

THEY DANCE CAUSE IT'S FUN:
BLACK GIRLS' HIP HOP DANCE LITERACY AND THE POLITICS OF
RESPECTABILITY

by

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(Under the Direction of Donna E. Alvermann)

ABSTRACT

Black girls are being penalized in school and society, largely for subjective reasons. Harsh, unrestrained, and microaggressive subjectivities towards Black girls are linked to the view that Black girls are viewed as more adult-like than their peers (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017). In schools, the trend of adultification persists in resulting in harsher penalties and punishments of Black girls without consideration for their modes of literacy (Cooper, 2019; Pough, 2004; Morris 2016; 2019). Feminine hip hop dance (a range of hip dance exclusive of breakdancing) is one of those modes of literacy that is policed and scrutinized largely due to the politics of respectability. Under a hip hop feminist framework, this multiple case study examines encounters with the politics of respectability due to hip hop dance in the lives of three Black girls in grades 3, 7, and 11. Hip hop feminism seeks to understand how Black women and girls operate within a hip hop culture, or more simply put, live their hip hop lives. To gain this understanding, it is imperative that the experiences and perspectives of the hip hop *participants* are centered, instead of the perspectives and assumptions of passive observers. Multiple case

studies demand a contextual inquiry of the phenomenon being researched (Yin, 2014). Therefore, inquiry into how this dance form existed as sociocultural literacy served as a secondary research goal. The primary reasons the girls gave for dancing is because it is fun. This affirmation of childhood joy is in sharp contrast to the assumptions of sexualization attributed by observers of Black girls dancing. Case study participants danced in such frequency and abundance that demarcations of when the dances stopped and started overlapped and proved to be permeable. Implications for this study include acceptance and therefore pedagogical strategizing of feminine hip hop dance as literacy in the classroom, a restructured orientation of how dancing by school-aged Black girls is perceived, and expanded research into the social, literacy, and digital aspects of feminine hip hop dance.

INDEX WORDS: hip hop, hip hop dance, feminine hip hop dance, Black girlhood, digital literacy, multimodality, HHBE, hip hop feminism, socio-cultural literacy, literacy, TikTok, Dub Smash, twerk, ratchetdemic, adultification

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother and my late father. I am forever indebted and ingratiated to your love and support throughout my life. I am thankful for the legacy of community activism, action-oriented support for the disenfranchised, and an overwhelming supply of love for people and equality. My parents are also the byproduct of the legacy of their parents, my grandparents. My maternal grandmother, worked tirelessly to support mothers' agency over their own bodies. My paternal grandmother was a teacher and the first Black media arts specialist in my home town. It was only this year that I discovered bricks were thrown in the windows of the home my father grew up in as protest of my grandfather's anti-racist work. It is the same home I also grew up in. This work is dedicated to my family and ancestors for writing in my spirit, the work I must continue.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem.....	3
Significance of Problem.....	6
Statement of Purpose	9
Research Questions.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	10
Theoretical Framework.....	10
Organization of Study	18
2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	19
Dance History	19
Politics of Respectability	23
Dance History Continued	27
Literacy Beyond the Written Text	30
Literacy, Hip Hop, and Dance	37
Gaps in the Literature.....	42

3	METHODOLOGY	45
	Rationale for Design	45
	Subjectivity Statement	46
	Site of Research	49
	Participant Selection	49
	Data Sources and Collection	51
	Data Management	55
	Data Analysis	55
	Assumptions and Limitations	59
4	FINDINGS	62
	Ethnodrama: Queens in Training	62
	Academic Report	93
	Finding 1 - Dance Happens Throughout the Ages: A Case of Three Flowers	97
	Finding 2 - Dance Happens Everywhere	103
	Finding 3 - Hip Hop Feminine Dance is Practice of Literacy	119
	Finding 4 - Hip Hop feminine dance as an agentive act of Black Girlhood, Joy, Resistance, and Respect	124
	Summary	141
5	IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH.....	143
	Implications for Practice	147
	Implications for Research	160
	Limitations	167
	Summary	167

REFERENCES	170
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APPENDICES

A RECRUITMENT / ADVERTISEMENT	183
B ELIGIBILITY SCREENING CONSENT SCRIPT.....	185
C CONSENT FOR ARTIFACTS	189
D MINOR ASSENT FORM.....	191
E PARENT CONSENT FORM	193
F DANCE SURVEY	198
G STUDENT QUESTIONS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION.....	200
H PARENT QUESTIONS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION	204

