principles to provide some insight about the kind of collaboration that was to be expected and to emphasize that teaching and learning are reciprocal. A teacher can teach when students are giving them energy, attention, and participation, and vice-versa (call-and-response *otherwise*). Like bell hooks suggests in *Teaching to Transgress*, I aimed to create a teaching and learning environment that

resembled a performance, which interacted with audiences, and was therefore reciprocal and engaging (14).

e. Critical feedback as call-and-response *otherwise*:

At the end of my first day of teaching embodied hip hop pedagogies, Mrs. Sanchez kindly provided me with essential feedback. She saluted the energy, preparation, and clarity I projected to the students. However, she noticed that some of the words I was using were too complicated. None of the students stopped me when they did not understand what I was saying. Call-and-response *otherwise* did not work well in that aspect. I knew that I had to pay attention to the vocabulary I was using moving forward, or, make sure I defined words, to help students understand the meaning of more advanced vocabulary.

The other crucial feedback she gave me was the importance of handouts. As a college-level teacher, my first day, I simply asked students to take a piece of paper and “take notes.” Mrs. Sanchez made me realize that students are not trained yet at their stage to even know what to write, especially while someone is teaching. She advised me to create handouts with clear instructions for each activity, definitions, relevant images, links, and boxes or place holders with spaces for them to write when necessary.

Mrs. Sanchez called, and I responded. When I implemented more structured handouts⁹⁷ the next week, I immediately sensed that students were following along better, and the handouts also helped me stay on track. Our call-and-response otherwise was for the greater good: improving embodied hip hop pedagogies and ultimately making a difference in the global *otherwise* cypher.

⁹⁷ Handouts can be found in appendix, p.345-352

Week 2: graffiti element⁹⁸

This was the first week I taught a hip hop element. What I know about graffiti is the knowledge I enculturated from hip hop friends in Paris, videos, books, exhibitions, dancing/video shooting in front of graffiti walls in Europe and witnessing live graffiti paintings at various hip hop events throughout my life. However, I am no expert in graffiti nor have I practiced this element directly. I tried to find an artist to collaborate with but was unsuccessful in finding someone in time. I compensated for my own lack of expertise by doing some research prior to the class. I found a lot of free online resources created by other hip hop educators and watched a multitude of documentaries as inspiration for ideas as to how to approach the lesson. This is the first time I thought that I perhaps was in a little bit over my head. Because I was no expert in the graffiti element, it felt as if I was betraying hip hop culture and disrespecting the form and the labor of artists.

a. Repurposing graffiti to generate knowledge *otherwise*:

On the other hand, I had mixed feelings about my statement about betrayal because most hip hop educators also teach about elements they are less familiar with. I came to the realization that hip hop educators who use various elements of hip hop in the classroom, transform the element where their expertise was limited. What I mean by this is that they would focus on their personal expertise, i.e., their strengths, skills, talents from other aspects of hip hop, and use them to teach about the element they are less familiar with. For example, Hinds repurposed the concept of graffiti writing by asking students to create live-tableaux on stage using their bodies. So, I decided to focus on this strategy: transforming

⁹⁸ Graffiti handout can be found in appendix p. 345

and repurposing. I approached the lesson from a more socio-political standpoint. After reflection, I should have combined embodiment into my transformation and focus on what I am good at: critical moving. But, time was running out; and I was so caught-up by what graffiti looks like (i.e. spray painting on walls or paper; sketches) that I did not think of ways I could have incorporated movements and bodies into the lesson. So the lesson I taught focused on destigmatizing graffiti by learning the political meanings attached to the sketches and attempting to answer the often-debated question: Is graffiti art or vandalism? Despite the missed opportunity for a greater focus on embodiment, I believe that transforming graffiti into a knowledge that spoke to me and the students still generated knowledge *otherwise*.

b. Critical questions about graffiti as knowledge *otherwise*:

The question: Is graffiti art or vandalism? spoke to students. At the beginning of the class, practically everyone viewed graffiti as something bad or “thug” because this is the common discourse they heard at home or at school. Some students grew up with graffiti near their house. However, some were told by their parents not to partake in this activity because it was vandalism, while others found graffiti a beautiful art form. I did not answer the question for them because the goal was for students to critically reflect on the subject. Whether one likes graffiti or not, I wanted to present the message that graffiti was a form of political expression. To understand that, we analyzed the political message behind diverse images of graffiti.

During this exercise, a lot of students recognized the graffiti created by street artist Banksy. Banksy is not a hip hop graffiti writer but I chose to showcase this artist because

he is one of the most popular street artists of our time and anticipated that some students would be familiar with his work. He graffs at night to stay away from the police and the public eye. Interestingly, over the years, what was considered a “simple graff on a wall” became a work of art to preserve. Authorities in many countries have either preserved his art with Plexiglas or organized tours to showcase his art. Looking at Banksy’s graff was a great segue to discuss another critical subject “graffiti, from street art to high art.” As discussed earlier, graffiti was and still is associated with illegality and thug life. However, Banksy’s art has been auctioned for millions, and some graffiti artists we watched short documentaries of, now also exhibit in museums. These instances helped the class think about issues of authenticity in the graffiti world and in hip hop, exploring how it was born in the street and is now highly institutionalized. This lesson enabled students to understand how the public opinion about graffiti and hip hop can shift.

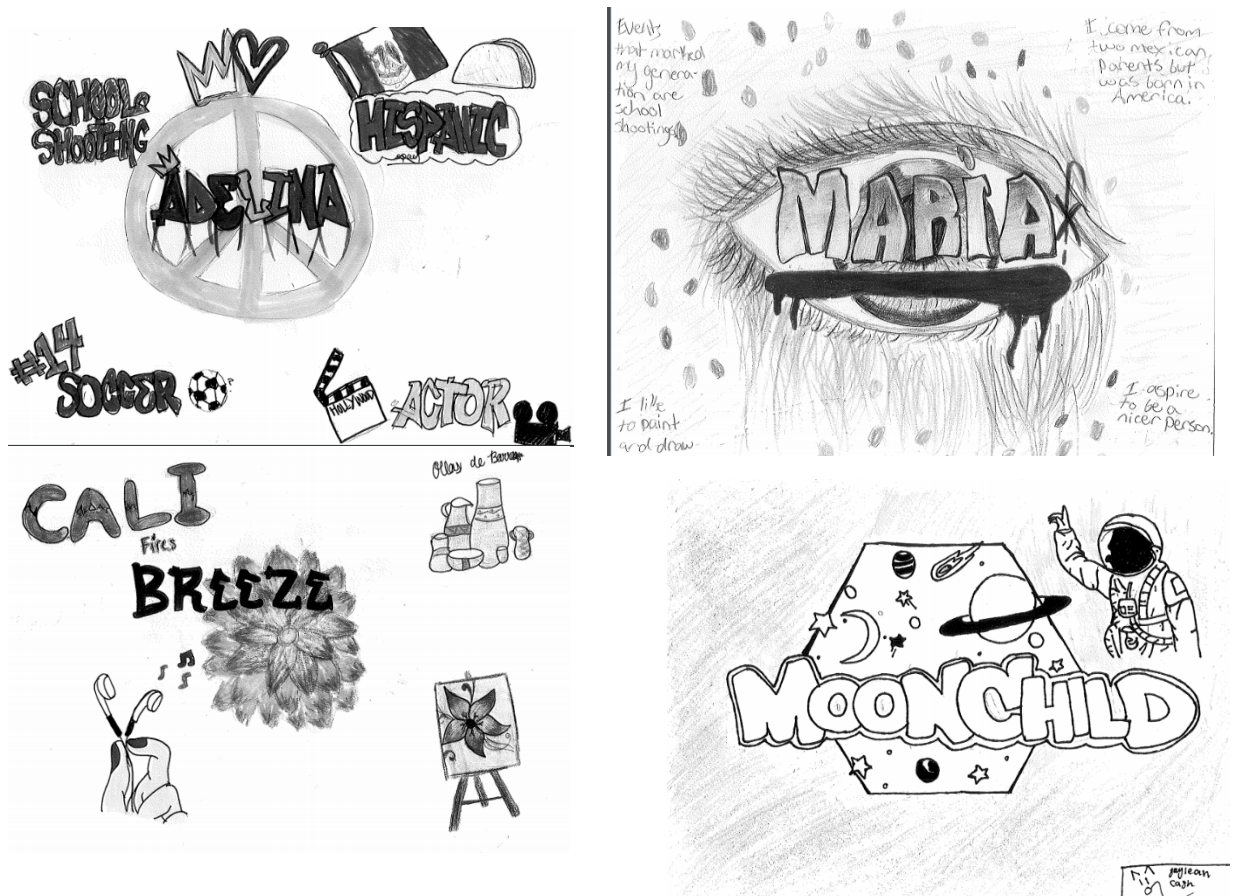
By teaching the critical debates present in graffiti art and raising awareness about the non-mainstream discourse (i.e. non-criminal) around this practice, I generated knowledge *otherwise*.

c. Movement of ideas as knowledge *otherwise*:

The 50-minute class became a crash course on graffiti. I struggled to find an effective way to implement embodiment about an element that is primarily based on writing and drawing. One way I implemented a form of embodiment during the graffiti week, was by rethinking what movement means. Indeed, as discussed in chapter-cypher 2, embodiment can mean different things; movement does not always have to mean moving with your body. Movement can be attached to movement of ideas, knowledge, energy.

Instead of actively moving in the classroom, I decided to have students' knowledge move around the tables. After analyzing a few pieces of graffiti, we concluded that graffiti is made of several ideas, textures, words, feelings coming together as one cohesive graffiti. Therefore, the exercise for Connor, Sanchez, and Bowen's students was to start with a word that spoke to them the most regarding the current unit they are learning (Chinese empire, first presidents, astronomy, respectively). Then, students passed their sheets to their neighbor, connecting several ideas. The goal was to take all these ideas, words, and textures created through collaboration and make them into a sketch, like a graffiti artist might make in preparation for a graff, that would also serve as a cheat-sheet containing information on their unit. Through their act of sharing and re-sharing, students were participating in call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*.

Since Brooks' class was focused on personal development and identity formation, I chose to highlight these goals with the activity presented. I asked them to write their name in the middle of the sheet, and think about the following: their hobbies, who they aspire to become/career goals, an event that marked them, the culture(s) or ethnicity(ies) they associate with, and something fun about them. This activity aims to introduce the concept of the "come as you are" philosophy of hip hop where each student is encouraged to showcase who they are and embrace their identity. As a terrible drawer with no experience writing graffiti, I could not teach graffiti sketching techniques. However, we used some of the methods associated with creating a graffiti (finding a message, showcasing your identity, using different colors and textures, playing with forms and letterings etc.) and reinterpreted what graffiti could look like in a classroom setting. The results were stunning!



Picture 19: Selected drawings from Bowen's and Mrs. Brooks' classes

The graffiti unit class went better than I had expected. Almost everyone turned in a graffiti the next week, and both students and teachers seemed excited about this new subject. My use of embodiment was particular and perhaps limited: it was geared towards movement of ideas and representing embodied reality/identity on the page.

d. Limitations of critical moving in the moment:

After talking to my dissertation chair the following week, I realized that I failed to truly embrace the graffiti element of hip hop as an embodied practice. I was so focused on making a “writing” or “art” on wall/paper become movement, that I forgot about the

movements of the graffiti writers, not only when they are spray painting, but the movements that are involved when doing something illegal. I forgot to incorporate what it is like to spray paint in the dark, crawl under a tunnel, or even run for your life. I was so caught up by the craft, that I forgot about the creator. Students and I generated knowledge *otherwise* but not completely. This is was good lesson for me.

In the previous chapter-cypher, I discussed hip hop educators' missed opportunity to truly embrace embodiment meaningfully in their classroom. Even as an advocate for critical moving, my own concept, I did not achieve it in real-time in the context of this graffiti unit. Wanting to "keep it real" and not betray what graffiti is about became harder than I thought. This shows the gap between theory and practice. I now realize that there are many institutional and personal constrains that make it difficult for educators to implement their ideas and ideals in the classroom; whether it is time limitation, lack of space, being thrown off by students, lack of resources etc. Doing something different in the classroom and in society in general is hard. The nature of academia is to be critical and add to existing scholarship. However, trying and failing at my own concepts and ideologies showcase that nothing is simply black or white, and that teaching and learning can't be just good or bad. Falling and getting up is part of the complex process. Being transparent about my shortcomings will help me and others in the long run. So perhaps, "keeping it real" in teaching embodied hip hop pedagogies can mean two things: one, to stay true to hip hop culture and its teachings; and two, stay true to ourselves, acknowledge our hindrances, and try to do better next time.

If I were to teach a similar unit in the future, I would want to allot more than 50mn. I would still want to ask critical questions, incorporate elements of their curriculum content or identity in the process because these teachings helped students shape an opinion about graffiti and learn the political implications of this art, they see every day near their home. However, I would instead incorporate graffiti making into part of a larger project during the performance portion of the embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum where students would have to collaborate to create a large graffiti piece in their classroom or their school. This activity would enable them to learn various skills such as teamwork and organization which are part of knowledge *otherwise*. They would have to go through some of the hoops that other graffiti artists practice such as choosing the political message behind the graff, deciding upon a location which would inevitably make them reflect on issues of legality vs illegality, street art vs. institutionalized art. Basically, this larger project would help students live and embody some of the key aspects of being a graffiti artist and therefore critically reflect on their practice. In other words, they would participate in critical moving and call-and-response *otherwise*.

Despite the quick introduction, the graffiti lesson sparked the interest of many students. The graffiti drawing “homework” was the most successful. Most students turned it in, and we had some amazing works of art. Furthermore, a lot of students decided to implement the element of graffiti in the hip hop performance later in the quarter. I think that the graffiti lesson/element had a lasting impact on them. Mr. Bowen took inspiration from my lesson and asked his other 8th graders to incorporate drawing and writing for their

capitalizes on guest speakers or artists. Hinds invited Faazh to teach the DJing element of hip hop, and myself for the breakdancing element during his hip hop theatre class; Love invited a bboy and popper to organize a cypher with her students; Iglesias invited bboys Lil Cesar and Kid Freeze to discuss diverse socio-political implications of hip hop culture. I also have heard on multiple occasions at hip hop pedagogy conferences and during my interview with Petchauer, that in order to practice hip hop education *right*, it is important to bring artists into the curriculum not to essentialize and singularize. The value of inviting others into the space is twofold: one, no hip hop educator is an expert in all artistic elements or all subjects related to hip hop thus it would avoid appropriating ; and two, bringing other bodies in the classroom space reembodies and diversifies the practice of teaching and learning since students have the opportunity to learn differently from a person with a different identity, cultural background, and knowledge about hip hop.

For my emceeding class, I therefore contacted Joshua Rosales, an English major undergraduate student at UCR whom I met in Professor Hind's Hip Hop Theater class the year prior. His poetry and rap performance stood out. But more importantly, his active participation, critical reflections, and research on hip hop informed me that he would be a good fit to collaborate with for this unit.

I usually am the guest instructor in someone else's classroom and usually have almost "carte blanche"¹⁰⁰ as to what I am going to teach. So, I did not have much experience with collaborating or co-creating a lesson with somebody else. I decided to learn more about this practice and read "Teaching and learning popular music in higher education

¹⁰⁰ Literal translation is: white card. Can be understood as having complete freedom and authority

through interdisciplinary collaboration: Practice what you preach” by Liz Przybylski and Niknafs Nasim. This article was very informative about ways to use the culture associated with popular music such as improvisation, flexibility, and the do-it-yourself and do-it-with others ethos in the curriculum and the pedagogy (102). The key aspects about peer-teaching that I retained from the article and aimed to practice were: employing each other’s feedback when facing multiple challenges; using the presence of another teacher from a different discipline and standpoint to add to the library of teaching approaches; creating generative possibilities of doing something in multiple ways; making co-teaching echo with the peer-sharing/learning ethos present in popular music such as taking risks and improvisation (115-116). Overall, the article formulated my concept of call-and-response *otherwise* in different ways. It was very instructive; however, the context of the authors’ course was different from mine. I had never had a working relationship with Rosales; he was an undergraduate student in English and I was a graduate student in Critical Dance Studies; Rosales only had taught one class in his life and my experience teaching middle school students was also quite limited. All in all, we were both quite new to this and it is safe to say that we were learning while doing.

Our collaboration started over the phone. I scheduled several phone calls to explain what each RV teacher expected of embodied hip hop pedagogies, how I was organizing my lessons so far (such as the use of handouts and videos, and practice of the element), then explained the different dynamic of each classroom, and finally, my vision of our collaboration. I have had the chance to participate in a few emceeing workshops. These experiences had given me preliminary ideas as to how our unit on emceeing should be

conducted. I wanted students to analyze the political statements of the lyrics of one or two songs in small groups and create their own small rap that speaks to the topic of their course. My overall goal for this week was for students to understand the socio-political implications of emceeing and understand its value as a form of expression.

I was honest with Rosales about my lack of expertise about rap music in the U.S. My primary expectation for Rosales' was for him to help identify relevant—and school-friendly (i.e. PG 18 and no curse words)—rap songs and help analyze them. However, I also mentioned to him that I was open to any suggestions and ideas about the content and the structure of the lesson since he had more experience listening to rap and creating lyrics.

