

**Salt Shakers: Black Women's Cultural Expression and Influence in Atlanta's
Hip-Hop Dance Scene**

by

Adeerya Jazman Johnson

B.A., Spelman College, 2015

M.A., Georgia State University, 2019

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

(GENDER, RACE, SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

October 2025

© Adeerya Jazman Johnson, 2025

The following individuals certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

Salt Shakers: Black Women's Cultural Expression and Influence in Atlanta's Hip-Hop Dance Scene

submitted by Adeerya Jazman Johnson in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in GENDER, RACE, SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Examining Committee:

Annette Henry, Professor Emerita, Department of Language and Literacy Education, Institute for Race, Gender, Sexuality and Social Justice, UBC

Supervisor

Minelle Mahtani, Associate Professor, Chair of Canadian Studies, Institute for Race, Gender, Sexuality and Social Justice, UBC

Supervisory Committee Member

Lakeyta Bonnette-Bailey, Chair of Political Science, Howard University

Supervisory Committee Member

John Paul Catungal, Assistant Professor, Institute for Race, Gender, Sexuality and Social Justice, UBC

University Examiner

Samson Nashon, Professor, Curriculum & Pedagogy, UBC

University Examiner

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the contributions of Black women within Southern hip-hop dance cultures in Atlanta, Ga, utilizing the conceptual framework of Dirty South Feminism. The framework I developed illuminates the intersections of Black social dancing, hip-hop feminism, and Black geographies, fostering a deeper understanding of Black Southern culture. Rooted in Atlanta's rich cultural landscape, this study explores how Black women use dance as a form of resistance, identity-making, and storytelling in physical and digital spaces.

The research employs a hip-hopography approach to capture the lived experiences of Black women growing up in Atlanta's hip-hop scene. In this context, focusing on Atlanta and the rise of its social dances, I conducted a focus group of four Black women and one femme to understand their perspectives on growing up in Atlanta and the dance trends and communities that influenced their connection to the city and Southern hip-hop culture. The findings from the focus group suggest that Atlanta remains central to the evolution of Southern hip-hop dance, with Black women acting as cultural architects who shape the development, aesthetics, and socio-economic growth of Atlanta's hip-hop scene. Their performances challenge mainstream representations, reaffirming agency in a genre and city that have historically marginalized them.

Ultimately, Dirty South feminism offers a unique perspective on how and why Black women navigate and shape Southern hip-hop culture. By prioritizing the voices and contributions of these participants, this work challenges prevailing narratives and asserts Atlanta as a hub of hip-hop feminist resistance, creativity, and cultural innovation.

Lay Summary

This research explores how five Southern Black women in Atlanta define their roles in Southern hip-hop through dance, music, and cultural expression. The dissertation highlights their influence and empowerment in reshaping the genre while navigating cultural, social, and economic influences. By examining dance styles like twerking and snap music, the study challenges societal norms around body and sexual politics, emphasizing Atlanta as a cultural hub where Black women cultivate and shape Southern hip-hop.

This work contributes to Black studies, Southern hip-hop studies, and contemporary Black feminist studies by addressing the historical marginalization of Black women's contributions to Southern hip-hop. It provides new insights into how Black women assert their identity and creativity, influencing the evolution of hip-hop culture and challenging traditional stereotypes of Black womanhood. This research enriches the understanding of body politics, cultural presence, and the role of social media in amplifying Black women's voices in hip-hop culture.

Preface

The Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) at the University of British Columbia (UBC) approved the research design and implementation reported in Chapters 3-5. The BREB certificate number was [H21-03943]. Grammarly AI was utilized throughout the writing process of this dissertation to assist with grammar, spelling, and clarity checks. All substantive ideas, analysis, and original writing remain my own. This dissertation is an original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Adeerya Jazman Johnson.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Lay Summary</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Lists of Tables</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Glossary</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>Introduction: What's up with the Bankhead Bounce?</i>	<i>1</i>
Homegirl in Motion	3
Preview of Chapters	7
<i>Chapter 1: What is the Dirty South?</i>	<i>10</i>
Southern Hip-Hop Geographies	13
Theorizing Dirty South Feminism	17
The Legacy of Hip-Hop Feminism	18
Dance Theory in a Black Feminist South	31
Conclusion	40
<i>Chapter 2: Mapping a Dancing Atlanta</i>	<i>42</i>
Rep Yo City: Atlanta Geography.....	45
Figure 1. Figure 2.....	46
Rise of the Dancing South	50
Atlanta Hip-Hop Dance Movements.....	55
Crunk Era.....	60
HBCU Dance Cultures	64
The Magic: The Rise of Atlanta's Strip Clubs	68
Conclusion	73
<i>Chapter 3: A Hip-Hop Feminist Epistemology</i>	<i>76</i>
Methodology	87
Table 1.....	91
Focus Groups as a Research Method	92
Coding	96
Challenges and Limitations.....	102
Conclusion	105
<i>Chapter 4: The Results & Defining the South</i>	<i>108</i>
Defining the South	110
Dancing in Atlanta	118
Atlanta as a Unique Southern City.....	129
Southern Women's Power and Influence	140
Implications of the Research	157

Limitations	160
Conclusion	161
Chapter 5: “Renegade”: Black Women's Dance Influence on TikTok and the Future	166
TikTok Viral Dances and Their Sociocultural Significance	167
Cultural Theft and Digital Appropriation	169
The Digital Black girl.....	175
Chapter 6. A Dirty South Feminist Critique.....	180
Reflection	186
Bibliography	190

Lists of Tables

Table 1 - Demographics 91

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1 - Map of Atlanta Zones</i>	46
<i>Figure 2- Map of Atlanta Zones (extended)</i>	46

Glossary

***AAVE (n.):** Abbreviation for African American Vernacular English, a dialect of English with unique grammatical, vocabulary, and accent features, spoken primarily by African Americans. AAVE has its roots in the linguistic history of African American communities and plays a significant role in cultural identity and expression.

BBL (n.): Abbreviation for Brazilian Butt Lift, a popular cosmetic surgery procedure that involves transferring fat from other parts of the body to the buttocks to enhance their size and shape. The procedure has gained cultural attention and discourse around body image and beauty standards.

Black Mecca (n.): A Black Mecca is a city known for its significant Black population, thriving Black culture, economic opportunities, and community growth. Atlanta is often called the "Black Mecca of the South" for its historical role in Black culture, business, and education. Phyl Garland popularized this term in a 1971 *Ebony* magazine article.

Cypher (n.): A communal space (can be a physical circular space) where one engages in improvisational rap, dance, or other creative expressions, fostering cultural exchange and knowledge production.

Femme/Fem (n.): A gender identity or expression that embraces traditionally feminine traits, often used within LGBTQ+ communities to describe individuals who present themselves in a manner associated with femininity, regardless of their gender identity.

Ratchet (adj.): Slang denoting a form of behavior considered to be loud, unruly, or over-the-top, often used to describe a person or situation that is seen as striking or unrefined. In a cultural context, some have embraced it as a term of empowerment and resistance against social norms and stereotypes.

Ring Shout (n.): An ecstatic, transcendent religious ritual, first practiced by African slaves in the West Indies and the United States, in which worshipers move in a circle while shuffling and stomping their feet and clapping their hands. It is an important cultural and historical form of African American spiritual expression and communal gathering.

Trap (n.): A Southern hip-hop subgenre originating in Atlanta, defined by drug-related lyrics, fast hi-hats, deep bass, and layered drums. Rappers T.I., Jeezy, and Gucci Mane are widely credited with popularizing the genre in the early 2000s.

*As Black culture garners more attention in social media, academia, and the community, there has been a trend of appropriating Black slang [AAVE]. Unfortunately, some terms have been misused and taken over by non-Black individuals. The exclusion of unfamiliar terms from the focus group serves to limit access to this language. The aim is not to make conversations difficult to understand but to highlight how outsiders can misunderstand Black culture and how Black women and girls have developed a unique language to connect and bond with each other. This is a means to safeguard and uphold a culture that outsiders often co-opt.

Acknowledgments

Praises to my ancestors, who danced, wrote, and dreamed before me. Their work and impact have brought me to where I am today.

Home: Shout-out to Decatur, Georgia, for being my dance studio. I am so grateful for the people who have helped motivate and support me through this thinking, writing, intellectual, and emotional process. Nothing in this world can fully prepare you for the emotional labor of a dissertation.

Family: First, I would like to thank my parents, Wanda Hence and Gregory Johnson, for always pushing me to be the smartest and brightest and for instilling a radical Black consciousness in me since I was a little girl.

Love: Falling in love while writing a dissertation can be distracting. But I am forever grateful to my life partner, Yari, who motivated me, cooked for me, proofread, and fact-checked everything about Atlanta. I love you deeply and am so happy to have your support in my scholarly endeavors.

Friends: Sisterhood is a core element in this dissertation, and I am so grateful to the Black women I call sisters. They have supported me in this process and with whom I have danced and grown up. Thank you, Ivyonne, Summer, and Kayonne.

Accountability: To my sister scholars, Kyesha and Ka 'Lyn, and my accountability buddy Mark, thank you for holding me down and being the accountability I needed to get through the frustrating times.

Canadian Family: I must show all my love to my Vancouver family, who were my home away from home and helped me build a strong Black queer community that I could lean on and thrive with. Rita, Morgan, David, Lutze, Chris, and Sean, you will always be my family!

Academia: My amazing academic committee supports my research, challenges me critically, and always seeks the best in me and my work. I am forever grateful for your interest and investment in this process.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all the little Black girls from the South who remain the beat that keeps the Dirty South alive.

Introduction: What's up with the Bankhead Bounce?

*Atlanta gon' drop it to the ground,
Inglewood gon' drop it on down,
Southside gon' drop it, drop it,
Oooo lawd, just Bankhead Bounce!
If you think you got it,
Get on the floor, then Bankhead Bounce!
Oooo lawd, it's about time,
for that shawty in the back to come up to the front.*

- Bankhead Bounce, Diamond ft. D-Roc (1995)

As a Black woman from Metro Atlanta, I will never turn my back on my city. I love the South. I love Georgia. I love Atlanta. The city moves through me—a rhythm and flow born from its radio waves, dance crazes, and unshaken spirit. Growing up, the “Bankhead Bounce” was more than a dance; it was a pulse, a memory, a language of the body that spoke Atlanta’s truth. The dance was simple; it only required a shoulder bounce and rhythmic rocking from left to right. I adored this dance because it perfectly elevated the Atlanta Bass songs of the era. It was a common dance seen on TV at local sports events, community gatherings, and parties. The dance was easy to pick up, and you felt cool doing it. The song’s rhythmic flow uniquely brought everyone together, especially when I danced with my friends. The joy of shrugging my shoulders and swaying to the left and right is a cherished memory of home that I will never forget. But as a young girl, I didn’t realize that this dance was from a neighborhood of Atlanta, nor did I understand the impact of Bankhead and its connection to the song. Even though I didn't grow up in Bankhead, later, I understood its significance and influence. Like the community, the dance was fun, trendy, and exciting to experience with others. Since its release, the “Bankhead Bounce” has become a cultural phenomenon and a classic dance that has significantly impacted Atlanta Bass and dance culture within the city. Being a Black girl from the South, I embrace the

ethos of The South vs. Everybody, recognizing the region's often-overlooked contributions to hip-hop and asserting the undeniable influence of Southern Black women in shaping its culture, sound, and narratives. The dances of Southern hip-hop propelled me, teaching me that movement is autonomous and can be a language of freedom where I can move how I want and when I want. More importantly, I seek to illuminate that same power and agency for other Black women and girls who, like me, love and move through Atlanta. This work is a testament to them, a space where their stories take center stage.

Atlanta is the heartbeat of this framework. It is my home. My place of identity. Often labeled the "Black Mecca," Atlanta is a site of promise, love, pride and contradiction. Its reputation as a hub for Black entrepreneurship, higher education, and civil rights leadership intersects with its role as the epicenter of Southern hip hop culture where Black girlhood and womanhood can form. Yet, this dual identity complicates how Black women and girls navigate the city's spaces. I foreground how I experience Atlanta's socio-historical significance. Rather than scattering narratives of Atlanta's role throughout one chapter, I scatter them into a coherent framework, starting with my understanding of existing in Atlanta and the Dirty South to flesh out Dirty South Feminism. This introduction explores my understanding of geography, place, and home through my experiences growing up as a Black girl in Atlanta. Leaning on Black geography, I establish my connection to the concept of mapping my movement across the city. I delve into my early dance experiences in Atlanta, specifically my involvement in ballet and tap. This section highlights the role of dance in shaping my girlhood and my positive experience at a Black woman-owned dance studio. I also set the stage for a discussion on Southern hip-hop dance and my ties to Black girlhood, which will be further explored in the dissertation. Ultimately, this introduction lays the groundwork for a dissertation that uses my narrative as the

foundation to why I've thought and researched deeply to examine broader themes of geography, place, identity, and the experiences of Black girls growing up in the South. By grounding the research in my own memories and connections to Atlanta, I explore how these memories can resonate with and inform the understanding of other Black women from Atlanta and across the South. Dirty South Feminism is not an abstract concept, but a tool grounded in the realities of Atlanta's Southern landscape and how I make sense of the Dirty South.

Homegirl in Motion

My experiences growing up as a Black girl in the South were simple, I made friends, played outside, and grew a connection to dance and hip-hop through the city and neighborhood around me. When I was around five, my mom enrolled me in ballet and tap classes. However, to be clear, while I was enrolled in these classes, it does not mean that I was classically trained in dance. It was a thing many moms would do for their daughters, following the rules of what shaped girlhood and what girls were supposed to do. Nonetheless, I enjoyed ballet class and took a liking to tap dance because of the beat and click-clack of my shoes. I lived close to my dance studio. I grew up on the east side of Metro Atlanta in Decatur, Georgia, right by Interstate 20 near Candler Road. I grew up in a working-class Black community where I would frequent the local Piggly Wiggly, South Dekalb Mall, and a family-owned wing spot called Dundeeds. In my neighborhood, all my neighbors were Black, even at my elementary school, the students, teachers, and staff were also Black. Black people were everywhere, and it was a normal experience and reflection of the city. When I left the South for the first time and moved to Vancouver, BC, I didn't realize the privilege that was. My mother and father were very persistent in keeping me close to the community to have access to Blackness and Black culture. They were avid supporters of Black businesses in the city and always played Black music at home. My

Blackness was deeply ingrained in my life, from my lived experiences and interactions with others as well as through the books I read, the toys I played with, and the movies and television shows I watched. Thus, it makes sense that my mom would enroll me in a Black woman-owned dance studio called the Conservatory of Dance and Fine Arts. At The Conservatory, all my dance teachers were young Black women who brought great energy, kindness, love, and consideration to dance, providing a safe space and making me fall in love with dancing and performing. I learned the basics of foot placements, leaps, poise, and elegance as a Black ballerina, which was something many Black girls would see growing up in Decatur, Georgia. It was at a young age I associated dance with being Black but also attributed the beauty of dancing and my love for dancing being a shared memory being taught by a Black woman and being shared amongst other Black girls. At that studio, every Black girl who entered the space claimed something for herself and, I hope, left empowered as we collaborated and danced at a young age. As I improved my dance skills, I wanted to do more, continue dancing, and audition for The Conservatory's dance troupe. Unfortunately, my family's financial circumstances pulled me away from such a memorable studio, and I had to find my love for dance elsewhere.

Living in Atlanta and growing up in Decatur always connected me to Black communities, positively impacting my childhood. It's amazing how well my mother found so many places for a Black girl like me to thrive and be surrounded by other children who looked like me. For example, she found a local Boys and Girls Club for me to attend after school. I attended the Samuel L. Jones Club in the small neighborhood of East Lake in Decatur. This was where my influence of dance trends and hand games from other girls in the area got started. Samuel L. Jones was close to my old home off Candler Road but farther from my new home in Clarkston, Georgia, where I moved when I was 8. My memories and connections from attending my local

Boys and Girls Club fit the national organization mission, “To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.” While this was fitting, and all clubs looked different based on location, the children and staff were Black, and my club was in a predominantly Black neighborhood at the time which influenced my knowledge of various slang, culture, dances and identities in Atlanta. I absorbed the vibrant culture and slang of Atlanta. Each move, each game, was a thread inserting me into the fabric of a Black Southern community. It was more than just dancing; we were playing, it was a celebration of our shared heritage, a space where we empowered each other, solidifying our identities as growing girls in Atlanta loving hip-hop.

During my preteen years, I was experiencing hip-hop from 2003 to about 2006. Southern hip-hop was dominated by artists like Ludacris, OutKast, Nelly, Missy Elliot, Chingy, Bow Wow, and Lil Jon. While more locally, the city was unknowingly brewing a new subgenre of Southern hip-hop called snap music. But, before I got introduced to the snap era, I spent this new moment of my life at school, in my neighborhood and at summer camp playing as many hand games as possible. I remember playing “Miss Mary Mack” “Slide Baby”, “Twee-Lee (Rockin, Robin)”, “Mama, Mama (Can't You See)”, “Shame”, “Double-Double”, “Down by the River”, and “Down, Down Baby”. We played dance games like “Gigolo”, where we took turns introducing ourselves and showing off a quick 8-count dance to demonstrate our skills. These hand games were just games—something fun and entertaining to help pass the time by. However, as I learned and reflected deeper on my connection to these games, I realized I played them because of the sound, the beat, and the social musical embodiment that came from connecting uniquely with other Black girls. I remember being so excited to jump in the circle when it was my turn or when any of my friends wanted to play a hand game with me because it felt good. It

brought me joy to create a synchronous sound with our bodies that carried a beat, rhyme, vibe, and connection. Friendships and sisterhoods often begin when I meet a new girl and offer to play a hand game or teach each other new hand games. These games could involve shouting (or cheering) your name, participating in a dance circle, or playing local variations of a similar game. Building upon my understanding of Black girls playing presents the notion that musical play fosters a sense of shared Black identity and cultural understanding within the sphere of Black girlhood. Gaunt (2006) discusses this impact and connection Black girls have always had to Black music and how embodied play helps build community and teach socialization through the process of beat-making, rhythm, and dance. Specifically, Gaunt (2006) states:

In handclapping games, cheers, and double-dutch, the musical and social agency of black girls rules the day. The style of black girls' embodied play reflects dominant characteristics of African American music and dance: the use of bent notes to inflect meaning; the playful and dramatic use of call-and-response; and the use of hip and pelvic gestures, as well as the percussive and rhythmic complexity and improvisational tendencies of oral and kinetic expression that are found in African American sacred and secular performance. (p.58)

She emphasizes that Black girl play teaches musical socialization through this process of beat-making and dance, building early forms of adult musical practices (Gaunt, 2006). These connections she makes speak to the extension of how I learned to dance to build musical knowledge and kinesthetic sensibilities that prepared me for this wave of snap-and-crunk music. While the snap era was a specific and unique era for Southern hip-hop and hip-hop as an overall

genre, I was unknowingly building the skills to listen to Southern hip-hop dance for instructions. I listened for the call-and-response essence to guide me and show off who I was, where I was from, and what skills I could bring to the dance circle. The rhythms, chants, and dances of Black girls' play formulated adult musical practice as I learned how to shake up a space and say my name, especially when Black names are often considered "ghetto." Through this, we learn how to be musically Black, which can be the practice of how Black girls build skills of rhythm and soul. Thus, for this moment in my life, I was building the skills of rhythm and soul through these hand games that prepared me to engage in Southern hip-hop at the cusp of its new era, but unknowingly to write this dissertation.

Preview of Chapters

Salt Shakers, draws from the Ying Yang Twins' iconic 2003 song "Salt Shaker," a cultural staple in Atlanta's crunk era. The title centers Black women's powerful and visible presence in shaping the contours of Southern hip-hop dance. Their expressions through dance are not only vibrant and kinetic but also operate as acts of resistance, pleasure, and reclaiming agency. In this dissertation, I examine how Black women shape, experience, and define Southern hip-hop dance cultures within the unique social and cultural landscape of Atlanta, Georgia. Central to this investigation are two key research questions: How do Southern hip-hop dance experiences influence the formation of identity and connection to the "Dirty South" among Black women, and in what ways do these experiences contribute to their cultural identity within the city of Atlanta? And how do Black women cultivate the sexual, economic, and geographical politics of the Dirty South, and what are the key elements and nuances in Black women's power dynamics, economic influence, and community behaviors in Atlanta? These questions guide my exploration of the ways in which Black women express themselves through dance, challenge

dominant narratives, and engage with the cultural, political, and economic structures that shape their dancing lives. Drawing from the energy and movement embedded in the song, this dissertation repositions Black women and girls as architects of Atlanta's dance culture. I challenge the historical erasure of their contributions within Southern hip-hop scholarship and call for a critical reexamination of who gets credit for shaping the genre's visual and embodied language.

The first chapter provides the theoretical foundation for the dissertation. It offers a literature review that engages deeply with four overlapping fields: Southern hip-hop studies, Black geographies, hip-hop feminism, and Black social dancing. In doing so, it identifies a gap in how Black women's embodied practices—especially in the South—have been underexplored. Scholars like Regina Bradley, Gwendolyn Pough, Kathrine McKittrick, Thomas DeFrantz and Katrina Hazzard-Donald provide entry points for thinking about performance, place, and gender. At the same time, this chapter builds on that foundation to introduce Dirty South feminism as the primary theoretical framework. I discuss how Southern hip-hop's hyperlocal expressions—grounded in region, race, and sexuality—can be better understood through the stories, movements, and experiences of Black women and girls.

Chapter two maps Atlanta's geographical, historical, and cultural importance to the rise of Southern hip-hop dance. It examines how zoning laws, gentrification, and neighborhood boundaries shape where dance happens and how movement is policed or allowed to flourish. The chapter also breaks down the emergence of key dance eras like crunk and snap, offering a grounded understanding of how specific communities gave rise to distinct dance styles.

Chapter three delves into the methodological framework of this dissertation, grounding the research in a hip-hopography and a hip-hop feminist approach that centers the lived

experiences, cultural knowledge, and creative practices of Black women in Atlanta. Drawing on a Black feminist epistemology, this chapter outlines how knowledge is produced through lived experience, embodied expression, and collective memory, especially within cultural spaces like Southern hip-hop. Rather than treating dance as an aesthetic or entertainment, I approach it as a form of knowledge production and cultural storytelling.

The fourth chapter presents the findings from the focus group conversations with Black women and a non-binary femme raised or lived in Atlanta. Their testimonies provide firsthand insight into how dance intersects with memory, self-expression, joy, and community. These reflections illuminate the everyday practices and cultural labor that sustain and evolve Atlanta's hip-hop dance culture.

Chapter five moves into the digital realm, examining how platforms like TikTok serve as contemporary dance floors for Black girl creativity. It interrogates issues of appropriation, virality, and the commodification of Southern dance aesthetics, while highlighting how digital spaces can extend Dirty South feminist politics into new domains of play, performance, and power. The final chapter concludes the dissertation with a reflection on the future of Dirty South feminism and the ongoing importance of centering Black women and girls in cultural narratives. It considers how this research can inform digital and local performances that honor Black women's embodied knowledge as critical to understanding the legacy and future of Southern hip-hop.

Chapter 1: What is the Dirty South?

The term “Dirty South” is often credited to the 1995 track “Dirty South” by Goodie Mob, which appeared on the group’s debut album, *Soul Food* (1995), initiating a commentary on Black life in Atlanta. Culturally, the Dirty South emerged as a response to the dominance of East and West Coast hip-hop in the early 1990s, developing its own distinctive style—characterized by heavy bass, regional slang, an independent hustle, and bold storytelling (Miller, 2004). In *The Legend of the Black Mecca*, Maurice J. Hobson (2017) situates Dirty South rap as a cultural and political counternarrative, giving voice to Atlanta’s marginalized Black communities amid the city’s pursuit of global commercial status. He argues that the Dirty South emerged from the Black Arts Movement, where artists like OutKast and Goodie Mob used hip-hop to critique Atlanta’s Black leadership and a Southern perspective on popular culture in the city (Hobson, 2017). Over the years into the new millennium, the Dirty South quickly became a defining cultural and geographic marker for Atlanta, representing the South’s overlooked style, culture, and vernacular. However, the Dirty South as a music genre represents a specific stylized sound across the South. The Dirty South blends heavy beats, independent artistry, Southern lyricism and unapologetically bold performances. With the genre’s popularity and uniqueness by the 2000s, the South wasn’t just making noise but setting the standard, influencing popular culture and underground hip-hop music (Bloomquist & Hancock, 2013; Grem, 2006). However, in the context of Southern hip-hop, “dirty” is more than a stylistic label to define the sub-genre—it’s also a conceptual framework grounded in geography, politics, and cultural resistance. To define “dirty” in the Dirty South is to embrace the South’s messiness and its contradictions. This means exploring the music’s rawness, and its complex history of racism, segregation, and class struggle. Grem (2009) explains that unlike the East Coast or the West Coast forms of hip-hop culture and

aesthetics, Southern hip-hop leans into the grime of its region: red clay, sweat, backroads, and bass. For example, Goodie Mob redefines “dirty” through their 1995 album *Soul Food*, using it as both critique and tool. For them, Atlanta was “dirty” because of its history of racial violence, ongoing Black-on-Black crime, corrupt judicial systems, and the visible effects of systemic neglect. Yet “dirty” is also aspirational—a way of reclaiming the South’s cultural worth. Goodie Mob and OutKast flipped stereotypes of Southern “backwardness” into a source of pride and identity (Grem, 2006). “Dirty” becomes a critical lens through which Southern artists can process trauma, find solidarity, and articulate a future while critiquing the politics of the South. By leaning into what the rest of other hip-hop regions mocked or ignored, Southern artists transform “dirty” into a site of resistance, truth-telling, and cultural power—grounding the South as a legitimate and innovative force in hip-hop history and making its place as a unique genre to consider a site to explore Black life and culture in the South.

Dirty South can be used as a socio-political lens rooted in Atlanta’s Southwest side. It provides a distinct Southern perspective that challenges dominant narratives about Atlanta (Hobson, 2017). Importantly, the Dirty South is a Southern dance backdrop to Atlanta’s, strip clubs, and Atlanta Bass music, spotlighting the city’s unique relationship with dance, sexuality, and commercialization. Through twerking, anthems, and unapologetic self-expression, Black women create a space where Southern hip-hop is more than entertainment—it’s an act of agency, creativity and joy. But these spaces challenge respectability politics and grapple with Black women and girls’ bodies, stories, and creativity, often breeding misogynoir spaces blurring the lines of autonomy and objectification. Within these spaces, Black women’s presence and participation drive the sound, shaping the Dirty South’s energy and purpose, but also raising concerns about the public disrespect and disregard of Black women. I argue that the Dirty South

is a vibrant cultural nexus where public sexual performances—epitomized through street festivals, twerk music, strip clubs, crunk, and trap music—not only celebrate the embodied expressions of Black Southern women but also challenge the constraints of respectability politics. Regarding the formation and development of the Dirty South, I argue that the impact of Black women in the Dirty South significantly influenced and defined Southern hip-hop’s cultural and economic success. Hobson (2017, p. 11) leans on this as he notes, “Using popular culture from Atlanta provides a useful lens through which to view the lingering tensions and trends that were particular to Atlanta.” In this work, Dirty South Feminism and Black geographies intertwine here, as Black women from Atlanta reclaim space, challenge power structures, and affirm the city’s complex Black identities. Atlanta’s hip-hop scene is not just entertainment but a radical act of cultural and spatial reclamation that defines the Dirty South.

Through Black dancing, Southern aesthetics, memory-making, and Black girl play, they claim their bodies and identities from historical marginalization, mapping the complexities of survival and empowerment in Southern urban environments. Black women can challenge respectability politics and transform the “Dirty South” into a site of cultural innovation and community intelligence. Ultimately amplifying Black women’s voices, celebrating their resilience, creativity, and pivotal role in shaping hip-hop and Southern culture. But more importantly, I discover the unique connection of the Dirty South as a contradictory place to be in conversation with Black geographies.

Southern Hip-Hop Geographies

Black geographies is both a theoretical framework and an ontological practice that examines how Blackness is spatially constructed, resisted and reimagined. It disrupts traditional geographic narratives by centering how colonial histories, racial oppression, and Black cultural practices shape spatial realities (McKittrick, 2006). Scholars within this field, including Katherine McKittrick, argue that Black geographies challenge Eurocentric spatial knowledge, particularly its reliance on Cartesian coordinates and transparent space systems that enforce racial hierarchies and dispossession (Eaves & Wright, 2020; McKittrick, 2006). McKittrick's (2006) work explores how Black women's bodies are mapped across the U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean, emphasizing how racism and sexism create geographies that subordinate Black existence. These geographies, rooted in legacies of the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism, define Black life through displacement, disempowerment, and spatial control.

Traditional geography, structured through Western epistemologies, privileges transparency and physical measurement, often erasing the lived experiences of Black communities. Instead, Black geographies insist on alternative spatial readings that recognize the corporeal, the aesthetic, the creative, and the spiritual as meaningful sites of knowledge production. Southern hip-hop emerges as a direct response to and reflection of Black geographies. The genre, often defined by its regional identity within the "Dirty South," is deeply connected to place-based storytelling, representing the realities of racialized spaces in the American South. Through lyrics, beats, and sonic textures, Southern hip-hop artists map Black experiences in ways that challenge traditional geographic narratives. Furthermore, it highlights the creative visions of the marginalized as critical spaces for the geographic mapping of Black dance. First, cartography is a central foundation of geography, and it is concerned with locating,

identifying, and bounding phenomena within a coherent spatial frame (McKittrick, 2006). Second, geographic knowledge is the measure of "space-time." Lastly, the concept is captured by the terms place, territory, region, or locality. While Black artists have expressed their local situations to the broader community, country, and world through Southern hip-hop culture, the distribution of rap across the South has been significant. Mapping the hometowns of rap artists, the development of independent labels, community events, language, and radio stations centralizes the exploration of how geography can impact Black life and the production of culture in Southern hip-hop.

I particularly want to lean on the concept of a hip-hop South coined by Regina Bradley in her book *Chronicling Stankonia: The Rise of the Hip-Hop South*. Bradley's positionality on the influence of Southern hip-hop explores the impact of Atlanta hip-hop duo OutKast who pioneered a new Southern hip-hop sound that pushed away from the New York versus Los Angeles dichotomy influencing a new hip-hop scene in the early '90s cementing Atlanta as a marker to explore the politics of the South. She highlights how Southern hip-hop embodies regional identity, resistance, and a redefinition of Black spatial narratives in contemporary music where she coins the term "hip-hop South." Bradley (2021) states:

I theorize this sociocultural landscape as the hip-hop South, a hodgepodge of past, present, and future narrations of Southern blackness. The hip-hop South combines cornerstones of the past using hip-hop to carve out a space where the complexity of experiences in the post-civil rights era can breathe. (Bradley, 2021, p. 6)

Bradley's analysis is important in this work because she acknowledges the lack of a contemporary reading of the Black South, where there is an entanglement of race, place, and memories that exist within the boundaries of the South (Bradley, 2021). This analysis is important to Black geographies in the context of Southern hip-hop because it positions the South as a site to explore dance as two varied ways to study movement; through bodily expression and the mobilization of Southern hip-hop culture. For example, OutKast's *ATLiens* (1996) and Goodie Mob's *Soul Food* (1995) incorporate themes of displacement, survival, and the urban-rural divide, articulating a Southern Black consciousness often overlooked in mainstream hip-hop. These artists craft sonic landscapes that reflect not only physical locations but also the socio-political realities of the South—spaces shaped by histories of enslavement, Jim Crow segregation, and contemporary racialized policing. Southern hip-hop, in this sense, becomes a cartographic tool that reclaims Black geographies by asserting Southern Black identity on a global stage. Furthermore, Southern hip-hop's emphasis on regional dialects, localized storytelling, and cultural rituals (such as the use of call-and-response or gospel-infused production) reinforces the idea that place is not just a physical space but a lived experience (Eaves, 2017; Grem, 2006; McKittrick, 2006). The music resists hegemonic spatial narratives by centering Black joy, struggle, and resistance within the South's unique cultural formations which can lean on the influence of Black dance cultures.

Black dance cultures—particularly those emerging from Southern hip-hop scenes—serve as a key expression of Black geographies. Dance forms like twerking, bucking, and j-setting function as embodied cartographies that reclaim spatial agency. These movement traditions, often rooted in African diasporic practices, challenge dominant narratives about Black bodies by asserting mobility, resistance, and cultural memory through performance. Even the implications

of twerking claim a home in the Dirty South as a mode of self-expression and bodily autonomy. It subverts traditional spatial restrictions placed on Black women's bodies, transforming dance floors, strip clubs, and digital spaces into sites of empowerment. Similarly, bucking and j-setting, emerging from HBCU marching bands and LGBTQ+ club scenes, disrupt heteronormative and racialized constraints on movement, demonstrating how dance can function as a radical spatial intervention. But how can these spaces of movement be excluded, and why is an intervention necessary within Black geographies?

When examining the geographical aspects of hip-hop, it is essential to consider how to address the exclusion of certain groups, cultural differences, and the concept of a hip-hop South. Black women in Atlanta have disrupted public spaces with events like Freaknik (originally Freaknic) to the extent that Atlanta officials needed to rezone and control the spaces where Black women were dancing publicly (Thompson, 2007). Public youth gatherings in Atlanta take on new meaning as street-based protests, where dancing and performing in the streets take on urban forms of Black expression. Many Black women displayed and performed popular dance moves, where many were twerking and booty popping/shaking, which was described as carnivalesque (Miller, 2008; Thompson, 2007). What makes this dance specifically Southern extends beyond geography. They embody cultural aesthetics shaped by Southern histories of migration, segregation, and community gathering spaces. Where many of the critiques and tensions of Freaknik or any public dancing that exposed intimate body parts of Black women were deemed as lewd activity or self-objectification, and not considering the cultural climate in which these Black women chose to perform that differs across hip-hop regions (Miller, 2008; Sarig, 2007; Thompson, 2007). The Southern performances in cities like Atlanta with Freaknik or Black Bike Week in Daytona Beach in Daytona, Florida, cater to the Southern erotic mythology that

supports the lyrical and musical themes found in Southern hip-hop music (Thompson, 2007). The nuance in this perspective maps the geographical space that Black Southerners occupy in publicity, where the local response by government officials to such events is categorized as disorderly or criminal in action (Grem, 2006; Thompson, 2007). Therefore, the public street performances of Southern Black culture and hip-hop dance disregard the notion of otherness and claim or dominate urban white neighborhoods to express approaches of performance and play freely. This involves focusing on specific interconnected issues: the historical, economic, and social contexts of the Southern United States, along with the long-standing negative portrayal of Black people in urban areas of the South. Centering this geographical perspective questions how Black people build a culture around the polyphonic, cartographic, eco-humanist codes implicit in Black music. In the context of my research, I argue that the geographical dimensions of Black women's bodies and performances intersect with hip-hop feminism's critique of gender, power, and representation through the lens of Black geographies. This framework highlights how Black women navigate, contest, and redefine space in response to systemic exclusion evident in Southern hip-hop studies. I infer through Black geographies how I can further extend the ways to explore Southern hip-hop dance with a hip-hop feminist lens, through Dirty South feminism.

Theorizing Dirty South Feminism

I use Dirty South Feminism as the foundation of my research because it allows me to center Southern Black women's agency, cultural production, and resistance within Southern hip-hop dance cultures. Dirty South Feminism examines the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and Southern Black cultural production, particularly within hip-hop dance cultures. Rooted in Black feminist thought, hip-hop feminism, and Black geography, Dirty South Feminism

acknowledges the sociohistorical context of Black women's lives in the American South, where histories of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and racialized gender oppression shape contemporary expressions of identity and resistance. But in a deeper context how do these intersections look throughout the city of Atlanta. This framework emphasizes the agency of Black Southern women in shaping Southern hip-hop culture through their participation in dance, music, and social movements. It challenges respectability politics by centering the hypervisible, often contested performances of Black women—such as twerking, hand-games, and social dancing—not as sole acts of self-objectification but as cultural expressions with deep historical and communal significance. These dance performances, often rooted in Black vernacular dance traditions, serve as a means of reclaiming bodily autonomy, resisting social constraints, and redefining pleasure and eroticism on their own terms. Dirty South Feminism critiques the economic and social structures that frame Black women's participation in hip-hop dance economies, including strip clubs, music videos, and viral dance trends. Ultimately, Dirty South feminism focuses on Black Southern women's dance, pleasure, and resistance, challenging respectability politics and reclaiming hip-hop spaces as sites of agency, cultural power, and self-definition.

The Legacy of Hip-Hop Feminism

Hip-hop feminism was first discussed in Joan Morgan's hip-hop memoir *When Chickenheads Come to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down* in 1999. In this book, she examines how Black women in hip-hop culture are not merely victims of the genre but engage with it in complex ways, navigating both its oppressive and empowering aspects. Hip-hop feminism recognizes how patriarchy and sexism within the genre reinforce gender roles, chivalry, and the degradation of women, all of which shape Black women's relationship with

hip-hop culture (Morgan, 1999). For Southern hip-hop dance, dance styles like twerking, embody Black women's agency and resistance within hip-hop culture. While often dismissed as hypersexual, these performances reclaim space, challenging societal constraints on Black female bodies as Southern hip-hop is a sight for Black social dancing. I argue that Dirty South feminism critiques this regulation, highlighting how Black women assert power and identity through social dancing and disrupting dominant narratives in the South.

Morgan (1999) emphasizes a hip-hop feminist critique in which Black women navigate the contradictions of gender roles, sexual politics, and their identities within hip-hop culture. Black women navigate the complexities of hip-hop culture, facing the contradictions of appreciating the culture while also dealing with the harsh realities of sexism and patriarchy. These factors shape the public's perception of Black women's bodies, autonomy, and sexuality, influenced by hip-hop's violent and suggestive lyrics of objectification, and sexual shame. Responding to both external and internal critiques about how to conduct themselves and maintain their dignity considering respectability politics exposes the contradictions within hip-hop culture. The nuances in understanding Black women's ties to hip-hop challenge stereotypes of Black womanhood. For example, provocativeness is often perceived as a distraction from Black women's liberation movements, while acknowledging the importance of modesty to maintain a positive representation of Black womanhood and to challenge traditional racial stereotypes. Morgan (1999) discusses the generational complexities of Black girlhood and womanhood influenced by hip-hop culture. She positions hip-hop feminism as a continuation of the civil rights movement, emerging from the post-soul and hip-hop generations. This perspective suggests that hip-hop can spark political and social discussions that challenge the patriarchy and sexism prevalent in hip-hop. Aisha Durham extends Morgan's position:

Hip hop feminism can be defined as a sociocultural intellectual and political movement grounded in the situated knowledge of women of color from the broader hip-hop or the U.S. post-civil rights generation who recognized culture as a pivotal site for political intervention to challenge, resist, and mobilize collectives to dismantle systems of exploitation. (Durham, 2014, p. 3)

What makes Durham's (2014) position on hip-hop feminism unique is her critique of hip-hop as a homeplace for Black women and girls. The homeplace is a space for understanding Black women's place-based identities within a physical culture and an intellectual space where one makes sense of the world through hip-hop (A. S. Durham, 2014). Connecting homeplaces to Black geographies highlights that the South is the home of Southern hip-hop culture, which in this work reflects a vital space for Black girl creativity and the influence of Black womanhood. Durham's perspective of hip-hop feminism aligns with McKittrick's (2006) theory on Black women's geographies, expanding the understanding of their material and imaginative realities. This focus engages with a narrative that draws on Black histories and Black people to make social lives visible. Hip-hop feminism serves as both storytelling and a means of exploring space and time while highlighting the lives of Black women and girls within hip-hop culture. The geographical South provides a distinct context for understanding social life, profoundly influenced by a history of oppression specific to the South. This background provides a different perspective for examining the experiences of Black people in the South and exploring the nuances of Southern hip-hop culture. However, I also see this as the action where memory and cultural expression manifest in urban and rural hip-hop contexts. In alignment with more contemporary hip-hop feminist scholars, hip-hop feminism helps engage in critical and nuanced

ways of exploring how Black women and girls are invested within hip-hop culture and take on multiple forms of creative expression that occur within hip-hop dance (Cooper et al., 2017; A. Durham et al., 2013; A. S. Durham, 2014).

The Crunk Feminist Collective and its scholarly efforts center the lives of Black women and girls through a hip-hop feminist framework to disrupt and occupy the socio-cultural and political connections to hip-hop through the practice of “crunk.” However, their emphasis on collaborating the Southern genre of crunk music originating from Memphis and Atlanta with their hip-hop and Black feminist analysis falls short of centering Black Southern life from the perspective of Black women and girls (Cooper et al., 2017). Their ability to address disruption, agency, and respectability politics doesn’t account for the sexual and economic structures that arise from crunk music, trap culture, and Southern urban and rural life. Therefore, given that Southern hip-hop has historical and cultural ties to dancing and disruption in Southern conservative and Black elite spaces, the dances mapped out across the South that are perceived as hypersexual, or misogynist hold a degree of cultural capital influenced by shared social traditions. While I find Collins (2005) struggles to explore the differences in the representation of sexual liberation and women who are victims of sexual objectification within hip-hop culture, I, along with Sharpley-Whiting (2008), support the suggestion to talk to and listen to the strippers, video vixen, and groupies who occupy those sexual dance economies within hip-hop culture. I find that pulling interviews from strippers and video vixens like Karrine Steffans, Melyssa Ford, or Buffy the Body grants them a space to discuss their career choices but also address Black women’s sexual and physical freedoms that challenge male notions of female sexuality and pleasure. Ultimately, the inclusion of sexual and more physically erotic dances associated with sexual fantasies reflects the perspectives of Black women who navigate new

Black sexual politics present in hip-hop dance culture. This gap becomes critical when examining how hip-hop feminism and Black sexual politics intersect with the representations and realities of Black women in hip-hop culture. By centering the perspectives of sex workers, video vixens, and dancers, scholars like Miller-Young (2014) and Sharpley-Whiting (2008) illuminate how Black women assert agency over their bodies in ways that challenge and reframe historical stereotypes. These tensions reflect broader struggles within the hip-hop South, where performances of Black female sexuality negotiate both pleasure and oppression. Recognizing how Black women in the South navigate respectability, erotic expression, and hip-hop's masculinist gaze expands discussions of agency, revealing the complexities of gendered power within Southern hip-hop culture. The interrogation and praxis of including Black sex workers in hip-hop culture caters to the Black feminist and hip-hop feminist futures of incorporating nuanced sexual politics surrounding the agency of Black women's bodies that have ties to African diasporic erotic expressions found in Caribbean cultures but also appear heavily in the South (Halliday, 2020; Morgan, 2015; Sharpley-Whiting, 2008). The experiences that materialize from the South, kinetic orality through Black girl play, social dancing, and expressive cultures, such as musical blackness between the sexes, have unique connections to the growth of Southern hip-hop culture and politics of the South. Bradley (2021) further explores this concept and argues that Black girls from the South navigate Southern respectability politics through what she calls "country Black girl essentialism." She describes this as the ways Southern Black girls assert themselves into a culture and space to establish their voice and identity that happens outside of Southern maleness, the Black church, and the politics of Southern respectability of being ladylike or proper (Bradley, 2021; Davis, 1999; Graham, 2017; Robinson, 2014). These assertions exist in tension with broader historical struggles regarding Black women's sexuality,

which are deeply rooted in pervasive racial and historical stereotypes that originated in the antebellum South. These stereotypes often portrayed Black women as hypersexual, leading to a complex intersection of race, gender, and sexuality that has influenced societal perceptions and experiences of Black women throughout history. Post-slavery, the impact of Black minstrels appeared in ways that ultimately shaped societal constructs, which continue to affect the perception and identity of Black women in the public sphere. Organizations like the Black Women's Social Clubs and Black Greek Letter organizations in the early 20th century worked collectively to combat social stereotypes of being hyper-sexual, masculine, or labeled as a Mammy, Jezebel, or Sapphire (Collins, 2005; Davis, 1999; Pough, 2004). Furthermore, with the growth of sexual politics that materialized in the 1990s and early 2000s hip-hop culture, the emphasis on sex, money, and power further complicated the perceptions and mainstream stereotypes that permeated the participation of women in hip-hop. The portrayal of Black women in hip-hop as video vixens, strippers, and dancers and the reinforcement of stereotypes such as the gold digger, baby momma, freak, groupie, and video ho were consistent with the harmful narratives of Black women as the Jezebel and Sapphire. These narratives suggested that Black women in hip-hop were often seen as victims and lacked agency. They were mainly viewed as props for objectifying male rappers (A. Durham et al., 2013; Hollander, 2013; Love, 2012; Neal & Forman, 2004; Peoples, 2008; Sharpley-Whiting, 2008). While these perceptions of Black women in hip-hop have truth to them regarding the sexually violent and hyper-masculine lyrics that impact the gendered power dynamics in hip-hop, many hip-hop feminists explore the possibilities and realities that Black women have agency within hip-hop about their sexual performance. In the context of the hip-hop South, more conversations must occur about how

Black feminists and hip-hop scholars examine the ways Black women express their sexuality and pleasure without assuming they are victims of sexual expression.

Within hip-hop dance, a central tension in Black women's public sexual performances emerges in strip clubs and music videos, where they appear as strippers, erotic dancers, and video vixens. These women play a crucial role in hip-hop's visual and erotic dance culture, sustaining the sexual economy that fuels the industry (Miller-Young, 2014; Sharpley-Whiting, 2008). Specifically, this includes selling sexual fantasies, strip teases, exotic dancing, pole work, and "pussy popping" as integral forms of hip-hop entertainment. Their agency in these performances reshapes erotic representation and labor politics, highlighting how Black women assert power and influence within hip-hop dance culture. Scholars support this notion of creative power and erotic agency, where Black women in hip-hop use sex and sexuality as currency, as Morgan provocatively puts it, exploring "honest bodies that like to fuck" (Bailey, 2019; Clay, 2007; Miller-Young, 2014; Morgan, 2015, p. 40). Joan Morgan asks, "What possibilities can a politics of pleasure offer for Black feminist futures?" This question underscores how Black women engage with pleasure as a form of reclaiming their sexuality, challenging the social and historical compromises placed upon their bodies (Morgan, 2015, p. 36). However, this also introduces a new perspective on how Black women and girls' performances of hip-hop dance create new avenues for physical expression. This engagement with a genre not only promotes a hustler, "go-getter" mentality but also examines Southern hip-hop dance and hip-hop feminism as tools for exploring Black women's expressive cultures in relation to sex and body politics. Recognizing how Black women engage with Black dance, hip-hop feminism provides a fresh perspective within the Southern context. This framework is employed to explore the cultural, social, political, and historical significance of Black dance and its presence in Southern hip-hop

culture. Black women's connection to hip-hop dance through a hip-hop feminist lens works by exploring the sexual and non-sexual ways Black women and girls navigate hip-hop dance as an expression of Black girl epistemologies and social dancing. Hip-hop feminist scholars argue that the contradictions of women's ties to hip-hop emerge in the participation in sexual politics, attitude, independence, and exploring nuanced representation of Black women's identity that clashes with notions of respectability within the Black community (Durham et al., 2013; Halliday & Payne, 2020). I extend the conversation of early hip-hop feminist scholars who push for more contemporary critiques of hip-hop feminism by exploring the creative and intellectual work of Dirty South feminism that investigates representation, embodied experience, and alternative modes of critical engagement that emerge in Southern hip-hop dance and how the dance connections can start through Black girl expression (Clay, 2007; A. Durham et al., 2013; Peoples, 2008).

Black Girl Expression

There is an attachment to respectability and modesty in how society perceives Black girls who express themselves through hip-hop dance. Black women's inclusivity in hip-hop dance and hip-hop feminism explores Black girls' creative potential that often appears in the performance of twerking, Black girl play, and majorette dancing. There is a cultural and social concern within Black communities that aims to protect the lives and well-being of Black girls. The community aims to protect them from controlling images and historical stereotypes within hip-hop culture (Henry, 2010; Kistler & Lee, 2009; Peterson et al., 2007). However, it is important to note that one of the pillars of hip-hop is dance and knowledge of self, which are related themes that help

Black girls navigate pleasure, play, and self-expression. Southern hip-hop dance among Black girls embodies dance and knowledge of self, fostering creativity, resistance, and cultural identity. Through movement, they assert autonomy, challenge stereotypes, and preserve traditions. This fusion promotes Black girlhood, celebrating their role in shaping hip-hop while reclaiming space and power in Southern hip-hop culture. Black girlhood and hip-hop feminist scholars agree that Black girls' kinetic orality caters to their ability to build community and self-expression and unveil creative and intellectual potential through Black dances like twerking and majorette dancing (R. N. Brown, 2013; Gaunt, 2006; Halliday, 2020; Lindsey, 2013; Love, 2012, 2017). Furthermore, if Black feminist scholars like Collins (2000) argue that Black women build knowledge through embodied experiences, I strongly assert that Black girl's connection to hip-hop dance provides a nuanced and inclusive look into the ways their sociocultural and political ties to hip-hop culture serves as a sight for creativity and embodied knowledge. The performances of Black girl expression and creativity looks like TikTok dancer and choreographer Jalaliah Harmon who is creator of the viral "Renegade" dance. She blends hip-hop, contemporary dance where her style features intricate footwork and rapid, yet fluid body movements, inspiring he dance styles on TikTok. Black girl expression also looks like the cast of Black majorette dancers in the Lifetime TV show *Bring It!* Utilizing a competition style of majorette dancing as championship winners making a name for the Dancing Dolls across the South. While Black girl expression can occupy the public sphere on social media or television many other young girls who double dutch in their local neighborhood or perform the latest dance from hip-hop music videos in smaller communities or alone free from public critique (R. N. Brown, 2013; Gaunt, 2006; Jennings, 2020). The perceived sexualized action of twerking or any form of pelvic thrusting that emerges within hip-hop dance culture comes from how white

hegemony and white mainstream culture have categorized Black bodies as hypersexual and freakish (Bailey, 2019; Collins, 2005; Gottschild, 2005). However, it is important to emphasize that Black expressive dances in the U.S. are aligned with Afro-diasporic dance where traditional and historical dances include and often emphasize movement of the booty/butt and hips in ways that are not sexualized or demanded in African and Caribbean dance cultures (DeFrantz, 2016; DeFrantz, 2018; Gottschild, 2005; Halliday, 2020). The contemporary and more American translation of booty shaking in hip-hop culture that Black girls practice presents a new meaning of performativity and becomes inclusive of the ways Black girls define many of the social contributions of hip-hop dance that emerge through local dance cyphers and digital spaces via social media (Gotschild, 2005; Halliday, 2020; Lindsey, 2013; Love, 2016; Morgan, 2015). Black dance that centralizes on the butt that appears in popular social dances or majorette HBCU dancing is rooted in Black dance traditions that reclaim the Black female/non-binary bodies (DeFrantz, 2016; Gottschild, 2005). Likewise, Black girls' performance of twerking and other dances they internalize as play within hip-hop helps claim their culture, which is often culturally appropriated.

Black girlhood scholars suggest the usefulness of Black girl's dance cyphers pinpoint new relationships between Black women and Black girls to renegotiate private and public relationships with their bodies (Bradley, 2021; Brown, 2013; Halliday, 2020; Lindsey, 2013; Love, 2012, 2017), through performances of social dancing and twerking. In Black Girl play, the scope of inclusivity redefines the approach to explore hip-hop feminism through a performance lens. Black girl dance performances' cultural and social development presents material realities where movement and memory are constructed from marginalized Black communities that appear in hip-hop dance cultures (Brown, 2013; Gaunt, 2006; Halliday, 2020). Importantly, in

conversation with how Black women and girls have positioned themselves within different cultures, there is a message of shared joy which Audre Lorde emphasizes "...forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them and lessens the threat of their difference" (Lorde, 1984, p. 89). This positions the reality that Black girls can be aware of a connection to other women within settings of joy and play but also opens the idea that hip-hop culture shapes their narratives and existence that defy hegemonic and European standards of dance and beauty that emerge in Black social dancing as a way to explore the public sphere (Defrantz, 2018; Defrantz & Gonzalez, 2014; Gottschild, 2005).

Bring Wreck and Disruption

Black women challenge traditional notions of respectability in hip-hop by engaging with the sexual, economic, and geographic aspects of the Dirty South through public expressions of bringing "wreck" in the South. We see this with the emergence of Southern hip-hop, where Black women in the South craft the public sphere. I particularly lean on Gwendolyn D. Pough's (2004) definition of "wreck" from her book *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere* where she examines how Black women engage and shape hip-hop culture within the public sphere. Pough (2004) argues that attention must be drawn to the public sphere, where music can be a space for women to dominate and control the public discourse to better explore Black women's expressive cultures. She mentions this has happened in the past with Black blues women who discuss sexuality, female dominance, lesbianism, female erotic desires, and disrupting classed and racialized notions of love and sexuality (Davis, 1999; Pough, 2004).

I expand on the theorization and definition of wreck in Hip-Hop by thinking about its uses as a rhetorical tool that builds on Black womanist traditions and a Hip-Hop present. I am concerned with the ways the rhetorical practices of Black women participants in Hip-Hop culture bring wreck— that is, moments when Black women's discourses disrupt dominant masculine discourses, break into the public sphere, and in some way impact or influence the U.S. imaginary, even if that influence is fleeting. (Pough, 2004, p.76)

She analyzes Black women's use of language, performance, and sexuality as forms of agency and resistance, challenging mainstream narratives and asserting their presence within the genre. It's a rhetorical tool rooted in Black womanist traditions, where Black women's voices and actions challenge existing power structures within hip-hop creating broader cultural awareness (Pough, 2004). Within this research my argument of this is rooted in examining the socio-political and cultural space of Southern hip-hop expression and identity, where Black women and girls in the South use the genre to explore gendered politics. But also, the bringing "wreck" signifies a powerful intervention and assertion of presence, through social dancing and the evolution of Black women and girls occupying the public sphere with digital spaces such as TikTok and YouTube (Martinez, 2022).

Black women and girls have disrupted respectability politics in the South sexually through the public sphere by taking up geographical space through public social dancing. The sexual politics that emerge support call-and-response music, booty shaking, and sexual intercourse themes that are present within Southern hip-hop music. The physical locations in which parties, events, and social gatherings occur in the South have important connections to knowledge building and how Black women conceptualize their Southern experience that locates

and map Southern hip-hop culture. Black women also fuel the economic politics of the South through monetization and the trap that challenges gender, class, and representational politics within Southern hip-hop culture, which has ties to the sexual politics of the South. Strip clubs help build on Southern hip-hop culture by debuting music, thus providing an entry point for artists to boost their profile (Grem, 2006; Sarig, 2007). A significant aspect of Southern hip-hop culture is the impact of Black women sex workers and how public sexual entertainment supports the economic growth of both male and female rappers who incorporate strippers or strip club culture into their music. The hustler culture that emerges out of trap music, which is a subgenre of hip-hop music, also presents the discussion of Black Southern women discussing and contributing to an illicit lifestyle that develops from the displacement of Black urban and rural life. While trap music is framed as a male-dominated cultural economy, I argue that within Southern hip-hop dance, the subgenre operates as a site of public sexual performance through the ways Black women engage with it in dance spaces. In Atlanta strip clubs, for example, dancers choreograph pole dances to trap music, using movement to embody and amplify its intensity. These club performances position trap's hypermasculine soundscape, carving out spaces where women's sexuality becomes visible and agentive while also being culturally and economically influential to the benefit of the dancer and artist. Therefore, these markers of identity and representation that define the attributes of Black women in the South appear in the style and fashion of Southern hip-hop, Black girl aesthetic, and creativity. The different personas that occupy Black women's lives in the South are often self-titled or projected labels such as the "Southern belle," "the country girl," "city girl," "ratchet," and "trap girl." I ponder Black Southern identities and how the presence of women who make up the working class in the South create their own hip-hop culture and economy based on their location in urban and rural

Southern cities. Black women and girls in the South bring wreck through speech patterns such as Southern dialect or “going off,” which can be performed as dancing or showing out in public. The performances in the South that support this notion are seen in majorette dance culture found among historically Black colleges and universities, mostly in the South.

Exploring trap through a hip-hop feminist perspective to examine respectability and disruption in the South highlights the narratives that emerge from the trap as a creative epistemological genre that resists objectification, promotes agency, and engages in nuanced stylistic choices that are told by Black women from poor and working-class communities (Miles, 2020). Specifically, this critical analysis of the trap supports Milles's (2020) theory of trap feminism, which explores how Black women trap artists from the South create spaces that disrupt and respond to gendered racial capitalism through heavy bass music. Black women who occupy the physical and musical terrain of the trap are foundational to marginalization and modes of survival and the methods Black women take to protect themselves and family. The unfortunate downside is the performances, lyrics, and actions that are products of trap or trap music are translated as unladylike, degrading, and selfish. Furthermore, engaging in the politics of trap music and trap feminism explores how Black women who participate in the subgenre validate Southern hip-hop musical traditions, construct meaning, and commentate on their socio-political surroundings as marginalized people (Bradley, 2021; Jennings, 2020; Love, 2017; Miles, 2020).

Dance Theory in a Black Feminist South

The celebration of dance and Blackness has always coexisted in Black musical traditions. Black people dance, and the way they perform in the South differs from other areas in the United

States. Black dancing involves improvisation, freedom and control, sequencing, and shifts that can balance and distinguish one dance from another that is not present in Eurocentric/white dance aesthetics (DeFrantz, 2005; Gottschild, 2005). Each dancer adds flair, style, and expression, making their contribution to the performance unique. For Southern hip-hop, dance has strong cultural, social, and political ties to its dancers. Cultural differences in Black dance develop in childhood and continue into adulthood, including familial, social, communal, and aesthetic factors and styles (Gotschild, 2005). Southern hip-hop culture encompasses a variety of performance types that have developed in a similar fashion. These include communal performances, where multiple individuals come together to create a call-and-response engaging atmosphere; solo performances, where an individual people can dance in front of a crowd or in a circle similar to a cypher; and synchronized performances, where dancers coordinate their movements and actions to create a visually exciting and cohesive routine. Each of these performance styles contributes to the diverse dance groupings of Southern hip-hop culture. Individual and communal performances occur when dancers come together to dance either solo or with friends, family, or an audience. DeFrantz (2005) supports this notion that there is flexibility in the ways that Black dance can present itself with unique creative approaches where “Black” is a marker of social location: improvisation and spontaneity confirm unexpected possibility as a hallmark of Black performance. Thus, dancing in the South expresses oneself creatively and individually, drawing on culture, identity, location, and power as an emotional outlet to create a unique and imaginative experience. The spontaneity that comes out of Southern dancing manifests in various forms but also speaks to and represents a culture of Southern Black life that has a particular type and location of stylistic performance. These types of dances can be

present in various settings, such as family get-togethers, parties, street festivals, talent shows, and halftime performances at sporting events.

When exploring the aesthetics of Southern hip-hop dance and its connection to history, it is essential to situate Black dancing experiences as valuable, aesthetically pleasing, and a source of joy. My work considers the emotions expressed through the movements and their cultural and social connections to Southern hip-hop music. Therefore, centering dance theory through kinetic orality and African American vernacular, dancing best supports exploring Black women's connection to dance and the context in which it is built in Southern hip-hop culture. Southern hip-hop dance is a form that connects with its historical roots and has significant cultural, social, and political ties to its dancers. Through communal, solo, and synchronized performances, hip-hop dance allows for self-expression and creativity while providing a creative outlet for its participants. Understanding the different components of Southern hip-hop dance connects these politics to African American vernacular dance.

Vernacular dancing includes a variety of dance styles that naturally evolved within a community's everyday culture, often without formal instruction. African American vernacular dance encompasses the development of Black social dancing and the creation of their own dance styles and culture and is closely associated with Black expressive cultures (Defrantz, 2001; Hazzard-Gordon, 1992; Jackson, 2001). Throughout the diaspora, Black people have embraced improvisation, satire, and comedy as a means of individual expression and freedom. The evolution of Black expressive cultures and the influence of African American vernacular dance can be traced back to early gospel, blues, and jazz. For instance, in the early 1920s era of blues and jazz, many Black social dances emerged, becoming immensely popular and reflecting the vibrant cultural expressions of the time. Dances like the Lindy Hop, originating in the late 1920s

in Harlem, and the Charleston, the Cakewalk, and the Black Bottom, also emerging in the 1920s, were all known for their lively steps, including stomps, hops, and swaying body movements, often performed with exaggerated facial expressions capturing the improvisational nature of jazz music. These dances not only entertained but also played a significant role in the social and cultural life of African American communities. This legacy of Black social dancing continues its lineage in Southern hip-hop dance.

Dance theory serves as a tool for understanding knowledge and history. The impact of dance in the South and Black life highlights Black social dancing as a communal gathering within spaces Black people have claimed or created. Here, dance becomes both an embodied experience and a means of cultural transmission, mobilized—or actively carried and adapted—to new locations, evolving with new people in different settings. However, dance scholars have argued that a specific technique cannot define dance and cannot be harnessed or claimed by a singular group or individual (DeFrantz, 2005; Hazzard-Gordon, 1985; Morris, 2009). However, I assert from this notion is that dance can be claimed and harnessed by one group because of the cultural and sociopolitical ties that are connected to it. One example of this is how consistent racism, local segregation, and redlining in Atlanta have shaped the development of distinct neighborhoods and gathering locations. As a result, Black communities have created their own vibrant cultural identities, such as Southern hip-hop music, slang, fashion, clubs, events, traditions and dances. Many white individuals do not engage with this culture until it becomes mainstream. When they do visit the West or South sides of Atlanta, it often seems to be more about appropriating the culture rather than acknowledging and respecting the genuine creativity of Black communities. Considering the contemporary impact of cultural appropriation within Black culture and the exploitation of Black expression and aesthetics, there is social and cultural

ownership that strongly connects to Black people and Black culture. Hazzard-Gordon (1985) identifies four key theoretical markers for understanding African American vernacular and social dance within working-class Black communities: identity, cultural integrity, ingroup-outgroup dynamics, and political resistance. These markers highlight Black social dancing as an intergenerational art form passed down culturally. As dance theory suggests, analyzing social and cultural contexts is essential for distinguishing between different dance genres and styles (Charles & Justin, 2014). Given dance's deep cultural significance, examining Southern hip-hop dance reveals how specific movements are performed instinctually or deliberately.

Kinetic Orality

In 1989, American philosopher Cornel West coined the term "kinetic orality," which he defined as the tangible and everyday response to the systemic terrorism experienced by Black Americans. This response is characterized by dynamic, repetitive, and lively rhetorical styles that generate communities, such as antiphonal styles and linguistic innovations that highlight fluid and improvisational identities. West's analysis primarily focuses on renowned forms of musical expression like jazz. On the other hand, Kyra Gaunt, an ethnomusicologist, in her 2006 study titled "The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop," identifies the existence of kinetic orality in the handclapping and jump rope songs and rhythms of Black children's games. According to Gaunt, these songs and games have transcended their origins and made their way into popular music and film, serving as connection points, scene-setting, and character development. However, their significance goes beyond entertainment and recognition as they relate to counter-histories and intergenerational trauma.

Cornel West's conception of kinetic orality highlights the forms of resistance and survival that Black Americans utilize in response to institutionalized oppression. These rhetorical styles are tools for community-building, identity formation, and social commentary. Gaunt's extension of West's theory to the realm of Black children's games (e.g., Miss Mary Mack, Slide, Down by River, Jig-A-Low) emphasizes how kinetic orality manifests in different domains of cultural expression. She notes that the games Black girls play on the playground and in other informal settings have historically and culturally significant roots passed down from generation to generation. These games and songs not only serve as a form of entertainment but also carry profound social, cultural, and historical meanings. For instance, the rhymes and rhythms in these games often reflect the struggles, joys, language, and fears of Black people's experiences (Gaunt, 2006). They also provide a counter-history that challenges mainstream narratives of oppression and victimhood. By exploring the manifestation of kinetic orality in children's games and songs, Gaunt expands the understanding of Black cultural expression and its significance.

In her research, Gaunt (2006) delves into the study of Black girls' kinetic orality, paying particular attention to this phenomenon's temporal and spatial dimensions. She highlights Black girlhood's social memory and the capacity to transform across generations and geographic locations. This illustrates how Black women and girls pass on hand games and dance routines to the next generation, sharing them with friends, family members, and the dance team. Gaunt's analysis is unique in that it underscores the significance of Black social dancing as a connective experience between chants and songs from the past and their use in present-day performance, thereby creating an archive of memories of Black dance as a communicative performance. Furthermore, musical expression helps to understand the sociocultural impact of Black girls'

dance performances and highlights the unique styles that embody Southern aesthetics, Black girls play, and authenticity.

Similarly, Bradley (2021) explores the relationship between kinetic orality and social aesthetics, focusing on how Black women and girls have established themselves within Southern culture, which she terms "country Black girl existentialism." She argues that Black women and girls engage in nonlinear conversations that exist across time and space to define themselves within a culture and region that have marginalized them through misogynoir stereotypes, which have diminished their agency and contributions to African American culture and society (Bradley, 2021). Both scholars work to center the cultural work and influence of Black girls and Black women while also underscoring how Southern culture serves as a breeding ground for exploring the dynamics and structure of Southern hip-hop dance culture. The unique contributions of their research offer valuable insights into how Black girlhood and womanhood are understood and expressed through Southern hip-hop dance and how these expressions reflect broader cultural and social dynamics in African American communities.

Black girlhood scholars suggest the usefulness of Black girls' dance cyphers pinpoint new relationships between Black women and Black girls to renegotiate private and public relationships with their bodies (Bradley, 2021; Brown, 2013; Halliday, 2020; Lindsey, 2013; Love, 2012, 2017). Through performances of social dancing, twerking, and Black girl play, the scope of inclusivity redefines the approach to exploring hip-hop feminism through a performance lens. Black girl dance performances and their cultural and social development present material realities where movement and memory are constructed from marginalized Black communities that appear in hip-hop dance cultures (Brown, 2013; Gaunt, 2006; Halliday, 2020). This suggests that Black girls are conscious of their association with hip-hop culture, which influences their

stories and lives in the same way as Black female rappers. They also challenge dominant Eurocentric standards of dance and beauty in Black dance traditions (Defrantz, 2018; Defrantz & Gonzalez, 2014; Gottschild, 2005). A physical and collective form of communication is present in Southern hip-hop dance that challenges traditional stereotypes of Black womanhood and girlhood. This culture allows Black women and girls to exist in a different cultural and musical landscape prevalent in the South, where social dancing is valuable to engagement, kinetic orality, body, beauty, and play.

Social Dancing in the Hip-Hop South

Just as there are five elements of hip-hop—DJing, emceeing, b-boying (breakdancing), graffiti, and knowledge of self—there are five elements of dancing (Gotschild, 2005). The first element is the body. It is the frame and the primary instruction of how dance is performed. Next is action. Action highlights the person's motion, such as moving across the floor, in the air, or on the ground. Space is the process of how one moves. This includes the path, direction, size, and relationship to other dancers as one moves when performing any dance solo or together. It's the practice of occupying an area. Time encompasses how the body moves in conjunction with speed and precision. Time in performance can be quick or slow movements and how speed impacts the dance. The last element is energy. Energy acknowledges how a dancer moves, including the emotion, the presence, and the flow of a dancer as they move through space and time. This element offers a thematic, light, playful, or dramatic component to the performance.

In contrast, the foundation of Southern hip-hop starts with the bass. The heaviness, power, and dominance of the bass have control over the music, the culture, and the body. I approach this as a musical mapping of the memories, bodily movement, and the women and girls

who curated a specific era of Southern hip-hop that changed the fabric of hip-hop dance. Acknowledging the elements of dance, the South and dance are relational. The body relies on the pulse of the bass, the tempo's urgency can impact the action, and the culture's call-and-response lyrics influence the space and time. The communal experience and impact of the song's lyrics and geography inform the energy. Through the elements of dance, Black women and girls have dedicated their lives to loving Southern hip-hop because of its impact. In the era in which Southern hip-hop and the Dirty South Came into existence, its identity evolved around the same time as other hip-hop regions, partly through public dismay at their socio-economic marginalization. The communal gathering of the five elements of hip-hop brought Black and Brown folks together to discuss their lived realities, ignore life's hardships, and exchange cultural norms that defined their artistic expression, just as Dirty South music did. Locating this specific region of hip-hop amplifies similar foundations of hip-hop through a Southern lens that captures the depths of Black geography with an analysis of Southern racial politics, Black musical traditions, and Southern culture. Thus, studying and expanding on the mappings of the Dirty South makes it a relevant sub-genre worth exploring in hip-hop studies.

The particularities behind hip-hop dancing emphasize how dancers use movement to express themselves collectively to a hip-hop beat. The uniqueness of Southern hip-hop dance is that geographically, there are specific mannerisms, styles, vernaculars, and movements that are popular and unique to a particular region. Southern hip-hop dance can only manifest geographically in the South. Therefore, Atlanta dances are integral to its history of hip-hop. I consider the many aspects of dance as a cultural and social interaction that centers on call-and-response music in Southern hip-hop culture. To fully comprehend this phenomenon, I explore the history of Miami bass, Atlanta bass, Freaknik, the crunk era, and the snap era, which are all

interconnected with other cultural communities in Southern hip-hop dance, such as strip clubs, majorette dancing, and Greek life performance. Through participation in these communities, Black women knowingly and unknowingly wield social-cultural and economic power and relevance. This power has contributed to Southern hip-hop music's widespread popularity and influence across the region. As I outline and emphasize the history in which Southern hip-hop dance was founded, I am centering on the notion that the different dances that are explored within this history captivate a particular history, influence, culture, and community that maps a specific landscape of Atlanta that is still foundational to African American social dance.

Conclusion

This chapter establishes the groundwork for my approach to Southern hip-hop dance through the lens of Dirty South feminism. This framework emphasizes Black geography, memory, Southern hip-hop and the lived experiences of Black women from the South. Dirty South feminism amplifies voices and stories that are often overlooked, demonstrating how place, politics, and the everyday creativity of Black womanhood and girlhood shape Southern hip-hop culture. By grounding this project in embodied knowledge and hip-hop feminist thought, this chapter prepares for those that follow, underscoring that for Black women and girls in the South, dance is never just dance—it's storytelling, resistance, and survival. The next chapter expands on this by focusing on Atlanta and the relevance of mapping as an act of geography to locate Black social dances throughout the city. I explore hip-hop zoning and gentrification and their unique impact on where Black folks live, gather, survive and dance. From skating rinks to strip clubs, parking lots to nightclubs, the spaces where Black social dance occurs begin to reveal insights about access, community, and creativity. I investigate the emergence of Atlanta dance eras like

the crunk and snap movements—iconic Atlanta moments that shaped national trends while remaining deeply rooted in local Southern experiences.

Chapter 2: Mapping a Dancing Atlanta

Gottschild (2005) explains that the Black dancing body is always present, on the move, and shifting. She adds that the Black dancing body is geographical “a metaphor for the sites, states, routes, and milestones” for “body politic and individual signature” (Gottschild, 2005, p.8). To examine the work of Black women dancing in the South under the influence of Southern hip-hop, I pay close attention to the cultural style, musical traditions, and performances integral to Southern culture. This means answering the questions of how Southern Black bodies are present and what are the routes and milestones to understand how Black women in the South move in and across Atlanta. This also involves addressing and challenging misconceptions about the body politics of Black women but also defying pathological misreadings of Black women’s body politics. By doing so, I explore the essence of the historical landscape in how the South navigates Black dancing bodies. This chapter delves into Atlanta’s dance culture history and its socio-cultural impact. I explore the significance of primary dances, moments, and sub-genres and their cultural impact on Southern hip-hop history and Atlanta’s hip-hop music scene. This section also analyzes the stylistic and performative elements of key dance cultures in the South and the groups involved in hip-hop dance formations. The importance of this section lies in highlighting dance theory, particularly in a way that centers African American vernacular dance, kinetic orality, and social dancing as a process of exploring Southern hip-hop dance as a geographical, social, and cultural landscape. Black women and Black dancing have always been criticized in the public sphere but are uniquely at the forefront of praise and envy in popular culture (Gottschild, 2005). To address this paradox, this section delves into the history and context of Black social dancing. Particularly, I explore the history of Atlanta’s dance scene, provide a critique of Black women’s erasure within hip-hop history and how the Southern hip-hop

economy has a unique process in which music, dance, and community connect. This chapter speaks to Southern hip-hop dance as a research framework to study the formation of body movement, kinetic orality, and Black popular culture as it develops and moves across the South. Thus, examining Southern dance cultures and their evolution in history leads to a broader discussion on how Black women remain at the center of Atlanta's hip-hop dance community and Black dance cultures.

Since the late 1980s, Atlanta has been the foundation of various dance songs and styles that extend well into the early 2000s. Exploring Atlanta's dance culture is crucial for understanding regional differences in hip-hop dance aesthetics, movements, social cues, and connections. Southern music history shows that Black people have always been connected to some form of social dancing through genres such as blues, jazz, and soul music. From the blues and jazz eras, popular Black dances included the Charleston, Lindy Hop, and Jitterbug, evolving into the Twist, Mashed Potato, and the Electric Slide during the soul era, all reflecting vibrant social and musical expressions. The legacy of ring-shout and call-and-response has always been a core element of Black musical traditions and social dancing. In *Steppin' on the Blues*, Jacqui Malone (1996) emphasizes the cultural significance of early Black social dance, viewing it as more than mere entertainment. She argues that dance halls serve as "temples where rituals of purification, affirmation, and celebration are held," providing dancers with the space to transform adversity into cultural expression (Malone, 1996, p. 27). Additionally, Malone highlights that Black people often learn social dancing early in life, as children's games and storytelling incorporate movement, demonstrating how "play serves as training for performance" and cultural understanding (Malone, 1996, p. 27). Malone's insights align with Dirty South feminism, as this perspective centers Black Southern women's embodied knowledge and cultural agency. In

Atlanta's hip-hop dance scene, social dance isn't just performance—it's a language of resistance, pleasure, and self-definition that juxtaposes a larger history and mapping of the city. Thus, the emphasis on Black social dancing and musical traditions is an essential reference to the evolution of Black music and how its stylistic elements have made a presence in Southern hip-hop history.

Atlanta has developed a nuanced place of visibility regarding their dance styles and practices that make their dance performances staples within the hip-hop community that have transgressed over decades, impacting how the music is shaped and understood by people living in the Southern region. This chapter supports the argument that Black women and girls have always occupied and created dance spaces in Atlanta by highlighting the impact of multiple dances within the South as culturally relevant performances and styles. By exploring the impact of Southern hip-hop music and how it emerged in Southern hip-hop, this chapter also looks at the core musical eras that have shaped Southern music, including the snap era, crunk era, Atlanta bass, and the cultural festival Freaknik. When considering how Black dance can be looked to as a historic site of the African American experience, I want to make sure that it's understood that Black dance is a place Black people can understand and find themselves, especially for Black women and girls since the genre is often misogynistic and sexist. This will lead to how Black women and girls disrupt Southern hip-hop politics and Southern womanhood based on their understanding of Blackness as a dance experience. Thus, it is core to the research to identify the lines and boundaries where Black culture in Atlanta is crafted and how the neighborhoods of the participants vary due to the borders or “zoning” based on the boundaries where white neighborhoods reside in areas outside of the access and production of Black life in East, West, and South sides of Atlanta (West End, Ben Hill, Vine City, Decatur, Grant Park, Sweet Auburn District, Riverdale, and College Park).