Early on in our collaboration, I positioned myself as the leader of ideas pertaining to the structure and overarching goal of the class whereas Rosales had more input in the content. For example, Rosales suggested teaching the basic poetic principles found in rap songs such as metaphors or similes. Incorporating aspects of generating lyrics into the lesson was a great added value since it increased what students would learn about rap: social implication plus techniques to generate and analyze rap lyrics.

Following our collaborative strategy (me focusing on the structure, and Rosales on the content), we started working separately. I was preparing the handout, incorporating critical questions, and thinking about our main goals and pedagogy style. The lesson plan was similar to the graffiti unit: the structure would be the same for each class, but the content would change slightly to reflect the main course topic of each RV teachers (AVID, World History, U.S History, Astronomy). So, Rosales was looking for rap songs that would be relevant for each teacher's class and preparing a presentation where he introduces

himself, teaches about the various lyrical elements of emceeing and their socio-political implications. I also told him to be prepared to rap one of his creations which would be a great performative element of surprise to the students. Even though we decided to focus on our respective roles, we consulted one another throughout the process to see if we were both comfortable with the decisions we made, help each other when we felt stuck in our own processes, and brainstormed strategies to make sure the group and individual activities would run smoothly.

In terms of collaborating the day of teaching, I had established the fact that we would be co-teaching where Rosales would be the main speaker and I will be there to assist him. So, after briefly introducing him, I let him take over the class but I was standing next to him to help him manage the classroom. It was my first-time co-teaching and I quite enjoyed the dynamic because I was able to complement Rosales teaching by adding examples and explained certain terms or concepts when I saw that students had a confused look. In short, Rosales was helping me learn about his expertise, and I was able to assist him with my pedagogical experience.

This collaborative process was an enactment of call-and-response *otherwise* through mentorship, co-teaching, and exchanges of skills. Throughout our collaborative process, I viewed my role as a mentor since I was guiding Rosales how to prepare a lesson and how to teach. My ambition for this week was not only that the students thrive in learning about the emceeing element, but also to practice the “each one teach one” philosophy in this collaborative process, the hip hop spirit of mentoring.

The mentorship also happened outside the classroom or lesson planning process. During our lunch break, I tried to offer Rosales advice to succeed in his graduate school application and future graduate school career. I could not afford to remunerate Rosales (being an unpaid teacher myself) for his work but offered him lunch. I did my best to compensate for the lack of remuneration by providing him with valuable teaching and lesson plan prep experience, as well as tips for graduate school. Essentially, I gave him a chance to teach, as a young college student, alongside professional K-12 teachers.

b. Emceeding as knowledge *otherwise*:

After providing information about emceeding and how lyrics are usually formed, Rosales and the class analyzed, in small and large groups, a section of a rap song. For Brooks' class, we analyzed "GOOD MORNING AMERIKKKA" by Joey Bada\$\$, as it held themes of empowerment, social justice, and inequality that adapted well with the AVID class. For Connor's class, which was learning about the Chinese Empire, we found a song written by a Chinese-American rapper, Bohan Phoenix, who expresses his identity crisis in being a young immigrant trying to fit into mainstream American culture in his song "Overseas." We thought that some of the students in the class could identify with Phoenix' story. For Sanchez' class, Rosales chose an excerpt from Kendrick Lamar's "Complexion (A Zulu Love)" which discusses the cruelty of slavery and the role of black people in the United States which supports Sanchez' unit on the creation of the Bills of Rights and the first presidents. Rosales mentioned that finding a song for Bowen's astronomy class was challenging. However, he found "It's Good To Be Here" by Digable Planets, which is based on an aerospace theme. The lesson ended with an open-assignment

where students would create a rap based on their course content, and for Brooks' students, based on the identity-formation exercise from last week. It seemed that it was easier for Brooks' students who were tasked to write a rap about their story to create lyrics than students in the other classes who were tasked to write about the content of their class. Surprisingly though, in a short time (around 10 minutes), some students came up with great lyrics which included not only the elements of rap that Rosales taught them, but also, personal touches and style. I wish they could have spent more time doing this activity and hope the students who were into this activity kept practicing at home.

Being closer to students' age than I am, Rosales' choices of rap songs and personal style really spoke to the middle school generation. I recognize that I lack knowledge about current trends in hip hop and therefore usually present resources that speak to me the most. There is a clear and inevitable generational gap between students and teachers. Rosales did a great job filling that gap and providing students resources that spoke to them. The highlight of these lessons was when Rosales freestyled. Students were super excited about hearing his rap which discussed his American and Central American identity and navigating college. Students called and responded with sounds of appreciation, banging on their desks, and by giving him a standing ovation. His multicultural background spoke to the diverse student community at RV. I also know from my experience teaching and learning about diversity in the classroom, that diverse groups of students appreciate seeing "somebody like them" teaching, who, especially in this case, can relate to their generation's culture, such as hip hop.

On a side note, as a non-US born, not super talented hip hop dancer, not having an extensive network of practitioners anymore, at the start of my graduate school career and even sometimes during my fieldwork, I felt that I would never be like the cool hip hop educators I looked up to. I felt like I was deceiving my students a little bit, especially because of my lack of familiarity with U.S hip hop in comparison to other scholars and educators. I don't know if this feeling was an aftermath of the imposter syndrome¹⁰¹, part of my personality, or doubting my capability because of how women are enculturated to questions themselves and not exhibit too much confidence¹⁰². Probably a combination of all of these. In any case, I learnt over the years that "I don't know nothing, I just know differently." I then learnt to embrace my culture, identity, and background with hip hop culture as different, international, and *another* kind of experience instead of perceiving it as lesser than my American colleagues. And so again, it became clear to me that being transparent about what hip hop meant to me or that I am not an expert in "everything hip hop," did not work against me but for me. Nobody judged me for who I was or my hip hop story. Instead, it became apparent that combining the differing experiences and culturality of my students', colleagues, and myself became a source of new knowledges and inspirations. But coming to peace with this is an ongoing process. If you throw me into a

¹⁰¹ The imposter syndrome is very common in higher education and is defined as a "psychological pattern whereby an individual doubts their accomplishments and harbors a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a fraud". Pinto-Powell, Roshni. "what-colleges-can-do-help-students-avoid-impostor-syndrome-opinion." *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2018/12/20/what-colleges-can-do-help-students-avoid-impostor-syndrome-opinion>. Accessed, May 2020.

¹⁰² Such testimonials have been well documented in diverse studies. This online article introduces diverse authors discussing, what some of them call the "Confidence Gap". Kay, Katty, Shipman Claire. "The Confidence Gap". *The Atlantic*. May 2014. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/>. Accessed May, 2020.

hip hop education or a dance studies conference tomorrow, I will doubt myself. But I am working on it.

Inviting Rosales, a younger student of color practicing rap, was my strategy to produce a knowledge and pedagogy that students could better connect to. Furthermore, adapting our presentation to each RV teacher's curriculum content generated knowledge *otherwise*. Having the support of Rosales to teach the week 3 lesson was fantastic. Inviting a guest who is an expert is an absolute plus. Inviting a UCR English major showed students how hip hop can connect to college success. Also, our collaboration was an example of how embodied hip hop pedagogies are about the praxis of one of the essential hip hop philosophies of "each one teach one," and thus call-and-response *otherwise*.

Week 4: DJing/beatboxing element

For the DJing element of hip hop culture, I had the honor of inviting John Merchant, aka Faazh, as the guest artist. I have collaborated a few times with him in the past as a choreographer and as a graduate student researcher. I met Faazh through Professor Hinds as he is one of the lead actors and beatboxers in Hinds' plays.

Faazh produces hip hop beats but he considers himself to primarily be a beatboxer, actor, educator, and entertainer. He is therefore not a DJ. However, I had witnessed Faazh giving a DJ/beatbox workshop in Hinds' classes on several occasions. So, I had a good idea about what his pedagogy and content look like which made me want to work with him. The fact that our previous encounters brought us to collaborate again, demonstrates that call-and-response *otherwise* is multiple and interconnected.

a. Embodiment in beatboxing and career development as knowledge *otherwise*:

During our phone calls regarding the lesson plan, I asked Faazh to prepare a workshop-style course using beatboxing and sound-making which would reflect the rhythm-making aspects of DJing. I explained to him that embodied hip hop pedagogies were about using critical movement, and therefore I was seeking embodied exercises where students could also reflect on larger socio-political meanings. The plan was for students to be actively participating, making beats, and learning how to make sounds using their bodies. We had decided that we would not use any handouts or presentations for this workshop. Because of the absence of handout, my role in this collaboration was about making sure that the overall framework of the workshop would fit the philosophy behind embodied hip hop pedagogies. Similarly to Rosales, my expectation for Faazh was to prepare the course content and make sure it was aligned with the main ideas of my embodied hip hop pedagogies.

During our chats, I learnt that he had a lot of experience teaching young teenagers; he thus had more experience than Rosales in managing and leading a class. Because of his experience teaching and the fact that I participated in his workshops before, I was comfortable being more hands off during the lesson planning process than I was with Rosales. The collaboration in the classroom was similar to the one with Rosales. We established that Faazh would be the main “conductor,” and that I would assist in organizing the embodied activities and help manage the class if needed. Faazh led the classes with ease; he obviously was in his element.

Every time his workshops' participants, including students at RV, would hear his voice for the first time, everyone would act surprised and would gasp because of his unusual movie-trailer-like deep (very deep) voice. In addition to his lips' tricks and natural baritone voice level, his introduction captivated the audience: he said that he wanted to carry on the legacy of beatboxing taught by his uncle and that hip hop was energy. He added: "The principles of hip hop apply to life; hip hop teaches life skills. Not many cultures or art forms teach life skills as much as hip hop. Live in distress and be creative with it." Coming from an African American man raised in the Inland Empire, I think these words meant a lot to the students; they probably had more weight than if I were to say the same things. I did not invite Faazh only for his talent as artist and hip hop educator. He had a personal story, regarding his upbringing and his relationship to hip hop and college that I thought would speak to the student population at RV. It was also important, like with Rosales, to show that it is possible to be a person of color to make a career in hip hop and art. I believe that the lack of representation of such role models are barriers to empowerment and academic success.

Here we are, at the first workshop of the day in Brook's class. There was a lot of beatboxing, sound-making, and movement. He deconstructed the classroom space by asking students to form small groups spread across the entire room. Students (and helpers) were now standing in between tables producing knowledge in spaces other than on their desks or the usual designated learning areas of the classroom. He choreographed the classroom, like a DJ would choreograph their dancefloor, controlling the energy of the space, making the classroom a communal and performative environment. He asked

students to work in small circles and then, like a maestro or conductor, he pointed towards the circle(s) which would make sound. He would make embodied gestures to signify students should slow down or speed up their beat, as well as to increase or decrease the volume of their voice. This scene looked like a DJ with turntables who would scratch, turn, switch records. It was fantastic to feel the energy fly from one side of the room to the other. Basic rhythms combined to make something complex. Witnessing the power of individual expression turned into a larger creation was stunning. It was call-and-response *otherwise*. When he said, “Find your rhythm,” I interpreted it as a metaphor for finding your expression, identity, place in the space. Every voice/sound was on top of each other, lost in this big noise, and yet present, represented. To me, this showed the multi-tasking skill required to be a DJ, and therefore, emphasize the highly embodied craft of DJing. But I think I was the only one noticing their value. I don’t think Faazh fully realized the extent and importance of movement in the workshop; that it was special. In other words, in practice, Faazh’s activities were embodied. However, the critical and purposeful meaning behind these embodied activities were not made clear to the participants, which is something I had observed amongst other hip hop educators in my career and notably the ones discussed in chapter-cypher 2. It was particularly important for me that students realize, as hooks wrote, the connections between “life practices, habits of being, and the roles of professors” (138). Indeed, to me, a meaningful education is an education about life. Schools and teachers should be connecting our bodies and identities to life to help us become the best adults we can be.

Knowledge *otherwise* was shared during Brook's workshop through choreography of the classroom, storytelling, beat-making etc. However, the other part of the knowledge, the meaning behind these embodied activities were not communicated to the students clearly enough. In other words, knowledge *otherwise* was there but call-and-response *otherwise* only worked partially. This brings up the question: can call-and-response *otherwise* happen with any educator or artist or can it only be enacted by someone with extensive dance or movement training—which would considerably complicate the accessibility and shareability of my concepts and model...

b. Reconfiguring knowledge as call-and-response *otherwise*:

Because I felt that Brooks' students did not fully get the meaning behind the performances, on the way to the next class, I offered Faazh some critical feedback and reminded him about the necessity of thinking of movement as one of the key organizing and pedagogical structures of the workshop. I told him that there were a lot of amazing embodied practices that were happening and that he should emphasize them to the class, so that students would know that everything they do with their bodies, not only the sounds they are creating, but where their bodies are placed, and their role as part of the larger group, matters. Their individual contribution as a member of the smaller cypher impacts the larger classroom cypher.

After our quick chat while catching our breath from running in the hallways, Faazh reorganized the content to make movement a more purposeful part of his workshop. When students were not in sync, he explained how, in real life, it could be interpreted as a quarrel or a conflict in your life; he explained the same was true with sampling, sometimes it works,

sometimes it does not. This way, his rhythmic exercises became something they could all relate to, both physically and metaphorically. He used the elements and the techniques of hip hop in a more purposeful way, similar to how Petchauer would argue would be the *correct* or *real* way to use hip hop in the classroom in his article “I feel what he was doin’”: Urban Teacher Development, Hip Hop Aesthetics, and Justice-Oriented Teaching.” Before, our chat, Faazh’s workshop used hip hop in the classroom. After our chat, he used hip hop elements and connected them to societal knowledges which helped students connect hip hop, and art in general, with their bodies and lives.

By reconfiguring his workshop, Faazh responded to my call for action, therefore practiced call-and-response *otherwise* and shared knowledge *otherwise* to the students.

Our collaboration was very different from the one with Rosales. Unlike Rosales, Faazh was an experienced hip hop educator and, as a professional performer, definitively knew how to entertain the class. However, it was not until I provided critical feedback about the role of movement in my research that he realized how he could implement embodiment more purposefully during the workshop. My role as a collaborator was more hands-off during the lesson-planning and the content-making process, however, I provided more on-the-spot pedagogical feedback to make sure that the DJing workshop would still fit the core missions of my embodied hip hop pedagogies (i.e. critical moving).

Week 5: Dance element

Mr. Bowen arranged for me to have access to a larger classroom for the whole day to teach my freestyle dance workshop. I was confident about teaching dance in a classroom thanks to the Gluck Fellows for the Arts program where I taught a variety of

dance workshops at K-12 schools in the Riverside area. However, there were new challenges in this setting.

a. Limits of teaching embodied knowledge *otherwise* in a classroom:

The tables and chairs were already moved aside. The large rectangular space felt almost like a regular dance studio, except that there was no mirror. The walls were decorated with drawings; my computer and small speakers were placed on a small school chair, and the floor was bouncy. When students entered, I asked them to form a circle but that was impossible. The circle became an oval due to the size of the space and the number of bodies. The room was large but not large enough to hold 35 students and teachers. Moving was a challenge. Desks and chairs were falling on us. It became dangerous. I could have gone outside but the weather was cold, and I knew that students, especially the ones who are shy, would not feel comfortable exposing themselves. Like most K-12 schools in the Inland Empire I have taught at, the space provided to dance instructors is not ideal for a dance class.

This experience shows the lack of infrastructural resources from public education to accommodate artists and dance instructors and that perhaps, embodied kinds of knowledge *otherwise* cannot always be performed in a classroom setting. But I personally like to take on challenges. Embodied hip hop pedagogies are all about making the best of each situation and tweaking things to make it work for you, which follows the hip hop motto of “from nothing to something.”

b. Limits of embodied call-and-response *otherwise* in the classroom:

With my experience teaching dance to K-12 students, I knew that, whereas small children are super excited to try something new, teenagers are more self-conscious about how they might be perceived by their peers, and what might not be “cool.” My suspicions were correct: the teenagers did not want to work with me. Only about a third of each group were following instructions and were into it, another third would decide not to move at all, and the last third would just make jokes and play among themselves.

I was supposed to be in my element during this workshop, but it felt like a disciplinary nightmare. Teaching four hours of dance class in a small cubicle and complete chaos was not easy. This was a huge contrast from the two previous weeks when Rosales and Faahz were leading their workshops. I remember asking myself if my class was not taken seriously because I was a bad teacher or because of my high-pitched voice and petite body? I mean, nobody can blame me from comparing myself to the two previous male workshop instructors for whom the workshops ran quite smoothly. Do students just like having new faces in the room? Was I already too familiar of a face, not intriguing or cool anymore? Are students just not into dancing? Was it the awkwardness of the classroom space? WHAT IS IT ?!?! The questions in my head all coalesced around the concern: Am I the problem here or is it the nature of the situation...?!? I was very confused because, parallel to my weekly embodied hip hop pedagogies classes, I was also teaching hip hop dance workshops to the RV dance team, and these were going great. This experience echoes what Berman and Aoki and Kazan write about the disembodiment of education. More precisely, in this case, my body as a guest teacher was

marked/challenged by students, probably because of the lack of awareness of the teacher as a person. Luckily, the teachers and the helpers had fun, and they were impressed that a third participated; they expected even less participation.