Rep Yo City: Atlanta Geography

In the early 2000s, Atlanta experienced a surge of new rappers, with over 40 emerging and rivaling the established growth of talent in New York City, totaling 72 of 390 new rappers of the millennium (French, 2017). With the rise of Southern hip-hop, Atlanta made its mark as key rap center amongst East Coast and West Coast cities. By this time, three major rap centers emerged: New York City, Los Angeles, and Atlanta—these metro areas combined to be home to 50.2 % (or 564 out of 1124) of all rappers in America” (French, 2017). With the rise of the snap-and-crunk era of hip-hop during the new digital era of social media, Atlanta became the new rap epicenter for hip-hop. This evidence serves as a core location to navigate the geographical significance of Southern hip-hop as a rising hip-hop nation in the late 90s and early 2000s. The Southern hip-hop songs that charted in the South were dance songs that included some form of call and response. Exploring 20 years of hip-hop dance cultures allows for properly historicizing Southern hip-hop music, festivals, and experiences within Atlanta. Within Southern Black culture, the term “dirty” incorporates material cultures and spatial realities that include perceptions of family, the impact of Southern racism, otherness, and poverty (Stallings, 2019). Thus, the Dirty South is unique in providing a particular sound that was distinctively different.

Atlanta's rap scene reflects its neighborhoods. Rap artists use references to specific geographical locations or “zones” to describe their affiliations with their birthplace or areas of illicit activity. *Vice* Journalist, Thomas Morton (2015, para. 1) explains hip-hop contains an “urban milieu” and notes that Atlanta’s rap center can be mapped through its zones since many Atlanta songs often refer to their neighborhoods. Zone 1 includes neighborhoods such as Bankhead, Adamsville, and English Avenue and has produced influential figures in the rap

scene, like Shawty Lo and T.I.. Zone 2, covering North Atlanta’s Buckhead and Lenox, is known as “Black Hollywood” and attracts the city’s elite. While not home to many top Atlanta rappers, it serves as a hub for clubs, shopping, and promoting luxury lifestyles (Morton, 2015). Zone 3 features Pittsburgh and Mechanicsville, the breeding grounds for talents like Ludacris and Young Thug. Notable mentions from Zone 4 include Kriss Kross, who come from areas such as Cascade and Oakland City and epitomize the diverse cultural tapestry woven throughout Atlanta's neighborhoods. Zone 5 is the downtown core of Atlanta and is home to Piedmont Park. Zone 6 is the largest and most diverse area, comprising several neighborhoods such as Candler Park, Kirkwood, East Atlanta, Edgewood, and Sweet Auburn. Certain zones hold historical significance; the Atlanta Police Department's meticulous zoning system localizes crime-fighting efforts and optimizes resource allocation.

Figure 1. - Map of Atlanta Zones

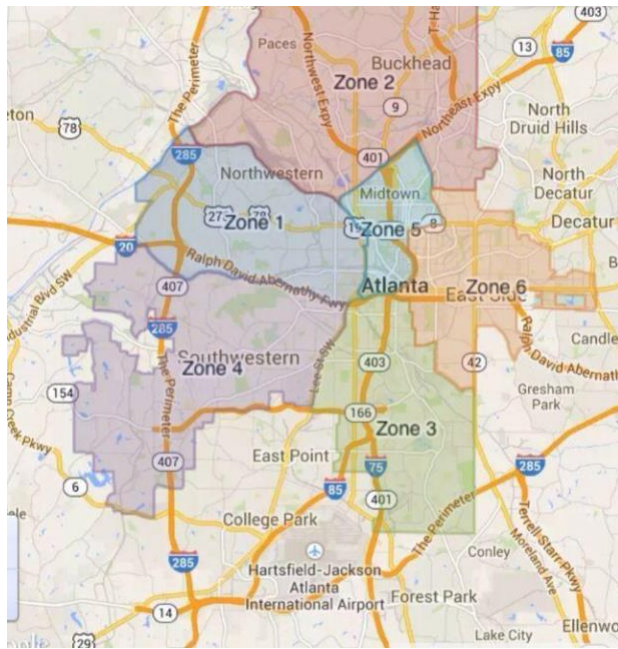
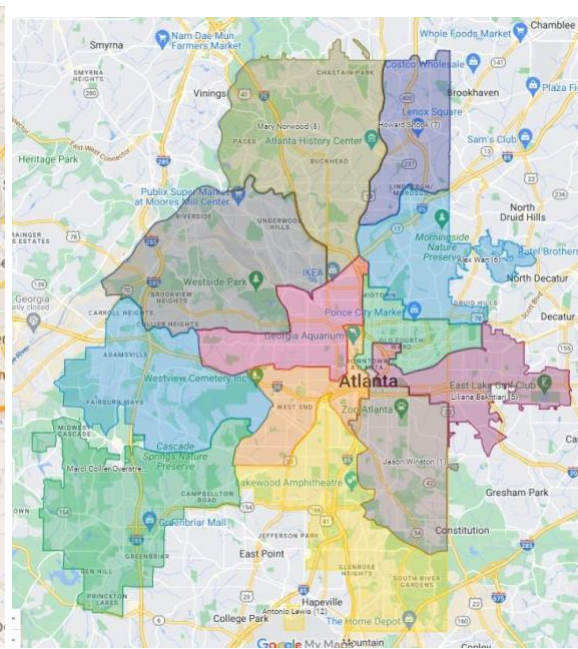


Figure 2.- Map of Atlanta Zones (extended)



Map of City of Atlanta zones: The City of Atlanta is divided into police zones or districts that regulate police patrols, the physical development of the land, and the uses of a property. (map credit: Tee Johnson, Google Maps)

However, Zone 2, which encompasses affluent neighborhoods such as Buckhead and Piedmont Heights, currently lacks representation of popular mainstream artists. The lack of representation in certain areas of Atlanta is closely tied to the high concentration of Black residents in the Southern parts of the city. This concentration is a result of historically discriminatory practices, such as redlining, which limited housing options for Black families. These practices have had a lasting impact on the cultural diversity of the city and have contributed to the persistence of segregated neighborhoods in the affected zones such as Zone 2. This underscores the close relationship between urban governance, police brutality, gentrification, and artistic expression in Atlanta's cultural landscape within the zones. In the other Zones (Zones 1, 3, 4 and 5), there is a culture and community that exists in a marginalized space where Black dance and music thrive outside the influence of predominantly white neighborhoods in Atlanta. As a result, when Black people in Atlanta gather to dance at certain clubs, skating rinks, and community events, these gatherings become safe spaces for Black creativity and community engagement.

Highlighting gentrification and Atlanta's APD zoning practices is essential in this dissertation because these structural forces directly shape the cultural geographies where Black hip-hop dance communities emerge and thrive. Atlanta's dance cultures—rooted in neighborhoods like Bankhead, Decatur, and the West End—are not just creative hubs, but historically Black spaces that reflect the city's legacy of resistance, cultural innovation, and community-building. As gentrification accelerates, these neighborhoods face displacement, policing, and the loss of spaces where Black youth once gathered, danced, and cultivated cultural movements like crunk and snap. Zoning laws and policing practices by the Atlanta Police Department often regulate nightlife, strip clubs, music venues, and informal community

gatherings—all central to Atlanta’s hip-hop dance scenes. By examining these intersections, this dissertation reveals how Black expressive culture is entangled with the politics of space and control. Grounding this discussion in Black geography allows for an understanding of how Black communities creatively resist spatial exclusion, claiming visibility through movement and cultural production (Bledsoe et al., 2017). This analysis insists that dance cannot be divorced from the urban contexts in which it is produced. It affirms that to truly understand Atlanta’s hip-hop dance legacy, one must also interrogate who has the right to occupy space—and who gets pushed out.

The rise and growth of Atlanta hip-hop culture are deeply tied to specific neighborhoods where dances like “Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It” emerged in South West Atlanta. These cultural expressions are rooted in the social fabric of predominantly Black communities that fostered creativity, resilience, and localized pride. As these neighborhoods face gentrification and restrictive zoning, the displacement of cultural hubs directly impacts where and how dance circulates. Recognizing the origin of these dances highlights how location and space inform cultural meaning, reinforcing that Atlanta hip-hop is not just a sound or style—it’s a geography of memory, movement, and communal expression shaped by place.

Southern Hip-Hop Dance

Throughout history, Black communities have created dances within Black spaces in response to shifting cultural and political contexts. Whether it was the Ring Shout during enslavement, the Charleston and Lindy Hop during the Harlem Renaissance, or the Soul Train line in the 1970s. Each of these instances of Black social dancing emphasized improvisation, rhythm, and collective participation, elements that are found in Southern hip-hop dancing.

The dances that emerge from the South are not only bodily responses to beats and lyrics, but they are also inscriptions of lived experience that articulate both joy, engagement and regionality.

Southern hip-hop dance stands out as a form of movement that relies on call-and-response tied to specific songs, local club cultures, and local performance practices that center Black communal creativity and expression. Looking beyond the simplicity of entertainment, Southern hip-hop dancing functions as a particular continuation of Black social dance traditions. Thus, Southern hip-hop dance is an extension of Black vernacular dancing with communal practices that carry cultural memory, impact, and innovation

Through the legacy and growth of Southern hip-hop dance, kinetic orality, and a provocative body shift how Southern hip-hop dance can change the engagement of hip-hop dance in a space and how it appears across cities in the South. For example, the body—whether through butt/booty-shaking in bounce or stepping in Southern line dances like the Mississippi Slide—claims a public space for Black expression and creativity passed down and engaged among the Black community, often performed in circles, clubs, and social gatherings where collective energy amplifies individual expression. By placing specific dances in conversation with their locales, I argue that Southern hip-hop dance must be understood not only as aesthetic performance but also as a form of embodied geography. In Atlanta, for instance, the dominance of strip clubs as dance incubators makes it impossible to separate Southern hip-hop dance from the socio-political economy of sexuality, labor, and pleasure. Dancers from Atlanta’s strip clubs own a culture and a club scene that is only found in Atlanta.

The distinctiveness of Southern hip-hop dance lies in its capacity to hold contradiction. It is simultaneously hyper-local and regionally expansive, sexually expressive yet often policed, commodified yet deeply rooted in community autonomy. As I bring my own perspective into this

analysis, Southern hip-hop dance is best understood as a key foundation to Dirty South Feminism. The dancers inscribe narratives of belonging that challenge spatial restrictions historically imposed on Black women in the South. Thus, to study Southern hip hop dance is to study how Black Southern women and girls transform everyday locales—clubs, rinks, parking lots, street corners—into stages of agency where their presence, style, and movement declare both survival and cultural innovation. In this way, Southern hip-hop dancing is best understood as both a product of its contemporary musical landscapes and an extension of centuries-old traditions of Black social dance, linking past and present through embodied storytelling and cultural creativity. Thus, outlining the impact of how Atlanta dances have built their relevance and impact deserves a closer reading to further extend how Black women and girls are connected to their city’s music.

Rise of the Dancing South

The history of Southern hip-hop dance in Atlanta starts with Miami Bass. The sound from Miami bass travels from the culture of Uncle Luke, 69 Boyz and 95 South, 2 Live Crew, Quad City DJs, and many others. This music incorporates unique sounds such as various regional lyrical influences, heavy bass, and faster rhythms that will follow the history of musical sounds that travel to Atlanta and stick to the music that emerged in the 2000s. This musical trajectory leads to the rise of Shy-D, Tony Rock, Kizzy Rock, Kilo Ali, Freaknik, and Jack the Rapper. These are the core artists of the rise of Atlanta dance cultures and further establish how the city became a dance mecca. The rise and dominance of a subgenre built on the cultural exchanges and experiences of people in a neighborhood and community have a unique impact. It creates the potential for an understanding and connection to the music, the people, and the places where the music thrives. However, despite the significant impact of Southern hip-hop dance in Atlanta, it

remains a subgenre that needs to be extensively studied. Much of the focus on Southern hip-hop's trajectory and history is often on individual artists' contributions or the South's centralization as a distinct genre compared to other regional impacts on the development of hip-hop history. By providing a more in-depth analysis, we can better understand Southern hip-hop dance's cultural and social implications and how it has impacted the music industry and the communities where it thrives.

The following section documents the emergence of different dances in Atlanta from 1995 to 2010. The historical account and cultural analysis are crucial in establishing the South as a dance capital. This analysis will discuss the most popular dances based on Billboard charts and YouTube views, highlighting the key figures and influencers who contributed to their formation. It will also examine these dances' cultural and community impact in various cities and neighborhoods across Atlanta. It's worth noting that the selection of songs is based on the first song that set the foundation and other songs that followed its formation. Although many songs were remixed or dances were reproduced to represent an artist's city due to the rise of call-and-response dance songs in Atlanta, the songs that were not selected do not diminish their impact or value.

Booty popping/Twerking

The gyrating of hips, popping of waist, twerking to the beats, shaking ass, and booty popping are all different calls to the name of twerking. The culture of twerking is an inherently African American Southern performance emerging in the late 1980s in New Orleans through DJ Jubilee's "Do the Jubilee All," sparking the beginning of an era regarding the way that Southerners dance to bounce music and other heavy bass-related songs in the South. The culture

in which twerking has spread across the South permeates the origins of the contemporary style of hip-yrating as a core topic in Southern hip-hop music. The diaspora connections about the ways that Black bodies have moved within music as an African diasporic tradition has connections and meanings such as in mapouka in the Ivory Coast, perreo in Puerto Rico, sandungueo in the Dominican Republic, and funk carioca in Brazil (Gaunt & Hobson, 2022).

In 2009, three teenage girls from Atlanta, who dubbed themselves the "Twerk Team," uploaded their inaugural video to YouTube dancing to Soulja Boy's song "Donk." Within a week, it had amassed over one million views, quickly going viral. The team continued releasing videos until 2015, featuring twerking routines set to twerk songs during the snap era. Their virality showcased how Black women's involvement in twerking and digital media amplified the dance's style and artistry and boosted a hip-hop artist's music, making their mark in Atlanta hip-hop dance history. Twerking, a form of hip-yrating, has become a worldwide phenomenon in recent years. Still, it has specific origins within The Dirty South, particularly within the fabric of Southern hip-hop sound and lyrics. While the literal term "twerk" is now being used within Southern hip-hop music, the actual act and the ways that Black girls have played within the context of twerking have many historical points of reference. In the South, street festivals and parties are essential to the culture. They are commonly held to celebrate and honor people, culture, and traditions situated within Black Southern communities. These events, such as second lines, local parades featuring Southern bands, Freaknik, Black Bike Week, and Homecoming, are a cornerstone of Black Southern engagement and joy where twerking is often performed. These events feature different types of music, including street performances, large bands, or local DJs, but their importance lies in specific musical traditions that have influenced Southern hip-hop music.

New Orleans Bounce

Bounce music has roots in New Orleans and has played a significant role in the rise of booty-shaking music culture. Some notable artists in this genre include Cheeky Blakk, who sang "Twerk Something," and Everlasting Hitman, who created "Bounce! Baby Bounce," Katey Red & Dem Hoes, whose hit was "Melpomene Block Party," DJ Jimi's "Where They At," Partners N Crime's "Pump Tha Party," and Magnolia Shorty, who sang "Monkey on Tha D\$ck." Bounce music is best known for its energizing and up-tempo beats, often called triggerman beats. This genre of music typically features call-and-response lyrics, repetitive hooks, and samples from various musical genres, such as funk and brass band music.

Bounce music is credited with crafting a specific New Orleans dance culture. It's characterized by call and response lyrics, explicit content, and references to local slang and dance culture. The music is often associated with dance styles such as "twerking," "booty popping," or "bouncing." Bounce dancing is physically characterized by a set of energetic, rhythmic movements that match the lively and up-tempo beats of the music. Initially, the dance was performed primarily by women, but it has since become popular among genders. The dance style draws heavily from African dance traditions, with dancers using their hips, legs, and arms to create fluid and dynamic movements. Bounce music has always had a specific style that encourages dancers to physically get low to the ground with quick footwork, twerking, and rapid hip movements. It often features a syncopated, rapid-fire beat perfect for dancers looking to show off their moves. The music has evolved, incorporating elements of hip-hop, techno, and other genres, but it remains a vital part of New Orleans' hip-hop culture. One of the defining characteristics of bounce music is its codified dance style, which involves a lot of hip movement

and booty popping. Despite its methodized dance style, there is still room for creativity and individuality in how people dance to bounce music. This has allowed for the emergence of new songs and twerking styles across the South that encourage twerking or other forms of booty popping.

Miami Bass

Hip-hop music gained popularity in the South of the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Cities like Atlanta and Miami played a pivotal role in creating and promoting booty-shaking music and unique bass-style musical sounds that encouraged people to dance. This gave rise to Miami Bass and Atlanta Bass music, which became integral to the Southern music scene. Miami Bass music emerged in the late 1980s and grew in the 1990s. It originated from Miami's historically Black neighborhoods, such as Liberty City, Goulds, and Overtown. The genre was popularized through local parties, skating rinks, festivals, and HBCU-related homecomings. The emergence of Miami Bass music is credited to Miami's vibrant local DJ and producer community. MC ADE's "Bass Rock Express" is regarded as a pioneering track in developing the Miami bass genre. It featured deep, thumping basslines, catchy hooks, and frenetic beats and quickly caught on with audiences. It established a new sound that would influence countless hip-hop, dance, and electronic music artists.

The mainstream growth of Miami bass music was created by local DJ Uncle Luke and the 2 Live Crew. They laid the foundation of the genre and produced tracks with provocative themes. Some of their popular tracks are "Throw the D," "Me So Horny," and "Pop that Pussy." Miami bass music expanded to other Southern and Florida cities like Orlando in the mid-1990s. New Florida artists and tracks like "Whoomp! (There It Is)" by Tag Team in 1993, "Tootsee

Roll" by 69 Boyz in 1994, "C'mon N' Ride It (The Train)" by the Quad City DJs in 1996 and "Whoot, There It Is" by 95 South contributed to its growth. The popularity of Miami Bass music was not just due to its dance-inducing beats. It was also due to its catchy lyrics, provocative dance themes, and the support of local community members, who were fans and residents of the neighborhood where the artists resided. This trend is similar to the progression of Southern hip-hop music and its ability to travel to other Southern regions.

Moreover, this analysis highlights how music ultimately influences communities where Black women and girls exist. It will delve into their portrayal in music videos, lyrics, and calls from artists urging their participation. Finally, this analysis will explore the impact of other familiar hip-hop dance communities and styles popular among Black women and girls in the South, such as majorette dancing, stepping, strolling, and stripping. Although these dance cultures and communities may not be native to Atlanta, they have uniquely impacted the curation of Southern hip-hop culture. Conceptualizing this process in this format provides a clear path to understanding the methodology and how other Black women and femmes remembered these dances and their connections at the time.

Atlanta Hip-Hop Dance Movements

According to Gottschild (2005), the creation of Black dancing bodies is influenced by the values, needs, and criteria of a particular culture and politics at a specific time. This is an essential aspect of American cultural history, and the perception of these values and needs comes from marginalized stories. Atlanta's music scene boasts a unique and familiar look into Black American history as a new era of Southern music and youth culture emerged akin to the birth of hip-hop on the East Coast. Many of the key spaces where Black girls and other Black youth

cultures formed their connections to Atlanta's hip-hop scene. And similar to the ways hip-hop emerged in the Bronx in the 1970s and 1980s, Atlanta's music scene was born from members of the Black youth community who came together in local parks, skating rings, community centers, and clubs to create music, build cultural connections, and escape the political and social disparities of their city. These locations were foundational to the rise of movements like crunk and snap, serving as the social and cultural arenas where these styles developed, spread, and became symbolic of Southern hip-hop identity. Initially dubbed the "Motown of the South," Atlanta's music scene was propelled to success by radio stations like WERD 1160 AM, by Jack Gibson, the first Black person to own and operate a radio station in Atlanta. Gibson's persona, Jack the Rapper, helped bring the music of the South to a broader audience and had political connections to leaders like Thurgood Marshall. Another influential figure in Atlanta's music scene was Chad the Rapper, who founded the Jack the Rapper Family Affair music conventions. These conventions quickly became a hub for Atlanta artists, producers, record executives, managers, and radio personalities, solidifying the city's reputation as a music powerhouse. The convention was a platform that allowed Black Southerners and other notable artists to develop and build on the culture and the capital of urban music. This convention ultimately gave Atlanta a reputation as a city that could host and maintain power and connectedness to urban culture and music. The establishment of Jack the Rapper Family Affair and its impact supported the foundation for musical producers such as Dallas Austin, Jermaine Dupri, Mr. Collipark, K-Rab, and Organized Noise to build a unique Southern sound native to Atlanta and its growing cultural city.

Atlanta Bass Era

In the 1980s, Atlanta cultivated its bass music scene featuring local DJs, radio stations, and performers such as MC Shy-D and Tony M.F. Rock. This sound was defined by its thumping bass beats and lyrics centered on partying and dancing. In the 1990s, however, the Atlanta bass scene flourished as a distinctive musical sub-genre and culture. The annual spring break festival Freaknik helped spearhead this development, which helped to differentiate the Atlanta bass sound from its Miami bass roots. During this period, influential Atlanta bass icons like DJ Smurf, Lil Jon, and Kilo Ali played a vital role in innovating and popularizing the new sound. Their music often featured elements of hip-hop, R&B, and dance music and was recognized for its inventive incorporation of R&B samples. Leading labels like So So Def Recordings and Wrap Records also contributed significantly to shaping the Atlanta bass scene by discovering and promoting new talent and releasing some of the most sought-after tracks of the era. Atlanta Bass MCs are known for their sexually explicit lyrics reminiscent of Miami bass themes. The genre reached its peak in 1996 with hit tracks such as A-Town Players' "Wassup, Wassup," Zae's "Thyow," Ghost Town DJs' "My Boo," Playa Poncho's "Koochie Kuterz," and Freak Nasty's "Da' Dip." These tracks showcased the genre's ability to bring a unique sound to the hip-hop scene and paved the way for other dance genres that originated in Atlanta.

As a result, twerking songs grew in popularity as a dance style within Atlanta, becoming a way for Black communities to express themselves and their individuality through early Atlanta Bass, with numerous songs and videos dedicated to the dance style. The 2000s saw the rise of alternative genres such as Crunk and Snap, significantly impacting Atlanta bass. Atlanta Bass played a crucial role in shaping snap, crunk, and trap as notable genres that emerged from the early Atlanta hip-hop scene.

Yeek/Yeekin

Skating rinks have historically served as a gathering place for Black youth. The popularity of skating rinks rose in the 1980s and early 1990s in Atlanta, where teens and young Adults began to form skate crews and competitive skate troops. These skate troops were known for their synchronized and choreographed unison as they glided around the rink to popular hip-hop, R&B, soul, and funk music. Through the practice and performance of these skate groups, they would compete against each other to gain recognition based on harmonization, style, originality, and strength. During its peak in the late 1980s, yeeking was the dance of choice at high school talent shows across the city, from Fulton County to Dekalb County. This was also when Shyran's Showcase, a famous Black teen nightclub, was situated in a strip mall on Gresham Road in Decatur. Yeek, short for "Your Energetic Explosive Klimax," is a style of dance that represents a buildup of emotions, unbridled energy, and raunchy innuendo. It is named for the call that onlookers would yell out when a group of syncopated dancers emphasized every fourth step in their routine. Yeeking is distinct from skating and occurs when the skates come off. The two dance styles show that yeeking incorporates the same skate dance style as observed in skate crews and traditional hip-hop dancing. The fundamental element of yeeking is its similarity in skate style, rhythmic stepping, and coordination flow. The similarities between the synchronized skate routines and Yeek dance movements illustrate the interconnectedness of Southern hip-hop culture and the community that fostered it.

Yeeking performances feature spontaneity, but an apparent synchronization is also popular among yeek dancers, who dominate the dance floor. Dancers often added their own style and flair to compete with other dance troupes. Skating rinks would sometimes lead to

spontaneous dance contests where dancers would perform in the middle of the rink while audience members and viewers would gather around to cheer and hype up the dancers. As dance groups perform or battle against one another, audience members shout out “YEEK,” “AY!” “YU-ED!” “YUH!” to bass music coming out of Miami with artists like 95 South, 69 Boyz, 2 Live Crew, and Uncle Luke, and established by Atlanta Bass artists such as Shy-D, Tony Rock, Kizzy Rock, and Kilo Ali. The popular bass sounds included a specific beat, but using drums from the Roland TR-80 drum machine produced an extended kick drum and deep bass, allowing for faster dance rhythms. However, to get partygoers to dance, bass music often contained sexually suggestive lyrics and call-and-response rhymes, setting it apart from other genres of hip-hop. Yeeking represents an essential cultural phenomenon in the dance and hip-hop scenes and continues to influence contemporary dance styles. Holt (2018) describes the movement, look, and style of yeeking as

“... lateral two-step with a step-tap move that goes from side to side. This step is coupled with a one-sided shoulder bounce that always matches the direction of the step. This movement, he explained, came directly from the basic movement of roller skating.”

As popularity grew in Atlanta around Yeeking's uniqueness, Yeeking's presence appeared in more local skating rinks, talent shows, and parties. The new era of an Atlanta sound and a long-established hip-hop dance culture positions the foundation for the more neighborhood—and city-based dances that regionalize Atlanta and situate the city as a mecca of performances.

Bankhead Bounce

The Bankhead Bounce is a dance that originated in the Bankhead neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia, during the mid-1990s. It involves a combination of movements, including various types of shoulder leans, shoulder “bounces,” and head nods, performed to the beat of the music. The Bankhead Bounce has become integral to Atlanta's music and dance culture, representing the neighborhood’s artistic creativity and vibrancy. Bankhead's rich cultural heritage and contribution to the entertainment industry make it a significant locality in Atlanta's history. Furthermore, the influence of Bankhead's artists and cultural phenomena has extended far beyond Atlanta's borders, earning it a place in hip-hop history. The dance gained widespread recognition and popularity due to the release of a track called "Wassup Wassup" by A-Town Players in 1995. The song featured L. "Diamond" Atkins and D-Roc, both from Bankhead. The beat and catchy lyrics caught the attention of the hip-hop community and beyond, and the Bankhead Bounce quickly became a sensation. The Bankhead Bounce is characterized by its energetic and fluid movements, often performed in solo or group settings, amongst friends, family members, or other strangers at parties or clubs. It has been described as a dance that embodies the spirit and culture of Atlanta and continues to be a popular dance form within the hip-hop community.

Crunk Era

Snap/Snapping

In August 2005, Southern hip-hop group Dem Franchize Boyz released their hit song “I Think They Like Me.” The single hit No. 1 on the Billboard Hip-Hop/R&B charts and took over the airwaves. This song is credited with the beginning of the snap era. Snap music, also known as

ringtone rap, has regional origins in Bankhead. Snap music is characterized by its up-tempo beats, catchy hooks, and repetitive lyrics, often centered around dance instructions or call-and-response chants. The term "snap" refers to the sharp, sound usually produced by the drum machine or handclaps in the music where most dances from snap music include a snap sound effect or dance move. Shortly after its inception, snap music became closely associated with another Atlanta-based genre, crunk, known for its high-energy beats.

The community where snap and crunk emerged was characterized by stark economic disparities, with many residents living in projects and low-income housing. Despite these challenges, the music scene flourished and became an essential part of the local culture. The fusion of snap and crunk music created a unique sound that resonated with the community and beyond. While "I Think They Like Me" was the leading success of the Dem Franchize Boyz, the single was one of many songs by the group that established them as creators of the legacy of the snap era. Group members Jizzal Man, Parlae, Pimpin, and Buddie were known in the community for rapping and recording music in their local neighborhood, Bankhead. In 2005, the group garnered attention from Jermaine Dupri, who remixed their single "I Think They Like Me," propelling it to the top of the charts. D4L (Down 4 Life), another influential Atlanta rap group, gained fame with their 2005 hit "Laffy Taffy," which topped the Billboard Hot 100 charts and earned an RIAA gold certification for their debut album, "Down for Life." Soon, a rivalry emerged between D4L and Dem Franchize Boyz, who were named as pioneers of snap music. Although Fabo of D4L disregarded Dem Franchize Boyz' claim as the pioneers of the genre. However, DJ T-Roc, the resident DJ of Atlanta's Club, the Poole Palace, argued that K-Rab created snap with his local "Poole Palace" song before both groups, presenting an alternate narrative of snap's origin. K-Rab witnessed women doing a new dance at the club in the Poole

Palace during the prime of crunk music and the early era of snap music, so he created the "Poole Palace" to give the dance a song for women to dance to. D4L's November 2005 debut album further solidified their role as snap music pioneers. Members Shawty Low, Fabo, Stoney, and Mook-B introduced a distinctive sound marked by catchy hooks, simple euphemisms, and a strong Southern influence. Their breakout single, "Laffy Taffy," not only topped the charts but also propelled snap music into the mainstream, becoming a cultural phenomenon. The success of "Laffy Taffy" garnered multiple gold and platinum certifications, highlighting D4L's commercial success and cultural impact. Beyond their musical rifts, D4L and Dem Franchize Boyz played a crucial role in elevating Atlanta's hip-hop scene, influencing subsequent artists, and shaping the trajectory of Southern hip-hop.

Crank Dat...Soulja Boy

In 2006, the emergence of the phrase "crank dat" signified a noteworthy cultural moment within online hip-hop circles. Online users would share videos featuring diverse dance routines set to an increasing array of songs incorporating the titular phrase. One of the earliest iterations, titled "Crank Dat Dance Remix," surfaced on SoundClick on June 14, 2006, while another version, "Crank Dat Jump Rope," debuted a month later. However, the version that gained widespread recognition and became a cultural phenomenon was DeAndre Way, popularly known as Soulja Boy, for the song "Crank That (Superman)." Musically repetitive and sparse, the composition features snaps, a steel drum pattern, and an extended chant of "Yoooouuuulll." Notably, Soulja Boy composed and recorded the song in ten minutes, sharing it on his MySpace page along with instructional dance details on February 25, 2007. Although Soulja Boy was not originally from Atlanta, the song's popularity surged steadily, catching the attention of Atlanta

music producer Mr. Collipark, who facilitated Soulja Boy's signing to Collipark's label on Interscope Records.

The dance moves associated with "Crank That" were inventive and instrumental in propelling the track to cultural prominence in Atlanta and eventually worldwide. Inspired by recent dance crazes from Atlanta, Soulja Boy and his friend Arab crafted movements that involved bouncing on heels, hand ripples, wrist cranking, mimicking motorcyclists, and culminating in a distinctive Superman pose. The rise of "Crank That" was further fueled by the advent of YouTube, which had launched just a couple of years before the song's release. The track quickly became a viral sensation, inundating online platforms with "Crank That" videos and inspiring numerous spin-offs featuring variations like "Crank That Batman" and "Crank That Spongebob." The widespread online presence and engagement prompted reflections on whether Soulja Boy was the first rapper to achieve virality and significantly impact the YouTube platform.

Analyzing the impact of "Crank That" within the context of Atlanta's hip-hop culture reveals its role as a cultural catalyst. The dance-centric phenomenon not only showcased the innovative spirit of Atlanta's hip-hop scene but also demonstrated the power of indie artists in shaping mainstream music culture. The online dissemination of dance routines, fueled by the song's popularity, served as a precursor to the influence of social media on music trends that we see today. Moreover, Soulja Boy's ability to leverage the virality of "Crank That" into a major-label deal underscores the evolving dynamics of the music industry, where online platforms became viable launchpads for emerging artists. "Crank That" is more than just a hit song; it represents a transformative moment in Southern hip-hop, reflecting the intersection of digital culture, youth creativity, and the evolving landscape of Southern hip-hop music.

HBCU Dance Cultures

Majorette Dancing

Majorette dance, which comes from the Dutch term "Dansmarietjes," started as carnival dancers twirling batons but has since evolved into a dynamic art form. The 1968 Orange Blossom Classic is the annual college football game in Miami Gardens, Florida, and one of the country's largest Historically Black College and University (HBCU) events. The Classic marked a vital moment, introducing Alcorn State University's Golden Girls majorette team. Gloria Gray Liggans, one of the original eight dancers, contributed to the first synchronized dance with a live marching band, paving the way for the evolution of majorette dance. This practice expanded further with Southern University's Dancing Dolls in 1969, showcasing precision and poise that inspired subsequent teams. From that, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the American South have shaped and revitalized traditional majorette dancing, turning it into a rich blend of jazz and hip-hop dancing mixed with ballet, burlesque, cabaret, kick lines, and more. The pioneering team laid the foundation for majorette dance, inspiring subsequent generations and shaping the distinctive styles of teams like the Jackson State University J-Settes and the Southern University Dancing Dolls. The incorporation of signature moves, like the high kick, and the use of unique uniforms contribute to the cultural richness and identity of majorette dance.

Characterized by high kicks and unique choreography, majorette teams have become iconic symbols of Black sports-related entertainment with their lively half-time performances. Uniforms play a crucial role, with original Black majorette teams known for intricate headdresses adorned with feathers or rhinestones. Majorette performances feature bright outfits

and leotards, coordinated hairstyles, and intricate routines, often done in collaboration with a school's band during football and basketball games. Black Majorette culture extends beyond HBCUs, influencing high schools, colleges, and universities across the South, sparking a renaissance in Black, sports-related entertainment, and local Black dance companies.

Majorette dancing also deserves an analysis of beauty and recognition. Defrantz (2005) suggests that contemporary dance studies have ignored the notion of “beauty” as a powerful aesthetic paradigm to present nuanced performance analysis. The way majorette dancers perform and their nuanced and blended movements allude to how the body can construct beauty. Moreover, there is a perception amongst Black dance scholars that acknowledges Black beauty in dance can go beyond visual appeal and instead focus on spiritual, social, and political circumstances (DeFrantz, 2005). The impact of majorette dance goes beyond mere entertainment; it is deeply rooted in Black creativity and culture, fostering a connection between Black people, music, fashion, and history. With its diverse influences and dynamic styles, majorette dance encapsulates the essence of Southern hip-hop culture. It challenges societal norms, particularly in the assertive movements that counter-historical sexual politics, empowering both straight Black women and femme gay Black men who often perform majorette dances as choreographers and performers. The importance of majorette dance extends beyond performance, as it educates those curious about joining. Preserving dance routines through digital media ensures that the rich tradition of majorette dance continues to thrive, passing down stand counts and choreography to future generations with shows like Lifetime’s “Bring It!” The enduring popularity of majorette dance across social media and television underscores its cultural significance, creating a legacy that transcends time and continues to shape the vibrant landscape of Southern hip-hop culture.

Stepping

Stepping, a percussive dance art form, originated from Black fraternities and sororities' song and dance rituals. In this highly energetic dance form, the body transforms into an instrument, utilizing footsteps, claps, and spoken word to generate intricate polyrhythms. In the early 1900s, as Black students increased their college enrollment at various universities, the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) emerged as a Greek-letter council to provide academic and social support and community service. The NPHC comprises nine historically African American Greek-letter fraternities and sororities, also known as the Divine Nine. These organizations were founded between 1906 and 1963 to promote academic excellence, community service, and cultural awareness among African American college students. The member organizations of the NPHC include Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity. Each organization has its unique history, traditions, and values, but they all share a commitment to uplifting the African American community and fostering brotherhood and sisterhood among their members. However, each organization also has unique chants, steps, and strolls that they perform on college campuses and at local events. Stepping extends beyond traditional boundaries, incorporating elements of tap dancing, break dancing, gymnastics, and Afro-Caribbean dance. The beginnings of modern stepping trace back to the early 1900s when organizations within the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) organized "Greek Sings," using songs and dance in a call-and-response format to uplift audiences. The tradition evolved into step shows, which remain popular today and are marked by stepping competitions for money or

bragging rights. Competitions are often judged on sportsmanship, originality, stage presence, and uniforms. Step shows showcase the teams' pride and unity. Signature moves and steps, such as "The Alpha Train," "The Q Hop," "The Nutcracker," "The Dove," and "The Poodle Prance," have been passed down through generations, each uniquely associated with specific organizations.

As stepping and strolling continue to thrive in the contemporary, their presence has existed on social media, television, and in music videos. The practice, characterized by its rhythmic complexity, cultural expressions, and organizational pride, has become a global symbol of unity and creativity. The evolving nature of stepping highlights its adaptability and enduring appeal across diverse communities and settings. It maintains its significance as a cultural and artistic form deeply rooted in Black history.

Strolling

Strolling shares similar forms to stepping and modern dancing within Black Greek communities. It is a unique dance form involving synchronized movements and precise gestures. Rooted in African American culture and African heritage, it is often performed in a line, like a line dance. The historical context of strolling has been seen as resembling a South African dance called gumboot dancing. Initially conceived as a showcase of African culture during an era of racial adversity, strolling served as a performance of pride and unity. Its origins within the Greek community can be traced back to the 1920s with Alpha Kappa Alpha Fraternity's pioneering stroll. This tradition symbolizes solidarity among organization members, creating a sense of community and trust. Exaggerated movements, referred to as marching, captivate spectators from afar, transforming each stroll into a captivating spectacle meant to entertain and pay homage to

the history and culture behind the movements. This tradition has since evolved, encompassing many Greek organizations, each contributing unique strolls that reflect the core values of unity, culture, community, and love ingrained in their respective letters. Each Divine Nine sorority and fraternity has its distinctive strolling style, reflecting its historical journey and values.

Furthermore, within the Divine Nine, strolling played a pivotal role in the new member process, serving as an educational tradition during probates. Although strolling is not widely promoted to the public, it is deeply respected by its members, who view it as a sacred tradition. Strolling is often kept within the organization to maintain its significance and intimacy. However, in recent times, strolling performances like stepping have become popular as a pop culture phenomenon in television and film, and students on college campuses also witness competitions and public performances. Strolling remains an art form deeply intertwined with cultural heritage, fostering unity, respect, and a shared commitment to preserving its significance within the Black Greek experience.