After my first class, I knew I had to switch strategies because “teaching” obviously was not working. So, for the next three classes, I asked students to create a short routine inspired by their school day in a small group. Then, they had to show their creations to each other before the end of the workshop. Suddenly they had a responsibility. They became the knowledge maker, and they became more engaged. The workshop became about their school day, their story. And I am sure, they did not want to lose face in front of the other classmates. So, they participated.

I did not keep going in a direction that was not working for me or the students. There was a gap between what I had prepared and what the students were ready to take on. I was able to quickly reformat the workshop in response to this realization and get them moving. After teaching and learning “normally”, I switched gears to organize a teaching and learning that echoes call-and-response *otherwise* instead, and it worked.

I had planned to ask them to reflect on what it is like to be moving in a classroom, learn the baby freeze, and some hip hop footwork. But sometimes being a hip hop educator is about being okay letting some of our prep go. By giving the lead to the students, the rest of the lessons went almost organically. Being ready and prepared with a choreographed plan helps, but in order to be a good educator, I improvised in the moment. That is a skill.

Week 6 – 10: Hip hop performance

For Connor, Sanchez, and Bowen, the embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum culminated with an embodied hip hop performance. For a couple of weeks, I led workshops where I prepared students to create their own hip hop performance. This meant that I provided them with theatrical tips based on my personal knowledge as a former professional dancer and from what I had learned in Hinds' class. After a couple weeks of coaching, they were instructed to work in small groups to create a hip hop performance that would reflect the content of their unit.

a. New grading system as knowledge *otherwise*:

Each teacher had prepared a list of criteria and options groups could choose from. They were going to be graded based on how they demonstrated their knowledge of the unit. This was a big deal. These three classes were exempt from the traditional big end-of-the-quarter written exam in exchange for creating the hip hop performance. On my end, I was going to grade them on criteria based on their hip hop performance (i.e., originality, use of four elements, collaboration, incorporation of feedback).¹⁰³ My methodology in setting up the criteria was to use the same criteria I had already introduced verbally during the earlier hip hop performance workshops. These criteria were also based on my observations and assessments of these preliminary workshops.

For Brooks' class, I organized something different based on Brooks mentioning early on that she was not interested in working on a larger hip hop performance. I still wanted students to perform in some capacity but wasn't sure how yet. So, I reworked my

¹⁰³ Grading criteria can be found in appendix p. 353

curriculum to have students work on an oral group presentation about hip hop or social protest in Riverside. Each group had to choose one of the following topics: protest in Riverside, hip hop and embodied protest, or one of the four artistic elements of hip hop in Riverside. The assignment was to create a visual (online or physical poster); a handout; present orally; and provide a short embodied demo.

I was very happy with teachers accepting to evaluate their students differently, through a hip hop performance. By so doing, they challenged the more static and standardized grading system in public education and generated knowledge *otherwise*.

b. Limits of call-and-response *otherwise* as collaborative practice:

Most students had never performed or even spoken in front of the class before. This was very new to them. I suggested teachers give students some extra time, other than the Fridays I teach, because it was likely not going to be enough. I had underestimated the time they needed to break the ice with one another before finally starting to craft and create something together. They were afraid of collaborating and working as a team. I assumed that students were used to working in groups because I had had group homework and activities since elementary school. It was not until teachers told me how great incorporating teamwork was, that I realized that working together was not something their students were familiar with.

Because of my assumption, I had not laid out to the class what strategies to use to collaborate. In retrospect, sharing that information with the students would have been useful. However, they learnt by doing and each group had a different collaborative dynamic, for better or worse. In some groups, for two full lessons, none of the group

members would collaborate; each member worked in silence independently. But finally, when they realized that the “test” or “performance” was around the corner, one member would take the lead and spark the interest of other group members and start a *real* collaboration. I also wanted teachers and students to have this creative space and time by themselves, without me. I wanted teachers to feel confident and comfortable providing feedback about the performance and interacting and bonding with their students differently. I wanted them to be okay with students deconstructing the classroom, asking for props, looking through the classrooms’ drawers and materials.

I realized after this experience that certain kinds of call-and-responses *otherwise* do not work organically. They need to be introduced and prepared for them to have the desired intent and impact. It is my job as the educator to evaluate when a call-and-response *otherwise* can be fully improvised and when it needs some preparation.

c. Performance as knowledge *otherwise*:

Most teachers did not have high expectations about the performances. Indeed, while some students had a well-prepared routine including all the elements of hip hop including big graffiti drawings, movements, rapping, and sound-making, some, still did not take the activity seriously or were simply not trained to rehearse, to remain serious, or to work through their shyness. Performance requires a certain kind of discipline which I could not teach in a matter of a couple 50mn classes. I had assumed, that the fact that this performance would count towards their end-of-the-quarter evaluation would motivate them to create something solid. Perhaps my background as a former professional dancer overpowered my judgement.

This shows a major flaw in the curriculum plan. Ideally, I should have included at least a couple more weeks of engaging in performative discipline which would include: sharing know-how about creating a piece collaboratively; showcasing works in progress to teachers and students for critical feedback¹⁰⁴; and learning to improvise when you forget your line or move, or when you don't have the material, time, or technological resources to develop the production you originally had intended. However, one thing every teacher agreed on was that this performative activity taught students how to problem solve and work collaboratively. They were impressed at the leadership skills that emanated from some of their students: "I got to see a whole different side of my students" (Connor). At the end, we were pleasantly surprised by some of the performances. In Connor's class, most students performed a Mayan human sacrifice and represented the war between the Spanish and the Aztec; in Sanchez' class, students performed the beginning of industrialization with mechanized gestures, the underground railroad, and students found innovate ways to distinguish the geographic locations of the Northern States from the Southern states in the limited classroom space; in Bowen's class, students depicted the solar eclipse, satellites, and the solar system, using their body in motion, props, and graffiti. Some of the performances had hidden layers and subtle embodiment which were performed beautifully.

Whereas the techniques associated with creating and performing a hip hop theater piece were not always there—mainly due to the lack of time practicing and rehearsing

¹⁰⁴ The Friday before their performance, each group showed me and teacher their work in progress. But that one time was not sufficient.

and lack of prior embodied practices in the students' lives—knowledge *otherwise* was still generated. Students created something different, something of their own, embodied, and built life skills such as leadership.

At the end of the performance, I thanked students for participating in this brand-new activity, and getting out of their comfort zone. I also made a point to tell them about the labor of their teachers going out of their way to make this program happen. I wanted them to realize that it would have been much easier for their teachers to do their regular lessons and follow the script. However, I commended their leap of faith and how invested they are in their students.

Economy of teaching and learning:

After watching the three teachers participate in the economy of teaching and learning during my classroom observations, I started to adopt this technique myself to incentivize homework. I gathered all the UCR pens and notebooks I received for free over four years of grad school and applied for an outreach grant to purchase coloring pens at the Dollar store to distribute to those who completed their homework.

Interestingly, though, I am not sure it really worked. The graffiti assignment was by far the most successful and yet students did not know back then that I would compensate them for turning it in. This tells me that the compensation was not students' primary motivation. Rather, students would do the homework if it spoke to them and/or they assessed it was feasible in the time constrain or with the resources they had at home.

I also wonder where the power dynamic lies in this situation. Does the teacher who offers the snack, gift card, pass, extra points have more power, or do students who

push teachers to come up with creative and monetary incentives to engage the class have more power? Why don't students work unless there is pressure or incentives?

Call-and-response *otherwise* is supposed to be a reciprocal teaching and learning style based on trust, peer-sharing, and continuity. However, the economy of teaching and learning shows a power dynamic and a unilateral form of knowledge transmission where students won't learn unless they are getting something in return. This shows that call-and-response *otherwise* does not always work in the context of teaching and learning at RV and perhaps at other institutions as well.

Positive impact and successes of embodied hip hop pedagogies program:

While I was not able to achieve everything in my initial plan, the collaboration still had a significant impact on students, teachers, and myself, and mattered. I list here a few "Aha" moments or key themes that happened during the ten weeks at RV, and which speak to the positive impacts of embodied hip hop pedagogies: student participation; teachers' learning; the role of embodiment and hip hop broadening students' and teachers' perspectives on education. I also summarize teachers' feedback to understand how this collaboration went from their perspective.

My motto coming to RV was "keeping it real" and it paid off. I went all in with my ideas on embodied hip hop pedagogies and the feedback was mostly positive. For example, a couple teachers told me that their other classes were asking, "How come we don't get to have a hip hop class" and seemed envious of their peers. After a few weeks, students started waving at me in the hallways or in the courtyard, and even chatted with me in between classes. I like to believe that this was a result of trust building.

I was particularly surprised when one of the teachers told me that some of their students were depressed and on suicide watch and yet participated in the hip hop performance workshops. They added that usually, students with depression tend to be very shy and would not participate in group activities. Somehow, they decided to go out of their comfort zone and perform in front of the class with their colleagues. Perhaps performative work could be an alternative way to engage non-traditional learners.

I also measure success by analyzing the teachers' answers to my post-workshop survey. I received the answers from three out of four teachers: Connor, Sanchez, and Bowen. The comments demonstrated that the teachers participated in this workshop because they cared about their students:

Sanchez: "Such a fun experience that students still talk about."

Bowen: Let's do this again!

Connor: "I am a teacher who loves change and loves to try unconventional strategies, especially when they are of high student interest."

Sanchez: "I'm always open to trying new things [that] will engage students and connect to them personally. I felt this would relate to most students."

Bowen: "I do Personalized Learning in my classroom and my student population is into hip hop. I wanted to step outside of my comfort zone and include hip hop pedagogy in the classroom."

To them, one of the most successful aspects of the workshop was the fact that it tied in with students' identity and selves:

Sanchez:

The workshop was personalized as students were able to create their own products and performances. [...] The workshop helped students realize the history and evolution of hip hop beyond their assumptions. Most students did not know the history and cultural implications about hip hop. The workshop also helped students to see that any passions can be pursued in an academic career. [...] I love how the hip hop workshop allowed students to learn and apply the skills learned. Through the performances, I felt students were exploring who they were and how to express that.

Connor: “Kids, especially in regions of POC¹⁰⁵, need to see that there is so much to be proud of and that their creations can be part of the learning dialogue.”

Bowen: “I thought of hip hop being only kinesthetics. I like the other aspects of it”

Teachers are interested in implementing elements of this workshop into their classes and seeing it part of a larger structure, and reflect how it is cross-curricular:

Sanchez:

I have a better understanding of hip hop as an instructional design and how to apply this structure into other possible areas (country, folk art/ culture, etc....) [...] It gave me insight on how I can incorporate movement and performance with academic topics. [...] I think the category hip hop would need to be added into a broader area of urban music, dance and art and it does play an important role in public education. Much of the educational programs are now shifting to personalized learning programs and this provides a way for students to connect

¹⁰⁵ Persons of Color

personally. Teachers often struggle with linking the content to students on a personalized level while still maintaining academic rigor.

This quote reiterates the need for performative and culturally sustaining pedagogies in K-12 education. Indeed, Sanchez suggests that hip hop is an important and relevant subject for RV students. However, she brings up a broader issue concerning the lack of performative and art practices at RV and in public education in general. I also find very interesting how Sanchez highlights the paradox between school moving towards personalized learning when in fact, they still struggle to meaningfully link the curriculum to their students' embodied reality. Implementing embodied hip hop pedagogies at RV, therefore, participated in rendering more visible the need for embodied art practices in K-12 education as well as the work that institutions must engage ahead for connecting students with their embodied realities better.

Finally, all four teachers mentioned that they are willing to implement performative and hip hop elements into their classrooms and think that it is a beneficial program to implement in K-12 institutions in the Inland Empire. However, for this to happen, they agree that more time would need to be dedicated because students don't learn as fast as college students and would require additional prep time to collaborate on each unit to meet students and the hip hop educator's needs. I was invited to come back to teach in Winter 2020 which shows that teachers were happy with our collaboration.

My original plan and concepts of call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* may not have always worked the way I intended them to, but I managed to incorporate most of these ideologies in the classroom in my attempt to create an *otherwise* cypher at RV.

Overall, through these testimonies, we can gauge that embodied hip hop pedagogies constitute an alternative pedagogical model for assessment with room for improvement.

Go conclusion and retrospective:

In this section, I: summarized my weekly teaching content and choreographic readings of my embodied hip hop pedagogies classes at RV; discussed the different kinds of collaborations between myself and the invited artists; examined my in-the-moment embodied experiences in relation to call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*, and socio-cultural markers such as gender, nationality, and background with hip hop; and presented the positive feedback received from teachers. Basically, this section showcased what I was able to accomplish during my ten-week fieldwork at RV and represented the successes and challenges of my endeavors.

My original aim during this action research was to achieve call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* and implement the findings I have learnt from my previous ethnographic sites (i.e. hip hop events and hip hop education classes). However, during my fieldwork, these concepts were not always at the forefront of my pedagogical strategy in-the-moment. Indeed, I was overwhelmed with my expectations and roles in the classroom, in-the-moment. I was too much into the action, trying to build a curriculum that makes sense, and teaching while juggling graduate school and my part-time job. Consequently, the integration of my conceptual aims and communicating about the importance of embodiment became almost secondary.

This unfortunate reality shows the gap that often exists between theory/research on paper and the field. I recommend future ethnographers to *really* pay attention to these

kinds of happenings and critically reflect on them. This disparity is the nature of research; it is never exact. In the next section, I will go over a more nuanced analysis of my praxis looking at the institutional and personal challenges and shortcomings as an educator and as a curriculum developer.

The *Real* Mechanics and Politics of Guest Teaching:

Introduction:

Above, I described the positive impact of the embodied hip hop pedagogies program at RV and introduced some of the challenges I faced in the classroom. Here, I discuss in more details, the ideal vs. the real curriculum. In other words, I look at how feasibility confronts ideology. I describe the challenges I faced as a guest teacher, my personal missteps implementing this program for the first time, and critically reflect on my embodied practices, thus “keeping it real.”

I am the “organized” type. However, guest teaching at RV made me realize that so much of teaching is an improvisation. Indeed, we can be as organized as we want, there will always be unexpected situations that are out of our control shifting our ideal plans. In other words, I faced a high level of negotiation between choreographing (i.e. planning) and improvising (adjusting to in-the-moment scenarios). This sub-section also aims to show future scholars and educators the kinds of difficulties they might encounter and be prepared for them.

Collaboration challenges with RV teachers:

Feasibility did not meet reality because of the lack of time I had with the teachers which is a representation of larger institutional and systemic issues such as the lack of funding and support for public school education.

a. Limits of collaboration and call-and-response *otherwise*:

Ideally, RV teachers and I should have discussed deeper and further the main tenets of our collaboration and our respective roles and expectations. We did discuss these subjects during our initial meetings but those were rushed since they were organized after teachers' long school day, in between the other countless things they needed to complete before heading home. So even though, at the end of each meeting, we all had an idea of how our collaboration should work, we had not really delved into its complexity. Both teachers and I were new to organizing this kind of collaboration, so this experience was a learning curve for all of us.

If I were to do this again, the pre-teaching (the collaboration setup) would need to start much earlier. This time, I visited RV twice in fall quarter where I quickly met with teachers, and I started teaching early winter quarter. Next time, I would create a solid collaboration plan in fall with: pre-scheduled meetings throughout our collaboration, gather teachers' lesson plans for winter ahead; provide teachers all my pedagogical/curricular ideas, lesson plans, and handouts ahead (at least templates); provide teachers with all my assessment questions ahead; provide teachers with a preliminary calendar noting the "heavier" weeks (weeks where teachers may need to spare time in one or two extra class periods to the embodied hip hop pedagogies program,

such as hip hop performance rehearsals); ask for breaks, restroom, copier access etc.

Basically, instead of thinking of our collaboration being only one quarter (ten weeks), the new collaboration would be for two quarters where one quarter is dedicated to organizing all the mechanics involved with teaching and learning and assessing the program.

These instances show that call-and-response *otherwise* is not obvious nor organic at all times. Collaboration takes practice. Embodied hip hop pedagogies collaborations aim to be transgressive and embodied. But I cannot assume that teacher-collaborators already know how to do these kinds of collaboration, and that we are on the same page. They need a degree of deep brainstorming, practicing, doing, redoing, like an ongoing ever-figuring-it-out- call-and-response *otherwise*.

b. Limits of collaboration and knowledge *otherwise*:

There was not enough time to fully collaborate on the curriculum content. For RV teachers, it would almost be a surprise what I would teach every week because I would usually send them my lesson plan and PowerPoint a couple of days in advance, but they would not have the time to open it until my class would start. Everything was a little rushed, and though I enjoyed having that kind of liberty, ideally, we should have spent more time outside the classroom together to build a curriculum that would both embrace their curriculum content as well as the embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum.