The Magic: The Rise of Atlanta's Strip Clubs

Within hip-hop dance, one of the major tensions of Black women's public forms of sexual performance appears within the strip clubs and music videos as dancers. Black women who occupy hip-hop's visual erotic dance cultures center and support the lives of Black sex workers who fuel the sexual economy of hip-hop (Miller-Young, 2014; Sharpley-Whiting, 2008). To specify, the acts of selling sexual fantasies, strip teases, exotic dancing, pole work, and pussy popping are all forms of erotic dance that do appear as hip-hop entertainment. However, there is a history and foundation to this culture uniquely present in the South. Their agency and performance of these dances include the ways sex work within hip-hop as strippers and video

vixens presents new power dynamics in which Black women shape erotic representation and labor politics within hip-hop dance culture. Sharpley-Whiting (2008) suggests talking to and engaging with the strippers and video vixens who occupy those sexual dance economies within hip-hop culture. Having a more in-depth understanding of strippers and video vixens' history and social-cultural impact grants them a space to be aware of their career choices but also addresses Black women's sexual and physical freedoms that challenge male notions of female sexuality and pleasure that exist in Southern hip-hop music. It is relevant to note that the sexualized nature of twerking or any form of pelvic thrusting that emerges within hip-hop dance culture comes from how white hegemony and white mainstream culture have socially categorized all Black bodies as hypersexual and freakish (Bailey, 2019; Collins, 2005; Gottschild, 2005). Black women's pleasure within hip-hop dance isn't solely tied to sexual intimacy but to the act of sexual agency and pleasure that emerges in the South through twerking and pole work.

Atlanta's vibrant strip club culture, represented by establishments like Magic City, has become integral to the hip-hop industry's development and national prominence. Artists often choose strip clubs for exposure, bypassing traditional avenues and establishing other strip clubs in Atlanta, like Stokers, Diamonds of Atlanta, and Onyx, as influential spaces in the industry. The intersection of Southern hip-hop culture and strip club influence has significantly shaped the trajectory of the music industry, particularly in cities like Atlanta. One of the city's oldest and most popular strip clubs, Magic City, founded in 1985 and currently owned by Michael "Magic" Barney, symbolizes this dynamic connection. Renowned for its pivotal role in launching the careers of artists such as Future and Migos, Magic City embodies more than just a strip club; it serves as a place where aspiring rappers, dancers, and DJs converge to seek fame and fortune. Beyond its reputation as a strip club, Magic City is a hub where aspiring rappers seek

recognition, and dancers and DJs pursue their fame. The club's prominence is evident in its portrayal in media and its reference in various hip-hop lyrics, underlining its cultural significance in Atlanta and Southern hip-hop culture.

In the context of hip-hop, strip clubs function as primary meeting places, akin to churches, within gangster rap culture. These establishments serve as venues where new records are premiered. DJs play influential roles, where women aspire to dance, gaining respect and substantial earnings. Being a dancer in Atlanta has positive and negative connotations, as in other regions. However, the city's strip clubs have a unique atmosphere that sets them apart. The clubs are not just about exotic entertainment but also about socializing, watching sports, and dining. This contrasts with the stereotypical perception of strip clubs as hypersexual places and showcases the distinct cultural dynamics in the South. The blending of hip-hop's emphasis on displaying one's wealth with the culture of nightclubs has given birth to a new gender relationship that is rooted in sexual transactions within strip clubs. The rap lifestyle, characterized by materialism and heavily promoted through various media outlets, intersects with club themes, influencing both the lyrical content and aesthetic of music videos. This cultural intersection has given rise to a distinct hip-hop gender relationship that revolves around the consumption and transaction of material goods, shifting power dynamics that Black women strippers hold within the strip clubs. The interaction between hip-hop and strip club culture has created a unique gender dynamic that is centered around transaction. Men are often portrayed as the consumers, while women are portrayed as the objects of their desire. The lyrics and videos of rap songs usually depict men spending money on women in exchange for their attention and affection. This transactional relationship is further emphasized by the club culture, where women

are often hired to work as bottle service girls or go-go dancers, serving as visual representations of the transactional nature of the relationship between men and women in hip-hop culture.

The close relationship between strip club DJs, dancers, and record label executives fosters a promotional circle where the success of a song in the club directly influences its trajectory in mainstream media. Male rappers have consistently leveraged stripper culture to their advantage, using it as a backdrop for music videos, lyrics, and performances. The success of songs like “Whoomp! (There It Is)” and the widespread recognition of strip club anthems underscore these establishments' influence on launching rap acts into mainstream success. While there is occasional criticism of female rappers for embracing stripper culture in their lyrics, it is male rappers who have predominantly benefited from the association. The industry's historical underinvestment in female artists contrasts with the profitability of strip club-themed content for male rappers. Rappers are incentivized to make songs exciting, as their earnings are linked to a dancer's reactions, while DJs benefit from tips given by dancers. Record label executives invest heavily in strip club nights to break new records, recognizing the potential of these venues as gatekeepers for lucrative recording contracts. Atlanta strip clubs stand out for their diverse and dynamic performances, featuring acrobatics, twerking, and other unique acts. As hubs of creativity, exposure, and economic activity, these establishments continue to contribute significantly to the evolution of hip-hop dance in the South.

Pole Work

The landscape of specific dances and performances may vary in Southern hip-hop strip clubs. Yet, several iconic and widely embraced booty-shaking dances and pole routines have become synonymous with the region. It is crucial to recognize that the names and styles of these

dances can evolve, and localized variations may exist. I will explain some popular movements and performances frequently associated with Southern hip-hop strip clubs. Twerking, a central element in many Southern hip-hop dances, involves rhythmic, provocative hip movements, typically performed in a squatting position. Clapping or booty clapping entails the dancer rhythmically making her buttocks clap together, often in sync with the music's beat. Pole tricks and spins highlight acrobatic skills, incorporating spins, climbs, and intricate moves on the pole. The Banana Split, a flexible and challenging move, requires the dancer to lower her body into a full split while dancing. "P-Popping," or pelvic popping, accentuates pelvic movements, creating a distinctive effect. Surfboarding involves a woman lying on her back while a male dancer simulates surfing on her body, often incorporating suggestive movements. Handstands and inverted moves showcase strength and flexibility as dancers perform handstands and inverted poses, sometimes against the pole. Floorwork and crawling introduce seductive floor movements, including crawling, adding sensuality to the overall performance. Chopsticks involve a dancer moving her buttocks in a way that resembles drumsticks, emphasizing control and precision. While not a dance move, Dolla Bill showers is a signature act in Southern strip clubs, where patrons make it "rain" with dollar bills, throwing money onto the stage. These performances contribute to a broader cultural and artistic expression within Southern hip-hop strip club scenes. Dancers infuse their unique styles and creativity into these moves, fostering a diverse and dynamic atmosphere within Southern strip clubs.

Contrary to stereotypes, many strippers leverage their exposure to empower themselves without succumbing to the male gaze. These women recognize the exposure gained in strip clubs as an asset, enabling them to navigate and thrive in the industry. Instead of viewing their roles negatively, they have become influential figures contributing to the vibrant landscape of hip-hop

culture. The intricate relationship between Southern hip-hop culture and strip club influence has left an indelible mark on the music industry. The symbiotic connection between emerging artists, DJs, dancers, and record label executives in strip clubs has propelled hip-hop to new heights, making these venues not only cultural spaces but also economic powerhouses. As strip club culture continues to evolve, it remains an integral and enduring element within the broader tapestry of Southern hip-hop. The trends in dance styles are subject to change over time, with new moves continually emerging, reflecting the nature of hip-hop and strip club culture in the Southern region.

Conclusion

When reflecting on the history of Atlanta's dance cultures, significant areas in the city center Atlanta as a dance hub. It solidifies a history and experience that began in the late 1980s and evolved and expanded in the early 2000s. By centering skating rinks, strip clubs, and block parties, HBCUs and other community sites as critical spaces of performance, Atlanta's hip-hop culture is the foundation to understand Southern hip-hop dance within a broader framework of Dirty South Feminism. These spaces and dances illuminate how Black women and girls claim agency in their neighborhoods that are marked by Atlanta's zoning and gentrification. Their participation in crunk and snap dance movements underscores how embodied practices are forms of cultural theory, asserting presence and pleasure in public space that they can carry into adulthood. Thus, Atlanta's dance landscape not only generates hip-hop aesthetics but also grounds a feminist praxis rooted in Southern Black women's lived experiences. Exploring the relationship between Black women and girls and their communal experiences with dance and kinetic orality can provide a framework for understanding the cultural and social interactions that

occur through dance. Additionally, African American dance is strongly connected to traditional African dance cultures, as both utilize polyrhythm and body articulation. African American dancers use various movements within their bodies, including shoulders, pelvis, arms, legs, etc., in response to the rhythm and beat of a song. Many African dances are participatory, with spectators being part of the performance, thus blurring the line between performers and audience members. Southern hip-hop also has a central theme of call and response, which creates a musical experience that does not necessarily require all participants to dance. Listeners can engage with the lyrics and production of the music while watching others dance.

The communal experiences of Black women and girls with dance requires a multifaceted approach that considers cultural studies and the unique rhythmic components of African and African American dance. By examining these various aspects, scholars can better understand how dance connects to social and political contexts and how it influences Black identity, body politics, and gender dynamics. By centering these specific dance cultures, songs, and eras, I provide a contextual history that participants in the focus group can identify with and connect to. While they may not have experienced the same performances, they can still reflect on how these dance moments and performances have played a role in their lives. In the research, the focus group engages in similar themes within the dances mentioned in Atlanta's history. Participants will build connections through memory-making with others in the group, enhancing the impact of a collective experience. By exploring the different dances that emerged within Atlanta, Black womanhood and girlhood have cultural ties to Atlanta's hip-hop history and how Atlanta has solidified itself as a hip-hop city. In conclusion, by centering the history of Atlanta's dance cultures, the history can provide a richer understanding of the city's cultural heritage and how it has contributed to the knowledge of hip-hop feminist perspectives within Southern hip-hop.

Furthermore, the research findings should enhance the understanding and appreciation of the different dance cultures and how the dances have impacted participants' lives.

Chapter 3: A Hip-Hop Feminist Epistemology

For this qualitative inquiry, I utilize a hip-hop feminist method approach to gather detailed information and insights from participants through focus group discussion with four women and one femme. The information collected is intended to help develop a more profound and extensive oral history of Atlanta's sociocultural impact on the hip-hop scene in the early 2000s. Ultimately, the approaches to the research contribute to the growing body of research on hip-hop feminism and expand the understanding of the sociocultural significance of Southern hip-hop culture. Thus, I propose that a hip-hop feminist methodology will expand the lens of Black feminist epistemologies in Southern hip-hop studies by exploring the experiences of Black women in the South, creating a methodology centering their connections to validate hip-hop feminist methods and their interest in hip-hop culture. Furthermore, I center a qualitative inquiry that considers data collection and analysis to recognize the importance of cultural backgrounds, dialects, racial, ethnic, and gender differences within Black and hip-hop culture. My methodological framework enhances hip-hop feminist research and expands the praxis of studying hip-hop feminism within the context of Southern hip-hop studies. I chose this approach because hip-hop feminist research often fails to include the full range of Black women's experiences and socio-cultural connections to Southern hip-hop cultures. Therefore, I implemented a multifaceted hip-hop feminist approach, which employs Black feminist epistemologies and the concept of hiphopography within the context of a focus group method for this study. By utilizing this methodological framework, the study provides a nuanced understanding of hip-hop feminism and its relevance to Southern hip-hop culture.

The layout of this chapter helps to understand and establish the best method for capturing the voices and experiences of dance culture in Atlanta. A hip-hop feminist methodology focuses

on centering and uplifting the voices of Black women who grew up during the rise of Atlanta's vast hip-hop as a major Southern hip-hop city. The layout of this chapter is broken down in three ways. First, I break down the theoretical approaches to the research; this includes defining and outlining the importance and use of hip-hop feminist methodologies, intersectionality, hiphopography, and Black feminist epistemologies. Second, I outline the methodology for the focus group and the demographics of participants relevant to the study. Lastly, I explain and break down the coding process from the study, along with the challenges and limitations of the research. With this approach, I highlight the uniqueness of memory-making and collaborative storytelling, which are distinctive aspects of this collective focus group experience. The long-term goal is to develop a methodology for capturing the experiences and perspectives of Southern Black women in hip-hop, a group that is often underrepresented in Southern hip-hop studies. Through effective data collection and analysis, I elevate these diverse voices and provide insights that can be used to empower other Southern hip-hop researchers to choose to study marginalized groups within Southern hip-hop studies.

Black Feminist Epistemologies

Collins (1990) addresses Black feminist epistemologies to highlight how Black women are traditionally excluded from knowledge production in terms of critical social theory. This knowledge production encompasses white supremacy and the presence of patriarchal society impacts the key issues confronting Black women in America collectively and shape the world around them. In consideration of Black Southern women, Black feminist epistemologies provides a unique framework for studying Black dance in Southern hip-hop by centering lived experience, embodiment, and cultural production as valid forms of knowledge. Rooted in

community, kinetic orality, and resistance, this epistemology positions Black social dance as an expressive archive that reflects social, political, and spatial dynamics of the South (Collins, 2000; Durham, Cooper, & Morris, 2013). This lens recognizes Southern hip-hop dance as both theory in motion and a liberatory practice but also informs why dancing is important to Black women and girls in the South. Therefore, employing Black feminist thought as a specialized framework for understanding Black women's experiences contributes to the construction of Black feminist knowledge and influences how Black women can perceive their positionality in the South (Henry, 2011). Utilizing a Black feminist epistemology in this research study also highlights how hip-hop is a male-dominated sociocultural genre. Additionally, this highlights the reality that often, in hip-hop studies, there is a very monolithic approach that is typically male centered in researching, discussing, or analyzing the history and accomplishments of men in hip-hop. Even when the research focuses on Black women, it usually centers on their experiences of violence and subjugation within hip-hop. In recent years, the resurgence of hip-hop feminist frameworks—Treva Lindsey, Aria Holliday and Moya Bailey—and more critical analysis in Southern hip-hop studies—Regina Bradley, Cory J Miles and Maurice Hobson have provided a fresh lens for understanding Black women's connections within Southern hip-hop culture. I consider Lindsey's (2015) articulation of hip-hop feminism as both theory and praxis where Black women's cultural productions and lived experiences within hip-hop can be important sources of knowledge. My framework, Dirty South Feminism, extends this lineage by treating Southern hip-hop dance as an embodied archive—a way Black women in Atlanta resist systemic oppression, narrate their realities, and envision freedom. In line with Collins (1990), I argue that these expressive forms of Southern dance offer alternative ways of knowing rooted in community, memory, and performance. Through this lens, Southern hip-hop culture becomes a

vital site of hip-hop feminist inquiry and transformative praxis. Adopting a Black feminist approach helps to illuminate how Black women acquire knowledge while living in the South. In what follows, a qualitative research design is employed to explore how Black women have utilized music, language, and cultural dance practices to express their collective consciousness as Black girls growing up in the hip-hop South. This approach reflects a hip-hop feminist awareness that provides a platform for Black women to continually enhance the impact and significance of Southern hip-hop culture in their lives.

I explore how five Black women perceive Southern hip-hop culture and navigate life in the South to form relationships, identity, and behaviors tied to their lived experiences, all while engaging in these discussions in a focus group. This study reveals the importance of examining Black feminist epistemologies as a historical narrative that has yet to be explored from the perspective of Southern Black women and girls. Additionally, suggesting that Southern hip-hop dance is a way to understand how Black women and girls from Atlanta understand the social, political and cultural development of the city they live in. Frequently, when there's a one-sided investigation of how Black women fit into hip-hop, there's insufficient understanding of how the consumers and creators of the culture view it. Therefore, comparing how many scholars of hip-hop do not identify as Black women or Black Americans leads them to be outsiders of the culture, and they do not fully understand or can actively construct studies that inquire about knowledge from folks who have produced hip-hop culture. Therefore, the call, need, and desire for Black women scholars and researchers in the field of hip-hop represent a crucial insider perspective that can foster more liberated conversations about creating hip-hop based on their lived experiences through. A Black scholar's perspective can create a safe space and foster critical thinking about coding and data analysis that reflects insider viewpoints. This research

approach enhances the study's validity and reliability. Examining Black women's knowledge enriches hip-hop studies by showing how communal influences enhance Black womanhood's impact on sisterhood, memory, identity, and cultural references. The analysis sharpens the understanding and experiences informing Southern hip-hop, while legitimizing data collection and influencing methodology for greater transparency of Black women's lived experiences in Atlanta.

From Theory to Methods: Hip-Hop Feminism in the South

Hip-hop feminism discourse works to ensure that Black women who grew up within the world of hip-hop and its extensive culture have validation for its unique connection to how Black women and femmes understand hip-hop as a culture that impacts their lives. The range in hip-hop feminist theory situated within the larger conversation of Black feminist studies and hip-hop studies is to consider the contradiction of hip-hop and Black women's ability to critique and navigate it. Furthermore, the extensive discourse on new perspectives of hip-hop feminism aims to include new media to examine hip-hop feminism in social media, Afrofuturism, and pedagogy (Durham et al., 2013; Lindsey, 2015; Peoples, 2008). Hip-hop feminist theory further expands the knowledge of Black women and girls' creative and cultural potential. Joan Morgan's influential book emphasizes the significance of hip-hop feminism as an approach to acknowledging the tensions, contradictions, and personal narratives within a hip-hop culture that has been shaped by sexism, racism, and misogyny. This approach helps Black women connect to Black feminist politics indirectly and directly through academic study. Hip-hop feminists also address that hip-hop feminism offers an approach to exploring Black women and girls' creative and intellectual work to understand their knowledge to assist in challenging and transforming

power structures within hip-hop and validate complex identities and cultural practices (Durham et al., 2013; Lindsey, 2015). The strength of hip-hop feminism lies in its significant role as a generational marker, reflecting the diverse layers of hip-hop's evolution along with the experiences of different generations of Black women and girls who have been shaped by hip-hop's influence. Morgan (1999) acknowledges the hip-hop generation as folks who grew up in a post-civil rights, post-feminist, post-soul era, which also centers the birth of hip-hop in the late 70s and early 80s. The extension of a post-hip-hop generation, now classified as millennials, rejects commercialized, white-washed hip-hop in favor of a reimagined version that positions hip-hop as a political art form connected to broader social justice movements. This shifts the focus to the study's demographic as I explore the rise of a hip-hop South and Atlanta, the city at the forefront in the early 90s. In conversation with other hip-hop feminist scholars, the call for expanding hip-hop feminism is rooted in exploring and addressing new questions about representation, embodied experiences, and alternative ways of critically engaging with Black women's intellectual and creative work in the genre (Durham et al., 2013; Lindsey, 2015). The approach aims to spark discussion rather than simply critique differences. I posit that hip-hop feminism needs to address the various criticisms of how regional differences or the experiences of Black women and girls have evolved within contemporary developments of hip-hop culture.

In this study, hip-hop feminism aims to establish a framework based on cultural criticism and performance-based art forms, mainly dance, along with ethnographic research. This approach helps to explore the lived culture of Black women as an everyday entity. However, the relevance of this work raises some questions. As I delve into a methodology to better approach the stories and experiences of Black women within hip-hop, I am concerned about the limited inclusion of Black women's presence in hip-hop feminism which targets their erasure in the

South. My first critique is that hip-hop feminism has limited its critiques and intellectual work of centering the vast culture and experiences of Black women within Southern hip-hop. There are many layers to the foundation of Southern hip-hop in which Black women have helped shape Southern cultures. Still, the lack of awareness resembles how hip-hop studies has consistently centered East Coast and West Coast representation of culture and performance, and not the South. The application of a hip-hop feminist critique in the context of the American South is crucial due to the profound influence of the antebellum era and the civil rights movement on shaping the cultural and political landscape of Black Southern culture. Through this lens, we can explore how hip-hop feminism intersects with the historical and contemporary experiences of Black women in the South, shedding light on their unique struggles and triumphs within this distinct socio-political context. The complex political climate and racial subjugation of Black women and girls in the South is a crucial area of investigation that includes issues such as sexism, classism, and racism. In the methodology, I utilized hip-hop feminism as an approach to understanding the range of experiences of Black women and girls in the Southern region of the U.S. I have also examined how Southern hip-hop music has created a unique cultural landscape that is different from other regions in the country. Thus, I take the premise that a methodology that centers hip-hop feminism as its theoretical approach is crucial for validating how to capture dance cultures that are fundamental to Southern hip-hop music.

I suggest that incorporating the perspectives of hip-hop feminist scholars, Black girlhood scholars, and scholars of Black performance and dance studies can help strengthen a comprehensive methodological approach. However, I do have some criticisms of hip-hop feminist theory. While it is important for Black women and girls to think about how social and political structures have impacted their lived experiences in the South, I am curious about the

validity of how their voices are studied and utilized to protect and advocate for their contributions within Southern hip-hop. It is important to acknowledge the impact of hip-hop feminism while also engaging in community work and activism that addresses the social justice issues that have historically and systemically impacted Southern Black women and girls within Southern hip-hop culture from an academic lens. Moving forward, hip-hop feminist methodologies should consider more nuanced approaches to gather comprehensive and accessible data for discussions on the ways that hip-hop has harmed Black women and girls while also recognizing and validating their contributions to the foundation and growth of hip-hop culture.

As I consider the usage of hip-hop feminist studies to explore Southern hip-hop culture, I reflect on my lived experiences as a woman from the South and examine how other Black women in the South have used Southern hip-hop as a voice and a way to build connections through community and family-related performances, experiences, and connections. This requires an epistemological approach that centers on how hip-hop feminism can help reconceptualize perspectives of how Southern hip-hop dance cultures uniquely push against the sexual scripts and respectability politics of Black women that exist within popular culture. There is validity in how Southern hip-hop dance cultures have navigated across the South, providing a sense of identity, awareness, and kinetic orality that defines a specific geographical experience within Southern cities. To support this argument, I take multiple methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks to expand this conversation through a hip-hop feminist methodology.

Hip-Hop Feminist Methodology

A hip-hop feminist methodology should not only consider how millennial Black women engage with hip-hop, but also how Black women from the South navigate distinct social, cultural, economic, and geographic landscapes, wherein Southern hip-hop has played a pivotal role in shaping their understanding of life in the South. The historical ties of the Southern region to the legacy of the Confederacy, slavery, and "proximity to white racial terror" (Robinson, 2014), it is imperative to explore the political dimensions unique to Southern hip-hop that stem from this racist history. The approach to this research delves into the subcultures of hip-hop dance and the intricate interplay of regional identity, community, and memory among Black women from Atlanta. The research pinpoints the geographical backdrop of Atlanta, a prominent Southern city and a hub for hip-hop that serves as a cultural cornerstone that invokes a sense of home and familiarity in the context of Southern Black life. Therefore, a hip-hop feminist methodology works to develop a hip-hop-centered qualitative methodology by centering oral histories and performance art to center on embodied cultures. The political investment in this work is an intersectional approach to including a demographic of Black womanhood that considers not only gender, but sexuality as well (Love, 2017; Murphy et al., 2016). Disrupting forms of heteronormativity in hip-hop expands hip-hop culture in a way that is more inclusive of Black women's identities and supports the literature on Black women's creative potential (R. N. Brown, 2013). The research is an extension of Black girlhood that explores how Black girl play can be applied to connect the communal relations of Black girls who grew up in Atlanta in the mid-90s and early 2000s, during the rise of Atlanta hip-hop dance songs. This enhances the connection to Atlanta hip-hop culture and the impact of lived experience, showing how it can be applied to the Southern hip-hop music scene. A hip-hop feminist methodology recognizes the

various generations of hip-hop that emphasize Black women's ties to the culture and their capacity to build knowledge collectively. Therefore, focusing on how Black women cultivate their identity, community, self-expression, social norms, and political ideas. This approach seeks to further the study of Southern hip-hop, providing a platform for Black women to share their narratives authentically.

Hiphopography

I initially planned to conduct a research project using photo voice to document physical dances and have participants explain the significance of specific dances to them. However, technical challenges prevented me from using this approach, which led me to conduct a focus group as the primary method of data collection. When I first posted my survey on Qualtrics, I encountered a significant issue with over 300 bot responses, which compromised the data due to the platform's inadequate security measures and privacy protections. Consequently, conducting a focus group led to a loss of the individuality and creativity that could have emerged from the photo voice project. However, the focus group enabled participants to interact with one another, ultimately preserving the communal aspect and the argument about how Black women have built culture and community by drawing strength from each other's identities and perspectives. Black women's groups can inadvertently adopt an ethic of care while fostering safe spaces that create a lasting impact and enrich the experience of discussing their roles within hip-hop culture which felt in line with hiphopography.

Hiphopography is a research approach to studying hip-hop culture that combines ethnography, biography, social history, and oral history. Hiphopography differs from traditional ethnography as it minimizes hierarchical distinctions between the "researcher" and the

"researched," subjecting these divisions to scrutiny. This approach requires the hiphopographer—a hip-hop researcher—to engage with the hip-hop community on their terms. A comprehensive understanding of the aesthetics, values, history, and the use of language, culture, and interaction methods is indispensable for studying hip-hop culture (Alim et al., 2023; Spady, 2013; Williams & Singh, 2023). Hiphopography analyzes and utilizes the perspectives and culture from where hip-hop originates. However, this process can potentially cause erasure and disconnect during research. Like Black feminist research methodologies, there is a parallel between understanding both internal and external perspectives, which should also be reflected in hiphopography to understand the research participants and approach. Spady (2013) highlights the insider-outsider perspective, which focuses on the relationships and power dynamics within a study and affects participants due to the researcher's privilege. This perspective considers the presence of hip-hop scholars and journalists who might not have firsthand knowledge or insight into specific hip-hop regions or significant hip-hop moments that these communities experienced. Thus, the hiphopographer needs to connect with the community as they prefer and consider all sociocultural implications in their research.

Hiphopography and hip-hop feminist research are essential to this research as they offer frameworks that center Black women's lived experiences, cultural production, and political expression in Atlanta. Spady's concept of hiphopography "remixes the historical record" by valuing the narratives of hip-hop practitioners and positioning them as co-authors of their cultural history (Alim et al., 2023; Spady, 2013). This methodology allows for an embodied, community-rooted analysis of hip-hop that resists traditional, outsider approaches. I explore this notion for Black women in Atlanta acknowledges the contradictions of loving a culture [the Dirty South] that often marginalizes them while also creating space for resistance, joy, and

identity formation. Together, hiphopography and hip-hop feminism provide the tools to study Atlanta's dance culture not only as performance, but as political commentary and spatial reclamation.

Methodology

For this dissertation, I utilize a qualitative focus group methodology to center the collective experiences, insights, and cultural knowledge of Black women dancers who grew up in Atlanta's early Southern hip-hop scene. Focus groups allow for rich, dialogue exchanges that reflect the communal nature of hip-hop culture and Black feminist epistemologies. To contextualize participant perspectives and backgrounds, I use Qualtrics to gather demographic information such as age, location, dance background, and social media usage. This data supports a deeper understanding of how identity and geography inform their engagement with hip-hop dance, while honoring their narratives as critical forms of knowledge production and cultural resistance.

Reflecting on my approach to a Southern hip-hop-based research method, I recognize the importance of conducting applied hip-hop studies research and writing. My research methodology significantly emphasizes ethical and culturally inclusive practices that incorporate the voices of Black women. My approach considers how Black women's voices have often been excluded and marginalized within hip-hop studies research. Additionally, as a member of the Southern hip-hop community, I maintain a high level of ethics when approaching participants in the research. Recognizing that I am the researcher and have control over the study, I am responsible for ensuring that I provide a communicative and safe space for the participants to express themselves within the research framework. This involves acknowledging that there may

be Black individuals within the LGBTQ community who have also experienced classism and endured experiences of misogynoir within hip-hop. In this study, the incorporation of hip-hop feminism as a particular site of identity and representation extends the context of Southern hip-hop for a young Black woman like me. Growing up in the South, I am familiar with many of the dance styles, call-and-response songs, and sexually oriented themes that have impacted my experiences of growing up in Atlanta. This perspective gives me the ultimate insight as an insider to discuss many cultural cornerstones that make Atlanta an ideal site to explore Southern dance experiences. I do find that the privilege of being a Black woman with multiple degrees does position me as an outsider, considering I am not a part of the music industry, which may impact how certain information is perceived and understood in the context of the music industry. The exploration of the various dances that have emerged from Metro Atlanta has not only influenced Southern hip-hop culture but also how Southern dances reflect different Southern sounds, locations, positions, and demographics. Southern states are home to culturally relevant cities that captivate the South's most prominent dance hits and places that birthed the evolution of different dance styles such as snap music, the strip club, bass/booty, crunk, hand games, and majorette dancing found at historically Black colleges and universities. I explore Southern hip-hop dance in Atlanta due to the lack of research and hip-hop feminist analyses regarding Southern hip-hop dance experiences. Additionally, my connections as an Atlanta native allow me to capture the visual transformations that impact Black women and girls in neighborhoods like Decatur, The West End, Vine City, The Old 4th Ward, Grant Park, and Sweet Auburn, which adds nuance to studying Black women and girls within hip-hop and Black feminist studies. Historically Black neighborhoods have significant cultural and historical roots connected to the Civil Rights Movement and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Furthermore, the West

End is home to the largest consortium of universities in the world known as the Atlanta University Center Consortium (AUCC), which includes Spelman College, Morehouse College, Clark Atlanta University, Morris Brown, Interdenominational Theological Center, and Morehouse School of Medicine. These locations' connection to Southern hip-hop dance culture in Atlanta is historical and social in nature, as they serve as lyrical themes, backdrops for music videos, and sites of dance performances.

My positionality acknowledges that Black women and girls have consistently been influential supporters and creators of Southern hip-hop, expressing themselves through diverse hip-hop styles, body politics, and identity. It's important to acknowledge that Black women are active participants in hip-hop culture, and their unique Southern style and influence deserve recognition. I intentionally delve into the evolution of Southern dance, culture, and geography, exploring how they intertwine with the specific livelihoods cultivated by Black women and girls in their environment. I aim to maintain the focus on understanding the significance of the term "Dirty South" within the musical genre and how Dirty South feminism relates to components of Black feminism and womanism, considering the distinct geographical experiences of Black women in the South. In my research, I highlight dance performances that reflect the experiences of Black womanhood and girlhood in specific Southern cities, which have been important contexts for the expression of Black women's bodily and cultural identities.

Setting

To take an intimate approach to exploring Black women's connections to Southern hip-hop dance in Atlanta, the small focus group provided a safe online space (via Zoom) for Black women and femmes to discuss their communal and geographical connection to the South. While Atlanta is a large city comprising different neighborhoods and zones, I wanted to include all major communities and neighborhoods where specific dances emerged in the Metro Atlanta area. I conducted the online study from my home. Participants joined a Zoom focus group from various locations across the U.S., identifying Atlanta as their place of birth and where they spent their childhood and adulthood. However, during the study participants came from various locations and moved to cities as they entered adulthood. The cities they migrated to included Atlanta, Houston, Nashville, and Minneapolis.

Sample of Convenience

I paid particular attention to recruiting women from the Metro Atlanta area, which includes the West, South, and East regions and neighborhoods. I find that there is no limit to the participant's location from Atlanta who have migrated to other US cities considering Southern hip-hop and Black women's geography research has validated that various cities are not just a physical location but also a state of mind or cultural connection (Collins, 2000; Miller, 2008; Thompson, 2007). Therefore, self-identified "Atlanta" natives are acceptable without the confines of the city limits if they have been displaced outside of the city due to gentrification or live in another state. The sampling method utilized a convenience sampling. These methods were selected based on the type of information I anticipated, along with validating a specific demographic of people from Atlanta, Georgia. To broaden relevant perspectives within hip-hop,

this study highlights the spectrum of LGBTQIA+ identities to challenge notions of hegemony and heteronormativity in the genre. Self-identified Black women who identify as Afro-Latina, Afro-European, and Afro-Caribbean, as well as those who are queer or transgender, are essential for supporting Black feminist epistemologies and affirming Black women’s identities in hip-hop.

The Participants

Focus group participants were selected based on their connection to Atlanta’s hip-hop scene, but most importantly, as residents of the Metro Atlanta area. Representing a diverse range of experiences, these women and fems share a deep connection to Atlanta’s vibrant dance and music scenes. Participants ranged from scholars, educators, community organizers, and cultural advocates, whose insights were critical in illuminating the intersections of identity, performance, and regional influence. Their collective contributions provide a nuanced understanding of how Black women and fems shape and sustain the city’s cultural legacy.

Table 1. - Demographics

Name	Gender	Age	City*
Keisha	Female	30	Douglas, GA*
Nia	Non-binary	33	Atlanta, GA
Jasmine	Female	32	Atlanta, GA
Imani	Female	31	Tucker, GA*
Ebony	Female	30	Riverdale, GA

*Demographic information about study participants. Participants born in another Southern city outside the Metro Atlanta area.

Demographic Survey

From the demographic survey, four Black women and one Black non-binary femme born or lived within the metro Atlanta area served as participants in the study. Regarding the participant's gender identity, majority of participants identified as female, and one identified as

non-binary/queer. For location, participants identified they lived within cities within the metro Atlanta area, such as Tucker, Clarkston, and Douglasville. However, most participants stated in the focus group that they had lived in Fulton County or the City of Atlanta during their adult lives. The survey participants reported that they had previous experiences with dancing, both in social and professional contexts. They also expressed that they had memorable dance experiences and connections with people in their community, associating these moments with specific dances that linked to those memories and connections.

Focus Groups as a Research Method

Applying a qualitative, hiphopography, feminist ethnographic study is essential for exploring cultural themes in Southern hip-hop dance cultures in Atlanta. This dissertation examines how Black women, and non-binary individuals form dance communities through connections with friends, family, and shared experiences in the South. These communities shape Southern hip-hop culture and create spaces where cultural identity, resistance, and joy are expressed through movement. By focusing on Atlanta—a city with a long, thriving history of Southern hip-hop dance—I highlight Black women's roles in sustaining and innovating this often-overlooked subculture. Although my dissertation draws on a few methodological tools that resemble an ethnographic practice, such as focus groups and close attention to cultural practices, it does not take the form of a traditional ethnography. Usually, an ethnography involves long-term immersion within a community, participant observation of daily life, and the production of complexities of lived experience (Barnes, 2021). My project does not rely on extended fieldwork or participant observation as its central methodology, nor does it comprehensively document the entirety of Southern hip hop dance culture. Instead, the research grounds the methodological

framing and critical questions that can serve as a foundation for future ethnographic research on Southern hip-hop studies and Black women's engagement with it. To authentically reflect their voices and experiences, I employed a focus group research method rooted in Black feminist thought, including focus groups centered on collective reflection and dialogue.

Focus groups are deeply aligned with Black feminist research methodologies because they prioritize collective dialogue, lived experience, and knowledge production rooted in community. Black feminist scholars have long emphasized that knowledge emerges through conversation, storytelling, and relationships (Chepp, 2015; Clay, 2007; Taylor, 1998). By centering Black women in communal discussion, focus groups disrupt hierarchies between researcher and participant, embodying what Patricia Hill Collins calls "dialogical knowledge" (2000, p. 260). Focus group studies also offer insight into shared experiences, social norms, and collective meaning-making (Krueger & Casey, 2015). For this dissertation, which centers the lived experiences of Black women in Atlanta's Southern hip-hop dance culture, focus groups are particularly valuable. They create a space for participants to reflect on dance, identity, place, and resistance, mirroring the communal nature of the culture. Focus groups offer several key advantages. First, they create a collaborative environment that encourages participants to build on each other's ideas, producing rich, layered data (L. Morgan, 1997). This dynamic is especially important when studying cultural and creative expressions that emerge from community practices, such as Southern hip-hop dance. Second, focus groups align with Black feminist methodologies by prioritizing dialogue, collective storytelling, and shared epistemologies (Collins, 2000). They allow participants to name and theorize their own experiences in ways that challenge dominant narratives. Third, focus groups can reveal patterns of thought, language, and experience that might not surface in individual interviews, especially around sensitive or

culturally specific topics like race, gender, and regional identity (Pough, 2004). I argue that if facilitated thoughtfully and ethically, focus groups are a powerful tool for co-creating knowledge with marginalized communities. In this dissertation, they are data collection tools and methods of cultural affirmation—creating space for Black women to speak, reflect, and reclaim their narratives within Southern hip-hop.

Utilizing a focus group is vital to this research because it centers the voices and lived experiences of Black women who actively shape Southern hip-hop culture. Focus groups create a space for collective reflection, allowing participants to engage in dialogue that reveals shared cultural meanings, social dynamics, and localized understandings of dance, identity, and resistance (L.Morgan, 1997). This method aligns with hip-hop feminist research by valuing communal knowledge production and creating room for complexity and contradiction (Pough, 2004). It also deepens the reach of hip-hopography by providing a platform where participants can co-author the narrative, challenge dominant assumptions, and reframe their experiences on their own terms (Hesse-Biber, 2013). In this study, therefore, they are not just data collection tools but acts of cultural reclamation, affirming the importance of Black women's collective knowledge in academic and artistic spaces.

Procedure and measures

The planned research method initially involved using a photovoice approach to collect data, highlighting the physical movements and techniques prevalent in various popular Southern hip-hop dances. Unfortunately, this method was unsuccessful due to the inadequate security measures of Qualtrics and a lack of interest among potential participants who were willing to be on camera. But, after conducting thorough research and consulting with my dissertation committee, it was suggested that I employ a focus group as an alternative data collection method.

The shift in methodology created a unique opportunity to explore a more nuanced approach to gathering information. It involved facilitated discussions where participants could actively engage in the conversation while concentrating on key themes and elements central to the research.

To recruit participants, I utilized social media and implemented a convenience sampling technique to solicit interested participants. Despite these efforts, I could only assemble a small group of five participants for a single focus group session. I compensated participants \$100 honorarium for their time and commitment during the hour and forty-five-minute session. Before completing the focus group, participants completed a survey to provide context for the study, including detailed demographic information and contact details. After completing the survey, they filled out a consent form and indicated their availability for the focus group. Once I collected this information, consent forms, and availability data, I scheduled a suitable time for the focus group.

During the focus group session, participants joined via Zoom and introduced themselves, sharing their first names and last initials, nor were they required to turn on their cameras. Participants also had the opportunity to share their pronouns, current location, and place of birth. Throughout the focus group discussions, participants responded to questions designed to explore their understanding and connections to Southern hip-hop while living in Atlanta. Despite the safety precautions of the participant's identity regarding confidentiality, there was minimal risk. Through various conversations, participants addressed each other by name to connect similar ideas or memories and to validate and agree on various cultural moments. Thus, many of the interview questions that covered their familiarity with Atlanta in social, cultural, and political contexts helped garner a rich and engaging conversation. Participants were also asked about their

history with dance and whether any connections with family or friends related to their knowledge of dance and its social aspects. As a result, they discovered many similarities between their relationship and dance during their conversations.

After finishing the focus group, I thanked the participants for their involvement and compensated them as previously agreed upon in the consent form. I transcribed the conversations and began organizing the data to identify trends, themes, and codes for the subsequent analysis. Additionally, I assigned pseudonyms to participants to safeguard their confidentiality and privacy in the data write-up. I made sure the coding process was consistent with the current literature and highlighted the deliberate approaches important in Black feminist methodologies. This approach helped identify key themes that would shed light on their perspectives as sources of oral history and memory formation.

Coding

To ensure accurate data coding, I used In-vivo coding with a hiphopography and hip-hop feminist perspective during the data collection. In-vivo coding involves using participants' own language to categorize and analyze data, which provides a nuanced understanding of their experiences and perspectives. This method is particularly beneficial when exploring cultural or subcultural phenomena since In-vivo can capture the authenticity and uniqueness of participants' voices (Saldaña, 2012). In-vivo coding is relevant for capturing the unique vernacular, expressions, and terms specific to Southern hip-hop culture. This allows the exploration of the language used by Black women when they described their engagement with Southern hip-hop dance.

By incorporating participants' language into the coding process, I ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the authentic voices of the participants being studied, thereby improving the validity and cultural relevance of the findings. In the context of researching the connections between Black women, Southern hip-hop dance, and hip-hop feminist theory, employing In-vivo coding offers valuable insights into the participants' experiences and history (Manning, 2017). I utilized a combination of coding cycles to contribute to more robust conceptual and theoretical insights, enriching the overall understanding of the phenomenon or process under investigation. I conducted three rounds of coding to get the most accurate and consistent process to connect participants' thoughts and feelings about Southern hip-hop and Atlanta dance cultures. In-vivo coding helps centralize the participants' perceptions of their everyday lives, memories, and experiences living and growing up in Atlanta, Georgia. To continue a hiphopography approach to the research and build out Dirty South feminism as a hip-hop feminist framework, coding for themes required multiple rounds of coding, rereading the transcripts, and annotating for large categories and subcategories. The following section will highlight the findings in the coding process, where I will explore the process of coding, categorizing, and detailing the thematic analysis.

First Round

As I went through the entire coding and categorization process, I solidified the data into four significant categories and twelve subcategories with 68 condensed codes derived from 156 initial codes collected during a one-hour and forty-five-minute interview. For the first round of data analysis, in-vivo coding serves as the primary method, allowing me to immerse myself in the participants' language and expressions. This approach is useful for small-scale studies like

this one, providing a detailed examination of individual narratives within the context of Southern hip-hop dance and hip-hop feminist theory. During the first round, 156 initial codes were identified. Notably, the engagement primarily focused on the overarching conversation among the participants, rather than on the individual responses directed towards me.

Consequently, many initial codes consisted of concise phrases that expressed emotions, attitudes, behaviors, memories, and moments. This challenge required me to deeply explore individual experiences and their expressions to capture the nuances and diverse perspectives that each participant contributed during the interviews. Therefore, as I moved through the coding and categorization, the aim was to reveal the major themes I anticipated would align with existing research on Southern hip-hop cultures, Black feminist frameworks, and cultural theories related to dance. Additionally, I recognized the significance of preserving the participants' language as potential codes that highlighted the vernacular and terminology essential to Southern culture. It validated the notion that geographical distinctions significantly influence how Black women engage and communicate with one another. From the conversations, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) played a vital role in asserting the authenticity of knowledge-building, community formation, and communication among Black individuals in the South, thus contributing to the emergence of various codes during the initial coding process.

Second Round

Second-cycle methods were more challenging due to the requirement for profound analytical skills in effectively classifying, prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing, and constructing theories. By the end of the second coding round, I condensed the codes into 16 to 19 subcategories. This process necessitated extensive synthesis and integration of various

perspectives, many of which conflicted with participants' emotions, attitudes, memories, and communities. I found this challenge remained consistent through the third round of coding. However, during this process, I began to synthesize concepts that aimed to capture the core elements of dance culture while also identifying crucial components that participants described as integral to their experiences growing up in the South. Furthermore, I observed that some elements of AAVE were lost as I underwent this synthesis. While AAVE is fundamental to the language and culture of the participants, its inclusion limited the scope for adding new themes to the categories.

Additionally, as I annotated numerous subcategories, I encountered the ongoing challenge of distinguishing between what constituted a memory, an aspect of the community, or a specific dance experience. Consequently, I had to establish clear definitions for these subcategories, which would be vital for reference when conducting a more comprehensive data analysis. On the other hand, one of the less demanding aspects of the coding process was differentiating between what constituted Southern culture and what pertained specifically to Atlanta culture. The participants' conversations and the interview questions allowed them to provide a holistic account of their experiences living in the South, encompassing their interactions with other Southern cities. They also collectively reflected on a Southern experience shaped by musical influences from other Southern cities and friends who were not native to Atlanta. Despite the abundance of codes that reflected participants' attitudes and revisited numerous memories and nostalgic moments, I could differentiate between the two and establish subcategories that validated their past experiences and the emotions those experiences elicited. Through the second coding process, I successfully prioritized key elements that aligned with the existing literature on Southern cultures and Atlanta's history, thereby affirming the knowledge

contributed by Black women in the South. These finalizations were carried over into the third round of coding.

Third Round

In the final round of coding, I succeeded in creating four main categories: "Defining the South," "Atlanta," "Dancing," and "Southern women." Each category was subdivided into three subcategories with more minor codes, capturing critical perspectives and opinions from the focus group. One of the most nuanced categories to emerge was "Defining the South." This category encompassed consistent experiences of individuals existing in spaces inherently Southern, enhancing their understanding of themselves and the people around them. It also tied into their attitudes towards Southern music and their ability to identify different Southern hip-hop genres that influenced their perceptions of Southern culture, as the music has a distinct sound that travels across Southern cities. Additionally, participants highlighted vital elements that reflect the history of what is considered inherently Southern culture, such as car culture, fashion, Southern hospitality, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and mobilization within the Southern diaspora. Furthermore, when participants spoke of their lived experiences, "Atlanta" emerged as the second category, revealing three distinct subcategories that highlight Atlanta as a unique Southern city. These subcategories included "politics," which focuses on Atlanta's role in a socio-political context; "culture," emphasizing elements that define Atlanta as a distinct cultural site; and "music," which explores the city's musical heritage and influence on participants.

The "Dancing" category was originally named "performances and dancing," but it was shortened to simply "dancing." Subcategories within this category included "performances,"

"community," and "influences." These subcategories emphasized the specific dance culture highlighted by the women in the interviews. Variations of dance performances surfaced, closely linked to the types of communities that were built around or existed due to dance and the different people participants connected with through dancing.

The final category, "Southern women," was the most challenging to code due to similarities in defining the language and context from participants, since they discuss differences between "power and influence," "attitudes," and "memories." However, I could code the themes accordingly based on the larger context of the conversation in relation to the research questions. Two codes were used to understand this category: first, through the perception of Southern women and how they speak about Southern women, and second, as a category reflecting how Black women build knowledge about themselves in conversation with each other. The subcategory of "power and influence" addressed conversations about cultural and economic power, emphasizing the role of women as foundational to hip-hop production in the South. The subcategory of "attitudes" delved into participants' experiences as Black women and how elements of respectability and safety influenced their feelings about being women in the South and their understanding of the world around them. This often led to challenges in differentiating certain attitudes from memories. While some of these memories could have been categorized under "dancing," it was determined that "memory making" was a vital component of the conversations that participants were having, featuring codes related to collective memory experiences, nostalgia, and dance memories as specific experiences that Black women shared communally within the conversation and as reflections of their past.

In summary, the coding process involved sifting through, organizing, and synthesizing a wealth of data to capture the depth of conversations among the participants. The transcripts were

coded to identify critical elements that best reflected the participants' perspectives and to incorporate key elements from the literature that described how Black women build community and culture through geographical and Southern hip-hop dance, particularly as it emerges from Atlanta. Throughout the coding process, there were moments of success and challenges and often encountered a variety of obstacles and setbacks. However, despite these challenges, I remained fully committed to refining the work to make it suitable for the study of Southern hip-hop. This involved conducting extensive research and analysis to ensure that the project accurately reflected the unique cultural and musical elements of this genre. Additionally, I took great care in selecting participants to participate in the study, carefully considering their backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to gain a well-rounded understanding of the subject matter. Despite the highs and lows of this process, I was determined to see the project through to completion and am proud of the result.

Challenges and Limitations

The primary goal of collecting sufficient data for this research study was to ensure that non-native Southern readers or outsiders to the culture had a clear visual understanding of Southern hip-hop dance. By utilizing convenience sampling, I assembled five participants for one focus group. The chosen sampling methods presented initial difficulties. I invested considerable effort in recruiting interested participants willing to engage with me, even with an honorarium offered. Although I made intentional adjustments to the call for participants across social media platforms and college listservs, few individuals responded. Consequently, I concluded that a convenience sample would be the most effective approach to gather participants.

The second major challenge was scheduling. While I only had five participants, scheduling one meeting for five people across three different time zones was challenging. It took about a month to schedule and arrange the meeting for the focus group. Agreeing on the best time zone, meeting platform, and time of day made the organizational aspect hard. However, I scheduled the interview after shifting and accommodating people's availability. The biggest takeaway from this challenge was accommodating their busy and active lives. I maintained flexibility, patience, and respect for participants. Because this work is foundational to Black feminist ideologies, I was more than receptive to giving the participants grace and time to find an appropriate meeting date that worked for everyone.

The third major challenge was navigating the technology of Zoom. This focus group would have benefited from meeting in person to enhance the collective experience. One significant issue was that one participant's internet signal was weak, and their responses were often muffled or interrupted while speaking. This not only made it difficult for other participants to hear but also complicated the transcription process. Additionally, some voices were distorted on Zoom, making it hard to recognize changes in responses from each person's voice. Consequently, conversations blended, making it difficult to identify who was speaking and complicating participant identification in the transcription. Lastly, while I encouraged participants to use their cameras at their discretion during the study, I considered the challenge of not being able to see participants perform dances or their facial expressions. This challenge highlights the importance of visually experiencing and participating in Atlanta dance performances as a meaningful way to create memories. Even though this approach did not happen, I would like to explore it in future studies.

Limitations of the Methodology

Furthermore, while convenience sampling offers advantages in addressing a focus group situation, the methodology has several limitations. The main restrictions of this method include two types of bias—sampling bias and research bias—and limited representation due to a small group size. Sampling bias limited this study due to the search for specific participants.

Methodological studies highlight that when participants are not chosen randomly from a larger population, it might result in sampling bias. This indicates that the sample may not be typical of the more significant population, and such findings may not apply to other groups, providing a lack of variety. In this case, I believe that with more time to conduct long-term research, there could be a larger representation of Black women and femmes to speak more about their dance experiences coming from different dance communities, such as majorettes, strippers, and choreographers.

Furthermore, a wider age range would have provided greater depth to the history and cultural aspects of the study. The fact that older women influenced many participants in their families highlights the legacy and community impact of Southern hip-hop dance. This study may include minor researcher bias, especially since I sought participants who identified as millennials. As the researcher, I chose participants who were easily accessible and had similar characteristics to the study's focus. Consequently, there is a lack of diversity within the sample, which narrowed the range of opinions and experiences represented in the study. The appearance of research bias in humanities studies that lack a feminist methodology or a critical Black feminist lens can take various forms. Such bias can distort research outcomes and lead to the presentation of results that are both racist and sexist, making them incomprehensive and unrepresentative of a broader population. Furthermore, the bias and the sampling method

employed in this study may be viewed as a form of bias. However, given the misrepresentation and erasure of Black women's achievements and influence within Southern hip-hop, a particular and detailed sampling method is necessary to address this underrepresentation in Southern hip-hop studies. Fortunately, this opens the discourse and the possibility that researcher and sampling bias can be misleading in research that seeks to highlight marginalized voices within disciplines like hip-hop studies.

Conclusion

The third chapter focuses on the methodology used to examine hip-hop feminism in relation to the experiences of Black women growing up in Atlanta, Georgia. It highlights the importance of integrating contemporary views of hip-hop feminism with Black feminist approaches. These methods contribute to understanding the complex relationship between millennial Black women and femmes and hip-hop culture in a region historically defined by the legacy of the Confederacy. The research centers on the subcultures of hip-hop dance and the interplay of identity, community, and memory among Black women in Atlanta within the context of a culturally significant Southern city. The chosen methodology highlighted the impact of hiphopography on hip-hop feminist principles, incorporating qualitative inquiry and acknowledging the diversity of cultural backgrounds, dialects, and racial, ethnic, and gender differences within Black and hip-hop cultures. The chapter also underscores the limitations of exclusively theoretical examinations of hip-hop feminism and the importance of including Black women's voices and lived experiences in the research process. The methodology chosen for this study represents a well-considered approach to comprehensively examine the relationship between Black women, hip-hop culture, and the distinct social, cultural, and historical landscapes

of the South. The emphasis on combining contemporary hip-hop feminism with Black feminist methodologies is particularly relevant given Black women's unique challenges and experiences, especially those hailing from the South. The historical context of the South, with its ties to slavery, the Confederacy, and racial violence, necessitates a research approach that goes beyond theoretical examination to grasp the depth of these connections and contradictions.

As little may be known about the phenomenon being studied, the aim to construct an explanatory theory aligns with the hip-hop feminist research approach. This approach allows for the development of a nuanced understanding of how Black women in Atlanta have contributed to Southern hip-hop culture. The concept of "hiphopography"—a methodological approach that combines ethnography, biography, and both social and oral history—provides a framework for capturing the complex, lived realities of Southern hip-hop culture. More than just a mode of documentation, hiphopography delves into the everyday lives, sounds, movements, and stories of the communities that create and sustain Southern hip-hop. In this context, it serves as a valuable approach to studying the complex world of hip-hop culture and its intersection with the lived experiences of Black women. The incorporation of Black feminist epistemologies and the centralization of Black women's knowledge within the research is a methodological strength. This not only underscores the significance of Black women's roles in shaping culture and society but also highlights the researcher's positionality, thus ensuring transparency in acknowledging the impact of personal perspectives on the research process.

Throughout the coding process, I faced challenges and successes in managing large amounts of responses from the focus groups to capture the richness of participants' perspectives and merge them with relevant elements from the existing literature. This dynamic process is integral to revealing how Black women build community and culture through Southern hip-hop

dance, particularly in the unique context of Atlanta. In summary, the chosen methodology is highly appropriate for the research goals, addressing the complexities of Black women's relationships with hip-hop culture, rooted in their Southern identities. It enables a deeper understanding of the subject matter while acknowledging the researcher's positionality, ensuring a comprehensive and well-informed study. I find that highlighting a Southern hip-hop dance experience is not limited when studying traditional hip-hop dance, such as b-boying and b-girling. The research methodology examines how this experience directly links to the development and curation of Southern Black culture as well as Southern hip-hop studies within the context of Atlanta. Conducting the research in Atlanta, Georgia, serves as the ideal setting for the initial stages of Southern hip-hop dance studies. The Atlanta rap scene and Southern hip-hop studies have yet to fully explore or promote the connections between dance and hip-hop for Black women in the city. The next chapter will thoroughly analyze the insights gathered from the focus group, exploring the diverse experiences of these five Black participants in the context of Southern hip-hop production in Atlanta. This analysis will shed light on their significant contributions and perspectives within the Southern hip-hop dance scene.

Chapter 4: The Results & Defining the South

Atlanta is known for its unique Southern hip-hop scene, vibrant music, and dynamic dance culture. This chapter emphasizes how Black women recognize the city of Atlanta as a foundational region of Southern hip-hop culture. Participants consider Atlanta home to the South's most influential dances and sounds. Recognizing the impact of Atlanta's Southern hip-hop scene and dance cultures, this chapter provides a perspective of Black women and fems who have actively fostered the culture of Southern hip-hop in the city of Atlanta. The chapter presents the results from the contributions and conversations of Southern Black women and fems from the focus group. The insights gained from the focus group provide valuable perspectives into the intricate connections made by Black women through the dance cultures inherent in Southern hip-hop. Furthermore, this chapter presents a contextual perspective of Atlanta's history and cultural impact. It integrates theoretical frameworks that address the cultural impact of Black women and fems in the Southern region. The focus group conversations revealed four interrelated themes illuminating how Black women understand and experience Southern hip-hop culture in Atlanta: Defining the South, Atlanta Dance Culture, Atlanta Culture, and Southern Women's Power and Influence. These themes emerged as participants reflected on their identities, geographies, and cultural practices shaped by the South's complex history and Atlanta's distinct role as a hub for Black creativity. Through storytelling, shared memories, and embodied knowledge, participants articulated how regional identity, dance traditions, and gendered power intersect in their everyday lives. Together, these themes demonstrate how Southern hip-hop is not just a musical genre but a lived and embodied experience that affirms Black womanhood, challenges marginalization, and fosters a sense of belonging rooted in place, rhythm, and resistance.

The data collected has been analyzed to identify significant themes, providing a multifaceted view of the significance and relevance of Black dance cultures in the Southern landscape. The results address my research questions and delve into the future direction of this research, emphasizing its pivotal role in initiating more conversations about the cultural impact of Black women and fems. The discussion of findings in this chapter highlights the empowering role of dance as a tool for engagement intrinsic to Black girlhood play. The findings underscore the importance of acknowledging the cultural significance of Black women and femmes in the South. The conversation indicates that further research is needed to understand their broader contributions and community connections across other Southern cities.

The results examine how hip-hop culture in Atlanta has impacted the larger hip-hop scene in the South, both historically and contemporarily. An important aspect of this investigation is its focus on the participation of Black women and fems in hip-hop culture, which is a notable research gap in the study of Southern hip-hop. By exploring the experiences of Black women in this genre, this study provides a perspective on the role of gender in shaping hip-hop culture in the South. Therefore, I posed these two research questions: (1) *How do Southern hip-hop dance experiences influence the formation of identity and connection to the "Dirty South" among Black women, and in what ways do these experiences contribute to their cultural identity within the city of Atlanta?* and (2) *How do Black women cultivate the sexual, economic, and geographical politics of the Dirty South, and what are the key elements and nuances in Black women's power dynamics, economic influence, and community behaviors in Atlanta?* In this chapter, I present the four major themes that emerged from the focus group to answer the research questions and break down the sub-themes to highlight Black women's specific experiences in Atlanta.

Defining the South

One of the primary themes explored in the study is how participants define Southern culture and what it means to live in the Dirty South. One of the most significant challenges in examining Southern hip-hop is understanding how individuals define themselves, especially as Black women, and their connection to Southern culture. Southern scholars such as Zandria F. Robinson, Regina Bradley, and Jesmyn Ward have significantly contributed to this discourse, aligning with the conversations of Black women that appear in the focus group, specifically, the notion that the intersection of race and regionality plays a role in the everyday experiences of Black people in the South. In addition, exploring country cosmopolitanism and regionality can influence gender norms and roles, reaffirming traditional gender behaviors due to the blend of rural and urban traditions (Bradley, 2021; Ward & Taylor, 2016). I explore this specifically in the context of Atlanta as a major cosmopolitan city. Many of Atlanta's history and cultural components are built on the deliberate efforts made by its Black community. Here, Black women and girls challenge common misconceptions about their regional identity, thus expanding on Bradley's ideas about Atlanta's development of a distinct hip-hop identity that incorporates the city's unique aesthetics and experiences. Through their unique interpretation and understanding of being a part of the culture, participants have contributed to the genre's evolution and defined what it means to be Southern and live in the Dirty South.

These themes explain how Black women define the South as residents of Atlanta, detailing the variety of Southern behaviors, diversity across the South, and the type of music the region produces. By identifying the South's unique cultural landscape through a more contemporary lens and perspective, participants were able to redefine the essence of Southern culture. Additionally, the results show a comprehensive analysis of the cultural norms and

practices that shape Southern culture, as well as an examination of how Black women have challenged the traditional notions of Southern culture and provided their interpretations. The value of this perspective from the participants centers on the importance of understanding and respecting Black women's knowledge of the South and how their influences have been decentered due to the perception of Black men's musical and cultural contributions. Thus, the subsequent sections shed light on how Black women define the elements of Southern hip-hop culture.

Southern Culture

Black Southern components of hip-hop culture are characterized by a blend of traditional Southern aesthetics with modern urban and rural elements. This includes call-and-response music, a unique fashion style suited for the Southern climate, and a distinctive Southern drawl with regional vernacular and traditions. As a result, the South has a vibrant and distinct identity that sets itself apart from other regional hip-hop cultures. While cities across the South share these similarities, Atlanta's cultural markers differentiate it from other Southern cities. Participants explain the complexities of different Southern regions' cultures and how the diversity of Southern cities can challenge external perceptions. Nia reflects on this:

“...it's hard to think of the South as a monolith; let's say even the plural differences between the South's most important cities, Houston, Miami, Atlanta, and New Orleans, are as stark as they are, but yet when we try to talk about a culture—a Dirty South culture—we have to put them all together.”

To define the South, another participant, Ebony, similarly expresses the larger culture of what the Dirty South means, “When I hear the term Dirty South, I think of culture mainly, but I think of everything that comes with it, the Blackness, the Southern hospitality...” One of the most critical aspects of conversations about the Southern diaspora is how they define the South and what draws them to it. Despite having traveled to other regions in the U.S., they believe the South has a unique and distinct atmosphere. They find that the South has a unique energy that is not found in other regions, and it has a specific vibe that makes it stand out. Notably, the participants in these conversations use the term "vibe," a familiar expression used by Black people to describe a particular feeling. Miles (2023) also explains that vibe is an essential tool Black Southerners use to make sense of the world. The vibe is more than intuition; it is understood as the social climate that emerges when ideas, people, and spaces intersect (Miles, 2023). From the conversations with participants, a vibe is understood as an energy level among people in a specific location or at an event. It is a collective experience that measures a place's environment and overall mood. The consistent usage of terminology like "vibes" and "feelings" highlights the importance of the sensory experience the South provides.

The concept of vibe in Southern hip-hop speaks to the atmosphere that creates a dance space. This also informs how hip-hop music establishes a space that is both geographical and kinetic. Throughout the conversation, a vibe speaks to how participants identify how movement and space enhance one's consideration of how dance develops behaviors and identities in The Dirty South. Ultimately, the interplay of vibe, space, and movement in the Dirty South not only enriches the cultural landscape but also shapes the unique identities of those who inhabit it, creating a vibrant tapestry that encapsulates the essence of Southern hip-hop and its connection to the region's culture.

Behaviors of the South

Participants' responses were particularly significant in providing descriptive and insightful explanations of behaviors familiar and unique to the South. Through their responses, the participants shared similar understandings of what it is like to live in the South through core themes such as the idea of taking no shit, sharing music, resilience, ratchet, and parental influence. During the focus group, many participants discussed the impact of the strong Southern women in their lives, including their mothers, grandmothers, and aunties. These women were a source of inspiration and motivation for them. They taught them the values of resilience, strength, and independence and encouraged them to speak up for themselves and others. Participants also mentioned that Southern hip-hop music contained messages of empowerment. Thus, because participants are a part of Southern culture, they experienced a culture that demanded respect, and they learned to call out inappropriate behavior and not tolerate nonsense. Keisha explains:

“I feel like the South prepared me to get in front of whoever the fuck I wanna get in front of and say whatever the fuck I wanna say and what I need to say. And it's just been a beautiful thing for me.”

Jasmine also expresses a similar perspective, “I wouldn't say I had an attitude, but I had an aura about me in the sense of like I wasn't taking no shit. I ain't never took no shit.” But, within this conversation, participants ultimately spoke about how Black women have influenced their understanding of Black womanhood and what that meant to be a Black woman in the South.

Through doing so, they referenced a variety of Black Southern hip-hop rappers who they felt carried a specific behavior that demanded respect but also validated the power that Black women had and could have due to what Jasmine refers to as “boss bitch culture.” Similarly, participants connected with the South's larger economic landscape. They identified things such as gentrification and low economic status as a point of reference to the culture in which Black women have existed. They also witnessed their culture from Black women and their families, allowing them to embrace what resilience means and looks like as they navigate the world. Their conversation aligns with a similar dialog that Atlanta hip-hop artists often discuss regarding the social and economic landscape, the displacement, and gentrification of Black communities within the city. Jasmine explains, “I'm confident that there's no amount of adversity that I can't withstand because of some of the things I experienced growing up in Atlanta.” Kiesha also expresses:

“...because of the experiences that I had early on growing up under certain conditions and circumstances, I've been able to maneuver in a way that almost takes the street knowledge and transforms it into, I don't know, professional.”

The responses from participants reflect Black women's attitudes and how they navigate the world. It is unique because it centers on Atlanta as a reference point for Black women's identities and experiences. It traces the genealogy of the discussions that reveal how participants perceive themselves, demonstrate resilience, and demand respect. They exemplify their ability to succeed and thrive from the nuanced cultural elements within Southern hip-hop culture. Participants discussed that parental influence played a significant role in how they learned about Southern

hip-hop music and culture. This was one of the most important themes from the focus group. While participants acknowledged the unique musical sound that defines Southern hip-hop music, the music that has cultivated memory and communal connections stems from their relationships with their mothers and other women and their family or friend group. Ultimately, I thought it was noteworthy that Black women in the South were building such a unique bond with their mothers through hip-hop music since it is often shamed because of its unique lyrics and songs that call for booty shaking or visual images that highlight video vixens, strippers, and women's promiscuity. Imani expressed that the way women dance in the South wasn't a sexual experience, "Everyone does it, mom does it, aunt, everyone does it. So, it was never like sexualized to me..." Jasmine also explained her relationship and memories with her mother:

"I thought about my mama. My mama had me when she was 17. Similar to what Nia said. Like my parents were young, I was listening to Project Pat; we were not listening to everybody [R&B]. We were listening to 'bang bang shoot 'em up and sell dope' [music]."

Nia also shared a similar connection with her parents,

"Southern hip-hop music has raised me. I had very young parents, so I was the kid whose parents listened to both DMX and OutKast in the car. From an early age, like I just had Goodie Mob and OutKast albums, you know, spoon-fed to me from a young'un. So, I think that was quintessential to me coming of age..."

Southern Hip-Hop Music

Most importantly, participants expressed that their understanding of the South and how they defined it represents how they remembered and connected to the Southern hip-hop music scene in Atlanta. Participants discussed that many of the songs familiar to Atlanta and the South have a certain level of simplicity and particular instructional lyrics with a unique beat to promote dancing. The participants, primarily millennials, recall that their main memories of Southern hip-hop music begin in the late '90s and are mainly focused on the early 2000s hip-hop scene. They mentioned that most of the Atlanta music they know comes from the crunk and snap era. They also confirmed that Southern hip-hop music from different parts of the South shares a similar sound, which artists from other regions of the U.S. have tried to emulate. This sound still sets the standard for current hip-hop. Additionally, participants remembered when they considered it meaningful that hip-hop music was spread by word of mouth, through interactions with friends at school, and during their visits to the skating rink. Ebony explains:

“Like you hear the music at the skating rink, go to school, then you hear more music and you are like, okay, I can't wait till we go back to the skating rink so I can hear more music and learn all these dances.”

Her reflection explains the communal culture of sharing music and awareness of Southern hip-hop music through school and local youth hangout spots such as the skating rink. Participants spoke about key aspects that define the South by acknowledging its diversity. They were aware of the different sub-genres of Southern hip-hop while also identifying Atlanta as a unique Southern city where they built specialized music connections and memories. They

emphasized that the South, particularly the Dirty South, has a distinct cultural identity that diverges from other regional cities. Their reflections explain the intricate landscape of Southern identity, acknowledging its diversity and rejecting the monolithic viewpoint of the South, which is often imposed by other hip-hop regions. Despite societal stigmas, the special bond between Black women in the South and the influence of Southern hip-hop music emerged as a conduit for shared experiences, familial ties, and cherished memories that define their experiences.

Analysis

The impact of how participants think and define the South revolves around visibility, community, and identity. I notice that many conversations lean in on similar arguments found among hip-hop feminist scholars who discuss how Black women often seek visibility within hip-hop spaces as a communal and familiar space of existence. However, I've learned through these conversations that Black women from the South heavily rely on family and how other women in their community have integrated hip-hop into their lives to connect with their daughters. Additionally, the practice of sharing and exchange serves as an entry point for participants to understand and spread Southern culture based on what they see and hear. The complexity of how participants understand the Dirty South lies in their awareness of the disenfranchisement of Black people living in Atlanta and how racial and gender politics shape their social and political beliefs. Addressing issues like gentrification or acknowledging the effects of single-mother households within the Black community plays a crucial role in their reality and provides a distinct perspective on understanding their world. While single-parent households are not exclusive to the South or Black families, I find this discussion significant because the Black women in the participants' lives create space for dance as a form of connection and cultural

expression. The Black women in their lives are not only independent and strong, but they are also choreographers and dynamic. Ultimately, participants' understanding of the Dirty South highlights systemic issues like racial and gender politics, gentrification, and the complexities of young single-mother households. However, these households are not sites of struggle but are spaces where Black women choreograph culture and identity through dance. These women are portrayed as independent and strong and dynamic creators who shape Black vernacular dance and identity. Dance becomes a geographic and cultural marker, reinforcing the centrality of Black dance cultures in shaping Southern identity and enhancing meaningful communal connections.

Dancing in Atlanta

The conversation about dancing in Atlanta details the intention and influence behind how hip-hop dances are shared, passed down, and understood. This discussion sheds light on the dance culture specific to Atlanta and highlights the differences in various dance cultures among other Southern cities. Additionally, leaning into the history and influence of Black life and communities in Atlanta emphasizes a deep understanding of the cultivation of dance communities among Black women and girls. The study's findings highlight similar historical processes of how Black communities-built knowledge around musical traditions and dance practices. Each sub-theme details a specific process that reflects the impact of instructional dance songs popular during the participants' girlhood and emphasizes the larger conversation about how hip-hop dance evolves to influence current youth cultures. The discussions and conversations among the participants that emerged from the sub-themes of dancing extend the theoretical work toward understanding Black women's unique connection with the South. These

discussions centered on a general understanding of performance, how it fostered community through dance, and the unique influences that shaped their experiences of specific instructional dances from their girlhood. While much of their girlhood knowledge is linked to hip-hop instructional music, Atlanta is the foundation for those memories.

Performances

The participants' dance performance experiences revealed various topics, showcasing a strong Southern communal influence. They expressed similar attitudes towards dancing and shared their unique experiences, including being introduced to booty shaking/popping, gaining insights into diverse dance practices and routines, reflecting on community or school-based dance experiences, and expressing their feelings about popular dances. Interestingly, the participants also emphasized the significance of strip clubs as venues where dance performances intersect with societal norms and expressions of identity, adding a complex dimension to their understanding of dance within Southern hip-hop cultures. Notably, the participants' discussions centered on reflections on popular dances, their dance evolution and efforts, and their role in forging communal connections with other Black women and girls growing up. Participants discussed various memories about dancing. What stood out the most was that all participants noted that other Black girls or women taught them specific dance moves. This sparked conversations about how some dances were frustrating, while others were simple and easy to learn. This amplifies the notion that Black girl play included creating different types of dances that strongly influenced their girlhood but can have various levels of difficulty regarding choreography. Jasmine says, "...all of the songs were very direct, so you had no choice but to learn to dance." Jasmine's comment highlights that many of the dances influenced her

participation. Because of a song's popularity, it became a cultural norm to hear and perform these songs in social settings. Imani also addresses the popularity of many local Atlanta dances,

“It is a core memory, y'all, because when I first got here, that was just so foreign to me, but like everybody was doing it, and it was so much fun, and it was like everywhere, like at the skating rink [*sic*], it was at school, football games, basketball games.”

Imani's point led to a discussion among participants, where they highlighted many moments that influenced their teenage years and linked them to different neighborhoods in Atlanta. Imani's reflection is also significant, as she was born in New Orleans but moved to Atlanta after Hurricane Katrina. Being in a new Southern city like Atlanta kept her connected to the hip-hop scene in her community. It's worth highlighting the evolving influences and songs that emerged from different neighborhoods of Atlanta produced a plethora of hip-hop dance songs at the time. From the rise of the Atlanta Bass era, the impact of Snap and Crunk Fortunately, through the multitude of videos created and shared by Black women and girls, the conflict of privilege and the issue of cultural appropriation diminishes the ability for them to be credited for their creativity in their performances. As the impact of going viral on TikTok becomes more apparent and studied, there is a phenomenon of virality that centers on white privilege and the algorithm's ability to center non-Black creators on the app. White TikTok content creators have often co-opted many popular dances on TikTok within the past five years with larger platforms. They stole the dances and made them mainstream because of their large presence and privilege on TikTok. This inevitably creates a digital media space of cultural

appropriation where popular white content creators can benefit economically and socially from the different dances that Black creators have created.

White creators on TikTok have gained partnerships, brand deals, TV show opportunities, interviews, and recognition as the creators or leaders of dance challenges (Sinke, 2020). However, it is significant to highlight that the perception and representation of Black women and girls' ability to create content on social media platforms like TikTok reflects the presence of Black girlhood in social media. The digital space Black girls occupy has expanded their ability to find joy and express themselves culturally through content creation. There is a wide range of dances from different regions of the Black community, and a variety of songs are created by Black artists that Black women and girls can perform to. Recently, there have been dance challenges on social media that incorporate movements and performances of Black majorette dancing, hip-hop dancing, and various forms of kinetic orality. These dances are usually performed by Black girls. However, how these performances are portrayed on social media can be quite different from the cultural connection and understanding within the Black community (Boffone, 2022; Brown, 2022; Victoria, 2023). Often, non-Black TikTok users appropriate these dance forms and performances without any understanding of their cultural significance. Similarly, Black women and girls also use AAVE to communicate and express themselves on social media. Unfortunately, this language is often co-opted by non-Black communities who misuse it in context because they lack the cultural connection and understanding that Black people have. The misuse of AAVE serves as a form of expression and communication within the Black community, and its appropriation can be viewed as disrespectful and insensitive, which is explored further in Chapter 5.

Additionally, the emergence of social media and the internet changes how Black girls are viewed and helps them create a digital culture, thanks to the virality of dance videos on YouTube and homemade music videos from other local kids in their community. In contrast, sharing dances among friends and family served as the traditional way of passing down rhythm and movement. This underscores the influence of music as a community-oriented kinetic practice, shaping how participants interacted and engaged in dancing with their loved ones. Participants convey that many of these influences came from other girls in their community and were not necessarily linked to sex or the intention of having sexual relations with boys diverging from the dichotomy and adultification of Black girlhood. Contrary to stereotypes about Black girls being impressionable, participants recognized from a young age that their dance performances are primarily influenced by song lyrics that promotes booty shaking as a fun way to showcase their dance moves among friends and family. Imani explains, “[Dancing] with my friends was just a way of having fun and being free. I didn't always associate it with a guy.” Ebony also reflected on a similar thought,

“...it was a vibe. It was really fun. And I was I like, I wanna be like them. I wanna do what the bigger kids do. I wanna, you know, twerk booty shake, whatever. I didn't call it twerking. [It was booty shaking then].”

Notably, the engagement Southern Black girls have with movement—particularly twerking or booty shaking—carries a distinct cultural place in the South. Recognizing the differences in regional cultures that shape hip-hop music, the South reveals a nuance in how Black girls view their bodies, play and joy, which often appears in popular festivals, events, and street fairs that

are also connected to Southern Black culture history. For example, Freaknik, which represented a unique intersection of Black youth culture, music, entrepreneurship, and community-building, served as a cultural influence for the rise of Atlanta's hip-hop scene. Jasmine explains how growing up in Mechanicsville near Freaknik influenced her,

"I started seeing people booty shaking cuz that's what we used to call it. It was my auntie [and] them at the house parties and stuff. And like, I grew up downtown, so like Freaknik and all that stuff happened on the streets where I live, like McDaniel Street in downtown is where I grew up. So, the parades of Freaknik would be on my street. "I saw it, but I was never interested in that way. However, at events like birthday parties, our parents would be dancing, and then someone would start shaking their booty, and I'd be like 'I'm just doing what y'all doing!'"