With that said, organizing my weekly workshops required teachers to make room in their lesson plan on Fridays, and teach what is normally five-day course content in only four. Perhaps our collaboration was less effective outside the classroom but there definitively was collaboration in the moment, in the classroom.

In the classroom, teachers were all very engaged: they would ensure that the activities run well by aiding when needed and would provide valuable feedback when possible. As a Gluck instructor, I have seen many times, teachers who would use my visit as an excuse to check their phones or leave the classroom to have some alone time. The RV teachers jumped in to support what I was saying, or helped keep students on track, and thus actively participated in the classroom and collaborated with me.

c. Limits of call-and-response *otherwise* as research praxis:

Ideally, I had hoped to conduct a case-study where I would analyze in greater depth the benefits of embodied hip hop pedagogies for students and teachers. In that scenario, I would have needed to spend more time teaching and interviewing and would have needed to conduct a survey study. Many things were not set for me to conduct such research: I did not have an IRB approval to interview minors; I would have needed to convince teachers to sacrifice more of their own teaching time to implement embodied hip hop pedagogies; even if the teachers would have allocated more teaching or interviewing time, the work requirements of my PhD and the lack of funding would have made it very difficult to conduct a longer study at the middle school.

These collaborations were a great learning experience. Like Valerie Kinloch, one of the author-collaborators in Paris and Alim's culturally-sustaining pedagogy book, I quickly began to feel the pressure of meeting demands amidst time constraints (qtd. In Paris and Alim 28-29). I am worried that teachers' mandatory administrative duties, scripted curriculum, and the test-based competition-driven schooling culture would force them to adopt a more traditional pedagogy style despite their engagement towards their

students. Furthermore, I believe that it is difficult to fight a battle alone. I am afraid that if they feel isolated or unsupported by their colleagues or school, they will tire and abandon their vision to fall in line with institutional requirements (Rose in Paris and Alim 28-29).

Another area where my research, and especially my critical reflective and analytical skills could have improved are around the intersectionality between teaching and my positionality as a female international researcher, non-officially trained K-12 instructor. Indeed, some of the conversation about gender, race, status, and positionality present in this chapter-cypher, came later, during the editing process of this dissertation. Even though some of the questions that arose during my fieldwork were noted, I did not critically reflect on them in these particular terms at the moment. In my next research, I will consider how my positionality might be read and effect teaching before beginning, and make sure to connect these dots sooner.

d. Impact of absences on active participation and group work:

Embodied hip hop pedagogies are based on active participation and collaboration. However, a lot of students were absent every week. I would go into a class on Friday and realize that half of the class was absent because they were on a fieldtrip or some students were no longer in that class. I would not know until I entered the class and saw empty seats. A lot of activities were designed for students to work together over time. However, it was hard for me to work with class sizes that would change every week, and for students to remain motivated when they knew their work might not be pursued the next time we met depending on who was present. It was challenging to implement ideal embodied hip hop pedagogies under such circumstances.

Earlier, I discussed how teaching embodied hip hop pedagogies to a disciplined class felt easier because students would follow instructions and the degree of improvisation in the classroom would be limited. Here, the challenges were due to unknown factors. I had to adapt my lesson plan upon glancing at the classroom and observing who was missing. It required quick readjustments. Some students would be frustrated when their group members were missing. However, I was able to shift their frustration to a positive challenge such as improvising in the moment. Like me, students had to readjust their plan, come up with solutions, and make the best of the situation. This brings up the question: can call-and-response *otherwise* happen effectively when the groups are constantly shifting? In the end, improvisation in the classroom develops critical life skills, because in life, not everything can be fully premeditated. Humans improvise and adapt to changes all the time.

e. The guest teacher and the sub teacher:

In common discourses, being a guest usually means being privileged and treated exceptionally. The biggest collaborative challenges I faced were the lack of communication and time with the teachers. I rarely received an answer to an email I sent. However, early on, I established that Mr. Bowen would serve as a mediator among the teachers, so I would text him a few days before Friday to make sure everything was in order. Still, I never really knew what to expect, how many students would be there, or even if the teachers would be there (they were often absent due to conferences and field trips). It would be a surprise every week. When teachers were absent, there usually was a

substitute teacher. The subs were often not aware of my workshop, so they did not have the handouts printed or the tech ready.

f. Limits of call-and-response *otherwise* with sub teachers:

Every substitute teacher worked differently. There would be a different dynamic each time. Some subs were totally hands off and let me teach my lesson; others would intervene a lot or control the room. For example, during the oral presentation group project in the AVID class, students were asking me if they could use their phone to research information online since some of the web content (such as YouTube) was restricted on their school computer. I said, “Yeah, sure, as long as it is for this project and you don’t chat on Facebook or something.” However, when other students asked the sub teacher, they were strictly forbidden and worse, the students I gave permission to were called out. My pedagogy style clashed with that of the sub teacher and the school regulations limiting the possibilities of call-and-response *otherwise* in the space.

During the same class, which I aimed to be a workshop-style, free-flowing group time, one of the students who was a special ed student, decided to dance around the classroom, zigzag around the tables to ask other groups what information they found for their project. I found it fantastic that he understood what kind of classroom environment I was trying to create, and that he felt comfortable using dance as a medium to express himself and move in the classroom. However, after a couple of turns, slides, and twists, this student was asked to go back to his seat by the substitute teacher and remain seated quietly, probably because in Western traditional schooling, sitting and listening are signs of respect and proper learning.

This particular example stood out to me because it showed that substitute teachers and the school were not equipped to guide students with different cognitive learning abilities or to promote embodied pedagogies. To me, this student had creative ways of taking in information, which fit perfectly my embodied hip hop pedagogies model of learning. He was in sync with my concepts of the *otherwise*. Instead of using this student's innovative way of learning to their advantage, the sub teacher and the institution tried to suppress his expressivity by molding him to be like the rest of the classroom. Their goal was for this student to fit, to conform to the norm. However, embodied hip hop pedagogies aim for the opposite.

It was hard, as a guest teacher to navigate the power dynamic between the sub teacher who, I am assuming, followed the institutional policy, and myself, thinking I had liberty to teach my embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum. My pedagogy would contradict their teacher-education, and probably the school's policy, but there was no time nor space to engage in a healthy conversation with the sub teachers to prevent that.

Embodied hip hop pedagogies strive to create space for individual identity to support students. However, during that particular instance, I did not feel like I could, as a guest teacher, really do something about it without undermining the sub teachers' authority, which in the long-run, may have had a large negative impact for their collaborations with the students. Overall, the system is not ready for embodied pedagogies and call-and-response *otherwise* in the classroom yet.

First-timer experience:

a. Limits of call-and-response *otherwise* in short time:

As teachers mentioned in their feedback, time was the main hinderance of the program. Meeting students only once a week was certainly not enough because they would forget what we had done the previous week, breaking the continuity. The program was also rushed because I did not understand my audience at the deepest level due to my inexperience as a public middle school teacher. Middle school students are teenagers who challenge their teachers to prove themselves because they are at a crucial moment in their life, where they learn to be in society, and stop accepting without questioning rules that have been dictated in their household and at school. As a teacher, knowing how to navigate that energy in the classroom was time consuming and should have been something I considered when building the curriculum. How can call-and-response *otherwise* happen well under time constrain?

b. Limits of call-and-response *otherwise* with non-English speakers:

Connor's class had one non-English speaker. On the first day, I asked this student why he would not draw or write anything on his handout. He just stared at me and so I moved on to walk my way through the rows of chairs and see how others were doing with the activity. I had no clue. In later weeks, I realized that this student did not understand a word I was saying this whole time. It is not until I heard some of his classmates translate instructions from English to Spanish that I realized there was an English learner in the class. Perhaps there were English learners in other classes too, but I only became aware of this student in Connor's class. I wondered why teachers did not

identify them to me? And even if they did, I wonder what I could have done better. This is where I lack experience to assess the situation and try something that would work for him and the rest of the class.

This instance demonstrates the importance of choreographing the curriculum and pedagogy ahead of time. Even as a bi-lingual person myself, it was very difficult for me to come up with a quick solution to best support this student in the moment.

Improvisation in the classroom works only when I can quickly land on my feet and adjust to a situation with the tools I know such as English language. In this instance, I honestly don't know how I could have handled the situation better in the moment without singling out the student awkwardly, making him uncomfortable, and without leaving the other students hanging. So, I wonder, can call-and-response *otherwise* happen effectively without understanding each other's language? In theory, it should, because of kinesthetic knowledge. However, in practice, I am not so sure...

c. Limits of call-and-response *otherwise* with difficult subject matter:

One day, in Bowen's class, one student drew a swastika on their group handout. I was walking around asking how their group work was going when I saw the sign on their sheet. I asked them who drew it and if they knew how serious it was. I said that whomever drew it that they please reveal themselves so that the entire group does not get "punished" for it. I asked the substitute teacher to come to the table, hoping she would guide me through the school or institutional procedures for this kind of situation. But she did not seem to know how to handle the situation either. So, I concluded that I would bring this up to Mr. Bowen and that he would talk to the group members.

I really felt clueless in the moment because I did not want to raise attention in front of other students, and yet, I wanted to teach the gravity and the meaning of this drawing. I am grateful that Mr. Bowen followed up with the students the following week, but I really wished I knew how to approach the situation in the moment. My call-and-response *otherwise* felt short, cut off.

d. Limits of call-and-response *otherwise* when managing the classroom:

My lack of classroom management (not sure what to think of the word “management” when talking about students, anyway) experience was something I struggled with. When students would give me a hard time, I would lose my patience. When I lost it, I tended to come out as passive aggressive, and for example, would start reminding them about their participation grades. I would regret it immediately, but it would throw me off both on the spot and long term. It was probably not a big deal and yet, sometimes, I would not be able to sleep for days. Or on the contrary, maybe it did impact students negatively, and I would be disappointed in myself for that.

I wanted to become a hip hop educator to impact students positively. What I did in these moments was reproduce some of the trauma I experienced as a young student. Sometimes, I was guilty of wanting them to be quiet and disciplined because I thought what I was saying mattered. I had this conflicting feeling between what I believe in, as a hip hop educator favoring freedom of expression, and the conflicting thoughts in my head saying: “give me a break!” How do all these people on YouTube do it right? Are they amazing every day, or do they just post the videos which “worked” well? Is this all choreographed? Are they always perfect as they seem?

All in all, it was hard to execute call-and-response *otherwise* the way I described it on paper. The realities of teaching and learning must account for call-and-response *otherwise* to be messier and more complex. It is never perfect. But what is important is to keep improving it by practicing call-and-response *otherwise* more and more.

e. Limits of looking young, and connecting to students:

Where to start... I am almost thirty years old, but I look like I am sixteen. Seriously. As previously mentioned, Kazan writes: “Though physically present, my body was not read as a teacher’s body. I looked too young; I did not look sufficiently ‘other’” (2). I can speak to that. Whereas looking young is considered an advantage in most parts of our society—for many problematic reasons, by the way—I faced some hurdles as a teacher for looking too similar to my students’ age group. There is nothing I can do about it physiologically. One would think that looking like their students might connect them more. Well, I am not so sure anymore...

I became more aware of this problem after experiencing a few college students start treating me as if I were their friends. I have begun using fashion to other myself from my students: I would wear heels; accessories; blouses; maybe sometimes even lipstick to look more adult, more “teacher-like.” I had not paid attention close attention to my fashion choices in regard to teaching until a fellow female graduate student told me how she felt that she had to “dress the part” for students to respect her as an authority figure in the classroom. It hit me in that moment, how I was unconsciously reproducing gendered behaviors because they were so embedded in the society. Indeed, as discussed by Feminist, Queer, and Gender theorists such as Judith Butler, gender is highly

constructed by the society; it is not something we are born with or innate. In *Undoing Gender*, for examples, Butler argues that there are social, psychological, and aesthetic policies that regulate people's performance of gender and try to conform them to the norm. Despite the fight for gender equity, many aspects of our modern society, such as education, wages etc. are still discriminatory and are based on patriarchal ideologies.

For my embodied hip hop pedagogies classes at RV, I wanted to “keep it real” and so I did the opposite of what I used to do at UCR. I dressed more like myself: I would wear t-shirts with prints of famous role models that would speak to social justice and freedom of expression to spark curiosity and interest. I was purposeful in not dissociating myself from the middle school students through my clothing choices. I remember being a young student and seeing my older teachers wearing padded shoulder blouses with ironed pants and thought how it was obvious we were not from the same generations. Taste is personal, and people should dress however they want. In my case, I like to dress casually and sporty, and so I did at RV. Well, I had the liberty of dressing the way I wanted as a guest instructor—as far as it was decent, obviously—unlike perhaps other teachers who had to follow certain fashion codes.

In “Hip-hop Education: A Perspective of the Culture through the Eyes of a High School Teacher,” Kai Jones mentions how his individual identity superimposed upon his identity as a teacher. The clothing aesthetic of hip hop culture manifested itself within his role as teacher (qtd. in Emdin and Adjapong 92). Similar to the way that clothing manifested for Jones, I used fashion to connect with my students a little more. Similarly, in chapter-cypher 2, Iglesias mentions how she was wearing more formal clothing at the

beginning of her employment, and how students could expect to see her dress more hip hop as the weeks went on.

Anyways, I am not sure that gaining respect necessarily comes from the way the teacher dresses, but perhaps, how relatable they are, and how they are understanding of their students' styles and lived experiences. In my case at RV, I don't know if my choreographic/designing choices worked in my favor or against me as a young-looking guest teacher.

f. Suggestions for first-timers like me:

I described above the first-timer struggles I encountered. This section includes suggestions for other first-timers. Here is a short (and non-exhaustive) list of recommendations for future guest educators based on what I would do differently:

- Read the school policy on dealing with bullying, name calling, racism, sexism, etc. and practice how to address these issues appropriately.
- Ask about any special-needs students in the classroom.
- Ask teachers if they plan to be absent during your guest teaching day(s). Follow-up about what should you expect (or not) from substitute teachers. If they are going to be absent on multiple occasions, ask if they can invite the same substitute teacher so that the sub teacher can better assist you.
- Observe the classrooms beforehand and learn teachers' tricks to manage their class.
- Arrive on site 45mn early: check-in takes time, especially if you are not in the school district's system. Furthermore, this extra time gives you time to prepare a plan B in

case you are made aware that teachers or students are absent, or the tech or paper materials are not ready.

- Always have back up in case the on-site tech does not work.
- Bring snacks and water, tons of it! Ask where all the restrooms are and request to have access to all of them, and to the staff/teacher lounge. Although, I must warn you, the micropolitics going on in the staff lounge can be a lot to handle. If you need to go out of the school to remember why you are doing this despite hearing teachers complaining and sometimes even being mean to students or colleagues in their backs, don't hesitate to take a stroll outside.
- Include breaks in your schedule. Teaching classes back to back while crossing the entire campus with students also transitioning in the hallway will make you sweaty, impatient, and short of breath.
- Don't try to do too much. Sometimes less is more. Adjust your expectations.
- Probably the most important: do not take things too personally whether these things are a student's re/action; a teacher forgetting to print your handouts, or students not doing their assignments. Don't let your lack of confidence get in the way of doing work that matters.

Movement practice and critical moving:

Embodied hip hop pedagogies differ from other hip hop education curricula because they purposefully focus on the role of movement in hip hop and education, and therefore aim to look at embodiment critically. However, in the process of implementing my curriculum, I sometimes lost track of making embodiment the core of each element

and communicating openly about the importance of kinesthetic knowledge to my students, which are the main concerns I had with other educators' work (i.e. chapter-cypher 2).

Every hip hop element is highly embodied. Art is performed by people. We cannot dissociate the artist from the craft. I tried my best with the circumstances I was in (short class periods - once a week – negotiating between learning about the social-historical/political contexts around hip hop and moving) to implement meaningful embodied practices in the curriculum. Sometimes the embodied element was highly choreographed and other times I relied on improvisation.

I wish I could have spent more time on each element and connected each element to their embodied practices more meaningfully. I did my best to implement the embodied portion of knowledge *otherwise* at RV. However, the realities of teaching and learning made it difficult to bring embodiment forward as much as I had intended to. Knowledge *otherwise* worked partially, which demonstrates the gap between theory and practice. As a scholar, it is easy to point out and write about how others do things right, or wrong. I thought I could do certain things better, but the field told me otherwise. My ideologies are hard to implement, even as an embodied hip hop pedagogies advocate and scholar. And so I truly commend and respect people such as Hinds, Love, and Iglesias described in chapter-cypher 2, who were able to implement so much embodied practices in their classes. Because, believe me, it is far, far from easy.

Limits of my body and the disembodiment of education

The education system and education scholarship, I believe, fail to take embodied practices and realities seriously. They don't address the visceral, physical, emotional difficulties experienced by teachers enough. During my guest teaching process, I was hyper aware of how my body navigated the institution in an unusual way.

a. Limits of call-and-response *otherwise* in my body:

I am not a trained teacher in the technical sense. I did not attend a teacher-education program prior to starting the collaboration at RV. What I do bring to the table is my extensive dancing and dance education experience. My movement practices enabled me to perform teaching in an innovative way and practice pedagogy in a more interdisciplinary and embodied manner. This unique perspective enables me to reconsider what the classroom space can look like and develop a relationship with students that is different than the usual hierarchical omniscient knower vs. passive learner situation. However, I wonder if what I experienced, on a bodily level, is ever explained in teacher-education courses. Do they talk there about how you might feel, how your body will react in certain situations, and how hard it can be mentally and physically, and how connected these embodied experiences can be?