Freaknik coincided with the rise of Atlanta as a central hub for hip-hop and Southern Black culture was a breeding ground for musical artists, DJs, and dance trends that would later define the region. The event showcased the energy of bass music, Southern hip-hop, and Atlanta's dance culture, influencing artists and genres that would shape the industry, from OutKast and Lil Jon to the rise of twerking in the South. But at the time, participants discussed booty shaking as one of the more popular dances discussing Southern dance performances. However, they were most familiar with and engaged in a variety of popular dances that emerged during their teenage years, somewhat saturating the variation of dances. They shared how those dances shaped their friendships. I also noticed how they were able to engage with each other and reminisce about the

different dances they remembered from their past. Nia identifies many of the popular Atlanta-based dances:

“I mean, the Bankhead Bounce wasn't that hard. [I feel the same way with ‘Lean Wit It, Rock wit It’ and ‘Snap Yor Fingers.’ It was just moving back and forth. I don't think ‘Beef It Up’ is that hard either. I think that's what's dope about all of them. Unless you're thinking about ‘Whoop Rico’ or you're putting together a whole snap routine with the crew.”

To highlight the work of how Black girls play and how Black girls can build musical traditions and kinetic orality, participants revealed they not only learned dances from certain Atlanta-based hip-hop artists but also created other dances and choreographies in girl groups and formed larger dance circles and dance cyphers with each other. Imani reflects on this experience:

“[It was hard for me and my friends] to try to make a whole dance routine outta all the dances coming out during that time. I remember at the skating rink, people would like to spray paint [their clothes]. There was like a spray painter at Golden Glide [skating rink] and they would spray paint your team’s name. We were the Topnotch Divas. This sounds so insane [laughs]. I remember me and my friend literally rehearsed cuz she lived near Wesley Chapel which wasn’t too far from the area of these dances...”

Similar to how participants defined their experiences, they spoke about another recurring theme with dancing and its influence on building community. They learned dances and built bonds with

their family by learning from their parents or other women in their families. Nia discusses their mother's dance influence on their childhood:

“...my mom calls bass [music] skate rink music and she was a majorette in high school. She had big dreams of actually being like a majorette at Morris Brown. But life didn't work out the way that she wanted it to. But my mom always danced at home and taught me how to dance, and we always danced together. I was always hip to whatever we were listening to as we got older. So, like she knew, you know, the ‘Goodies’ video and the ‘Like a Boy’ video choreography just as much as we did.”

Ebony also explains how her dances were influenced by her cousins and that they watched music videos together to learn.

“I lived in my grandma's house. It was a bunch of us. All my cousins lived there too. So, I'm like seven and I had another cousin that was eight and then her sisters were like 12, 15, 16. We used to always be in the basement, and they would just say, ‘Hey, let's turn on some music videos.’”

Participants discussed a lot of their dance influences and spoke about the different groups of people they interacted with to learn these dances, they not only socialized with their family members and friends. A lot of the participants lived in different areas in Atlanta, which exposed them to specific dances and gave them insight into the city's demographic. Many participants explained that they grew up in Black communities or attended Black schools, which allowed

them access to be a part of this production of Black popular culture. They were also influenced by Black popular culture due to their physical location, as they frequented various neighborhoods in Atlanta. This spatial awareness that participants draw on highlights how Black culture is produced and how Black people engage with it. In the context of Southern hip-hop, many of these dances encourage different layers of kinetic orality and place participants in situations where the connections made through these dances help link them to broader aspects of Black culture. Black girls build knowledge specifically within hip-hop culture, which contributes to the connection of community, language, culture, and identity concerning space and geography.

Furthermore, the influence of space on how Black women and girls share language and movement highlights the significance of Southern hip-hop music and how the dances facilitate connections and map Atlanta. Black girls assert power within Black geographies through dance, using movement as a form of resistance, cultural memory, and spatial reclamation. Black geographies, as defined by McKittrick (2006), are spaces shaped by Black life, agency, and history despite the power dynamics within Southern hip-hop. Within these spaces, dance is not solely a performance but an embodied practice of self-definition and identity.

Participants built a foundation of friendship, community, and culture around the emerging dances in Atlanta during the '90s and 2000s. Because participants grew up in the prime era of snap music, crunk music, and the intentionality of bass music calling for listeners to booty shake, Black girls' connection to hip-hop centers around dancing. Many artists or songs that participants reflected on and remembered were often instructional songs, and participants cultivated their social dance communities. I find it most interesting within this focus group that the social commentary about hypersexuality and the adultification of Black girls can lead to assumptions. In this focus group, I find it interesting that the social commentary on

hypersexuality and the adultification of Black girls reveals the Black community's assumptions and stereotypes about agency. It shows that Black girls are learning these dances from other women in their community. The conversations from participants also acknowledge that dancing in the South is a form of engagement, enjoyment, and play, rather than being connected to sexual interactions with their male counterparts.

Analysis

Craighead (2006) poses many questions regarding the definition of Black dance. Scholars of Black performance theory and dance theory have often questioned the need, influence, and definition of Black dance. These various inquiries focus on whether Black dance exists, who is qualified to define it, and ultimately seek a deeper understanding of how Black dance operates within the diverse contradictions in dance theory, raising issues of sexuality and gender (Craighead, 2006). What is interesting about the conversation is listening to the perspectives and the participants' tone of voice, as well as how they engage with each other. It reveals a lot of questions about what Black dance is and who ultimately gets to define it. While Black dance does exist outside the margins of professional dancing, there is a rich culture within Black social dancing that Black women and girls have the autonomy to define. In the focus group discussions about performance and dancing in Atlanta, the city emerges as a hub for hip-hop culture and the foundation for many popular hip-hop dance songs. Again, leaning on the importance of Black geographies in this research centers on how the South is a base for dance knowledge and the impact of Atlanta hip-hop. The influence of Black women and girls in the late 90s and early 2000s during the Atlanta-bass era, including the Snap and Crunk eras, brought significant attention to Atlanta. The participants involved in this focus group are the individuals represented

in the videos who performed at local skating rinks, online on YouTube, or at family events.

These movements mark these locations that sit outside the margins of white-dominated public spaces in Atlanta due to gentrification but also transform them into sites of Black joy, defiance, and storytelling.

The question of the existence of Black dance is that Black individuals within the communities have the voice, the history, and the evidence to demonstrate that it has always been present. Additionally, Black women and girls possess the power to keep it relevant and fresh. Those qualifications do not need to be strictly defined, as there are nuances in how different Black girls across the South choose to engage with Black dance. Based on the conversations and how Black girls view themselves in relation to hip-hop youth culture, the participants expressed a certain lightheartedness and a curiosity to learn and engage. However, what's interesting is that many complexities surrounding Black dance and the academic perspectives aiming to understand it don't necessarily exist in how Black girls interact with the music and dance. Furthermore, in the environments where these social dances take place, especially in hip-hop, there are not many internal factors that influence how Black women and girls consistently consider marginalization while dancing. To clarify, during the discussions, participants highlighted the contradictions in Southern hip-hop music, but I cannot suggest that they think the intersections of sex, race, and gender at that time. And that is because there is the interest of having fun, there is the interest of being creative, and there is the interest that comes out of admiration for other girls and family members in their communities. The protection of also existing and living within a Black community and being in a city with a rich documentation of Black history against the odds of gentrification and participants can live in the public and to live within the joy of Black life without those repercussions always existing when they perform with each other period.

DeFrantz (2018) emphasizes that Black dance allows us to appreciate Black people in musical motion, helping us understand Black life and highlighting its value as a means of expression and self-awareness. This also supports his concept of movement approaches and demonstrates how Black dance can traverse space and time. Considering the historical context of Black social dancing in Atlanta, there is a notable shift—especially influenced by hip-hop—in the ways Black girls are learning to create and express movement. Considering that these dances are social dances grounded in the vernacular of hip-hop music, their movements can be translated into formal dance. This reflects how Black girls engage with majorette dancing and ballet culture, showing how these connections intertwine with HBCU culture. Furthermore, majorette dancing can draw on the traditional foundations of ballet, jazz, and contemporary dance. Furthermore, regarding the theme of dancing in Atlanta, I find that Black girls embrace this type of dancing for the joy it brings. The variations in how Black girls express themselves reflect the memories they've cultivated, which they can share and lean on during conversations with others. Black girls wield power in Black geographies by transforming familiar spaces into movements where they can be political and personal, affirming their agency within the South.

Atlanta as a Unique Southern City

During the focus group session, I analyzed participants' perceptions of Atlanta as a city and a place to live. I identified three major themes: how participants perceive Atlanta's culture, politics, and music scene. Throughout the conversation, participants described Atlanta's culture through different events, their experiences going to school in Atlanta, skating rink culture, and how the city made them feel. When it came to Atlanta politics, participants critiqued the city's lack of community organizing when it came to issues such as gentrification, sexuality, and

violence and Atlanta's health culture. They also discussed how Atlanta's culture affects low-income Black community's ability to work and provide for their families. Lastly, participants were able to identify different songs, artists and themes in regard to Atlanta's music scene. They also identified certain subgenres of Southern hip-hop, such as bass, snap, and trap music, that they grew up listening to and engaging with others as Black girls living in Atlanta. Participants were able to highlight the way that Atlanta's hip-hop music scene heavily influenced the larger hip-hop landscape by pinpointing unique rappers born in Atlanta to discuss their respect for Black women who own their identity and power as female rappers from the South. I also think it's important to emphasize how Black women express themselves based on where geographical location, which validates my observations from Black feminist stories. Their vernacular also highlights how Atlanta has its own language culture and participants' conversations provided an inside perspective of how language connects communities within the South through different slang, locations, and behaviors, which influenced their experiences growing up.

Atlanta Music

Participants spoke about Atlanta's music culture and defined it similarly to other Southern hip-hop historians. They explained that the origins of bass music and snap music are rooted in Atlanta. Atlanta's hip-hop scene has had a significant impact on shaping the sound of other Southern hip-hop genres. Participants spoke about how Atlanta's unique sound comes from a variety of producers like Dallas Austin and Jermaine Dupri, which further validates the argument that their production skills were foundations to other Southern hip-hop sounds. Participants shared that how they accessed music during that era is different than how music listeners acquire it today. Many participants talked about using electronics such as a CD player and iPod. They

also used online software such as LimeWire to download songs they heard at the skating rink or through friends. This insight highlights the different ways the participants found music through different technologies. Ebony shared her excitement of downloading the music software LimeWire: “I couldn't wait. I got my first Dell desktop computer and that was the first thing I put on there [LimeWire].” At the time, many local artists had limited means of sharing their music or performing at events in the city. They did not have access to major platforms like today's artists who are producing music on MySpace and YouTube. This acknowledgment speaks to generational differences in music production and how listeners were gaining access to new artists at a time when streaming services didn't exist. Jasmine spoke about how she gained access and shared music:

“By this time, we were in middle school and [we used] LimeWire, MP3 player in Myspace and Bebo Hello. I remember when I got my first iPod. I think it was a Nano... and I had LimeWire downloading shit, and it gave the computer viruses. We would pass our iPods around. You would keep your headphones on, but you would pass your iPod around, and we would listen to everybody's music.”

Participants reflected on their upbringing during the emergence of Atlanta's 2000s music scene. They acknowledged the city's impact on subsequent generations and its influence on future hip-hop cultural production. While reflecting, Nia shared:

“We grew up on the music. [We were fortunate to] come from a region and a city where every generation or every five years or so, the culture reinvents itself. Like, the sound is just—unmatched.

Based on the key themes of influence and the unique culture that has inspired and transformed the lives of Black women who have lived in Atlanta, participants provided perspective on a larger conversation about what Atlanta has contributed to Southern hip-hop. Within the study, centering Black women's voices is important because these women spoke about their learned experiences and how it has had such an impact on who they are but ultimately support hip-hop diminish theories in the ways that Black women's existence within hip-hop serves as an important reflection of identity, community, and storytelling. I find that these conversations are a form of cultural production that highlights how Black women have consistently been integrated in the genre and continue to influence a culture that specifically exists within Atlanta. This observation can also be applied to other reflective conversations of other Southern cities.

Atlanta's Cultural Significance

Each participant had a Southern hip-hop history that greatly aided in understanding how they perceived themselves and navigated Atlanta. It was interesting that participants like Nia were focused on their experiences growing up and living through the gentrification of Atlanta, along with the impacts of the bid for the 1996 Olympics. But while participants like Keisha and Imani were born outside of Atlanta and come from different Southern backgrounds, they were both able to emphasize how much of their preteen years were rooted in Atlanta's snap and crunk era. Participants experienced firsthand how sisterhood and community connected them to Atlanta, which has long been an epicenter of culture and music. Participants like Ebony, who grew up on the South Side of Atlanta, have a unique perspective on living outside the city, like Imani. Interestingly, while most of the participants share a distinct connection to the South, there is a significant impact from how Atlanta hip-hop music flows and navigates throughout the state of Georgia; many of those influences and memories are situated in the conversation. Participant's

perception of Atlanta's cultural economy centers on how they've interacted with people within their community and how it makes them feel based on their memories and realizing how Atlanta is a unique place that shaped their lives from their younger years into adulthood. What stood out the most were their memories at the skating rink. The information they shared continues the historical timeline of how Black youth built their knowledge around hip-hop culture through skating rinks. And historically the origins of Atlanta's hip-hop scene started in skating rinks, leading to yeeking and a safe space for Black youth and family to gather. Nia explains:

“...We started going to skating hang in the fourth and fifth grades. You start going ‘cause everybody has a bunch of brothers and sisters. So, people's mamas—like my mama—literally call the skating rink the babysitter.”

Ebony also explained how skating rinks provide insight into new dances and music. Sometimes, they were more interested in learning more about the music so they could perform with her friends at the skating rinks. My assumption is the fascination about the dances performed at the skating rinks allowed participants to stay up to date with current music trends.

“Like you hear the music at the skating rink, go to school, then you hear more music and you are like ‘okay I can't wait till we go back to the skating rink so I can hear more music and learn all these dances.’”

Keisha thought about the impact of this gathering on her sense of being different. However, she also saw it as a place where people could come together, be themselves, feel free, and confidently express themselves, thanks to the inclusive atmosphere of the skating rink:

“It was just such a different space. It's like as soon as you walk into the skating rink you're in a different space. You're no longer in whatever city you live in. You're no longer your parents' children. [You're just yourself] in that space ready to shake your ass or do whatever you about to do.”

While participants reflected and discussed different events like Freaknik, Birthday Bash, the Car and Bike Show, snap artists, and local underground concerts, they spoke a lot about how their experiences of existing within the culture of Atlanta hip-hop made them feel a certain way about living in The Dirty South based on the type of environment Atlanta has created for them. Imani expressed the differences between Southern cities and how Atlanta is a very unique place in The Dirty South:

“Atlanta feels like the Dirty South to me. The Dirty South is like the culture of everything in the essence of what I think about music and lingo, and the word that comes up in my mind is Atlanta. I don't always think of other cities such as New Orleans or Nashville, or other Southern cities. So, I see the difference.”

Participants also highlighted Atlanta's unique ability to serve as a source of influence for other Southern cities. They mentioned that Atlanta has had a significant impact on other Southern hip-hop cultures, based on their own experiences and travels to other Southern cities and different parts of the United States. This has allowed them to appreciate Atlanta's influence on a national level. Nia states, “We literally drip culture, and everybody else sort of, you know, dives in and adopts it.” Jasmine similarly added, “...it's a trendsetter city, but it makes trendsetters, and I like that. I like being from Atlanta.” While Atlanta is often considered a Black Mecca in a larger social and political context, participants were still able to critique the various

ways in which Atlanta has influenced them. They feel a sense of belonging and confidence, but they also have the ability to critique the political landscape and how it has impacted their lives due to their marginalized status.

Politics in Atlanta

In conversations about Atlanta, participants critiqued the politics of Atlanta's economic and political impact on Black lives. They were able to validate their own experiences and speak about Atlanta's rich Black culture, and their involvement in it. They also provided insight into the ways that Atlanta's economic and political landscape has impacted displacement and violence in the Black communities, which has encouraged and facilitated Atlanta's hustle culture. The discussions mirror similar conversations among scholars of Southern history regarding how working-class and poor Black individuals have been affected by the evolving social, economic, and political environment of Atlanta. This underscores the impact of community development and political advancements on the lives of Black people and their experiences residing in various parts of metro Atlanta. One of the major conversations the participant discussed the impact of gentrification and how it has displaced Black communities in Atlanta. Jasmine reflected on a changing city:

“...one thing that Atlanta has undergone that negatively impacted a lot of native people's experiences is gentrification. I talk about this a lot because I grew up in housing projects in Atlanta in the downtown area next to where the Olympics took place. The Georgia Dome didn't exist when I was a baby, right? So, the things that have happened in Atlanta that were in some ways meant to hurt people like me who grew up in housing projects

and grew up very poor on welfare have honestly given me confidence as a Black woman coming out of Atlanta.”

She adds: “I was there when the city was full of projects. I was there when the red dog police would kick down our apartment doors looking for drugs and shipping folks off to prisons.”

Jasmine's perspective is reflected in Southern hip-hop artists' critique of life in the South and low-income communities. Artists like OutKast and Good Mob spoke about the circumstances in their lyrics. Although Atlanta is a cultural hub, it is also a place of disenfranchisement. Like Atlanta artists, many people have used their music to shed light on the realities of living in local communities in the city. They have learned to work hard and hustle to succeed or have witnessed others doing the same. However, many individuals have recognized the shortcomings of Atlanta, which has motivated them to become community organizers and teachers and work in public policy to address issues affecting marginalized communities. For example, Nia has been actively involved in community organizing efforts to protect and support people in the Atlanta community.

“I got a public policy degree and an urban studies degree, but I also went to war with the city as a community organizer. And so, I inherited the upward mobility trajectory of Black elites like the mayors of the city. But I've also stood toe to toe with a merited [popular] city and demanded stuff on behalf of the people who were being displaced.”

As participants reflected on their experiences of living in Atlanta, they were also able to value the challenges that they face by living in low-income communities or living in single-parent households. These circumstances helped them respect the city that allowed them to have a sense of self and pride to be from Atlanta. Ebony explains:

“What I learned growing up from my parents and you know, my different circumstances and my environment, it makes me really, really proud to be from Atlanta...”

Participants discuss how growing up in Atlanta’s low-income, single-parent households shaped their identities. They take pride in their resilience and in the city itself, recognizing Atlanta as both a site of struggle and empowerment that significantly influenced their values, toughness, and sense of self-worth. Jasmine also reflected on the duality and how Atlanta has impacted her in a spectrum of ways:

“...that city made me who I am in the best ways and it also made me who I am in the worst ways too, in the sense of like I don't play this shit with nobody because I had to be like that growing up.”

Participants’ critiques of Atlanta's political landscape also added to the understanding of how important it is to escape the living conditions society place Black communities in. Atlanta’s politics is also rooted in witnessing family members work and hustle to provide for their families. Keisha spoke about how her uncles in Atlanta influenced her to work hard:

“...it's [hustling] very much reflective of the things that I saw my uncles talking about and saw my uncles doing because I spent a lot of time with my uncles. It really puts you in that space of just knowing the hustle, knowing the bustle [is important]...”

Ebony reflected on her mother's strong work ethic and its impact on their life in Atlanta:

“I grew up in a single-parent home. It was always just me and my mom, and I had to watch my mom struggle just to make sure that I got a good education, had clothes on my back, and shoes on my feet. She made sure I could have the things that she didn't have. My mom is from Atlanta, too, so being able to see her hustle and having her instill that [mentality] in me...”

Despite facing economic marginalization within the Black community due to Atlanta's political landscape, Black women have displayed resilience and the ability to navigate through these challenges. This conversation provided a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Black woman in the South and what motivates them to continue contributing to the social and political landscape of Atlanta's hip-hop community. Overall, the discussion shed light on how Black women can maintain their resilience while remaining critical of the city that has historically caused them harm.

Analysis

Atlanta's cultural, political, and musical significance offers a narrative that aligns with Southern hip-hop studies, Black feminist theory, and hip-hop feminism. Atlanta emerges as a definitive location of Southern hip-hop, reflecting distinctive subgenres—bass, snap, and trap. Participants' insights on figures like Jermaine Dupri and Dallas Austin affirm these producers as foundational architects of Atlanta's sound. This narrative resonates with Southern hip-hop scholars such as Regina Bradley (2021), who examines how regionalism and sonic innovation

intertwine to construct unique Southern identities. Participants' engagement with technologies like LimeWire and MySpace highlights the generational shifts in music consumption, echoing Tricia Rose's (1994) assertions about the interplay between technological access and cultural dissemination within hip-hop. Importantly, the emphasis on Black women's contributions and experiences within Atlanta's music scene underscores a critical intersection of Black feminism and hip-hop feminism. Participants' reflections on female rappers owning their power exemplify this dynamic, showcasing how Atlanta's hip-hop scene becomes a site where Black women assert their agency and navigate the complexities of identity and gender.

Participants' narratives also draw attention to Atlanta as a spatial and cultural geography that facilitates community-building and identity formation. The prominence of skating rinks as cultural hubs mirror historical spaces of Black leisure and resistance. These rinks serve as intergenerational sites where music, dance, and socialization converge, offering a sense of belonging and creative expression. This aspect aligns with the concept of Black geographies as illustrating how Black communities reimagine spaces of joy and resistance within oppressive structures. The connection to Black geographies helps understand participants' critiques of Atlanta's political landscape, particularly around gentrification and economic displacement, which resonate with broader discussions in Southern studies about the racialized impacts of urban development. Jasmine's reflections on housing projects and redlining recall the systemic disenfranchisement of Black communities, paralleling the lyrical content of Atlanta-based artists like OutKast and Goodie Mob. Ultimately, participants' emphasis on Atlanta's linguistic culture—its slang, regional dialects, and communicative practices—underscores language as a critical marker of identity. This aligns with Geneva Smitherman's exploration of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as a tool for cultural preservation and resistance. The

unique “language culture” described by participants illustrates how vernacular fosters community ties and affirms regional pride.

Southern Women’s Power and Influence

This section provides a detailed breakdown of the sub-themes and significant codes that outline the conversation and meaning in which participants observe the actions and behaviors of Black women in Southern hip-hop culture. The research recognizes the complexities of how misogynoir and respectability politics affect the ways that Black women are portrayed. Furthermore, the responses from participants highlight their reflection on how they perceive themselves and other Black women in their community based on critiques of how they’re represented and identified. The "Southern women" category was the most difficult to code due to challenges in defining differences between "power and influence," "attitudes," and "memories." To understand this category, I used two approaches: first, through the perception of Southern women and how they speak about themselves, and second, as a category reflecting how Black women build knowledge about themselves in conversation with each other. The "power and influence" subcategory focused on conversations about cultural and economic power, highlighting the role of women as foundational to hip-hop production in the South. The "attitudes" subcategory delved into participants' experiences as Black women and how elements of respectability and safety influenced their feelings about being women in the South and their understanding of the world around them. This area sometimes posed challenges in differentiating certain attitudes from memories. While some memories could have been categorized under "dancing," we determined that "memory making" was a vital component of the conversations participants were having, featuring codes related to collective memory experiences, nostalgia,

and dance memories as specific experiences that Black women shared communally within the conversation and as reflections of their past.

The Attitudes of Southern Women

The participants discussed attitudes about being a Black woman in the South. They focused on their pride about being from the South, Black feminist rhetoric regarding respectability, and misogyny. They also highlighted insider versus outsider culture and what it means to recognize a different geographical landscape. What stood out to me from the conversations is the participants' positive attitudes about Atlanta being a safe haven for them. Participants admired how the culture of the South allowed them to find connections and a sense of self. Additionally, the participants discussed the value of Southern hip-hop culture for Black women and how it has enabled them to critique specific aspects of gender, race, and sexuality. These discussions open up larger conversations about how women exist and perceive the South, as well as understand the South as a home place, contributing to larger conversations about how Black women establish a place of belonging as part of a Black feminist approach to storytelling. Participants acknowledged that living and growing up in Atlanta validates their dance experiences and allows them to admire and respect the city where they grew up. They expressed the idea that Atlanta is a home and a safe haven for them to be themselves and exist in a community with others who appreciate similar Southern cultures. Keisha and Nia further explained this concept:

"...it's honestly like a safe haven for me, being someone who grew up in the Black country South and really having the opportunity to experience that and the Atlanta feel. The difference, in my opinion, between the Dirty South that exists within the same state

of Georgia is that the Atlanta Dirty South is almost like the upper class of the Dirty South.”

During the focus group conversation, participants shared many memories and reflections that emphasized what is most important to them about being a Black Southern woman. They see Atlanta as an elite Black American city compared to others in the South and believe that it fosters a certain spirit or energy that can help people become influential. This insider-outsider perspective allows participants to distinguish their experiences and connections to Atlanta's Black culture, and how the city's entertainment scene has influenced their perceptions of other cities outside of Atlanta. Jasmine explains this as a collective experience, “...[We're] not observing it. We're living it and there are like a group of women who are observing it and who will never understand it as intimately as we do.” The participants' conversations emphasized a distinct Southern culture that they appreciate and value in Atlanta. This culture has shaped their attitudes and enabled them to recognize the differences between living in Atlanta and living in other non-Southern places. Nia expanded on their admiration and fascination with the unique aspects of the South:

“And so, I'm really, really fascinated with both the literal dirtiness and ratchetness of the Dirty South, but then also the sort of intergenerational genealogy of the Dirty South Sound.”

Body Image/respectability

During the discussion, some participants mentioned comments about body image and respectability politics. Their comments centered on how they perceived themselves and their attitudes towards decorum and modesty as prevalent ideals of how Black women should see themselves. The conversation highlighted the theme of how respectability plays a role in what they know and don't know about their bodies, but the act of building self-awareness. Therefore, this conversation allowed participants to consider what representation looks like and how they feel about what it means to have someone who looks like them with a different body aesthetic than others. Jasmine highlighted:

“... I think about middle school, when I realized my booty was flat, so there wasn't any point in me shaking and gyrating and stuff. But I think I learned how to dance.”

Body image and respectability politics are represented in hip-hop culture. Atlanta is well-known for its multiple strip clubs and has produced a wide range of music that encourages dancing. As a result, there have been many discussions among individuals who have talked about their bodies. There is an understanding that certain body types are more prevalent in Atlanta's dance scene. Jasmine explains:

“...there are so many more negative narratives about people or Black women, specifically in Atlanta. Like we all strippers, we all want BBLs, we all chasing a rapper, we all wanna be on housewives.”

This body type is especially popular in Southern hip-hop dance songs and is frequently promoted through lyrics and music videos. These conversations about body image and respectability are important aspects of a larger discussion about hip-hop culture's impact on society and its influence on the current generation.

The Role of Women in Hip-Hop Production in the South

Women's cultural and economic impact and influence on the development of Southern hip-hop culture were also discussed. Participants acknowledged the female artists who have inspired them and how these artists have shaped their image and creativity as Southern hip-hop artists. This has paved the way for the increased visibility of Black women in this culture. Nia adds to the importance of a woman-led fan base for artists:

“I always say that if a artist wanna pop off they need to build a female fan base. I think about Young Blue. He’s a rapper but that nigga got hella love songs and I'd be over here screaming them shits okay. But I think it is like women we make, we make all this shit pop whether it is because we dancing to it, we share, we talking about it, we critiquing it.”

Participants emphasized how men rely on Black women’s financial and cultural investment to maintain their culture's influence. Nia explained, “...There’d be no Future [rapper] at all. That nigga's discography would be gone without the Black woman torturing him emotionally.”

Participants discussed the significance of strip clubs and the larger strip club economy that has

served as a hub for Southern hip-hop music artists. These clubs provide a platform for the artists and play a crucial role in the hip-hop economy through the transactions that occur in strip club culture. This showcases how Black women significantly contribute to the sustainability of the economy in hip-hop culture. Furthermore, this particular financial transaction provides insight into the larger sex work economy in the Southern region, shedding light on the intersection of economic disparity, gender and culture. It is worth noting that these transactions often coincide with a diverse range of songs and instructional dance music that hold significant popularity in Atlanta. Similarly, this bridges the impact of hip-hop's connection with adult entertainment by portraying strip clubs as contemporary urban spaces for record executives, producers, and both established and aspiring hip-hop stars. These venues are often used for recruiting video vixens and test-marketing songs to strippers and patrons. Participants spoke on the notion that men crave women's attention to validate their manhood and masculinity, further validating the need to produce music so that women can continuously invest in the artist's songs or aesthetics. Nia shared her take:

“...when you watch shit like Zola and you watch shit like P Valley, you see how integral the music is to that art. It just always reminds you that there would be no Atlanta hip-hop—be it crunk or trap or any of the shit in between. What is Travis Porter without the strip club? Just like what is Jeezy without the strip club? Because, like, ‘Gone shake ass bitch, I'm gonna throw this money by USDA—that early trap music is all about that. Ain't none of them projects without an ass throwing song on an album or an album that we turn into an ass throwing song... strippers don't just dance to ass throwing music. Like they literally throw ass to the hardest trap shit and that's the shit that goes up.’”

The participants also discussed how Black women can express themselves through dance, appear in music videos, and showcase their attitudes and bodies. Although not everyone had personal experience with dancing in strip clubs, three shared their take on women who work in those establishments in Atlanta and expressed their appreciation of the women's contributions to the larger culture of Southern hip-hop dance. Jasmine highlighted:

“They stand in them fucking [heels.] They dancing even if they choose to engage in sex work as a result of they job or cuz they want to. It's they body. are still keeping a culture going that's thousands of years old. It's just evolved, and it's now more connected in a way that we understand.”

Participants agreed that Southern hip-hop culture is built upon the involvement of Black women in Black girl play and music. This involvement has led to the success of Southern hip-hop music. The participants' perspectives centered around how they see themselves in various areas of Southern hip-hop music videos. It's important to note that seeing themselves visually doesn't necessarily influence their behavior. However, it does create an awareness of how the culture has kept them informed and knowledgeable about their existence in the Southern hip-hop culture. Ebony expressed:

“...watching music videos that was, like I said earlier, was something that I used to do all the time. Imagine us not being in music videos then there really ain't gonna be no music videos and a lot of these songs like the twerking songs, I mean it just, it just wouldn't happen.”

Previous findings have acknowledged the significant role of Black women in spreading and sharing music from local communities and neighborhoods. These findings highlight their power to expand community knowledge about Southern hip-hop music. The participants' love for music and their ability to share it shows how it is vital for artists to continue investing in music that Black women like. The participant's ability to add creativity and engagement to the music, such as adding new dance moves or performances, contributes to the larger culture of Southern hip-hop music. This engagement allows fans of Southern hip-hop music to consistently keep up with the latest hits coming out at that time. From Ebony's perspective, this recognition allows Black girls to become leaders of the culture, leading to the creation of playlists of Southern hip-hop songs and creating a space for Black girls to dance. "...we would try to make a whole dance routine outta all the dances that was coming out during that time." The creativity that emerges from Black girlhood and their ability to create these dances with each other serves as a lens to closely explore how Black girls choose to play, create and cultivate such a specific experience. It is important to acknowledge the nuances in how Black women perceive certain men in the music style and culture we are examining. Understanding how men view women in the South and how women perceive men can help validate that men value their attention. Participants identify with Black women because it allows them to feel like men and supports hip-hop or trap artists, along with local men in their neighborhood who create hip-hop music. Keisha explained:

"...all of these things, even the things that seem to not be associated with women, men put those things on to attract other women so that they can then say, 'Oh look bro, I got this many women around me and I got them because I attracted them with X, Y and Z.'"

Jasmine explained:

“...we have a critical aspect in elevating this music cuz honestly niggas be hating on each other and so that would be really wanna listen to each other's shit. So, it'd be us elevating the music.”

Although the history of Southern hip-hop and broader conversations within hip-hop studies mainly focuses on how men engage with and interpret their communities, I believe it's crucial to understand how social norms in gender dynamics affect the way men validate what women contribute regarding popularity, ego, and prowess. This underscores the necessity for men to invest in their fan base, particularly among Black women in the South. It is worth noting that although men's desire for validation through Black women investing in their music is acknowledged by the participants, it highlights the fact that Black women are still investing in a culture that could potentially objectify them. However, this culture also provides them with a certain cultural and economic power to help shape such a genre in a period of success. Hence, gaining knowledge about how Southern women live within Atlanta and how they reflect on these things while conversing with one another is one of the key components that make this focus group unique. The last component of the results emphasizes the importance of how Black women are acquiring knowledge and how the value of dance memories and nostalgia from these collective memories highlights a specific experience that these women can reflect on together. Additionally, this research considers the strip club as a microcosm of hip-hop's broader dynamics, highlighting the interlocking of race, gender, and power. This also underscores the

significance of this research as a means to understand how Black women have been culturally invested in Atlanta's hip-hop community.

Building Knowledge about Southern Women – The Memories

This section of the results focuses on how storytelling and memory-making processes help Black girls to build knowledge about themselves, which manifests into their adulthood. Participants were able to recall dance memories, which brought a nostalgic reflection of comfort, and ultimately created an archive of collective memories through similar experiences that they shared. Despite growing up in different regions and neighborhoods within metro Atlanta, it was clear that Atlanta had an impact on their dance experiences. Although Atlanta has undergone significant changes as a city, participants were able to rely on nostalgia as a point of reference to talk about the history and how Atlanta's hip-hop music has kept them connected. They found validation through those connections with other participants. During the focus group process, participants shared their stories and memories of certain dance or community experiences. These stories formed a larger oral history that could be shared with others. The approach to identifying such stories was not limited to what the participants were saying but also included multiple memories and banter and interactions amongst each other in the conversations. This approach helped create a unique perspective that had not been studied or centered within Southern hip-hop studies.

Dance memories

Based on the dance memories, participants reflected on interactions with people, such as their families and friends, and how those specific dances were tied to a particular moment in

time. The variety of moments either centered on certain dances that shifted how they thought about certain artists or what it meant to be a young Black girl in the early 2000s, which signified moments of knowledge-making. This means that participants were gaining information from people within their communities to bring awareness to some form of style of music, a compilation of dances, or a specific person who has influenced them to care about a dance or a song that has been popular in that time. Keisha shared:

“I remember vividly, especially as you all keep mentioning the skate and rink, I just keep remembering different scenes of myself dancing in circles with girls and then like getting together with girls cuz we're gonna go walk and go and stand in front of another group of young men.”

Nia provided her take:

“I'm like damn, we've really been listening to you know, the same artist since we graduated high school. And it's cuz we've connected and bonded with their [music].”

This study highlights the importance of centering Black women's lived experiences and emotional landscapes, particularly within the framework of Black feminist cultural traditions. The participants' reflections operate within the Black oral tradition, where storytelling, memory, and shared history offer tools for both healing and cultural preservation (Boylorn, 2012). Their discussions reveal how music—especially from Southern hip-hop artists—functions as a site of nostalgia, resistance, and communal bonding. Through their stories, participants express a deep connection to Atlanta's hip-hop culture, using it as a lens to process the past and imagine futures. Nostalgia also becomes a Black feminist strategy that affirms identity and belonging, echoing

hip-hop feminist calls to take seriously the emotional labor and joy embedded in Black women's cultural expressions and impact (Lindsey, 2015; Pough, 2004). Their shared narratives serve not only as testimony but as an evolving archive of Black girlhood, regional pride, and sonic memory.

Ebony speaks on nostalgia as comfort:

“...thank you for creating this space for us to share our experiences together. Cuz I've never been a part of a space like this to talk about this. I've been a part of focus group but I've never really talked about Atlanta culture and music and how it is a part of who I am so intimately today.”

The conversation among participants became a light-hearted facilitated space where participants found joy and pleasure in having a focus group tailored to their interests and identities. Ebony says:

“Cause like just talking about it with the group of women is really, really fun and it just brings back those memories. Like we damn, we're 30! And just revisiting those memories is so fun.”

The participants involved in the focus group were able to center their experiences of the dynamics of Atlanta and how it has impacted their womanhood. The opportunity also provided a space to be creative and build community through dance and various Southern hip-hop songs. This unique validation goes back into the theoretical framework of hip-hop feminism and the ways that Black women have been consistent and able to exist within hip-hop and navigating the nuances and the contradictions that manifests within the focus group conversations. By

providing questions that support a hip-hop feminist framework, participants did come out of the conversation feeling validated in a space that was intentionally created to have conversations about their specific experiences. Kiesha explains:

“...there is work that is on the way that is going to validate who I am, even when I stand in spaces where nobody else looks like me. There's something to be said about that. So, thank you for creating that space.”

Collective memory of music

The conversations presented shed light on the reflective engagement of Black women with hip-hop artists and songs from Atlanta. The women in the conversations spoke passionately about specific songs, relating to the lyrics, backstories, and personalities of the artists who crafted memorable moments in Atlanta during the early 2000s. The participants emphasized the joy of connecting with the music and the powerful sense of community that it fostered. This is significant, particularly in a culture that has historically subjugated Black women and practices misogynoir against them. The conversations provide realistic insights into how Black women engage with hip-hop. The conversations focused on three different dance songs and a dance group based in Atlanta. At the time these songs were released, the artists were underground artists and became popular within their specific neighborhood. They had the ability to land local radio play, which showcased the thriving underground artist scene. Participants discussed how they share and learn about new music, and it's evident that dance culture played a significant role in these conversations. It was a powerful tool that participants collectively reflected on. It demonstrated how dance culture was a way of building a sense of community and brought people together to celebrate their shared interests. By reflecting on these conversations, it's clear

that participants found music and dance to be a common ground that brought people together. It allowed them to connect, share their experiences, and bond over a common passion. These conversations also demonstrate how music and dance can transcend boundaries and bring people from different backgrounds together. The conversation between participants highlights this argument below.

“Shoulder Lean” by Young Dr (ft. T.I.)

Nia: “I mean Shoulda Lean! ‘I could shoulda lean, but I don't know how to dance though.”

Jasmine [*Singing*]: “Let me see you bounce right to left and make ya shoulda lean!’ I agree with Nia!”

“Teabag” by S.O.B and “Bitch Get off My Nuts” by D.H.B.

J: “A song that just came to me, was a teabag. Y'all remember that? Oh my god. Oh, it was a song. It was a song called Bitch Get Off My Nuts Bitch. Yes, bitch Get off My Nuts. I used to love that song.”

N: “Oh my God! We were so ignorant.”

Ebony: “You know [Whoop] Rico? I still won't dance to Rico. If it come on right now, I won't do it.”

J: “I fucking hate that dance.”

E: “It was so funny!”

J: “I used to be so confused. Like what the fuck are they doing bro!?”

E: “Yall remember Twerk Team?”

N: “Absolutely. So, I went to high school with Kalinda from the team. Like they really used to be in Douglasville. I don't know if Twerk Team came from Douglasville or around that area, but the ones that I did know used to be around my high school or the high schools in my town often.”

It is important to consider the perspectives of Black women who have grown up in the South, especially in Atlanta, where music, dancing, and sex work are core foundations of the culture. Despite the critiques that hip-hop has faced regarding its vulgarity, regional differences, and identity, the participants of the study value the unique artists, music, and people that have made this culture important to their identities as Black women. The conversations highlight how hip-hop feminist rhetoric can be useful in assessing the perspectives of Black women. It is important to understand the significance of the collective and the memory-making process, which emphasize the power of community and how Black women are open to expressing moments and situations from their past that have brought them joy. By doing this, we can gain a deeper understanding of the harsh critiques that Black women face and how they truly engage with hip-hop. Considering the South has historically faced critiques of hip-hop regarding its strength, lyricism, and imagery, it is vital to recognize the unique contributions of the artists and music from Atlanta. The women's conversations provide insights into how the music culture has become an essential part of their identities. These conversations remind us of the importance of uplifting Black women's voices and experiences, especially in marginalized communities.

Analysis

The focus group advances hip-hop feminism and Black feminist thought by foregrounding the voices and experiences of Southern Black women in hip-hop culture. It demonstrates how they navigate, critique, and shape a space that both empowers and challenges them. By centering memory, storytelling, and performance, the research contributes to a broader understanding of Black women's agency and resilience in the face of intersecting oppressions. This nuanced analysis calls for continued exploration of how Black women redefine Southern hip-hop culture and assert their place within it. The exploration of memory-making and storytelling as communal practices in Southern hip-hop underscores how Black women actively recall their lived experiences, challenging dominant narratives that erase or marginalize them. Through collective memory, participants offer an alternative perspective on Southern Black womanhood, using nostalgia and dance as tools of resilience and cultural continuity. A collective memory also relies on a digital archive found through social media websites such as YouTube, MySpace, and TikTok providing a digital record of Black women and girls contribution and influence on the production of Southern hip-hop dance. This approach extends Black feminist thought by framing memory as both a personal, digital and collective act of resistance and identity formation. The category of Southern women highlights the duality of self-perception and external critique. Participants' reflections on Atlanta as a "safe haven" and an elite cultural space for Black women contrast with broader stereotypes about the South. This insider-outsider dynamic complicates respectability politics, as women navigate admiration for Southern culture while resisting reductive representations tied to body image and class. The distinction between "power and influence" and "attitudes" reveals how Southern Black women's economic

and cultural contributions to hip-hop are central to its global success yet often overshadowed by patriarchal narratives.

The discussion of respectability politics within Southern hip-hop adds depth to understanding how Black women engage with and resist societal expectations. Participants' conversations around body image reflect internalized and external critiques shaped by historical and cultural frameworks. The emphasis on dance as a communal and individual act highlights how Black women use their bodies to assert agency and redefine beauty standards within a Southern culture that often commodifies them. By centering these perspectives, the study illustrates how hip-hop feminism confronts respectability politics within the South to validate diverse expressions of Southern Black life. The intersection of hip-hop culture and the strip club economy further complicates notions of agency and commodification. Participants recognize strip clubs as both sites of exploitation and spaces of cultural production, where Black women exert influence through performance and financial power. This duality challenges monolithic readings of sex work and highlights the intricate ways Black women contribute to and critique the culture they inhabit which often has ties to Trap music.

Incorporating bringing wreck into this context underscores the importance of reclaiming and centering marginalized voices in cultural narratives. The exclusion of Southern Black women from Southern hip-hop culture mirrors the erasure of women and girls' embodied contributions to hip-hop, such as twerking and play-centered creativity. Both exclusions highlight how legacies of power and institutional gatekeeping shape what is considered legitimate cultural production. By situating Southern hip-hop and Black girls' corporeal practices within broader frameworks of cultural innovation, these perspectives challenge dominant

narratives, highlighting the impact of Black geographies while emphasizing the centrality of marginalized creators in shaping Southern and hip-hop aesthetics.

Implications of the Research

Exploring the history and culture of Black women's connection to Southern hip-hop in Atlanta reveals a significant cultural landscape that extends to other Southern regions. Through my research, I examined the link between Black women raised in Atlanta or the Metro Atlanta area and the development of the city's hip-hop music scene. This connection has been essential in shaping the identity, sisterhood, community, and dance culture of Black women and girls in the area. By centering this work around the theoretical framework of hip-hop feminism, kinetic orality, and aspects of Black girlhood and Black girl play, I provide a distinct entry point to understanding Southern hip-hop culture. The findings of this study illuminate how Black women can reflect on their girlhood and connect to Atlanta hip-hop music through its various eras. It highlights their passion for Southern hip-hop and the significance of being a woman from the South. What I find most fascinating is that participants' understanding of the South shapes their views of non-Southern cities when they travel outside the region. This allows them to analyze Black women's body politics in a unique way while exploring themes of power and culture as Southern hip-hop music evolves over time. The participants in the research offered insights into a time and culture of hip-hop that is often overlooked in discussions about the genre's growth and influence. Moreover, neglecting the voices of Southern hip-hop women constrains the sociocultural landscape that has existed in the South since the mid-1980s with the rise of skating rinks, Miami Bass, and Freaknik. The key findings of the research underscore how dancing in the South is essential for Southern Black women's connection to hip-hop music. This observation

addresses the nuances and contradictions in how hip-hop feminism has continuously tackled the ways in which Black women confront complex and sometimes harmful media stereotypes. Consequently, the research reveals the intricate realities that Black women in the South encounter. Southern hip-hop music features specific call-and-response lyrics that foster a dance culture centered on Black women's bodies and sometimes the sexual themes explored in the lyrics.

The research underscores how Black women's perceptions of Southern and non-Southern spaces shape their understanding of body politics. With its distinct call-and-response style, Southern hip-hop often centers on Black women's bodies through dance and lyrical content. While this can be empowering, it also brings forth contradictions related to sexual agency and media representation. Hip-hop feminism critiques these portrayals while recognizing Black women's agency in redefining their roles within the culture (Pough, 2004). Participants discussed this to highlight their level of autonomy and agency as performers within the genre. However, male artists can take advantage of the economic exchange that happens between Black women in social hip-hop spaces like block parties, nightclubs, and strip clubs. This leads to a larger discussion about the current rise of Southern female hip-hop artists and how their connection to the South is reflected in their music. Southern hip-hop music also incorporates cultural production and dance elements such as twerking, which Black women enjoy doing with each other or in the presence of men. The participants' identification as Southern women highlights the respect they have for themselves and the level of autonomy they possess over their identities. The research shows that Black women define themselves as "bad bitches" and take ownership of their identity, especially when compared to other marginalized experiences. This was validated in the research through discussions about female hip-hop artists from the South, as well as Black

women who engage in sex work, such as video vixens or strippers at local dance clubs, or those who associate their music with trap culture. This research can lead to a deeper conversation about the multiple identities Black women possess, as well as their connections to their Southern roots.

To identify potential areas for future research in Southern hip-hop studies and hip-hop feminist studies, it is essential to recognize that each Southern city possesses its own unique socio-cultural history that contributes a distinct identity to its relationship with Southern hip-hop. The emergence of the genre from Texas rappers The Geto Boys is a crucial starting point for further exploration of this history. Various cities have developed music within their communities and neighborhoods to narrate their stories, which is similar to how West Coast and East Coast hip-hop convey theirs. Miami bass and New Orleans Bounce are essential genres that emphasize call-and-response music for Black women and queer individuals who have inhabited these dance spaces in the South. The sexual, economic, and geographical dynamics of The Dirty South underscore Southern hip-hop music, especially in Atlanta, which showcases lyrics that prompt dancing and forms of booty shaking. Women in the South, navigating this distinct Southern political hip-hop economy, have cultivated power and influence by leveraging music to inspire Black women to engage in diverse dance forms. They have also played a pivotal role in shaping careers and performance aspects within Southern hip-hop culture, boosting the wealth of both hip-hop artists and the broader community. This influence has transformed the representation of women in music videos, strip clubs, events, festivals, and digital media. These specific examples became core memories that participants reflected on, heightening the larger conversation about how Black women remembered their existence within the sexual and political economies in hip-hop music. The appearance of Black women in Southern hip-hop music, specifically in Atlanta,

also influenced participants to participate and shaped their understanding of their bodies and other women's bodies. This validates the ways that Black women have cultivated geographical knowledge of themselves, as it explores how they have maintained power and influence within the culture. It also reflects how Atlanta, as one of many Southern cities, caters to the desires of Black women to achieve success and maintain a certain level of resilience within a genre that perpetuates sexist and misogynoir characteristics.

Limitations

Black feminist theory has been instrumental in foregrounding the lived experiences of Black women, yet much of its scholarship has historically centered around Northern and urban feminist movements, often overlooking the cultural specificity of Southern Black womanhood. Theorists such as Patricia Hill Collins (2000) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) have laid the foundation for intersectionality, but their frameworks primarily address systemic oppression in legal, sociopolitical, and institutional spaces rather than the embodied and performative aspects of Black women's cultural expression. Furthermore, hip-hop feminism (Morgan, 1999) has largely focused on lyricism, media representations, and feminist discourse within hip-hop but has not adequately engaged with dance as a site of knowledge production. This gap leaves Southern hip-hop dance cultures, which are deeply tied to community and spatial identity, under-theorized within Black feminist thought.

Black performance studies, while offering critical insights into the politics of Black embodiment (Taylor, 2003; Hartman, 1997), has often privileged high-art and theatrical traditions over vernacular Black dance forms. Scholarship in the field tends to prioritize African American performance in theater, spoken word, and classical dance traditions while relegating

Southern hip-hop dance to the realm of entertainment rather than cultural critique. Which is why this research emphasizes Black vernacular and social dance as a source of knowledge that adds nuance to the study. Even when hip-hop is discussed, it is often framed through breakdancing, b-boying, and Northern traditions (Chang, 2005), minimizing the influence of Southern dance styles like twerking, juking, or bucking. This regional bias limits the ways in which Black women's embodied knowledge—specifically in spaces like Atlanta's strip clubs, skating rinks, and digital platforms—is theorized as a legitimate site of feminist and cultural discourse.

My research seeks to bridge these gaps by introducing Dirty South feminism, a theoretical framework that situates Black Southern women's dance cultures as central to understanding hip-hop's broader landscape. This requires expanding Black feminist thought to engage with the performative and affective dimensions of Southern hip-hop dance, moving beyond traditional academic spaces to incorporate oral histories and community-based methodologies. In doing so, my work challenges the historical erasure of Black Southern women in hip-hop narratives and positions their embodied performances as acts of resistance, self-definition, and cultural innovation. By centering the lived experiences of Black women in Atlanta's hip-hop dance culture, my dissertation contributes to a necessary expansion of both Black feminist theory and Black performance studies, ensuring that Southern Black women's creative labor is recognized as a critical site of knowledge production.

Conclusion

The discussion of Southern Black women's impact on hip-hop aligns with bringing wreck as a framework by highlighting how embodied expression, such as dancing and performance, challenges marginalization while creating space for agency (Pough, 2004). Just as bringing

wreck emphasizes the importance of understanding the lived experiences of Black women and girls, the focus group conversations reveal how Southern Black women define their cultural identities through self-perception and collective memory within hip-hop. These women's pride in Atlanta as a hub of creativity and resistance mirrors the relational dynamics that Kyra Gaunt (2006) explores. Gaunt's concept of kinetic orality—Black girls' use of song, chant, and movement to express social and cultural identity—resonates with how the participants discussed dancing with their friends and family to create new dances or add their own flair to new ones. By reframing activities like dancing as foundational rather than peripheral, these practices align with bringing wreck's goal of expanding hip-hop's narrative to include Black girls as innovators. In both scholarship and practice, these embodied expressions disrupt cultural erasure and reclaim visibility in Southern Hip-Hop.

Participants' engagement and memory-making signify the power and visibility of Black women in Southern hip-hop culture. Participants were able to share their experiences and connections in a safe environment, which is crucial as Black women's experiences and contributions are often overlooked and underrepresented. This sheds light on the unique experiences of Southern Black women and the complexities they exhibit in navigating and dancing within Atlanta's hip-hop scene. What I found particularly important regarding presenting the results is how the conversation evolved into a communal space for Black women to reminisce about their lives, experiences, and connections in Atlanta. This conversation was not only my observation; it was also reflected upon and commented on by the participants themselves, who recognized the value in the discussion and validated Black women's storytelling.

The first research question explored how Southern hip-hop dance experiences influence the formation of identity and connection to the "Dirty South" among Black women and in what ways these experiences contribute to their cultural identity within the city of Atlanta. This can be addressed by examining the four major themes that emerge from the focus group. Black women defined the South through Southern culture, specific behaviors, and the type of music that arise. Atlanta was highlighted as a city with a unique culture, politics, and music that are distinctly experienced in that city. The Atlanta dance scene incorporates both public and private performances, community engagement, and exposure to external influences, all of which contribute to the unique dance culture in the South. The significance of Southern women's identity lies in how it shapes Black women's regional identity, along with their attitudes and memories associated with being from the South. This stems from observing the attitudes and personalities of both women in their families and Southern female hip-hop artists. Consequently, Southern hip-hop dance experiences influence identity formation in relation to The Dirty South, due to the unique culture, behaviors, dance performances, and community connections. Participants articulated a broad understanding of the South. The distinct culture that emerges includes Southern vernacular, the HBCU culture shared by a Southern diaspora, and fashion. Additionally, participants identified a common theme in dance that reflects their attitudes towards dancing and the various dance groups they formed or participated in, which helped shape their communities of friends and family. Ultimately, the formation of dance experiences and individual identities is deeply rooted in the community influences of older siblings, parents, and experiences from their neighborhoods and schools.

Many unique dance experiences that help Black women understand their lives in the South stem from familiar aspects of hip-hop youth culture. Additionally, since the participants

grew up in Atlanta, their experiences align with the common realities of how Black kids grow up in the South. A defining element of Atlanta's culture is the way its history and politics shape the various neighborhoods within and around the metro Atlanta area. I infer that, because the participants in this study are aware of Atlanta's social-political landscape, they offer a unique critique regarding how Atlanta is politically defined in relation to the social justice issues they have witnessed or experienced while living there. In the first two sections of this chapter, I outlined the responses from the participants that addressed these research questions. Ultimately, it is clear that from this focus group, there is an awareness that the experience of Southern hip-hop dance uniquely influences how Black women perceive themselves. They have formulated their identity because they are from the South. Atlanta has provided a unique social and political landscape that allowed them to grow and thrive, building unique connections with other Black women and girls within the South. The research question can further be explored through different Southern regions because of the similarities of Southern hip-hop culture and how Black women have built connections through dance within the South based on Southern hip-hop traditions. This cultural leadership is deeply rooted in Southern hip-hop traditions, particularly those originating in Atlanta, where the sexual, economic, and geographical dynamics of The Dirty South have long placed Black women at the forefront of hip-hop culture. Southern hip-hop, with its bass-heavy beats and lyrical emphasis on dance, has historically encouraged forms of bodily expression, such as twerking and other dance styles that center the movement and power of Black women. This culture, thriving in spaces like strip clubs, festivals, and music videos, has been crucial in shaping how Black women navigate and negotiate their bodies, power, and influence. As I show in the next chapter, through a discussion of TikTok, these traditions evolve

as Black girls use the platform to innovate dance trends that draw from Southern hip-hop's aesthetics while also creating new avenues for cultural engagement and visibility.

Chapter 5: “Renegade”: Black Women's Dance Influence on TikTok and the Future

The “Renegade” dance, created by Jalaiah Harmon, became a viral sensation on TikTok in 2019, showcasing the power of Black girls in shaping digital dance trends on social media. Her recognition underscores the importance of crediting Black girl dancers, particularly young Black girls, in shaping contemporary dance culture. Harmon's viral success—and initial erasure—underscores the ongoing struggle for Black girls to receive recognition in digital dance economies. Her work exemplifies how Black girls mobilize Southern hip-hop dance to assert visibility, creativity, and agency, reinforcing my research emphasis on digital platforms as critical spaces for documenting and legitimizing Black women's cultural labor. Dirty South feminism validates and navigates the socio-economic realities that stem from urban and rural Black communities in the South. It centers on the experiences of Black women, girls, and non-binary femmes who express their identities and communicate through dance as a collaborative, social performance. This fifth chapter discusses the key results that emerged from the research study and how they are essential to explore the future contemporary aspects of Southern hip-hop culture and its connection to future perspectives of Dirty South feminism. It's important to highlight the impact of Black women, their connection to Black girl creativity, and their ability to continue to leverage their power and influence through social media platforms such as TikTok. This section explores contemporary aspects of Southern hip-hop culture concerning Black womanhood and Black girlhood, which extends the conversation of digital archives and digital cultures. The approach supports the argument that Black women and girls continue to elevate Southern hip-hop music and its artists. This section advocates for nuanced strategies to further this work by promoting additional research and historical exploration of the similarities

and differences in Southern hip-hop music and dance culture across various Southern cities. Ultimately, this section creates opportunities for future research to explore the contemporary nuances within Southern hip-hop culture and how the genre remains a prominent snapshot of the Southern hip-hop musical landscape.

TikTok Viral Dances and Their Sociocultural Significance

During the Crunk and Snap era of Southern hip-hop in Atlanta, Black women and girls dancing in music videos played a transformative role in shaping the visual and cultural aesthetics of the genre. As artists like Lil Jon, Ying Yang Twins, and Soulja Boy rose to prominence, their music videos became vibrant spaces that celebrated dance as a central form of expression. Black women's performances—embodying styles like twerking, j-setting, and other intricate choreographies—were integral to these videos and reflected Southern Black communities' energy, resilience, and creativity. Black women and girls have long been at the forefront of cultural innovation, their contributions shaping and reshaping dominant narratives through music, dance, and storytelling. Hip-hop feminism—a radical framework for interrogating power structures and amplifying marginalized voices—thrives within digital spaces, providing Black women and girls with platforms to assert their agency and influence. From pioneering blogs like the Crunk Feminist Collective to Issa Rae's *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl*, Black women have harnessed the power of the internet to critique, create, and curate content that centers on their lived experiences (Durham et al., 2013; Duthely, 2017; Erigha & Crooks-Allen, 2020).

Contemporary aspects of Southern hip-hop culture and the extension of the genre heavily rely on the influx of social media access and what social media means to Black girlhood and

creativity. Platforms like TikTok exemplify how Black women and girls continue to lead culture through digital media, often creating trends that reflect their historical practices of innovation and community building. For instance, the performative and expressive nature of TikTok dances draws direct parallels to the kinetic orality and play-centered embodiment that Gaunt (2006) theorized as integral to Black girlhood. These acts of cultural production do not merely entertain; they function as forms of resistance and identity formation, embodying the ethos of bringing wreck. By disrupting dominant frameworks and demanding recognition, Black women and girls on TikTok challenge the exclusionary tendencies of mainstream media, much like hip-hop feminists in earlier digital spaces (Barner, 2016). With the emergence of social media, there is a new era in digital culture where Black girls are sharing their creative dance aesthetics publicly. This era highlights the way in which Southern hip-hop roots continue to influence Black girls' expressions in a modern context. Recognizing the connection and influence of Black girls in supporting Southern hip-hop artists and shaping the culture is essential.

The way Black girls create dances on social media highlights the value they place on creativity, building sisterhood, and community. Whether they are dancing with friends or fellow dancers or aiming to start a viral trend, their ability to elevate Southern Black culture online is significant. The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the rise in dance challenges on TikTok. TikTok is a social media platform known for creating, sharing, and discovering short videos. The app became popular during the pandemic. It enables users to express themselves through singing, dancing, comedy, and lip-syncing by creating and sharing videos within the community. Within the past few years, TikTok proves to be a platform for creators to build large platforms and communities based on various forms of creativity that garner large followers worldwide. What is even more noteworthy is the surge of Black content creators on the platform. These creators are

gaining popularity through various forms of content, including dance challenges, cooking, humor, and political commentary. TikTok has created a unique space where users can unleash their creativity and leverage various pop culture trends. The platform has become a stage for creators to showcase their talent –particularly Black women and girls-. Through TikTok, Black creators have been able to create content that resonates with their communities while also reaching a broader audience. It is worth noting that this rise is significant in an era where representation matters. It is an opportunity for Black creators to be seen, heard, and celebrated. TikTok has become a platform where they can challenge stereotypes, showcase their artistry, and influence pop culture. In a world where the voices of marginalized communities are often silenced, TikTok has become a powerful tool for Black creators to express themselves and elevate their voices.

Cultural Theft and Digital Appropriation

The number of Black content creators on TikTok is on the rise, highlighting the significance of Black expression within the app. Between 2020 and 2022, the total follower count of 100 Black lifestyle creators increased by 194%, significantly outpacing the 53% growth observed among 100 non-Black creators. This disparity in growth can be attributed to the unique online behaviors of Black consumers, which have contributed to the enhanced performance of Black creators (*BlackCreatorsReport, 2023*). It is crucial to recognize the unique vernacular and physical characteristics that make content creation an important part of Black women and girls' social media experience. The growing presence of Black talent on TikTok also sheds light on the impact of hip-hop on Black women and girls, specifically with regards to issues of misogynoir, classism, and colorism. Specifically, there are a number of ways in which the performances of

Black girls are underrecognized, under-attributed and marginalized resulting in cultural theft and misappropriation.

Shadowbanning

TikTok's algorithm contributes to the erasure of Black voices, undervaluing their cultural contributions and reinforcing systemic biases that limit their visibility and impact on social media (Boffone, 2022; Peters, 2022). Unfortunately, these issues are also reflected within social media in the form of shadowbanning Black content creators, where their content is not shown to a wide audience. Shadowbanning refers to the suppression of content related to controversial or political topics, which discourages open discussions on issues such as the war on drugs and racial injustice. However, the practice of shadowbanning has disproportionately affected Black creators, especially those addressing racial discrimination and systemic racism (McCluskey, 2020; Mitchell, 2021). More specifically, shadowbanning silences Black content creators by limiting their visibility without explanation, despite following TikTok user agreements and guidelines. This discriminatory algorithmic practice perpetuates digital racial bias, disproportionately affecting Black voices, creativity, and activism while reinforcing systemic inequalities in online platforms. This was specifically exemplified when TikTok failed to properly attribute dances choreographed by Black creators to Addison Rae, sparking debates on cultural appropriation. These issues highlight the ways in which Black women and girls are marginalized within digital cultures.

Appropriation and Algorithms

Fortunately, through the multitude of videos created and shared by Black women and girls, the conflict of privilege and the issue of cultural appropriation diminishes the ability for them to be credited for their creativity in their performances. As the impact of going viral on TikTok becomes more apparent and studied, there is a phenomenon of virality that centers on white privilege and the algorithm's ability to center non-Black creators on the app. White TikTok content creators have often co-opted many popular dances on TikTok within the past five years with larger platforms. They stole the dances and made them mainstream because of their large presence and privilege on TikTok. This inevitably creates a digital media space of cultural appropriation where popular white content creators can benefit economically and socially from the different dances that Black creators have created.

White creators on TikTok have gained partnerships, brand deals, TV show opportunities, interviews, and recognition as the creators or leaders of dance challenges (Sinke, 2020). However, it is significant to highlight that the perception and representation of Black women and girls' ability to create content on social media platforms like TikTok reflects the presence of Black girlhood in social media. The digital space Black girls occupy has expanded their ability to find joy and express themselves culturally through content creation. There is a wide range of dances from different regions of the Black community, and a variety of songs are created by Black artists that Black women and girls can perform to. Recently, there have been dance challenges on social media that incorporate movements and performances of Black majorette dancing, hip-hop dancing, and various forms of kinetic orality. These dances are usually performed by Black girls. However, how these performances are portrayed on social media can be quite different from the cultural connection and understanding within the Black community

(Boffone, 2022; Brown, 2022; Victoria, 2023). Often, non-Black TikTok users appropriate these dance forms and performances without any understanding of their cultural significance. Similarly, Black women and girls also use AAVE to communicate and express themselves on social media. Unfortunately, this language is often co-opted by non-Black communities who misuse it in context because they lack the cultural connection and understanding that Black people have. The misuse of AAVE serves as a means of expression and communication within the Black community, and its appropriation can be interpreted as disrespectful and insensitive. This raises questions about systemic impact and validation. It is concerning that non-Black and white content creators often receive more opportunities for exposure, platforms, and validation for their "creativity," while Black creators frequently face being overlooked, undervalued, or even penalized. Cultural appropriation generates frustration and concern within the Black TikTok community (K. Brown, 2022). Black girl's contributions to shaping popular culture through their artistic expression, particularly in dance and other forms of content creation, have been significant and deserve recognition and credit. Sadly, despite their significant impact on popular culture, the creative expressions of Black girls are often ignored or dismissed. This lack of recognition and credit is particularly evident in the appropriation of their dances by non-Black content creators. The proliferation of hip-hop feminism within online spaces has also led to a reimagining of literary and visual storytelling. Black girls are capable of layering meaning, plot, and dialogue on digital platforms which enable them to weave their narratives into a larger cultural tapestry. Through videos, challenges, and collaborative content, they remix traditional notions of art and storytelling, embodying the multilayered approach inherent in hip-hop aesthetics. This layering allows for the simultaneous celebration of individuality and community, as each creation builds on the work of others while contributing something new.

Many popular dances that originated from Black girl content creators have been copied and rebranded by non-Black content creators without acknowledging the original creators. This co-optation can have negative effects, as it erases the efforts and contributions of Black girl content creators and reinforces the notion that Black girls' creative expressions are only valuable when non-Black creators appropriate them. This is a harmful narrative that deprives Black girls of their rightful place as creators and innovators in popular culture. Moreover, it is essential to recognize that many of the songs associated with these dances are crafted by Black Southern hip-hop artists or incorporate elements of Southern hip-hop music. Southern hip-hop has profoundly influenced mainstream music and culture, with many of its components integrated into popular music. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the origins of these cultural elements and the pivotal role Black Southern hip-hop artists played in shaping mainstream music and culture. It is important to validate and acknowledge the contributions of Black girls in shaping popular culture through their artistic expressions. Additionally, the harm and impact of digital cultural appropriation must be recognized to address the way misogyny, racism, and privilege impact digital culture.

Black girlhood and Digital Footwork

TikTok has not only popularized individual dance moves like Dabbing, Flossing, and the Woah but has also facilitated the emergence of comprehensive and intricate dance routines. Contrary to its perception as a platform for adolescent leisure, many of TikTok's most popular dances are choreographed by professionals. However, attributing credit for these dances can be challenging amidst the rapid spread of dance challenges and the tendency of TikTokers to personalize routines. This phenomenon has raised concerns, particularly among Black creators

like Keara Wilson, a 19-year-old military student from Ohio, created dance routines on TikTok, with a pattern of repetitive dances prevalent on the platform. Wilson, who has ten years of dance experience and was a high school cheerleader, spent an hour crafting a routine to Megan Thee Stallion's song "Savage" with the aspiration of achieving virality (Peters, 2022; Tait, 2020). But barriers faced by Black TikTok creators underscores how these digital constraints impact the preservation and recognition of Black women's contributions to Southern hip-hop. By engaging with these parallel discussions, the research can extend broader conversations about digital inequity, cultural appropriation, and Black women's agency in online spaces by engaging with these parallel discussions.

Jalaiah Harmon, a 14-year-old dancer from Fayetteville, Georgia, created the viral "Renegade" dance to K Camp's "Lottery" in September 2019. She choreographed the dance and uploaded it to Instagram. Soon, TikTok influencers like @Global.Jones, @Addisonrae and Charli D'Amelio were performing and gaining recognition for the dance, yet Jalaiah received no credit. Jalaiah, a dancer versed in hip-hop, ballet, and jazz, often find their contributions overshadowed by mainstream influencers. In the timeframe spanning between September 2019 to February 2020, iterations of the dance Renegade, choreographed to K CAMP's song "Lottery," amassed over 1.6 billion views on TikTok. The dance gained widespread recognition, attracting attention from figures like actress Millie Bobby Brown and former First Lady Michelle Obama and garnering coverage in prominent media outlets such as The New York Times and "The Ellen DeGeneres Show." Jalaiah's case exemplifies the systemic erasure of Black creators on social media, where white influencers often gain viral success by replicating Black cultural production without credit. TikTok's algorithm and content-sharing nature exacerbate this issue, as viral dances often circulate without proper attribution. The platform has faced criticism for

suppressing content from marginalized groups, further compounding the struggle for Black creators to gain visibility and monetization opportunities.

The comparison between dance videos created by the original creators and those produced by viral content creators underscores the disparity experienced by Black girl creators who struggle to attain comparable levels of viewership and virality on social media platforms such as TikTok. The contrast between these type of videos underscores the racial and cultural disparities present, as white or non-Black content creators often find it easier to amass larger audiences with their viral dance content. Furthermore, the extensive participation in dance challenges intensifies the difficulty in locating the original content creators (Martinez, 2022; Peters, 2022). This issue is particularly significant considering that the original video might not be linked to the song due to content creators utilizing different song links in their videos. Additionally, this comparison underscores the erasure of the influential role played by Black women in cheerleading, choreography, and majorette dancing within hip-hop culture. Consequently, the power and cultural impact they wield is diminished when they are not acknowledged as the creators or when their videos do not align with the algorithm to be featured on TikTok's "For You" page.

The Digital Black girl

The systemic barriers faced by Black content creators on social media platforms mirror the historical erasure of Black women's contributions to hip-hop culture. Algorithmic bias, content moderation, and inequitable monetization structures disproportionately affect Black TikTok creators, reinforcing digital forms of marginalization (Harris et al., 2023; McCluskey, 2020). The issue aligns with the ways Black women in Southern hip-hop navigate similar

challenges, particularly in the realm of dance cultures that have been central to the genre's evolution. Additionally, the policing of Black creative expression—both through restrictive content moderation and the suppression of visibility—illustrates broader patterns of exclusion that have shaped hip-hop's historical and contemporary landscapes (Harris et al., 2023; Martinez, 2022). Many viral dances on TikTok come from Black women who find community in Black dance circles. This highlights the importance of majorette dancing from historically Black colleges and universities, as well as stop-and-shake cheerleading styles in Southern hip-hop dance cultures, which have gained mainstream popularity on platforms like TikTok. Particularly, even when viral dance challenges do not explicitly identify the creator as a Black woman, the dances are often performed to Southern hip-hop songs by Black women artists or Southern hip-hop artists, amplifying the genre's cultural impact within social media dance circles. The missed opportunity for Black women to achieve comparable virality not only affects their potential for brand deals or platform building but also inhibits their prospects in choreography or dance careers. When TikTok users predominantly consume dances from non-Black content creators, it fails to acknowledge the creative process of Black girls and women, which has significantly propelled certain songs to No. 1 on the Billboard charts. For instance, the widespread popularity of Megan Thee Stallion's "Savage" can be attributed in part to a dance performed by a Black girl, potentially influencing Beyoncé's decision to participate in the remix. Similarly, Jalaiah Harmon's rendition of the Renegade dance to K CAMP's song prompted the artist to rename the song, thereby acknowledging the power and influence of Black women in enhancing hip-hop culture. This underscores the importance of recognizing Black women's contributions to hip-hop culture, particularly in Southern hip-hop, which often deviates from the narrative centered around male lyricism. Dancing holds significant cultural value in the genre, contributing to its

uniqueness. While dancing is one of the pillars of hip-hop culture, the context differs in Southern hip-hop, where music, production, and music videos reflect a distinct cultural identity. Music videos often depict scenes from communities, clubs, or outdoor gatherings, where popular dances like "Toot It and Boot It" by DJ Unk or "Laffy Taffy" are performed by large groups.

As these dances gain traction on platforms like TikTok, it is common to see Black girls dancing with their teammates or peers from majorette dance teams, reflecting the communal aspect of Black girls' engagement with Southern hip-hop through dance. This communal engagement highlights how Black girls navigate and contribute to Southern hip-hop culture collectively. Thus, the comparison between original and viral dance content on platforms like TikTok sheds light on the disparities faced by Black female creators. It underscores the erasure of their contributions to hip-hop culture and highlights the cultural significance of their creative endeavors. Recognizing and celebrating the creative power of Black girls and women is crucial for fostering inclusivity and acknowledging their invaluable contributions to the cultural landscape of hip-hop.

Conclusion

By analyzing these intersections, this dissertation extends the conversation on Black women's digital performances as both cultural archives and contested sites of power. As social media platforms continue to shape hip-hop's evolution, the digital politics of visibility remain central to understanding Black women's agency within these spaces. The analysis explores hip-hop feminism and its relevance to Dirty South feminism in terms of the impact and growth of social media. It sheds light on the challenges faced by Black women as they navigate hip-hop culture, especially within the context of Southern hip-hop's presence on social media. Drawing

from hip-hop feminist theory, Dirty South feminism bridges the challenges encountered by Black women growing up amid the gender norms inherent in Southern hip-hop culture, especially in Atlanta. It is essential to comprehend the unique rhythm and cadence prevalent in this genre, which is reminiscent of the cheerleading chants and routines performed by Black girls. This rhythm also echoes in the music performed by Black majorette dancers in historically Black schools and colleges in the South. The evolution of Dirty South feminism can be observed in the realm of social media, particularly concerning Black girls' engagement with Southern hip-hop culture.

Platforms like YouTube played a pivotal role during the rise of the crunk and snap era, serving as a central hub for spreading dance trends within the Southern Black community. Notably, while Black men predominantly showcased dance moves on YouTube, Black girls actively participated, often engaging in dances linked to songs that required intricate movements, such as twerking. With the rise of TikTok, there's a shift towards more complex dance routines, some featuring up to 18 counts, reflecting the detailed performances typical of Black girls in cheerleading and majorette squads. Understanding the cultural significance of these dance forms offers insights into the empowerment gained from participating in them. Consequently, it is crucial to recognize the roots of these dances when performed by non-Black creators and to address instances where cultural nuances are misrepresented or overlooked. Majorette dancing, influenced by ballet, jazz, and hip-hop, represents a unique fusion of styles that deeply resonate within Black communities. Despite facing criticism historically, these dance forms serve as vital expressions of cultural identity and solidarity. However, their significance is often marginalized in comparison to more traditional dance forms like ballet. This disregard extends to the music, costumes, and overall aesthetic associated with majorette dancing, which diverges from

conventional standards but holds immense cultural value within Black communities. Dirty South feminism offers a lens to understand and appreciate the profound cultural contributions of Black girls in the Southern hip-hop scene. By recognizing the historical roots and cultural significance of their dance forms, it becomes evident that these expressions are not merely recreational but emblematic of resilience, empowerment, and cultural pride. Therefore, it is imperative to challenge misrepresentations and ensure that Black girls remain central to the narrative surrounding these art forms.

Chapter 6. A Dirty South Feminist Critique

My home, Atlanta, stands at the heart of Dirty South Feminism, embodying the rich intersections of Black geographies, hip-hop culture, and Black women's creative resistance. More than just a city, Atlanta is a cultural force—a place where Southern hip-hop thrives, where Black women's creativity shapes regional movements, and where the politics of race, class, gender, and space collide. Through this exploratory study, I demonstrated how five Black women in Atlanta use dance, performance, and digital media to navigate and redefine the spaces they occupy. Their contributions are not just aesthetic; they are acts of resistance, reclamation, and self-definition, challenging the structural forces that often seek to erase them within Southern hip-hop history. By centering Atlanta, I highlight how Dirty South Feminism is rooted in place, movement, and sound, where the city itself becomes both a battleground against misogyny, racism and gentrification and a sanctuary for creativity, community and joy. Dirty South Feminism is the heart of my dissertation because it allows me to center Black women's voices, creativity, and resistance in Southern hip-hop dance cultures, especially in Atlanta. This framework isn't just theoretical—it's an important tool for reclaiming the narratives that have long erased or marginalized Black women's contributions to Southern hip-hop. By blending hip-hop feminism and Black feminist thought, I stress how Black women use dance, performance, and digital spaces to challenge systems of power. Throughout the dissertation, I wanted to emphasize how Dirty South Feminism is deeply rooted in Black geographies and Southern hip-hop because the South isn't just a setting—it's a living, breathing force that shapes how Black women and girls move, create, and resist. Southern hip-hop isn't just music; it's a cultural language, and Black women have always been at its core, shaping its rhythms and redefining its spaces. Through this framework, I want to continue to highlight how Black women navigate,

reclaim, and transform the South, using dance as resistance and storytelling. Dirty South Feminism allows me to map the power of place, proving that Black women don't just exist in Southern hip-hop—we define it. To explore this, I circle back to answer the questions that posed the foundations of this research.

How do participants define the South? What does it mean to be from Atlanta?

McKittrick (2006) argued that Black women face a unique set of challenges navigating geographic spaces due to their history of exploitation, exploration, and conquest. This history has contributed to a complex web of social and cultural stereotypes that have affected how Black women navigate their identity, particularly in the Southern United States. The historical stereotypes of Black women as hypersexual, uneducated, and subservient have had a lasting impact on how society perceives and treats them. The impact of these stereotypes is compounded by the lyrics, rhetoric, and the culture of hip-hop, which perpetuate patriarchal notions of misogyny and hyper-sexualization. Hip-hop has often been used to exploit, shame, and harm Black women, further perpetuating these damaging stereotypes. As a result, Black women must navigate a complex and challenging social landscape within the South and hip-hop that has been shaped by centuries of exploitation, racism, and sexism.