Running from one class to the other, one side of the campus to the other, I barely could catch my breath and appear composed before I would step inside the next classroom. I also had no time to snack or use the restroom for three straight hours. Even after ten weeks, I did not get used to it. This experience, as beautiful and enriching as it was, was painful. The actual stress I felt in my body had a direct impact on my teaching. I

would look at the clock and wait for the lunch break so that I could relieve myself and finally put something in my empty stomach. I get dizzy and extremely tired if I don't snack regularly. Teaching does not really allow that. Students and teachers don't eat in the classrooms at RV. Part of me wanted to respect these rules to appear professional. Unlike the teachers and staff, I did not have access to most bathrooms in the school. The only one I could go to, was in the lobby at the furthest point of the campus.

This makes me wonder: was the school prepared to support me as a guest teacher? Based on the various shortcomings in communication, I wonder to what degree, structurally, the school was prepared or not for my teaching. Perhaps not all my "failures" are entirely my fault but instead also structural and institutional. My embodied realities/reactions show that call-and-response *otherwise* was impacted by the way I felt, my level of exhaustion, by the lack of restrooms etc. Again, call-and-response *otherwise* cannot always work the way it looks on paper. Improvisation and in-the-moment sensations have great impact on this teaching and learning method.

Recognizing my limits as hip hop educator:

Like most hip hop educators or culturally relevant educators, I had good intentions and wanted to promote hip hop in its purest form which thrives on peace, unity, fun, interdisciplinarity, freedom of expression and creativity (Emdin and Adjapong 2). I also believe in engaging students in meaningful projects that matter in their lives. Part of my job was to develop their critical thinking/moving skills, and "question the veracity of what they read in classrooms and pose powerful questions about social, cultural, economic, political, and other problems of living in a democracy that attempts to serve a diverse

populace” (Billings qtd. in Paris and Alim 146). However, was I always able to achieve that? Perhaps, as suggested by Travis Gosa and Tristan Fields of “Is Hip Hop Education Another Hustle?” I was not qualified enough to properly teach hip hop education. Perhaps I was so focused on the ideal embodied hip hop pedagogies or what I wanted out of it that I did not always respond to the students’ needs in the best way.

Unlike non-culturally sustaining classes, I engaged in political conversations, discussing subjects such as racial profiling, which may speak to the students. However, because of my lack of familiarity with the RV student population (which was primarily Hispanic/Latinx), I may have overlooked parts of their realities. I naively thought that my mere presence, as a hip hop advocate and non-US citizen, would serve as enough to connect with the students and entice them to learn. I learned that I had more work to do.

Moreover, I have realized that as a culturally sustaining pedagogue, as brought up by Casey Wong, I may have been guilty of thinking of students and their communities as marginalized or oppressed, even when my efforts were centered on empowerment (qtd. in Paris and Alim 132). Like the teachers in Paris and Alim’s ethnographic studies, I believe I focused on teaching about hip hop as a liberatory culture and how students’ personal agency could overcome societal issues. I concentrated my efforts on creating a curriculum with heavy topics fixated on issues. I now join Paris and Alim in asking, “How can we provide spaces for young people where they are not defined solely, or overwhelmingly, by their marginalization?” I don’t think I have an answer yet. This is something I must work on as I continue to teach young populations from diverse backgrounds and recognize my personal biases.

Hip hop saved my life and the lives of many others. As mentioned by Rose, “to love something is not to affirm it all the time; we need transformational love.”¹⁰⁶ It is important to recognize and discuss the negative discourses and practices present in hip hop such as hypersexuality, homophobia, hyper commercialization etc. I am not sure I really did that. Indeed, my love for hip hop and the lack of time to teach blinded me, resulting in teaching primarily the positive aspects of hip hop culture. Damaging discourses are present across all cultures. As the hip hop educator, I should have challenged hegemonic ideas, and pointed out when students reproduced negative cultural practices or created new ones.

Teaching about hip hop is teaching knowledge *otherwise* and is transgressive. However, within that, I must recognize the limits of hip hop. Because knowledge *otherwise* is about knowing different perspective and being critical.

Issues of appropriation in hip hop education:

Due to the lack of time and resources, I fell short as a collaborator. Ideally, I would have followed up with the teachers, observed their implementation of my model, offered constructive feedback to respect hip hop. However, since I could not achieve that, I am afraid I incited colleagues to reproduce problematic practices using hip hop culture: “Over and over I see young, White teachers on YouTube doing routines with their urban, mostly Black students to popular songs like Pharrell’s “Happy” or Silentó’s “Watch Me Whip (Watch Me Nae Nae)” as proxies for cultural knowledge and competence” (Billings qtd. in Paris and Alim 152). Instead of learning about hip hop and their students’ population at

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Paris and Alim, 11 Tricia Rose, Key Note Address, Cambridge University’s Hip Hop Studies Conference, June 2016

a deeper level, far too often, teachers select the most trivial aspects of hip hop to entice students into learning the same information they have been teaching for years. Because they are new to hip hop and to culturally sustaining pedagogies, teachers use hip hop merely as an alternative “cool new” tool for instruction instead of using hip hop as knowledge/education, which could result in replicating practices that hip hop education wants to remedy. Call-and-response *otherwise* can be very damaging in this scenario. Even though I am a hip hop scholar and educator, there are so many areas I need to improve before implementing this model again. This brings up the question: are embodied hip hop pedagogies accessible to non-hip hop educators? As of now, my answer is yes and no.

Embodied hip hop pedagogies cannot work without the intervention of a hip hop practitioner or educator. Any teacher cannot wake up one day and miraculously *do* hip hop education without appropriating and teaching hip hop wrong. However, with a similar setup, where a hip hop practitioner/educator collaborates for an extended period of time with interested teachers, it is possible that eventually, teachers can teach embodied hip hop pedagogies on their own. Once they learn the tools (which include collaborating with local artists), the philosophies, the research skills associated with embodied hip hop pedagogies, I believe they can do it themselves.

Embodied hip hop pedagogies are not something that can be taught in books or online. It is a teaching and learning method that needs to be practiced and lived in order to be implemented. So future embodied hip hop pedagogies educators must have experienced this type of model before using it in their classroom. The most important lesson as a hip hop educator is to know that no hip hop educator knows everything and therefore, that is

essential to invite other artists and practitioners into the space to co-teach and collaborate. Call-and-response *otherwise*, therefore, must be global and include multiple practitioners to create a collective *otherwise* cypher.

Real mechanics conclusion and retrospective:

In this section, I described all the challenges I faced implementing and guest teaching embodied hip hop pedagogies at RV due to institutional barriers, personal lack of experience, and the complexities inherent to collaboration, teaching, and my embodied realities. I also discussed the limitations of my concepts of call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* in the context of guest teaching at RV.

All in all, there are a lot of things I would have done differently. It has been hard writing this section, reflecting on my first experience guest teaching in a middle school as it forces me to come face-to-face with the ways in which I came up short of my goals with RV students. Inexperience, lack of funding and time, the challenges of the collaboration, the disembodiment of education, as well as limitations of institutional structures all played a significant role in the shortcomings in the curriculum and pedagogy. They put additional pressures on me, as someone with limited middle school and direct hip hop education experience. I did my best to challenge how schools' value traditional, more Eurocentric, ways of knowing and expressing knowledge. These are real constraints to achieve alternative pedagogy such as embodied hip hop pedagogies. I hope that examining my shortcomings will help future hip hop educators to reevaluate their positionality and prepare their curriculum and pedagogy in such way they would not enact such praxis in their classroom. Teaching must begin with the exploration of our own beliefs and actions.

Critical Reflections:

My action research attempted to deal with significant issues and participate in a larger societal conversation. As a social-community researcher, I engage in transformational practices that will help schools operate better especially for those who have historically been marginalized from academic settings. This autoethnographic chapter-cypher is my attempt to share both my successes and struggles and to expand the knowledge and understanding about the value of hip hop and movement in education.

One of the most important ideas that I would like people to get out reading this chapter-cypher is that teaching embodied hip hop pedagogies is complex, messy, and highly improvised, but challenges Eurocentric schools of thoughts and Western educational systems.

Diversifying education and research:

My aim with developing embodied hip hop pedagogies has always been to diversify the education system by developing more inclusive teaching and learning in the classroom through hip hop, multidisciplinary, and engaged pedagogy. However, as a non-academically trained K-12 educator in the technical sense of the term and a non-Hispanic, non-Inland Empire native researcher, I had to be careful not to assume I knew what was best or impose my beliefs and background on the space or the practice. What I mean is that I did not want to arrive at RV school and be like: “Hey, I am the French and Japanese PhD candidate who is going to tell you how to teach and improve the learning of Riverside students for ten weeks.” I did my best to foster the importance of collaboration to RV teachers and communicate to them that I was experimenting with a

concept, which I hoped would be beneficial for teachers and students at RV, and that we were all learners and experimenters together. However, despite the fact that they considered me their collaborator, because of my positionality (different cultural background and academic experience), I have always felt a little awkward developing and implementing my model. Perhaps I would have felt differently if this was a model that teachers and I would have built together from the beginning.

This first experience was pivotal for me as a researcher. I have tried to alleviate this disconnect throughout my fieldwork, by: learning from local experts (Hinds, Iglesias, Faazh) and remixing their teachings; and teaching students of all ages at multiple occasions and spaces in the Inland Empire. However, in the future, in order not to deepen the gap between myself, teachers, and students, I need to keep gaining experience working in K-12 settings and developing partnerships where I can co-build this model and adjust it to the school's needs.

The embodied hip hop pedagogies program was meant for students and teachers at RV to discover new ways of teaching and learning. But truth be told, I believe I am the person who learnt the most from the collaboration. It was not easy. Langhout and Fernández note, “[...] changes that are sustainable and alter role relationships among people such that communities have access to control over resources that affect them (both psychological and material) are challenging” (qtd. in Fetterman et. al 193). However, I kept going, because RV taught me that this work is important.

To all ethnographers, I stress the importance of not imposing your own epistemologies and practices when going to the field and collaborating with community members. This can be hard when positioning ourselves as researchers.

Limits of *otherwise* concepts as undoing Eurocentric practices:

We have seen throughout this chapter-cypher how the *otherwise* concepts worked and did not work at times. The main reasons call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise* could not be shared properly were due to institutional constrains, the lack of knowledge about these practices by guest or sub instructors, and the lack of communication from me to the students. I still think that these concepts have value and can work. Nothing can be an exact science in ethnography and in the Humanities, Art, and Social Sciences. Perhaps, I need to be very open to students and teachers about my goal of crafting embodied hip hop pedagogies as an *otherwise* cypher, and that it takes everyone (teachers, students, and myself) to make it happen.

Glocal embodied hip hop pedagogies:

Although hip hop is global, it is not the same everywhere. Indeed, within the multiplicity of hip hops, there is uniqueness. It is when we blend hip hop with local cultures that uniqueness emerges, as seen in this example found in Motley and Henderson: “there are elements that speak to stereotypic local Italian cultural markers: spaghetti, the checked table cloth, wine served in a traditional-looking decanter, blocks of parmesan, and the tattoo of Italy on the artist’s arm. The music includes samples from familiar Italian medleys to further enhance the localization” (246).

At the beginning of my research, my aim was to create a pedagogical model that could work anywhere and anytime. Indeed, my *otherwise* concepts suggest that through kinesthetic connectivity and call-and-responses knowledge *otherwise* can be performed on a global scale. However, my travels during my fieldwork in Tanzania and in the U.K combined with my research in the Inland Empire showed me that I must really pay closer attention to the local culture when building my curriculum and perhaps readjust my model according to the local community and school needs. Otherwise, I would be standardizing my curriculum, which is the opposite of what embodied hip hop pedagogies advocate for.

Since call-and-response *otherwise* is a multilayered enactment in the embodied hip hop pedagogies cypher, it has the potential to shake traditional Western educational systems and connect Afro-diasporic and marginalized communities globally, creating a knowledge that is both unique (i.e. site-specific) and global at the same time. I experienced such enactments of glocality during my participation/observation at hip hop education classes and during my own teaching practice. For example, when creating their own rap, Hispanic and Chinese students in the Inland Empire would add words or sentences in their respective languages (Spanish and Chinese) to depict an example attached to their cultural identity. Here, language constitutes a cultural and glocal vector. During my research travel to London with Hinds, I was surprised by the enactment of “Americanness” by the British students during his workshops. The students suddenly lost their British accent while rapping and were gesturing using African American aesthetics even though they were performing local rap artists’ songs or their own. They were

representing American hip hop; this portrays the complexity of the multiple ways hip hop is performed in different Western countries. I experienced another example of glocality when I asked my students in Arusha, Tanzania to improvise using hip hop moves I taught them. They would mix the hip hop moves with Tanzanian dance moves in their freestyle creating a unique glocal style of their own.

Because hip hop all around the world is glocal, hip hop pedagogy must be glocal as well. Indeed, as a hip hop educator who plans to explore hip hop pedagogy in other parts of the world, I must learn about other cultures' realities and build on them. If I bring my academic and U.S knowledge into a space that is disconnected from that reality, all I will do is reproduce colonial and U.S imperialist practices and dismiss local realities. Instead, I need to critically address hip hop culture today in other glocal sites outside the US—and critically utilize local communities' cultures, so that the pedagogy speaks to local hip hop practitioners.

I was able to promote glocality during my fieldwork on embodied hip hop pedagogies on several occasions. For example, at Riverside Valley middle school, I encouraged students to present a subject that is both on hip hop and local. One of the presentations was about the graffiti rocks located in the Graffiti Fall trail between Riverside and Corona. At my hip hop dance classes at the Riverside Arts Academy, I created a choreography to a Spanish-language song because the majority of my students were of Hispanic background. The director of the academy, Collette Lee, and the parents were enthusiastic about this choice. According to Lee, incorporating a Spanish song into

my curriculum was important because there were not enough artistic opportunities that speak to the student population in Riverside yet.



Picture 21: Le Lay, Maïko. “Graffiti Rocks. Picture Taken at the Bottom of the Graffiti Fall Trail,” October 2018

Limits of moving in the classroom:

In considering bodies and embodied pedagogies, it is crucial for me to acknowledge un-moving in the classroom. By (un)moving, I mean that bodies are critically conscious of their non-action. Stillness is deliberate and purposeful. Immobile bodies here are bodies that have recuperated agency and chosen not to move. While my original vision of the hip hop and embodied classroom was a space where bodies would move a lot, I now realize that I need to acknowledge bodies, and people, who choose not to move and critically address and respect their immobility. I used to see quiet and still bodies as docile bodies, but perhaps, for some, stillness enables critical learning and constitutes their freedom of non-movement. They may be using other ways of communication and learning, such as language, kinesthesia, and spirituality, etc. that do not necessarily require the act of moving. Furthermore, the hip hop pedagogy classroom aims to be as diverse and inclusive as possible. By putting movement at the center of the

knowledge-making process, I may inevitably prevent certain bodies, such as those of disabled individuals, from learning. Referring to the idea of the body being erased in academia, un-moving is different from someone who is prohibited from moving due to a culture of stillness and the spatial restriction present in our classrooms. (Un)moving in the classroom also brings up a larger question in hip hop culture: does hip hop account for bodies that choose not to move?

Otherwise cypher as doing hip hop:

My original mission with this research, and particularly during chapter-cypher 3, was to implement the *otherwise* cypher into a classroom. This chapter-cypher showed the challenges of translating my theories and concepts into practice. However, the labor of trying to implement the *otherwise* cypher is not lost; it is part of the larger embodied hip hop pedagogies cloud. I plan to continue the work, which can also be picked up by other advocates and researchers.

I like to plant a small branch of a bigger Inland Empire native succulent plant into a new pot to expand their beauty and offer them to friends, sharing a little bit of me; I see my curriculum and ideas being that small branch from my mentors' larger trees where their pedagogies and practices will always be present in mine, like a genealogy. This is Hip Hop. A large dynamic network of people, ideas, and embodied practices, like the cloud. This is a good time/space to reiterate the importance of the roles my mentors, the teachers/collaborators, and the people at RUSD who trusted my ideas played in the realization of this third chapter-cypher.

Conclusion:

In this chapter-cypher, I executed a choreographic reading of my experience developing and implementing my embodied hip hop pedagogies model at Riverside Valley middle school in Riverside. In each section, (“Ready”, “Set”, and “Go”), I explored the diverse mechanics and politics associated with each step of the implementation. This chapter-cypher also discussed the successes and challenges of such endeavors. I discussed the possibilities and limitations of both my concepts of *otherwise* and my female, international, inexperienced positionality. But ultimately, I argued that embodied hip hop pedagogies, with some adjustments, belong in the classroom.