This research delves into the nuanced ways in which Black women have utilized Southern hip-hop dance as a means of resistance and reclamation of their identity in a culture that has often shamed, rejected, and harmed them. The South is explored as a cultural space where Black women can benefit and profit from the social, cultural, and economic aspects of Southern hip-hop. Through their participation in Southern hip-hop dance, Black women have

been able to assert their agency and challenge the oppressive structures that have historically silenced and subjugated them. Moreover, through this research underscores the significance of the South as a location where Black women have been victims of structural racism, sexism, and classism through violence and subjugation. The research sheds light on the ways in which these same structures have influenced Black men in hip-hop to perpetuate similar harm in the Black community and Southern hip-hop culture. By examining the cultural production in the South, this research reveals the complexity of how Black women and men navigate and respond to the oppressive systems that continue to impact their lives.

This critique sheds light on how and why Black women have navigated creativity, self-expression, and community. It highlights that claiming a Southern home is not only an act of naming the self and self-histories, but it also emphasizes that different forms of expression regarding location are equally valuable and can provoke memories. Through focus group, memory-making is a critical element of Black expression, serving as a reference point for the collective oral histories that reinforce the geopolitical possibilities of Black poetics. Specifically in Atlanta, the city's zoning laws and divisions reflect the way that Black spaces have been forcefully taken over, exploited, and gentrified. These laws created the communities where Southern hip-hop music was birthed. However, for Black women, these communities have also evolved into collaborative creative spaces that sustain Black womanhood and girlhood. From the focus group, participants pointed out different locations such as skating rinks, colleges, family homes, clubs, cookouts, and local events as inherently Black girl spaces where they can enjoy and engage in new music, as well as new dance forms that propel the interaction with Southern hip-hop culture.

How important is dancing to Black women in the South?

According to Pough (2004), "bringing wreck" is a term that refers to disrupting and challenging widely accepted ideas while also making oneself visible and claiming a voice. In her work, Pough examines the various perspectives of Black feminism to address the ways in which Black women exist within hip-hop culture and how they navigate the contradictions within it. Hip-hop feminism emphasizes the contradictions of Black women's political awareness, and Southern hip-hop dance further amplifies the ways that Black women and girls define body politics that diverge from historical stereotypes of Black womanhood. It also addresses the shame of sexual expression found in the lyrics of Southern hip-hop music and the platform Black women occupy in public spaces where sensuality, sex, provocative movements, and revealing outfits craft new dance performances for Black expression. The participants' accounts of their playful and self-centered attitude towards dancing from girlhood to adulthood provide a clear history and perspective on how Black women identify their dancing experiences. Many of these influences come from their community and often other women in their family. Pough (2004) acknowledges that the hip-hop concept of "wreck" offers new perspectives on Black life in the public sphere. This is how one can present themselves to the public. However, through wreck, the public can also be a space that brings attention to redefining skill, personhood, and creativity. This supports the idea of informal public spheres. Nevertheless, hip-hop can function as a counter-public sphere for Black women, offering space for resistance, expression, and identity formation in spite of— and often in direct response to—misogynoir.

The focus group participants discussed how they engage in dancing, both in public and in private. Many participants mentioned how they dance in public spaces in the presence of family

and community members, such as at family gatherings, skating rinks, and talent shows. On the other hand, private performances serve as a space to prepare for dancing in public. From a Southern perspective, participants described and shared how they learned dances from music videos and YouTube videos, as well as from friends and family. Private performances are an intimate space to build confidence and prepare for dancing in other social settings, allowing Black girls to connect with others. Additionally, this contributes to the awareness of music and dances across the city, strengthening the role of Black women in these cultural expressions. The combination of public and private dancing helps to expand the ways in which participants can engage with Southern hip-hop music and contribute to its cultural and social presence.

Additionally, the public spaces where Black women perform, such as the strip club, serve as venues for dance and engagement and function as economic and political spaces that contribute to the promotion of Southern hip-hop music, particularly trap music. Understanding the role of Black women in shaping the elements of Southern hip-hop music through dance is important, even though the participants themselves may not have performed in a strip club or identify as sex workers in the entertainment industry. Strippers play a significant role in the genre and have considerable influence in elevating the radio play and careers of Atlanta-based hip-hop artists.

What does it mean to be a Black woman from the South?

Understanding a Southern Black woman's experience is recognized by how they navigate the South through Southern hip-hop culture. This research explores how Black women claim their public space and metaphysical space. Reflecting on the intention of Black club women of the 1800s and 1900s speaks to a generation of Black women who utilized respectability politics and centered Black liberation and political progressive causes (Pough, 2004). These efforts

shaped the identities, characteristics, and manners of Black women, setting the standards for what respectability meant to Black women in the Black community. The concept of respectability has been a significant focus in the aesthetics of Black colleges, particularly women's colleges like Spelman and Bennett College. They have also been focused on the ideas put forth by W.E.B. Du Bois, who supported the concept of The Talented Tenth. However, with the emergence of music genres, third-wave feminism, and the shift of public spaces to embrace new forms of representation and Black culture, there has been a change. The rise of Southern hip-hop and the reemergence of bodily expression, vulgarity, and sexual confidence in the late 1980s and 1990s led to Black women openly challenging the traditional standards of respectability and their representation in hip-hop. Southern perceptions of Black womanhood have been shaped by various cultural ideas of femininity, grace, and dignity, which have often challenged stereotypes associated with the Black church and educational attainment.

Southern hip-hop has a unique audience that caters to Black women who have established their presence in multiple public spaces, such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). These institutions have been instrumental in shaping the Black South's culture through their marching bands, majorette dance teams, Greek culture, and parties. Moreover, HBCUs were the cornerstones of the Civil Rights Movement and are closely associated with the Black church, which has helped Black women navigate the racial tensions that exist in the region. Black women in the South have used community and representation to establish and maintain a dance culture and community that validates their contributions to Southern hip-hop culture. They have created a space where they can express themselves and feel validated, which has helped them navigate the complexities of being a Black woman in the South. Through their dance culture, Black women have established themselves as contributors to the culture, and their

influence can be seen in the genre's music, fashion, and dance. By focusing on Dirty South feminist theory, we can better understand how Black women in the Southern United States have pushed back against traditional identities imposed on them. Dirty South feminism is an important analysis that focuses on how individuals can recognize their unique perspectives of the Southern region. This form of feminism helps us understand how the South sustains itself politically and socially and how this translates into Southern hip-hop music. It's important to note that being a Black woman who dances in the South is not exclusively linked to Southern hip-hop dancing. The various Southern hip-hop dances create similar but distinct public spaces in which Black women and girls participate.

Reflection

The experiences that materialize in the South, kinetic orality through Black girl play, social dancing, and expressive cultures such as musical Blackness between the sexes have unique connections to the growth of Southern hip-hop culture and politics of the South. The public sexual terrain of Southern hip-hop through the era of Freaknik, New Orleans Bounce music, and Southern strip clubs serves as a public display of sexuality and cultural expression. These Southern performances and events disrupt respectability politics within the South that centralize other Southern cultures and performances, which can be read as dirty (key to the Dirty South) (Grem, 2006). I want to note that these performances are just a small example of many performances of Southern hip-hop life that Black Southern women practice. The sexual performances and emphasis on the Southern booty/twerking have very specific economic and geographical ties to the musical production of Southern hip-hop music. I find that studies on Southern hip-hop fail to emphasize or imply that the music not only unites Black communities

but also that Atlanta hip-hop culture has a unique role in cultivating booty-shaking music and a culture where Black women have been key contributors. Social gatherings like Freaknik, the Atlanta Greek Picnic, and HBCU homecomings. Public dance performances and the congregation of young Black adults create a Southern hip-hop tradition that disrupts public spaces (Barnes, 2020; Sarig, 2007; Wicks, 2013). It is important to note that Black women in Atlanta who occupy and perform in these spaces craft and curate Southern dance culture, fueling the hip-hop aesthetic and economy that isn't formally recognized in Southern hip-hop culture.

The reality is that Black women in the South have significant cultural and economic capital that fuels Southern hip-hop music. The music has to be “danceable” for the women to perform, which ultimately means they grant the opportunity for rappers to become successful. Southern Black women disrupt respectability politics by their lyrical and physical performances that occupy the public sphere. The expressive cultures that emerge from Southern hip-hop through the perspective of Black women and girls become a crucial geographical location for Black women to express their ideas and viewpoints about the conservative South they live in and define their own narratives, and not through the assumption of victimization, self-objectification, and shame. Black women are not just participants in Southern hip-hop culture—they are architects of its evolution, shaping its visual, sonic, and embodied landscapes. This work asserts that understanding Southern hip-hop without acknowledging Black women's labor and influence is incomplete. Dirty South Feminism is not just a theoretical framework; it is a necessary lens for recognizing the power, presence, and impact of Black women in Atlanta's hip-hop scene and across the South. This dissertation underscores the significance of Black women's cultural efforts in shaping Atlanta's hip-hop dance culture through a Dirty South feminist lens. By centering the lived experiences of Black women and girls who have grown up in Atlanta, this

study reveals how dance functions as both resistance and reclamation—performative strategies that challenge spatial, social, and gendered constraints. The concept of “hiphopography” offered an interdisciplinary methodology that merged ethnography, hip-hop history and qualitative research to document the expressive practices of these women as they negotiate visibility, power, and place. Participants’ narratives emphasized not only their artistic contributions but also their navigation of structural inequities, such as gentrification, economic marginalization, and cultural erasure, reinforcing the need to honor dance as a critical site of Black feminist knowledge production (Clay, 2003; Collins, 2000; Durham et al., 2013).

Looking forward, this research invites further exploration into Black social dance communities across other Southern cities—such as New Orleans, Memphis, Houston, and Miami—that possess their own distinct cultural ecosystems. Each city offers rich and regionally specific histories of music, movement, and Black womanhood that remain underexamined in scholarly discourse. A comparative Dirty South feminist analysis could uncover how similar or divergent political geographies shape Black women’s creative expressions in these cities, deepening the understanding of Southern Black feminisms. For example, New Orleans bounce culture and Houston’s chopped and screwed dance scene present alternative timelines of embodiment and sonic memory, while Miami bass offers a powerful narrative of diasporic rhythm and sexuality in motion cementing the origins of bass music. Future research also integrate digital humanities to explore how social media platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram can remix and redistribute Southern Black dance cultures, allowing Black women and girls to perform and archive their identities in new, global circuits (Pough, 2004; Gaunt, 2015). Dirty South feminism, in this regard, is not only a theoretical intervention but also a roadmap to a Black geographical framework that identifies Southern Black women’s joy, movement, and

ingenuity. It calls for scholars to continue amplifying the embodied knowledge and cultural production of Black women in the South and beyond.

Bibliography

- #BlackGirlFollowTrain* creates a network for Black female content creators to support one another. (2023, January 18). NBC News.
<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/blackgirlfollowtrain-provides-community-Black-women-tiktok-rcna65551>
- Adaso, H. (2019, March 8). *The History of Crunk Music*. LiveAbout.
<https://www.liveabout.com/definition-of-crunk-music-2857305>
- Alim, H. S. (2006). “The Natti Ain’t no Punk City”: Emic Views of Hip Hop Cultures. *Callaloo*, 29(3), 969–990.
- Alim, H. S., Lamontagne, S., Shawel, T., Story, D., Williams, A., Douglass, M., Matus, E., Moore, L. F., Parks, S. K., Reed, T. A., & Wong, C. P. (2023). Public Enemy, Public Scholarship: Hiphopography and the Co-production of Knowledge with Chuck D. In Q. Williams & J. N. Singh (Eds.), *Global Hiphopography* (pp. 29–56). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-21955-9_2
- Bailey, M. M. (2019). Whose Body Is This? On the Cultural Possibilities of a Radical Black Sexual Praxis. *American Quarterly*, 71(1), 161–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2019.0009>
- Barner, B. N. (2016). *The creative (and magical) possibilities of digital Black girlhood*.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2152/39439>
- Barnes, R. J. D. (2021). On Our Own Terms: Building on Leith Mullings’s Transformative Black Feminist Ethnography. *Transforming Anthropology*, 29(2), 143–164.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/traa.12224>

- Bledsoe, A., Eaves, L. E., & Williams, B. (2017). Introduction: Black geographies in and of the United States South. *Southeastern Geographer*, 57(1), 6–11.
- Bloomquist, J., & Hancock, I. (2013). *The Dirty Third: Contributions of Southern Hip Hop to the Study of Regional Variation Within African American English*. 38.
- Boffone, T. (2022). The D’Amelio Effect: TikTok, Charli D’Amelio, and the Construction of Whiteness. In *TikTok Cultures in the United States*. Routledge.
- Boles, J. B. (2014). *Black Southerners, 1619-1869*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Boucher, L. (2016). Embodied resistance: Exploring the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in hip-hop dance. *TDR/The Drama Review*, 60(2), 103–122.
- Boyd, R. L. (2017). The early twentieth-century “Black Metropolis”: Urban geographic principles. *GeoJournal*, 82(4), 787–803.
- Boylorn, R. M. (2012). *Sweetwater: Black Women and Narratives of Resilience* (New edition). Peter Lang Inc., International Academic Publishers.
- Bradley, R. N. (2021). *Chronicling Stankonia: The Rise of the Hip-Hop South*. Univ of North Carolina Pr.
- Brown, R. N. (2013). *Hear Our Truths: The Creative Potential of Black Girlhood*. University of Illinois Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt3fh5xc>
- Brown, K. (2022, April 7). *The Rise of Black TikTok*. Black Girl Nerds. <https://blackgirlnerds.com/the-rise-of-Black-tiktok/>
- Burns, R. (2015, March 18). Freaknik: Rise and fall of Atlanta’s most infamous street party. *Atlanta Magazine*. <https://www.atlantamagazine.com/90s/freaknik-the-rise-and-fall-of-atlantas-most-infamous-street-party/>
- Chang, J. (2005). *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*.

- Chepp, V. (2015). Black Feminism and Third-Wave Women's Rap: A Content Analysis, 1996–2003. *Popular Music and Society*, 38(5), 545–564.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2014.936187>
- Clay, A. (2007). "Like an Old Soul Record: Black Feminism, Queer Sexuality, and the Hip-Hop Generation. *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, 8(1), 53–73.
<https://doi.org/10.2979/MER.2007.8.1.53>
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Psychology Press.
- Collins, P. H. (2005). *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (1st edition). Routledge.
- Collins, P. H. (2006). *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism*. Temple University Press.
- Cooper, B. C., Morris, S. M., & Boylorn, R. M. (Eds.). (2017). *The Crunk Feminist Collection*. The Feminist Press at CUNY.
- Craighead, C. (2006). 'Black dance': Navigating the politics of 'black' in relation to 'the dance object' and the body as discourse. *Critical Arts*, 20(2), 16–33.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02560040608540452>
- Crank, J. A. (2016). Down N' Dirty. *South: A Scholarly Journal*, 48(2), 157–169.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. 31.
- Crowley, M. (2009). The Black body in popular culture: Performing race and resistance in hip-hop dance. *TDR/The Drama Review*, 53(2), 12–30.

- Crowley, M. (2014). “Crunk, crump, and twerk”: Hip-hop dance as political resistance. *TDR/The Drama Review*, 58(2), 65–80.
- Davis, A. (2010). Choreographing blackness: African American dance and the politics of embodiment. *TDR/The Drama Review*, 54(2), 56–75.
- Davis, A. Y. (1999). *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (1 edition). Vintage.
- Defrantz, T. F. (2001). *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance* (First Edition). University of Wisconsin Press.
- DeFrantz, T. F. (2004). The Black beat made visible: Hip hop dance and body power. *Dance Research Journal*, 36(2), 102–108.
- DeFrantz, T. F. (2005). African American Dance—Philosophy, Aesthetics, and ‘Beauty.’ *Topoi*, 24(1), 93–102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-004-4165-7>
- DeFrantz, T. F. (2009). Dance and activism: A challenge for radical Black performance. *Theatre Journal*, 61(3), 409–423.
- DeFrantz, T. F. (2012). Unchecked Popularity: Neoliberal Circulations of Black Social Dance. In L. D. Nielsen & P. Ybarra (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and Global Theatres* (pp. 128–140). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137035608_9
- DeFrantz, T. F. (2015). Choreography as critique: Hip hop, contemporary dance, and the Black subject. *Theatre Journal*, 67(3), 489–510.
- Defrantz, T. F., & Gonzalez, A. (Eds.). (2014). *Black Performance Theory*. Duke University Press.
- DeFrantz, T. F., & Willis, T. A. (2016). Black moves: New research in Black dance studies. *The Black Scholar*, 46(1), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2016.1119632>

- Defrantz, T. F. (2018). *What Is Black Dance? What Can It Do?* [/paper/Black-Moves%3A-New-Research-in-Black-Dance-Studies-Defrantz-Willis/d9b4681f126a775a1b2a4c5fa175b81ce0741a44](#)
- Dils, A., & Crosby, J. F. (2001). Dialogue in Dance Studies Research. *Dance Research Journal*, 33(1), 62–81. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1478857>
- Dixon, G. (2017). Crunk, twerk, and shake: Hip-hop dance and the politics of embodiment. *TDR/The Drama Review*, 61(1), 85–103.
- Durham, A. S. (2014). *Home with Hip Hop Feminism: Performances in Communication and Culture*. Peter Lang Inc., International Academic Publishers.
- Durham, A., Cooper, B. C., & Morris, S. M. (2013). The Stage Hip-Hop Feminism Built: A New Directions Essay. *Signs*, 38(3), 721–737. <https://doi.org/10.1086/668843>
- Duthely, R. (2017). Black Feminist Hip-Hop Rhetorics and the Digital Public Sphere. *Changing English*, 24(2), 202–212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684X.2017.1310458>
- Eaves, L. E. (2017). Black Geographic Possibilities: On a Queer Black South. *Southeastern Geographer*, 57(1), 80–95.
- Eaves, L., & Wright, W. J. (2020). *Black Geographies*. https://www.academia.edu/43444275/Black_Geographies
- Erigha, M., & Crooks-Allen, A. (2020). Digital Communities of Black Girlhood: New Media Technologies and Online Discourses of Empowerment. *The Black Scholar*, 50(4), 66–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2020.1811601>
- Evans-Winters, V. E. (2019). *Black Feminism in Qualitative Inquiry: A Mosaic for Writing Our Daughter's Body* (1 edition). Routledge.

- Franklin, J. L. (1994). Black Southerners, shared experience, and place: A reflection. *The Journal of Southern History*, 60(1), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2210718>
- French, K. (2017). Geography of American rap: Rap diffusion and rap centers. *GeoJournal*, 82(2), 259–272. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-015-9681-z>
- From ‘Crank That’ To Dabbing: Atlanta Is a Dance Craze Mecca. (2016, March 10). WABE. <https://www.wabe.org/crank-dabbing-atlanta-dance-craze-mecca/>
- Gaunt, K. D. (2006). *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop*. NYU Press.
- Gaunt, K., & Hobson, J. (2022). *Is Twerking African?: Dancing and Diaspora as Embodied Knowledge on YouTube*.
- Graham, N. J. (2017). Southern Rap and the Rhetoric of Region. *Phylon (1960-)*, 54(2), 41–57.
- Grem, D. E. (2006). “The South Got Something to Say”: Atlanta’s Dirty South and the Southernization of Hip-Hop America. *Southern Cultures*, 12(4), 55–73. <https://doi.org/10.1353/scu.2006.0045>
- Grim, A. (2015). *Southern hospitality: Tourism and the construction of Atlanta’s image following the Civil Rights Movement*. Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College.
- Gottschild, B. D. (2005). *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool* (1st edition). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gottschild, B. D. (2016). *Dancing with the invisible: Race and dance in the age of globalization*. University of Florida Press.
- Gottschild, B. D. (2018). Dancing the Black body in white spaces: Race and representation in contemporary dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 50(1), 5–21.

- Halliday, A. S. (2020). Twerk sumn!: Theorizing Black girl epistemology in the body. *Cultural Studies*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2020.1714688>
- Halliday, A. S., & Payne, A. N. (2020). Introduction: Savage and Savvy: Mapping Contemporary Hip Hop Feminism. *The Journal of Hip Hop Studies*, 7(1), 8-18,116.
- Harris, C., Johnson, A. G., Palmer, S., Yang, D., & Bruckman, A. (2023). “Honestly, I Think TikTok has a Vendetta Against Black Creators”: Understanding Black Content Creator Experiences on TikTok. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 7(CSCW2), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3610169>
- Hartman, S. V. (1997). *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*.
- Hartman, S. (2020). *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (Reprint edition). WW Norton.
- Hazard-Gordon, K. (1983). Afro-American Core Culture Social Dance: An Examination of Four Aspects of Meaning. *Dance Research Journal*, 15(2), 21–26. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1478674>
- Hazard-Gordon, K. (1985). African-American Vernacular Dance: Core Culture and Meaning Operatives. *Journal of Black Studies*, 15(4), 427–445.
- Hazard-Gordon, K. (1992). *Jookin’: The Rise of Social Dance Formations in African-American Culture*. Temple University Press.
- Henry, A. (2011) Feminist theory in education in S. Tozer, B. Gallegos, and A. Henry (Eds.). *Handbook of research in the social foundations of education* (pp.261-282). Routledge.

- Henry, S. (2019, September 19). Timeline: The long, risqué history of Atlanta's nightlife. *Atlanta Magazine*. <https://www.atlantamagazine.com/news-culture-articles/timeline-the-long-risque-history-of-atlantas-nightlife/>
- Henry, W. J. (2010). Hip-Hop Feminism: A Standpoint to Enhance the Positive Self-Identity of Black College Women. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 47(2), 139–155. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.6065>
- Herman, J. P. (2020, June 15). *Inside the Soundtrack to "Insecure" With Music Supervisor Kier Lehman—Variety*. *Variety*. <https://variety.com/2020/music/news/insecure-soundtrack-music-supervisor-kier-lehman-interview-1234635839/>
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2013). *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer*. SAGE Publications.
- Higginbotham, E. B. (1994). *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Revised ed. edition). Harvard University Press.
- Hobson, M. J. (2017). Ali and Atlanta: A Love Story in the Key of the Black New South. *Phylon* (1960-), 54(1), 79–96.
- Hobson, M. J. (2017). *The Legend of the Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern Atlanta*. UNC Press Books.
- Hollander, P. (2013). "Elevate My Mind": Identities for Women in Hip Hop Love Songs. *Studies in Popular Culture*, 36(1), 105–122. JSTOR.
- Holloway, J. E. (2018). Embodying difference: Issues of race and representation in dance. *Dance Research Journal*, 50(1), 5–21.
- Holt, K. C. (2018). On Politics and Performativity in Atlanta Hip Hop Party Culture, Or How to Get Crunk with (Body and) Words. In J. D. Burton & J. L. Oakes (Eds.), *The Oxford*

- Handbook of Hip Hop Music* (p. 0). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190281090.013.30>
- How Freaknik became synonymous with Atlanta's cultural identity.* (2019, May 8).
 11Alive.Com. <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/outreach/atl-culture/how-freaknik-became-synonymous-with-atlantas-cultural-identity/85-046c4d90-fdae-4c78-8aaf-5fcdfb686f92>
- How Southern rappers became America's most influential musical force. (2015, February 4). *The FADER*. <https://www.thefader.com/2015/02/04/how-Southern-rappers-became-americas-most-influential-musical-force>
- How the Obsession With TikTok Dances Spilled Out of the App and Into the World. (2020, January 29). *Observer*. <https://observer.com/2020/01/tiktok-dance-moves-choreography-history/>
- Jackson, J. D. (2001). Improvisation in African-American Vernacular Dancing. *Dance Research Journal*, 33(2), 40–53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1477803>
- Jennings, K. (2020). City Girls, hot girls and the re-imagining of Black women in hip-hop and digital spaces. *Global Hip Hop Studies*, 1(1), 47–70.
https://doi.org/10.1386/ghhs_00004_1
- Johnson, A. (2021). Dirty South Feminism: The Girlies Got Somethin' to Say Too! Southern Hip-Hop Women, Fighting Respectability, Talking Mess, and Twerking Up the Dirty South. *Religions*, 12(11), Article 11. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12111030>
- Keara Wilson & More Black TikTok Creators are Copyrighting Their Dance Moves on The Viral List. (2021). *YPulse*. Retrieved March 30, 2024, from

- <https://www.ypulse.com/article/2021/08/06/keara-wilson-more-Black-tiktok-creators-are-copyrighting-their-dance-moves-on-the-viral-list/>
- Keyes, C. L. (2004). *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*. University of Illinois Press.
- King, J. (2011). Crunked and unruly: Theorizing resistance in Southern hip-hop dance. *American Studies Journal*, 54(3), 13–27. <https://doi.org/10.3368/asj.54.3.13>
- King, J. (2020). *Crunk feminism: Running a third wave*. The Feminist Wire.
- King, J. L. (2020). *Southern discomfort: Feminism, social justice, and the limits of crunk* (Vol. 1). University of Georgia Press.
- Kistler, M. E., & Lee, M. J. (2009). Does Exposure to Sexual Hip-Hop Music Videos Influence the Sexual Attitudes of College Students? *Mass Communication and Society*, 13(1), 67–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205430902865336>
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2014). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. SAGE Publications.
- L.Morgan, D. (1997). *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984287>
- LaFleur, M. R. (2014). “Speaking in tongues”: Southern lyricism in the post-Civil Rights era. *The Southern Literary Journal*, 46(2), 64–85.
- LaFleur, M. R. (2015). *“The Dirty South”: OutKast and Southern identity in hip-hop culture* (Vol. 6). Baylor University Press.
- Lane, N. (2019). “I Said What I Said”: Final Notes on Ratchet/Boojie Politics. In N. Lane (Ed.), *The Black Queer Work of Ratchet: Race, Gender, Sexuality, and the (Anti)Politics of Respectability* (pp. 147–164). Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23319-8_6

- Lee, K. A. (2016). Beyond the sound: The cultural significance of Atlanta's hip-hop scene. *Southeastern Geographer*, 56(1), 62–80.
- Lepecki, A., & Franko, M. (2018). Dance and cultural difference: Politics of representation and performance. *Theatre Journal*, 70(1), 3–24.
- Lewis, G. (2014). Historicizing freaknik: Atlanta, race, and the politics of public memory. *The Public Historian*, 36(4), 48–69.
- Lima, M. F. de. (2015). *Beyond twerk: Theorizing hip-hop dance through a Black feminist lens* (1st ed.). University of Florida Press.
- Lindsey, T. B. (2013). “One Time for My Girls”: African-American Girlhood, Empowerment, and Popular Visual Culture. *Journal of African American Studies*, 17(1), 22–34.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-012-9217-2>
- Lindsey, T. B. (2015). Let Me Blow Your Mind: Hip Hop Feminist Futures in Theory and Praxis. *Urban Education*, 50(1), 52–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085914563184>
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press.
- Love, B. L. (2012). *Hip hop's li'l sistas speak: Negotiating hip hop identities and politics in the new South*. Peter Lang.
- Love, B. L. (2017). A Ratchet Lens: Black Queer Youth, Agency, Hip Hop, and the Black Ratchet Imagination: *Educational Researcher*.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X17736520>
- Malone, J. (1996). *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance*. University of Illinois Press.
- Manning, J. (2017). *In Vivo Coding*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0270>

- Martinez, W. (2022). TikTok for Us by Us: Black Girlhood, Joy, and Self-care. In *TikTok Cultures in the United States*. Routledge.
- McCluskey, M. (2020, July 22). These Creators Say They're Still Being Suppressed for Posting Black Lives Matter Content on TikTok. TIME. <https://time.com/5863350/tiktok-Black-creators/>
- McKittrick, K. (2006). *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (First edition). Univ Of Minnesota Press.
- Miles, C. (2020). Black Rural Feminist Trap: Stylized and Gendered Performativity in Trap Music. *The Journal of Hip Hop Studies*, 7(1), 44-70,118.
- Miles, C. J. (2023). *Vibe: The Sound and Feeling of Black Life in the American South*. University Press of Mississippi.
- Miller-Young, M. (2014). *A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women in Pornography*. Duke Univ Pr.
- Miller, K. A. (2012). Southern hip-hop and the struggle for place. *Southeastern Geographer*, 52(2), 169–189.
- Miller, M. (2004). Rap's Dirty South: From Subculture to Pop Culture. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 16(2), 39.
- Miller, M. (2008). Dirty Decade: Rap Music and the US South, 1997–2007. *Southern Spaces*. <https://doi.org/10.18737/M78P5T>
- Miller, M. (2019). Atlanta's hip-hop economy: Changing geographies of a Southern pop culture industry. *Southeastern Geographer*, 59(2), 181–204. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sgo.2019.0016>

- Mitchell, T. S. (2021). *Black creators say TikTok's algorithm fosters a "consistent undertone of anti-Blackness." Here's how the app has responded.* Business Insider.
<https://www.businessinsider.com/a-timeline-of-allegations-that-tiktok-censored-Black-creators-2021-7>
- Morgan, J. (1999). *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: My Life as A Hip Hop Feminist* (First Edition edition). Simon & Schuster.
- Morgan, J. (2015). Why We Get Off: Moving Towards a Black Feminist Politics of Pleasure. *The Black Scholar*, 45(4), 36–46.
- Morris, G. (2009). Dance Studies/Cultural Studies. *Dance Research Journal*, 41(1), 82–100.
- Morton, T. (2015, February 10). Known Zones - The Noisy Guide to ATL's Trap Map. *Vice*.
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/7b7yag/known-zones-0000575-v22n2>
- Mosley, L. (2023). Beyond the Screen: An Exploration of Black Girls' Social Media Content as Dialogue. *Middle and Secondary Education Dissertations*.
<https://doi.org/10.57709/35534983>
- Murphy, K. P., Pierce, J. L., & Ruiz, J. (2016). What Makes Queer Oral History Different. *The Oral History Review*, 43(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohw022>
- Neal, M. A., & Forman, M. (Eds.). (2004). *That's the joint!: The hip-hop studies reader*. Routledge.
- Nichols, J. (2014). Crank That Thang: Contextualizing Black Masculinities and Hip-Hop Dance in the South from 2000-2010. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 38(2), 84–97.
- Payne, A. (2020). The Cardi B–Beyoncé Complex: Ratchet Respectability and Black Adolescent Girlhood. *Journal of Hip Hop Studies*, 7(1).
<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/jhhs/vol7/iss1/5>

- Peoples, W. A. (2008). "Under Construction": Identifying Foundations of Hip-Hop Feminism and Exploring Bridges between Black Second-Wave and Hip-Hop Feminisms. *Meridians*, 8(1), 19–52.
- Perry, I. (2004). *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*. Duke University Press Books.
- Peters, S. (2022). *Black social dances and how they influence today's TikTok creators*. REVOLT. <https://www.revolt.tv/article/2022-06-15/174532/Black-social-dances-and-how-they-influence-todays-tiktok-creators>
- Peterson, S. H., Wingood, G. M., DiClemente, R. J., Harrington, K., & Davies, S. (2007). Images of Sexual Stereotypes in Rap Videos and the Health of African American Female Adolescents. *Journal of Women's Health*, 16(8), 1157–1164. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2007.0429>
- Pough, G. D. (2004). *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*. Northeastern University Press.
- Rap Music's Roots In Atlanta's Bankhead Neighborhood*. (2015, September 11). Georgia Public Broadcasting. <https://www.gpb.org/blogs/atlanta-considered/2015/09/11/rap-musics-roots-in-atlantas-bankhead-neighborhood>
- Rim, M. (2023). Race, Gender, and Visibility on Social Media. In *Technology Ethics*. Routledge.
- Robinson, Z. F. (2014). *This Ain't Chicago: Race, Class, and Regional Identity in the Post-Soul South* (1st edition). University of North Carolina Press.
- Rose, T. (1994). *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Wesleyan.

- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed). SAGE.
- Sarig, R. (2007). *Third Coast: OutKast, Timbaland, and How Hip-hop Became a Southern Thing*. Hachette Books.
- Scott, D. B. (2017). Freaknik in Atlanta, Georgia: Collective memory and contested meanings. *The Southern Quarterly*, 54(1), 67–90.
- Sharpley-Whiting, T. D. D. (2008). *Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip Hop's Hold on Young Black Women*. NYU Press.
- Shaw, A. R. (2020). *Trap History: Atlanta Culture and the Global Impact of Trap Music*. Bluefield Media, LLC.
- Sinke, K. (2020, July 1). What Going Viral on TikTok Taught Me About Cultural Appropriation. *Lithium Magazine*. <http://lithiummagazine.com/2020/07/01/what-going-viral-on-tiktok-taught-me-about-cultural-appropriation/>
- Smith, J. F. (n.d.). *On Beyoncé, HBCU Majorettes, and Black Womanhood*. Lenny Letter. Retrieved May 25, 2021, from <https://www.lennyletter.com/story/hbcu-majorettes-shaped-my-idea-of-Black-womanhood>
- Spady, J. G. (2013). Mapping and Re-Membering Hip Hop History, Hiphopography and African Diasporic History. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 37(2), 126–157.
- Spady, J. G. (2011). The American South and hip-hop culture. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(2), 242–261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934710392964>
- Stahl, M. (2012). Doing it big: Composing the nation and the city in Southern rap. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 24(2), 233–257.

Steele, C. K. (2021). Black Feminist Pleasure on TikTok: An Ode to Hurston’s “Characteristics of Negro Expression.” *Women’s Studies in Communication*, 44(4), 463–469.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2021.1987822>

Tait, A. (2020). Meet the choreographers behind some of TikTok’s most viral dances. *Wired*.

<https://www.wired.com/story/tik-tok-dances/>

Taylor, C. R. (2003). *The rhetoric of Black music: African American music as resistance and revolution*. Routledge.

Taylor, U. Y. (1998). Making Waves: The Theory and Practice of Black Feminism. *The Black Scholar*, 28(2), 18–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1998.11430912>

Thompson, K. A. (2007). Performing Visibility: Freaknik and the Spatial Politics of Sexuality, Race, and Class in Atlanta. *TDR/The Drama Review*, 51(4), 24–46.

<https://doi.org/10.1162/dram.2007.51.4.24>

The 'hood comes first: Race, space, and place in rap and hip-hop | Murray Forman | download.

(n.d.). Retrieved August 30, 2022, from <https://b-ok.cc/book/5595648/8b19ea>

The new encyclopedia of Southern culture. Volume 13, Gender | Nancy Bercau & Ted Ownby &

Charles Reagan Wilson | download. (n.d.). Retrieved August 30, 2022, from <https://b-ok.cc/book/2634897/1ada06>

The Oral History of Freaknik. (n.d.). Complex. Retrieved August 23, 2022, from

<https://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2013/04/the-oral-history-of-freaknik>

The Pennsylvania State University. (n.d.). 299.

TikTok: The Home of Cultural Appropriation. (n.d.). TikTok: The Home of Cultural

Appropriation - The Blackprint. Retrieved March 30, 2024, from

<https://www.theblackprintau.com/article/2022/11/tiktok-the-home-of-cultural-appropriation>

Tucker, M. (2015). The choreography of political resistance: Dance, race, and representation in the age of globalization. *Theatre Journal*, 67(1), 49–71.

Tucker, M. (2018). Dance and the politics of representation: Issues of race, gender, and difference. *Theatre Journal*, 70(2), 165–185.

Tyson, K. (2003). The power of hip-hop: A Black feminist reflection. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(4), 955–973.

Victoria, K. (2023, April 18). How TikTok Shifted The Dance Community. *Girls United*.
<https://girlsunited.essence.com/article/tiktok-dance-community/>

Ward, J., & Taylor, D. K. (2016). Literary Voice of the Dirty South: An Interview with Jesmyn Ward. *CLA Journal*, 60(2), 266–268.

Wicker, J. (2020, April 15). *Renegade Creator Jalaiah Harmon Is Taking Back the Dance the Internet Took From Her*. Teen Vogue. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/jalaiah-harmon-renegade-creator-viral-dance>

Wicks, A. (2013). *The Prancing J-Settes: Race, Gender, and Class Politics and the Movements of Black Women in the African Diaspora* [Thesis].

<https://oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/151010>

Willett, A. (2018). Homegrown heroes: Community-centered narratives in the hip-hop music of Houston and New Orleans. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 30(3), 122–141.

Williams, F. G., & Glassburn-Falzetti, D. A. (20017). *Afrocentrism, Hip-Hop, and the “Black Queen”*: Utilizing Hip-Hop Feminist Methods to Challenge Controlling Images of Black Women.

- Williams, Q., & Singh, J. N. (Eds.). (2023). *Global Hip-hopography* (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan Cham.
- Wilson, J. A. (2007). *OutKast'd and claimin' true: The language of schooling and education in the Southern hip-hop community of practice*. University of Georgia.
<https://esploro.libs.uga.edu/esploro/outputs/9949334959702959>
- Wright, E. (2016). Crunk feminism: Using hip-hop to evoke social change. *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, 40(2), 37–51.
- Wright, M. (2010). Dirty South: OutKast, Lil' Wayne, Soulja Boy, and the Southern hip-hop aesthetic. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 22(4), 371–388.
- Wright, R. (2006). Atlanta's Dirty South: OutKast, hip-hop and the city of Atlanta. *Urban Geography*, 27(7), 629–649.
- Younger, B. (2020, August 3). The South Is Rap's Past, Present and Future. *NPR*.
<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/03/897745376/the-south-is-raps-past-present-and-future>