CONCLUSION-CYPHER



Hip Hop, Pedagogy, Academia, Self, and the Future of it all

Teaching is about closing the gap between institutions, teachers, and students to help everyone succeed into adulthood. My recommendation for future embodied hip hop practitioners is to start with creating a close-connection cypher in the classroom which can be one way to alleviate this gap, participate in a call-and-response *otherwise*, and sustain dynamic community practices already present in the classroom. Real change starts by not changing who we are but changing systems of oppressions that try to change us. And it starts in the classroom.



○ is a cypher. This symbol represents “coming back full circle.” After cyphers 1, 2, and 3, the three chapters of this dissertation, I want to show how this work is not sequential, or linear. Instead, this research constitutes a continuum, a cycle, where every chapter-cypher informs the others; all the knowledge gathered is interconnected like the cloud. This cypher is filled with the energy, knowledge, and people that have participated in this research. The thick black outline represents the protective shield created by the embodied hip hop pedagogies community to preserve it, and hopefully expand it.

○ is a code for unity, diversity, performance, and solidarity. I conclude with another cypher because I was performing in call-and-response *otherwise* all along with incredible people. This dissertation was about analyzing the self in relation to others and vice-versa. A cyclic ritual enables us to do just that. Even if I came back full circle, the work is not

done. It continues. By stamping this experience and this journey with this cypher symbol, I mark and archive forever its existence in the academe and in the world. ○ happened and mattered.

Research summary:

I started this dissertation by introducing my concepts of the *otherwise* cypher, and call-and-response and knowledge *otherwise*. These concepts started as hypotheses, which were informed by my early exposure to hip hop culture. These ideas were always with me in bits and pieces, but I was only able to develop these hypotheses in graduate school, particularly during my literature review analysis and experience teaching hip hop and attending multiple events, conferences, workshops, and classes. Even though these hypotheses have been work-in-progress throughout my entire PhD studies, they became better-formulated concepts during the second-half of my research, especially while developing my own embodied hip hop pedagogies model and while writing this dissertation. The challenges I faced implementing my own theories demonstrate that thinking about a concept may not always yield a fully developed fruit, because of the gap between theory and practice. However, I believe in the benefits of these concepts and their potential for this project; I will keep experimenting and improving their application in real classroom situations.

In this dissertation, I performed an action research and autoethnography on embodied hip hop pedagogies in K-12 and higher education classrooms in the Inland Empire. I advocated for the use of more embodied and culturally sustaining pedagogies in the education system. This work also challenged the current disembodied culture of

education that tends to invisibilize teachers' and students' bodies and identities, while focusing on Eurocentric curricula. I used choreographic reading—an analytical dance-centric method of looking at the intersection of body, movement, space, and power—to conduct fieldwork in multiple hip hop and performative events, and hip hop education and non-hip hop classrooms. Situated at the crossroads of dance studies, education, and hip hop studies, this research exists in the intersections and tensions between institutions, hip hop, and embodied knowledge. I argued that teaching and learning embodied hip hop pedagogies constitutes a call-and-response *otherwise* sharing knowledge *otherwise* in the *otherwise* cypher. In other words, I demonstrated that embodied knowledge is activated and given greater visibility through individual and collective acts of countering Western epistemologies, social justice, and performance.


I also coined the concepts of choreography of the classroom and critical moving, which highlight the legitimacy of movement and the *other* possibilities of performance in education. Ultimately, this research asks *what else* is possible in an institutional space such as the classroom, and what can the body do to transgress infrastructural limitations?

By combining the four artistic elements of hip hop (djing, emceeing, breakdancing, and graffiti writing) with critical moving and knowledge *otherwise*, this research aspired to help students and teachers develop creativity and new critical analysis skills, reflect on their positionality in the classroom space and in the society, and look for answers within. Participation in hip hop aims to help realize the importance of the self—or whole body (realities, identity, emotion, culture, and body)—in relation to others and to the spaces they participate in. My goal was for students to understand that their body is

knowledge; knowledge is no longer abstract, standardized, or unreachable. Quite the opposite: embodied hip hop pedagogies show students and teachers that knowledge is within their reach and achievable because they can produce, transmit, and share it with others. Embodied hip hop pedagogies constitute therefore an innovative pedagogical model that capitalizes on embodied knowledge. This pedagogy's goal is to empower students and teachers to teach and learn alternatively. This means teaching and learning differently through diverse processes and learning using non-Eurocentric information, such as hip hop, that have historically been marginalized.

Throughout this ethnographic research, my aim as a scholar, practitioner, and educator has been to show the people I collaborated with (students, teachers, artists, colleagues etc.) that it is okay to do something new, to push people to think critically about themselves and the world they live in, and to inspire them to find their own way/version of challenging the system. In this dissertation, I have also accounted for what did not work in my research by showing the challenges of implementing my ideal embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum and the limits of the *otherwise* concepts. My fieldwork experiences taught me valuable lessons and pushed me to improve my skills as a collaborator and hip hop educator. I also discussed how larger infrastructural, institutional, and systemic issues such as the lack of funding for ethnographic research and public schools in the United States, nationality, experience, or gender inequity, were often the root causes of my struggles.

My ethnographic research is hip hop: it is multidisciplinary, embodied, reflexive, personal, and communal. Although primarily an autoethnography, this work is the result

of many collaborations and great support from the community (educators, scholars, hip hop artists, students). This dissertation would not have been possible without their help. This research constitutes therefore an homage to them. Hip hop educator, Casey Wong, told me that there were not many Asian people *doing* hip hop in the academy. I would add that Europeans researching and *doing* hip hop are relatively rare as well. I hope that through this research I can help expand and diversify the field of hip hop education. I practiced the *otherwise* cypher as research. Likewise, my biggest wish for embodied hip hop pedagogies is to be broadly shared, developed, researched, and reinvented until one day, it *beats*  the system.

Post-research critical reflections:

In this sub-section, I critically reflect on my research journey stating what I have learnt along the way. Building on the making of this dissertation, these reflections will help me conduct research differently for future projects. I hope this is where others will pick-up or join this research.

a. Time, money, and research:

When I started graduate school, five years felt like half a century. But time flies. Half a decade was not nearly enough time to conduct the kind of research and provide the attention that embodied hip hop pedagogies deserve. Like most early career graduate students, at the start, I had the ambition of revolutionizing a field. I had the idea of conducting ethnography across the globe for an extended period of time. However, as an international graduate student, my stay in the United States is limited. Because of this time limitation, I have approached this research as a project within a larger process of

advocating for embodied hip hop pedagogies more broadly. I needed to start small in order to understand the layers of the embodied hip hop pedagogies model before I can move on to expanding the process of making them better and stronger.

The reality of graduate school hit me. The economy of conducting ethnographic research as a graduate student is unsustainable. The lack of funding limited my fieldwork and its possibility. The quantity of time I would have liked to have spent in each space was impacted by the inability to sustain myself and my research financially. So, the ethnographic research present in this dissertation is far from ideal. However, it is a solid first step toward achieving the larger goal of raising awareness about embodied knowledge, hip hop culture in education, and hip hop as research.

I recommend early ethnographers come up with a fieldwork plan that will both intervene in their field and keep them sane and afloat. Because of the competitive nature of grad school, the usual rather simple task of creating a plan, is not that easy. However, it will be a service to you (future ethnographers) to narrow down your fieldwork into one individual project, rather than thinking of your fieldwork as a research that will revolutionize the field.

b. Ideal vs. reality in research:

The third chapter-cypher of this dissertation is a great example of the gap between ideal vs. reality and theory vs. practice. Before starting my fieldwork at RV, I had a vision of my embodied hip hop pedagogies program with well-defined goals; well, on paper. The reality of fieldwork—between my personal lack of funding combined with RV teachers' lack of time and resources—shifted my research goals. So, I recommend

future ethnographers revise their fieldwork expectation from “big research goal” to “first step toward achieving the larger goal.” This mild change can go a long way in making your ethnographic journey feel less like a sprint—where you are out of breath and speeding in the process—and more like a marathon—where you have more time and energy to truly appreciate the process.

Building on my previous comment about creating an achievable fieldwork plan, *really* narrowing down the number of sites, interviews, and other kinds of analysis, is also extremely important. Because I love spontaneity and because I was so excited to finally start field research, I jumped into fieldwork blind, without having a well-thought concrete direction. Because of this, I spread myself too thin. Indeed, the research that is written in this dissertation is only the tip of the iceberg. I have gone to many more sites, interviewed more people, and taught in many other classrooms. I recognize that a lot of classes, events, and interviewees’ voices which I encountered throughout my ethnographic journey, are not explicitly represented in this dissertation. However, I learned from all of them and implemented their teachings in some capacity. Their contributions, even when not directly quoted, are part of this project. Those knowledge clouds were absorbed in my collective learning and became a part of my narrative cloud. I did not intend to render their contributions invisible. I hope that this work is doing something for the embodied hip hop community in exchange for their efforts.

For the first half of my fieldwork, I accumulated sites and projects without really knowing how they would really fit into my research. I did a lot and tired myself out. Perhaps, I should have analyzed fewer sites, taught in fewer schools, interviewed fewer

people, but spent more time analyzing them and the relations between them. I definitively could have compartmentalized and performed more close-choreographic readings.

All in all, I recommend the next generation of enthusiast ethnographers pause for a second before jumping into fieldwork right away. It is okay to take it slow at first to *really* figure out what *truly* interests you in the field and what the one or two things are that you *really* want to share with your readers. Once you know the main messages/arguments of your work, you will then be able to make every part of your fieldwork speak directly to your overall research.

c. Beauty of improvisation in research:

I actually have mixed feelings about the statement above. Indeed, one thing graduate school teaches you is to be adaptable and to adjust to any situation that comes your way. I conducted the kind of fieldwork I could have at the time. All these other sites and teachings were all moving parts that considerably helped me shape the research. Indeed, without the ethnographic research conducted in the multitude of events where I observed how teaching and learning occur in hip hop spaces, without learning from hip hop educators, artists, and without succeeding and failing in teaching in dance studios and classrooms, I could not have built my own embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum and implemented it. But, if I were to do this research again, knowing what I know today, I would have planned my fieldwork schedule in a more efficient manner by revising my list of sites and spending more analytical time in each instead. So, take your time. Take advantage of your grad school seminars to practice ethnography and figure out what is out there and how it can connect to your research interests.

d. Methods' classes:

Another area I could have organized my work better would have been by taking more methods classes prior to starting fieldwork. I took an ethnography seminar in my home department (dance) during my first year of graduate school. One, taking that classes so early on in my graduate school career, was not the smartest choice because I only really understood the implications of the learnings of this class, much later on, when I was ready to take on my fieldwork journey. But, by that time, I had forgotten some of the content of that class, inevitably. Because my dissertation relied so much on classroom and pedagogy analysis, and action research, I also wish I had taken methods classes in the education department. Although I read multiple articles and books about education scholars conducting fieldwork at schools, I wished I had gathered tools that would directly speak to my own research. Taking a methods class or working one on one with a Professor during an independent study would probably have helped me in that aspect. Lesson of the day: it is never too late to take seminars. I know that after two years of graduate school seminars, many of us want to move on and get our feet dirty in the field; but sometimes, taking a step back and realizing what tools are missing from our toolbox might help us in the long run.

e. Impact of researcher's positionality:

Throughout this dissertation, I discussed the many ways teaching and learning and my experiences at fieldworks have been impacted by my positionality in terms of race, gender, academic status, and experience with teaching and hip hop. Although the kind of embodied knowledge that was felt in the moment was described in my notes, it was not

until the editing process of this dissertation, that I really analyzed this content. What I mean is that even though conversations about my positionality were represented in my field notes, I was not able to make true sense of them, connect them to my larger research goal, and evaluate their impact, until editing this work. These embodied realities, while important, were not at the forefront of my analysis until later in the writing process. Interestingly, my voice and body were buried in the other argument. I would suggest future ethnographers always cross-analyze their findings with their embodied realities in the space and analyze if there are any larger elements at play, such as gender or racial discrimination, that may have impacted their work or their research in the moment.

f. Data gathering strategies:

Another area where future ethnographers can learn from my experience is data gathering. The more fieldwork, interviews, and media analysis you do, the more data you are going to collect. For example, my sites, interviews, and autoethnographic work are all connected but also extremely different from one another. The diversity of this research is its strength. However, while cross-analyzing the sites, I felt a bit overwhelmed. It was hard for me to find the common ground and how the varying elements impacted the overall research. Furthermore, analyzing dancers, bodies in movement, and kinesthesia, is not straight-forward, and cannot easily be categorized in any coding software. So how can you best prepare to gather your data? Create a methodic system that works for you and your research. A lot of ethnographers rely on software or pre-existing methods to do this kind of legwork for them. However, creating your own procedure has added value. Indeed, if like my dissertation, you plan to have each of your chapters focus on a different

method(s) or site(s), a single software or operation won't likely suffice. You need to find your own creative way to make your analytical process adapt to your needs. For example, I used a bunch of colored-sticky notes pasted on a wall so that I could start visualizing patterns. These sticky-notes eventually became flash cards, which became PowerPoint charts. Furthermore, saying during your interviews with your future employers that you created your own system of analysis will look bad a** (trust me on this)!

In sum, in my case (and probably for many of you out there) a lot of things did not go exactly as planned. But that is the exciting nature of research. There is only so much a researcher can control. There will always be unexpected situations occurring which will impact the research. Now it is up to us researchers to view them as either positive surprises or limiting circumstances. Either way, for my part, I tried my best not to see roadblocks as problems. Instead I aimed to transform these challenges into new possibilities. I converted struggles into positive learning by quickly adapting my fieldwork and data analysis, meeting and interviewing new practitioners, and always placing the body at the center of this research. Once people's and my embodied realities became the key to understanding and practicing this research, it became easier to put everything else in perspective. I believe that any barriers that have come my way have enriched this research and made me a stronger scholar, educator, and practitioner. This capacity to transgress and transform is part of *doing* hip hop.

What's Next?

There are five ethnographic areas I would like to focus on in the future renderings of my research on embodied hip hop pedagogies.

First, I plan to go back to UACC, an orphanage in Arusha, Tanzania founded by former Black Panther activists, which organizes hip hop events for the local youth. I will conduct an autoethnographic research looking at the tensions between my French and Japanese body, United States education and local cultures and practices in such a space. I will analyze the politics of reproduction and restructuring of Western epistemologies while teaching embodied hip hop pedagogies.

Second, I would like to spend more time analyzing the pedagogical and performative links between teaching in a studio and in a classroom. I am very interested in the notion of teaching (in the classroom) as performance. However, in this dissertation, I did not deeply analyze how the studio teaching practice impacted the classroom teaching and vice versa. The embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum aims to blur the lines between studio and classroom and expands where movement can occur and be taught. Therefore, analyzing the roots and deepening the relationships between the two pedagogical styles and spaces can only help raise awareness about the importance of embodiment in and out of the classroom. I would probably have to perform linguistic analysis about the lexicon of the body in both spaces and analyze how the body moves similarly or differently in each space. Perhaps, in this rendering, teaching an embodied hip hop pedagogies curriculum would happen only after having developed my own hybrid course where I teach in the studio and in the classroom distinctively and analyze the points of connection and divergence.

Third, I was recently made aware of a field called connected learning. Connected learning analyzes how in our media and technologically driven society, students learn

tremendously outside of the school structure. In other words, it refers to the knowledge gathered by students through informal and peer connections such as video games, extra-curricular activities, and communal practices. Connected learning also aims to evaluate how these informal and communal ways of learning can impact students' schooling practices and their career opportunities. I would be very interested in exploring this field further to examine how the diverse ways of learning about hip hop culture today (online platforms, freestyle reunions, battles, studio teaching etc.) can impact the teaching and learning in and out of the school.

Fourth, the quarantine due to Covid-19 has drastically shifted what ethnography can look like since people, including myself as a researcher and educator, cannot move outside, and schools are closed. Furthermore, the strong online presence of hip hop education coupled with the recent expansion of digital education made me want to explore how can my own concepts move online and translate on the screen. Now that our homes have become classrooms, I would like to understand how my pedagogical model can still be engaged, communal, and kinesthetic without physical embodied presence.

Finally, approaching hip hop education as a subculture, which belongs both in hip hop culture and in academic culture would be an interesting research angle. I have been part of the hip hop education community for a while. I have noticed that hip hop educators and scholars participate in hip hop/counterhegemonic culture while also participating in academic circles and ethos. I am interested in analyzing this complex in-betweenness of hip hop education, and how hip hop educators negotiate when to challenge versus when to participate in the system. The hip hop education field is

growing, with more educators, conferences, panels, and tweets every day. But what exactly is hip hop education? Looking more closely at hip hop education as a subculture of hip hop would help to understand its actors, goals, and future trajectory. Furthermore, making embodiment more visible in hip hop education is going to be a long-lasting battle because the field is still dominated by works where language is the primary tool of expression. Therefore, analyzing closely how the hip hop education field operates locally and globally will also help raise awareness about the need for more scholarship and practices around embodiment in hip hop pedagogy.

~~Real Talk: Censored. The other things you should know about my grad school journey:~~

Open Mic

May I?

Not so long ago, I thought that submitting this long document, completing this huge task, would mark the end of an era and the start of a new age. Kinda like in fairytales. However, the reality looks quite different. As a woman in academia, I need to tell the world what's up. It was hardcore people. Someone has to say it, write it, archive it. During the painfully long quarantine during the 2020 pandemic, I have been binge watching TV shows. My new favorite series icon is Ms. Maisel who breaks down patriarchy and gender inequality in 1950s America through stand-up comedy. I want to take action through performance like her. Seriously, why does it have to be so difficult to learn and to want to make the world a better place? Writing this, dedicating my career to improving the education system, helping future generations navigate academia, are my contributions for social change. *#MsMaiselofAcademia*

There is a mysterious myth surrounding the whole doctorate thing; like, you gonna be brighter, richer, make a ton of smart friends, and change the world. In reality, though, getting a PhD felt like an army of Big Brothers watching me (aka other academics criticizing my every moves) while battling the voices in my head telling me that I am not good enough. You all heard about the imposter syndrome, right? I hear this tricky mind game happens to the most confident of us. But when you get published, or receive positive feedback, or a grant, you feel invincible. That rush is addictive but never lasts. I find fascinating how this passive aggressiveness is embedded in the system; most

people are okay with it, like clicking on the “I agree” clause and giving consent before entering the game. I had a lot of support, don’t get me wrong. Yet, it still felt impossible. I hear that’s the nature of grad school. Interesting, isn’t? *#GradSchoolMyth*

#ImposterSyndrom

Side note: social media is usually not my thing. I don’t *do* it much. I never quite understood the rush for academics to use Twitter as a scholarly platform. Suddenly, those who ask you to write hundreds of pages want you now to create a tweet in less than 120 words... With that said, writing this during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, I am kinda grateful for social media and other online platforms that exist. To stay connected to your people, you first gotta be connected right? Well, this # thing man. I have to say, that’s brilliant. The # is a signifier, almost like a digital dance gesture representing a bunch of things and feelings in only a couple words. I mean. Look, this one sums up my grad school phase: *#PokerFace*

Now, another beast: job search. To tell you the truth, going on the market—wait, are you shopping and/or for sell? —is as difficult as grad school, if not more. You know what Dr. in front or Ph.D. at the end of your name really means? This: I was stuck in the infinite loop of a cruel imperialist institution with no money while suffering from sleep deprivation and anxiety. But I survived. I am badass. So, take me seriously and you better pay me accordingly! In reality, when looking at non-academic jobs (just keeping my options open, you know, as an international student) it doesn’t mean that much. It doesn’t do the trick anymore. Those two or three letters can scare employers. So, there are two ways to go about it: one, everyone pretends those four years-eight months never

happened: you are fresh out of college and apply to your first job. Option two, you are this scholar placed on a pedestal who does not belong in the industrial world. Employers don't know what to do with a job seeker with a PhD in the Humanities. That's why most PhD graduates want to stay in academia. That's what they know best, right? But the academic job market is saturated y'all. So, if you are *#controversial*, your chances drop fast. But this tough time makes you realize that after getting a PhD, you are not smarter nor an absolute expert. You just learned something and will keep learning for the rest of your life. It is actually kinda humbling. That's not the image that academia projects to the world, is it? No. Academics are presented as know-it-all, the reference in many instances. hooks could not have said it better: "That's exactly what's threatening to conservative academics-the possibility that such critiques will dismantle the bourgeois idea of a "professors" and that, as a consequence, the sense of our significance and our role as teachers in the classroom would need to be fundamentally changed."¹⁰⁷ But we are all learners: we learn from our students, colleagues, and everyone and everything around us.

#PhDJobsOrNot

The positive thing (yes, there is a positive in all of this, I am getting to it, patience) is embodied hip hop pedagogies. The holistic pedagogical aspects of my research can be applied to graduate school. What I am writing here is what a lot of people feel about the dissertation process but hasn't yet been considered important enough to be part of the diss. This is where embodied hip hop pedagogies come into play: by capitalizing on personal and communal identities, knowledge *otherwise*, movements, and

¹⁰⁷ Hooks, Bell. *Teaching to transgress*. Routledge, 2014. p.140

social justice, embodied hip hop pedagogies can no longer just be a subject of study but a more humane model for researching, writing, and *doing* graduate school. Indeed, if the diverse embodied processes of *doing* graduate school would be recognized more, researchers would not feel afraid to be vulnerable and tell their stories. Sharing the embodied information about the graduate school processes can only enrich our research and provide valuable knowledge about K-12 and higher education administration, policy, and operations. *#HipHopPedagogyAsResearch*

The goal here is not to discourage folks from going to grad school, but to change the systemic and violent oppressive machinery to make knowledge more accessible and appreciable. Let's rethink what it could be for a second, that's all I am asking. So, how can I do that? What's my role in academia? Now, that I am about to become a Doctor of Philosophy, I feel more empowered to speak up and do something about this unfair and sometime inhumane process. I really want to make education a space where people enjoy learning rather than feeling disempowered. Graduate school has brought beautiful things in my life, including broadening my socio-political knowledge about the world, a greater network, my husband and so forth. But because of the unfortunate events associated with the process, these wonderful moments have been clouded. Misinformation is, I think, one of the leading reasons that grad school so difficult. As a future mentor, I will prepare my mentees for the positive and negative realities of their academic journey. This is what I would have wanted before joining grad school or early in my career. And one day, when I will be in a position of power in the academe, I will need to remember my experience,

reread these lines, and most importantly, listen, communicate with students not to reproduce the current situation. #Mentorship #Makinglearningfunagain

I cannot take down the system by myself. This, whatever *this* is, is not gonna stop with me, not today. But still, I hope it does *something*. Why is this infernal cycle normalized? Why would we keep encouraging young folks to go through it, and perpetuate it? Shouldn't we stop the epidemic? Myself and my research aim to teach and learn differently from the Eurocentric and disembodied aspects of the current system. What we need to do is stop the violent, longstanding, and institutionalized practices associated with graduate school. I believe that embodied hip hop pedagogies as research praxis can help do that in some capacities. Revalidating embodied knowledge can help diversify academia and give us, people, a space, a voice, in this big institution.

#VoiceYourConcerns

Oh, my bittersweet! All of *this* is coming to an end. I am grieving a little bit. I have mixed feelings. Indeed, it feels weird to leave grad school after so many years, crying, meeting new faces, presenting at conferences, teaching, breaking up with friends, reading, writing, editing, reading *again*, writing *again*, editing *again*. Is this nostalgia? Why would I miss it? Is this why breaking ties seems impossible? Do I want to compete more? Maybe. Goodbye grad school. Although, I feel like I won't be very far from you. I feel like you will be my satellite forever. Bizarre. I can't let go of you quite yet. I am here to humanize you and fund you a bit more, and to help colleagues who might find themselves spiraling or stuck in your web. You, however challenging you may have been,

accompanied me. You were ugly at times, beautiful at other times. *A la fois* generous and forgiving, selfish and intolerant. I owe you. You owe me. *#OdeToYou*

You have been a great audience. Thank you for listening. Until next Time.

Mic Drop

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APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Fieldwork Summary Chart

19 Events:

5 Battles/Dance Events

1. Festival of Rhythm (Riverside)
2. Rhythm Rug (Riverside)
3. Urban Sol (ASU Phoenix)
4. Floor Improv (Union Station, LA)
5. Breakin' Ministry (Anaheim)

5 Performances

1. 909 Ultimate Brawl (Riverside)
2. Ice Cube Concert (Del Mar)
3. UCR College Team Show (SRC, UCR)
4. Buckworld One (UCR)
5. Birthmark (UCR)

7 Academic

1. Cypher Summit (USC, LA)
2. Between Sections (Watkins, UCR)
3. Moncell Panel (CAAM, LA)
4. Making Music in Education (Riverside)
5. DJ's Moving Bodies (UCR)
6. Show and Prove 2018 (UCR)
7. Bettina Love Talk (Claremont College)
8. AERA Hip Hop Ed SIG Webinar (Online)
9. 3rd Annual Ed Conference (Harvard)

4 Student-Participation:

2 Long

1. Brandon Aitken, Advanced Hip Hop (UCR)
2. Ni'Ja Whitson, Capoeira Angola (UCR)

2 Short

1. Jaamil Olawale Kosoko (UCR)
2. Bree Powell, Beginning Hip Hop (SRC, UCR)

6 Observations:

2 Long

1. Hip Hop Theatre (UCR)
2. Middle School Classes (University Heights , Riverside)

4 Short

1. World Dance Classes, (Los Angeles)
2. 909 HHDT Audition Workshop Class (SRC, UCR)
3. Collective Faction, Audition Workshop Class (HUB, UCR)
4. Collective Faction, Summer Workshop (HUB, UCR)

13 Teachings:

CLASSROOM:

2 Long:

1. Upward Bound Program (UCR)
2. Riverside Valley (Riverside)

5 Short

1. M.A. Teacher Education (UCR)
2. CHASS1ST Summer Transfer Students (UCR)
3. Kindergarten (Riverside)
4. World Dance (Cal Poly, Pomona)
5. TADP Moving Through The Lesson (UCR)

STUDIO:

2 Long

1. Upward Bound, High school Summer School (UCR)
2. Harmony Project, Riverside Arts Academy (Riverside)

4 Short

1. Freestyle Workshop, Rose Bruford College (Kent, UK)
2. Freestyle Workshop, Hip Hop Theater (UCR)
3. Riverside Valley Library (Riverside)
4. UACC Hip Hop Workshop (Arusha, Tanzania)

Appendix B: Sample Interview Questions

Rickerby Hinds' Hip Hop Theater Class Students

- 1) Briefly Introduce Yourself
- 2) What is your experience with hip hop culture?
- 3) Why did you choose to take this class?
- 4) How would you describe a typical class and how would you describe a typical hip hop theatre class? How is it similar or different from your other classes?
- 5) What do you think are the main goals of Hinds' class? What kinds of messages were conveyed according to you?
- 6) Can you describe your experience going through the different elements of hip hop culture over the quarter?
- 6bis) Which elements you were the most drawn to and why?
- 7) Can we discuss the movement week specifically?
- 8) Can you discuss the role of movement in Hinds' class?
- 9) What are the highlights of this class? Things to improve?
- 10) Describe one of your favorite moments or classes this quarter
- 11) What do you think of the group works? Describe how you work?
- 12) Why did you choose your group for the final performance?
- 13) Can you discuss your experience with the Assignment in his class?
- 14) How do you think he grades participation and attendance? What do you think about it?
- 15) What was your experience going to see plays or watching movies outside of the class?
- 16) Did you do anything extra for this class?
- 17) How do you feel about Hip hop being taught in a University setting?
- 18) Can you discuss your experience taking a class in a performative space, as well as working outside? What do you think about the spatial construction? How does it impact your learning?
- 19) What was your role as student? Active student? Comparison to traditional class?
- 20) What does hip hop theatre or hip hop pedagogy or hip hop culture mean to you now?
- 21) What do you take away from this class?
- 22) Would you recommend this class to other people? Why?
- 23) Is the class what you had expected?

Emery Petchauer: Hip Hop Educator Interview

Introduction:

- Briefly Introduce Yourself
- What is your background with hip hop culture and where you are at today?
- What does hip hop mean to you?

Hip Hop & Education:

- Can you describe a typical hip hop pedagogy class you teach?

- Can you describe a typical non-hip hop pedagogy class you teach if any? And if not, why do you implement hip hop pedagogy? How is your use of space in a typical classroom vs. a hip hop pedagogy classroom?
- How does the space influence your teaching?
- What is the role of movement in your pedagogy?
- Why do you think the movement element of hip hop is less represented in hip hop education?

Connection or Tension between Hip Hop and University/School:

- Can you describe how do you implement hip hop pedagogy in a non-hip hop pedagogy class? What does it mean to teach hip hop based education to people not interested in hip hop or who are not familiar with hip hop culture? (Students & teachers)
- Can you discuss the relevance of hip hop in a classroom and/or University setting? What hip hop artists and practitioners can bring to educational institutions? Classroom settings?
- How do you negotiate between being a hip hop advocate, teacher, scholar, and practitioner? What does it mean in terms of identity or teaching content in the classroom space?
- Can you describe some challenges faced as a hip hop educator in a classroom or University setting?

Teacher's Body:

- How your body/identity/race/gender/sexuality impact the Teaching and learning in the space
- How is YOU part of the teaching and learning/curriculum or YOU in relation to students or institutions impacts the teaching and learning?

Siddharth Agarwal: Recurrent Hip Hop Events Participant

1. Can you describe the space and the location of the event?
2. Why did you decide to attend this event?
3. Please describe your experience:
4. Is this event something you had experienced before?
5. What did you learn? What were you doing? How did you learn?
6. What struck you the most and why?
7. Describe your relationship to the space? To Others?
8. Describe how you moved/danced in the space
9. What was the highlight of the event? What was the most memorable?
10. Describe one of your favorite moments?
11. Describe one of your least favorite moments?
12. Would you reattempt the experience?

Teacher's Classroom Visit and Interview:

1. Can you explain what Flexible Learning is?
2. How is flexible learning incorporated in your curriculum?
3. How do you feel about teaching in a flexible environment? Compare to before? What is better? Or what are the challenges?
4. Is there time allocated to movement? Is there a space dedicated to movement practice?
5. Can you describe the role of identity, culture, movement in your classroom?
6. How does your movement, moving in the space, or body impact the teaching and learning in the classroom?
7. How different spaces impact your way of moving, behaving, acting, teaching, dancing?
8. How do your movements impact the teaching and learning in the space?
9. How much do you plan and how much do you improvise in the classroom?
10. How is YOU part of the teaching and learning/curriculum or YOU in relation to students or institutions impacts the teaching and learning?

Appendix C: Riverside Valley Middle School Documents

Initial Meeting Prep Document:

Hip Hop & Embodied Pedagogy: General Information

Background in Hip Hop & Teaching

- French & Japanese
- Hip Hop Street (Europe) & Hip Hop Pedagogy at UC Riverside
- Teaching Assistant, Gluck Fellow, Guest Lecturer

Research Interests

- Advocate for multidisciplinary teaching and learning
- Cultural Relevant Pedagogy
- Movement in the classroom
- Social Justice
- Creativity

Hip Hop Pedagogy

- Recent field in education → improving urban schools performance
- Hip Hop → students' cultural background → empowerment
- Not one definition:
 - Meaningful use of hip hop elements (Graffiti, Beatboxing, Emceeing, DJing, Breakdancing)
 - Curriculum centered on students' identities and cultural background

- Inspired by hip hop's philosophy and socio-cultural/political/historical context

Embodied Pedagogy

- Raise awareness about the body
- Movement carry knowledge
- Individual & Collective Body as part of the knowledge making process

Why Hip Hop & Embodied Pedagogy

- Democratic, Student-centered, Multidisciplinary
- Lower gap between teachers & students; transgressive
- Process, experimentation, creativity
- Western knowledge: emphasis on words and language → other ways of knowing, learning
- New ways to express themselves and develop critical thinking/doing
- Appreciation of pop culture, African diasporic culture, diversity and inclusion, artistic skills

In Practice

- Adapt to your schedule, timeline, and frequency
- Different types of co-teaching:
 - Hip hop & embodied pedagogy guest teaching
 - Mid or long-term curriculum development
- Guide: sharing resources, safe embodied pedagogy, brainstorming ideas

Exchange

- Interviews, participation/observation

2nd Meeting Project Plan:

Co-Teaching and Co-Learning:

A hip hop and embodied pedagogical collaboration between Students and Teachers

Introduction:

This introduction to hip hop and embodied pedagogy aims to equip both students and teachers with new pedagogical tools based on hip hop culture and its artistic elements to increase active participation, broaden teaching and learning strategies, build stronger relationships, and empower students and improve their academic performance. This workshop constitutes a collaborative project between teachers and students who will explore together a new academic content (hip hop culture) and experiment with highly embodied teaching and learning methods inspired by the artistic elements of hip hop culture known as DJ'ing, Emceeing (rapping), Breakdancing, Graffiti, and Beatboxing'.

The course titled “Hip hop as social, political, economic and cultural vessel”, explores a variety of interdisciplinary and intersectional concepts which can easily be adapted or added to an existing history or socio-cultural class. However, we encourage students and teachers from other disciplines such as Mathematics, PE, English etc. to participate in this course because it is designed to develop teaching and learning skills and tools such as critical thinking/doing, creativity, mentorship, DIY, performativity... that can be used and transferred in any disciplines. Ultimately, this 10-weeks course introduces teachers and students to hip hop and embodied pedagogy and help them develop personalized teaching and learning strategies adapted to their curricula and needs.

Background and Philosophy:

Hip hop and embodied pedagogy is based on Paulo Freire’s critical thinking theories and on bell hooks’ transgressive pedagogy which advocate for curricula to be centered on students’ realities and for the pedagogy to be more culturally diverse and relevant, democratic, and purposeful. Rooted in African-diasporic culture and knowledge, hip hop pedagogy aims to dismiss the invisible wall between students and teachers, and to create an inclusive environment where knowledge comes from the students and is facilitated by the instructor rather than taught. One way to achieve this collaborative environment is for both students and teachers to practice and experiment with different teaching and learning styles to find the ones that best resonate with them. Indeed, some people are more kinesthetic learners, others may be better listeners, or others may prefer to write. By using the different artistic elements of hip hop, students and teachers will practice a variety of teaching and learning styles and find the pedagogical skills and tools adapted to their needs ranging from writing lyrics, dancing, creating visuals, etc. Therefore, the use of the artistic elements of hip hop is purposeful: they are the teaching and learning tools, the content of the course, and the source of critical thinking/doing and creativity at the same time. Furthermore, the diversity of the elements and the inherent multidisciplinary of hip hop culture will demonstrate that embodiment can belong in the classroom space and carry knowledge. Finally, this workshop is built on the idea that teaching and learning constitute an improvised choreography in which students and teachers are the co-producers of the classroom performance.

Structure: Co-teaching and Co-Learning:

Part 1: 10-weeks hip hop and embodied course and workshop:

Both students and teachers will receive the same instruction during the 10-weeks program facilitated by Maiko Le Lay and will share the same goals:

- Learning about hip hop culture and its socio-political implications
- Developing skills such as critical thinking/doing, mentorship, DIY, creativity, performativity etc.
- Co-reflect about how they can implement hip hop and embodied pedagogy in their curricula

- Co-develop a teaching and learning environment that is multidisciplinary and which speaks to their various needs and diverse identities.

Students and teachers will learn a new course content/material as well as a new pedagogical tool each week. Every week, the group will meet for 2 consecutive hours. During the 2h period, students and teachers will analyze readings, videos/films, and discuss the content of the week as well as embodying them and critically doing what they learnt through various embodied activities.

Students and teachers will receive customized assignments based on the course content of the week and there will be interactive feedback sessions incorporated in the classes. An end-of-program survey will also serve to assess each participants' growth and challenges.

By the end of the program, students and teachers will receive enough tips to help each other co-build a highly embodied and culturally-relevant pedagogy that works for them.

Part 2: Follow Up: Laboratory, Performance, Final Assessment:

Laboratory: After the 10-weeks course, teachers and students will be encouraged to experiment with the tools provided and come up with new ones that fits their curriculum and the students' identities and learning styles. Students and teachers will have five weeks to develop teaching and learning strategies inspired by hip hop and embodied pedagogy that fits their classes' needs after which the instructor, Maiko Le Lay, will observe the classes and help assess their progress.

Performance: This 20-weeks programs will culminate in a performance based on the artistic elements of hip hop and a course content chosen by the teacher. The students, split in small groups, will be the actors and choreographers of the performance whereas teachers will assist them by providing the theme and the course materials necessary to create the performance, and constructive feedback throughout the creation process. Audience members are encouraged to attend this performance.

Final Assessment: After the performance and before the summer holidays, there will be a roundtable/community circle will be organized to discuss what students and teachers have learnt throughout the 20-weeks program and how they plan to implement the tools and skills developed at school and in their lives.

2nd Meeting - Initial 20-weeks Syllabus:

Course Syllabus: Hip Hop as Social, Political, Economic, and Cultural Vessel:

Facilitator: Maiko Le Lay PhD Candidate Critical Dance Studies, UC Riverside Mlela001@ucr.edu	Term: Winter and Spring 2019 Frequency: Winter (Part 1: Hip hop and embodied pedagogy - meets once a week for 2h; 10 courses); Spring (Part 2: Education Project, meets 2 times) Audience: Middle School Students and Teachers
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Overall Description:

This introductory multidisciplinary workshop-style course is designed to develop new approaches to teaching and learning for both students and teachers through hip hop and embodied pedagogy. Hip hop and embodied pedagogy constitutes a method of teaching and learning based on the socio-political contexts around hip hop culture and its artistic elements, social justice, and active participation and collaboration, creativity, performativity..., thus embodiment. The course content (i.e. hip hop as social, political, economic and cultural vessel) is built in tandem with the co-teaching/learning parts of the program. In other words, both students and teachers will learn about hip hop culture and its socio-political implications and explore various hip hop and embodied teaching and learning techniques together to create a collaborative learning environment. For example, while students are actively learning about hip hop culture and practicing the artistic elements, in parallel, teachers are learning about new ways to integrate performative and visual arts in their curriculum in a culturally-relevant and critical manner. Throughout the program, teachers and students will have the opportunity to swap their respective roles (students acting as class facilitators and teachers as learners) to achieve the overarching and long-term goal to develop student-centered curricula and culturally sustaining pedagogies.

Program Description for Students:

This course will explore the history and the evolution of hip hop culture and the intersectionality between its social, cultural, political, and economic context through readings, videos/movies, discussions, and live performances. Students in this course will be exposed to all the elements of hip hop culture known as DJ'in, Emceein' (rappin'), Breakdancin', Graffiti, Beatboxin', and Knowledge. The first five weeks of the class will be dedicated to learning and practicing one of the elements and the history of hip hop culture. Week 5 to 10 will focus on analyzing socio-political contexts around hip hop culture. The second part of the program (Spring, part 2) will be dedicated to implementing hip hop and embodied pedagogy in students' academic and social lives. The principal method of teaching and learning will be hip hop and embodied pedagogy: this class is

designed as a dynamic hybrid - multidisciplinary workshop where students' active participation will lead to the development of pluridisciplinary skills such as creativity, critical *doing*, performativity, community building, DIY, and mentorship. The course will culminate in the production of a hip hop show. By the end of the program, students will be able to critically analyze the impact of hip hop culture in the current society and generation and use the elements and philosophies of hip hop culture to develop academic and life skills as well as new ways of learning.

Program Description for Teachers:

During the first 10-weeks of the program, teachers will learn the same course content as their students and participate in the workshop as students. In parallel, they will also be asked to think about embodied and culturally-relevant pedagogical tools they can incorporate during the second-half of the program. Teachers will also assist students to create a multidisciplinary hip hop and embodied pedagogy-inspired performance.

Assessment:

Students and teachers will receive customized assignments based on the course content of the week and there will be interactive feedback sessions incorporated in the classes. Assessment will also highly be based on the in-class participation. An end-of-program survey will also serve to assess each participants' personal growth and challenges.

Agenda:

- **Winter: (Part 1: Hip Hop and Embodied Pedagogy)**

Week 1: Introduction to Hip Hop and Embodied Pedagogy:

- What does hip hop mean to you?
- Brief introduction to the origins of hip hop culture: dates, founders, socio-economic context
- Hip hop and embodied pedagogy: syllabus, goals setting, accountability

Week 2: DJin': the art of the remix:

- Hip Hop founding fathers: Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash
- DJin' techniques in practice: cutting, quoting, sampling, turn-tables, movement
- Reflection: hip hop and technology (discussion on socio-economic context around the emergence of hip hop musical culture)

➔ *Assignment: Watch "The Hip Hop Years"*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhrSIOa2bsA>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euh_IKVIMyk

Week 3: Emceeing: the art of spoken words and storytelling:

- Master of Ceremony and Block Parties, Call-and-Responses
- Conscious Rap: Analyzing lyrics and music videos
- Watch Video: Hip Hop Beyond Beats & Rhymes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KcoI418ds_0

➔ *Assignment: Create a DJ sample and explain your creative process*

Week 4: Graffiti Art: political statements on a wall:

- Watch: STYLE WARS : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EW22LzSaJA>
- From street art to high art
- In practice: Mural and embodied pictures

➔ *Assignment: Write a childhood or recent school memory using emceeing techniques,*

Week 5: Bboying/B-girling: embodying music and blackness:

- Philosophies in breakdancing: competition, naming, style, spaces etc.
- Influences: martial arts, capoeira, African Diasporic Dances
- East Coast and West Coast hip hop dances
- In Practice Part 1: freestyle workshop and battle

Week 6: Relationships in hip hop: community, mentorship, kinship, family and individuality:

- What do relationships look like in your culture? At school?
- Guest Panel and Q&A
- In Practice Part 2: Cypher

➔ *Assignment: Prepare questions for panelists*

Week 7: Hip hop in Popular Culture: Debate

- Analysis of popular images of hip hop culture (gang violence, hyper-sexuality, commercial etc.)
- Reflection week 1 - 5
- In Practice: Embodied Debate: critics vs. protectors of hip hop culture

Week 8: Globalization of hip hop: Appropriation, Commodification and Authenticity:

- Definitions of concepts
- Reflections: Personal examples
- Race-ing in hip hop, identity politics
- Industry and hip hop

Week 9: Hip hop and embodied social protest:

- Definition and reflection
 - Discussion: article
 - Analyzes of different hip hop protests videos:
 - Hip Hop for Social Change: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qZwHGZ-uNg>
 - LA Street Dance Activism, Shamell Bell
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDeFXrzDyu8&t=924s>
 - Turfing, Oackland R.I.P, Y.A.K Film
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQRnAhmB58>
 - Alvin Ailey, Freedom: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BHv426JhpGG/>
 - Bettina Love Class: Education for Social Justice
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTyBCh8GICk&t=1s>
 - In Practice: Embodied social protest and power dynamics
- ➔ *Assignment: Read: “Hands Up Don’t Shoot!” Gesture, Choreography and Protest in Ferguson*

Week 10: Your hip hop identity:

- Individual Performance of what hip hop means to you using one or two of the elements
- ➔ *Assignment: Teachers and Students: end-of-program survey due*

Additional Recommended Resources:

- Hip-Hop Evolution (Netflix)
- Watch: My Name is Myeisha, Director: Gus Krieger
- Practice at 1212 freestyle session (every other Sundays at Infuse Studio, Downtown Riverside)

Spring: (Part 2: Education Project)

Week 11-14: Teaching and Learning Laboratory

Week 15: Instructor’s Class Observation & Feedback Roundtable & Dreamscape Performance

➔ *Assignment: Prepare to discuss the teaching and learning strategies you decided to implement for the rest of the year*

Week 20: Final Performance and Final Assessment

➔ *Assignment: Perform in front of audience and instructor and prepare to discuss overall observation, achievement of the program, and future pedagogical plans*

Sample Handout Graffiti Week 2:

Embodied Hip Hop Pedagogy Workshop 2: Graffiti Art

Guest Instructor: Maïko Le Lay

I. Recap Week 1: Origins of Hip Hop Culture:

Historical Context:

- Where?
- When?
- By Whom?
- Socio-Economic Context?

4 Artistic Elements:

-
-
-
-

*Embodied Hip Hop Pedagogy Workshop:
COMPLETE AT HOME FOR NEXT WEEK

Ground Principles for our Collaboration:	List 3 things you Expect from our Collaboration? What are your 3 Goals for this Workshop?	List 3 ways you Plan to Achieve these Goals:	How will the Class, as a Collective Group, Achieve these 3 Goals?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat Hip Hop with Respect • Be Present / Active Participation • Respect Homework Deadlines • Respect your Work and Others • Take Notes, Review • Discuss, Collaborate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •

II. Graffiti: Origins and Common Understanding vs. Hip Hop Understanding:

Watch: “The History of American Graffiti: From Subway to Gallery” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEbYFrWUgTQ> – 00.00 – 1.38)

When were the first Graffiti Created?	Who made graffiti very popular, a cultural movement?	What are the types of graffiti mentioned in the video?

Watch: "Style Wars Trailer" on YouTube
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6GbbFXxNpw> 00.54-3.29)

What do the Graffiti Artists/Teenagers say about Graffiti?	What does the Mayor Say?

Search online for the definition of "Graffiti" and write 3 keywords based on your search:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

*What do you think of Graffiti? **COMPLETE AT HOME FOR NEXT WEEK**

To learn more: <http://www.speerstra.net/en/about-graffiti-and-street-art>



III. Graffiti – Street Art – Museum:

Let's analyze these images, describe what you see:

IV. Astronomy Graffiti:

1. Choose a Color Pen and Write a Word that Connects the theme of your class “Astronomy” and Pass it to your Group Members.
2. *Using some of the Words on your Sheet, Create your own Graffiti Memory Card. **TO COMPLETE AT HOME FOR NEXT WEEK**

Astronomy

Handout Sample Emceeing Week 3:

Embodied Hip Hop Pedagogy Workshop 3
“Emceeing / MC”: Guest: Joshua Rosales

Rap in your life:

How often do you listen to rap music? (Checkmark)	Which platforms do you use to listen to rap?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> At least once a day<input type="radio"/> At least once every other day<input type="radio"/> once a week<input type="radio"/> once a month<input type="radio"/> less than once a month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Radio<input type="radio"/> Internet (youtube or other musical websites)<input type="radio"/> Cds at Home<input type="radio"/> Streaming Platforms (e.g. Spotify, Pandora etc.)<input type="radio"/> Other?
Name a few rappers you know or listen to:	Which hip hop element are you most interested in? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Graffiti Art<input type="radio"/> Emceeing/Rapping<input type="radio"/> DJing<input type="radio"/> Breakdancing

13. Origins of MCing and What is Rap?

- 1) Watch “From Nothing to Something: the Art of Rap” and Answer: **What is Rap?**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9Gut0dMm8E>

“From Nothing to Something”?	“Hip Hop Did Not Invent Anything, It Re-Invented Everything”

2) What do you think these quotes from the video mean? (**TO COMPLETE AT HOME FOR NEXT FRIDAY**)

14. Poetic Techniques in Hip-Hop Verses:

1) Let’s Analyze “GOOD MORNING AMERIKKKA” by Joey Bada\$\$

[Verse]

Now, what's freedom to you?
 Let’s talk about it, take a minute, think it through
 I'm all about it, but the concept seems new
 The coppers still shoot us down on Channel 5 news
 Lock us up for anythin' we do to pay dues
 Some of us woke while some stay snoozed
 Zombies walkin’ around trippin' over issues
 The knowledge is official but it's often misused
 America my masseuse, massagin' my back
 Tryna act like, she ain't gonna do me like Pratt
 Geronimo, take a leap and lay flat
 I'm down to go for my message to spread across the map
 Holy cross on my back got a bullseye on it
 I gotta get stoned to fulfill my moment
 Oppress my oppressor, suppress the opponent
 Channel my ancestor, he wouldn't condone it
 In search of the healin' component
 Said you would notice

If you took notice, but you too nose
 Time to wake up
 Won't you come and smell the hot coffee?
 Stick your nose in the wrong places, one day you'll OD
 I swear the whole world owe me
 I'm nothin' close to the old me
 If you never knew me, then it's too late to be homies
 Homie, say what you told me
 I'm ridin' out by my lonely
 Waitin' for the day the big homie take these chains off me

1) Describe each technique and write which lines correspond to each technique:

MOTIF:	SIMILE:
METAPHOR:	PERSONIFICATION:

2) Discuss and Write What Message(s) does this Rap Song Convey?

15. Create 2 Verses or More using all 4 Poetic Techniques:

- Expression of Yourself
- You can Use the Themes of your Graffiti Activity (Event/Generation; Cultural Identity; Passion/Hobby; Aspire to Become) **(TO COMPLETE AT HOME BY NEXT FRIDAY)**

Sample Hip Hop Performance Grading Checklist:

**Hip Hop Theater Performance
Maiko Le Lay's Assessment:**

- Crew Name:
- Names of Participants:

Criteria	Strong	Average	Low	Comments
Use of 4 Hip Hop Elements				
Originality; Creativity				
Collaboration				
Feedback Incorporation				
Q&A				
Overall Performance				

Sample Hip Hop & Riverside Oral Presentation (Brook's Class):

Grading Checklist for Embodied Hip Hop Workshop's Oral Presentation

Names of Participants:

Criteria	Comment	Grade /5
Keeping Time		
1-page Handout		
Poster or PPT		
Relevance of Content		
Group Collaboration		
Overall		
	TOTAL:	

Sample Mid-Assessment Questions for Teachers:

Name of Teacher – Respondent:

Part 1: Mid Period Assessment

Date Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019

- How would you describe the evolution of our partnership/exchange?
- How would you describe the “embodied hip hop pedagogy” workshop?
- Has your understanding of hip hop culture and hip hop education, and those of your students changed due to this partnership, and how?
- What has been the most and least effective about this workshop?
- What has been challenging and successful regarding this partnership and Maiko Le Lay’s teaching and curriculum?

Sample End-Collaboration Assessment Questions for Teachers:

Part 2: Final Assessment

Date Sent: March 15, 2019

- Why did you decide to collaborate with Maiko Le Lay?
- How is this partnership close/far from what you expected of it?
- How would you describe Maiko Le Lay as a teacher? How is her curriculum, choices, and pedagogy similar or different from you or other middle school teachers?
- How did this partnership impact your teaching and learning environment and those of your students?
- Is embodied hip hop pedagogy important? Does it have its place in k-12 institutions?
- What are the current barriers to implement such curriculum?
- What do you retain the most from this partnership?
- What do you think Maiko Le Lay and yourself could have done to improve this program?
- What are your suggestions to make this workshop more middle school friendly and sustainable if it were to become a more permanent workshop?
- Would you recommend this partnership to other teachers/your principal/the district? How would it practically happen?
- Which part or aspect, of this workshop, if any, would you like to reuse in your teaching and why?
- Any additional suggestions/feedback?