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Pseudonyms and Ages of Participants	51
Table 2: Dance Challenges	117
Table 3: Feminine Hip Hop Dance as Agency	137-140

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Data Sources.....	52
Figure 2: Acquisition of Exchange and Dance at Home.....	106-107

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Throughout my life, I have heard the phrase, “there is a time and a place for that”. Although directives change and evolve over generations, this phrase emerged throughout this research as a directive that is just as popular today, as it was when I was younger. When I think about it, the phrase was usually in reference to muting an experience of joy through joking, laughter, or action in a place where the expectation was to sit quietly and listen. In other words, ‘there is a time and a place to fully be yourself, and this aint it’.

Schools, and more specifically classrooms, like many work environments, have traditionally been places where individual joy is not considered a productive asset. One time, as a team member on the leadership committee at work, we listened to somewhat of a jazz song submitted by a colleague as her suggestion of a theme song to align with our work and would engage our students about improvement measures. I was immediately stricken by the suggestion because another colleague and I had already created and performed a rap song that outlined our improvement goals and had already been received with gratitude, participation, and positive feedback from the students (some of the staff complained that this exchange was too loud). As I described my reasoning for why the original song was a better fit for our student population, I began to motion/dance as I spoke: explaining how our original song engaged the students, whereas the other song (I began to do a body roll while seated) imparted a different vibe, that was slower and didn’t lend itself as easily memorability. However, I was immediately interrupted by a superior, with the phrase “this isn’t the time for that”. For a moment, I was

genuinely taken aback because the bodily movement was part of the explanation... it was what I wanted to *communicate*. In my view, the students should become involved in a way that encourages or inspires ownership of the information, not one that lulls them into an affect that doesn't build enough traction to inspire memorization.

As I thought about the exchange, I realized I had many encounters with respectability politics and dance throughout my life. When I thought about it more extensively, I realized my daughters had also encountered respectability politics in regard to their dancing. This prompted me to view these encounters as part of an overall phenomenon. When I was softly reprimanded for my dance description, a tiny piece of me felt rejected and deflated; there was an attempt to mute my *voice*. After taking an autoethnographic journey through my own dance history, I wanted to know how students in today's classrooms encountered the politics of respectability, and how it made them feel when it happened. I wanted to know if and how they also used dances to communicate.

Hip hop feminism is the theoretical framework for the inquiry of dance, literacy, and the politics of respectability used in this research. Within this framework, dances are viewed as a cultural and therefore classroom assets. A performative studies framework was also utilized to fortify and honor the interpersonal, implicit, and overt artistry that informs feminine hip hop dance. As a teacher in K-12 and post-secondary settings, I always allowed the natural flow of dance when it emerged, or I explicitly asked for the presentation of current dances as a tool of engagement. My intent with this research is that education practitioners and stakeholders will expand their understanding of and compassion for Black girls who dance. With this understanding, the poignance of dance in culture, society, and art might expand pedagogical choices and pathologies about what is occurring when we see Black girls dance.

Statement of Problem

Black girls' bodies are being policed and subjected to hyper-surveillance without respect and regard to their modes of communications and cultural literacy. Dance is often viewed as freedom of expression and liberation (Glass, 2007; Huntington, 2007), but for Black girls that dance hip hop, it serves as another act that should be constrained and controlled due to the politics of respectability. Girls that dance hip hop are often sexualized by viewers and condemned to judgements of vulgarity or impropriety (Gaunt, 2015; 2018; Hall, 2012). While hip hop feminists seek to center the narratives of Black girls, they too often neglect to unpack the *insights* of those Black girls and women that have been sexualized in videos or society as a result of their hip hop dance performance.

Although hip hop feminism asserts that it celebrates multiple voices and individual sexuality (Morgan, 1999; Pough, 2004), women or girls that are perceived to purposely or inadvertently display sexuality in hip hop and/or enjoy the music, are marginalized, dismissed, (Carney, Hernandez, & Wallace, 2016) and assumed to be under the spell of patriarchy (Story, 2007). This policing of Black bodies, socially (Cooper, 2019; Pough, 2004) and academically (Baker & Epstein, 2019; Morris 2016; 2019), continues to reinforce the politics of respectability and patriarchal systems of authority that hip hop feminist scholars seek to dismantle. Similarly, the label of 'hyper-sexuality', often utilized in scholarship to describe feminine hip hop dance performance, hegemonically sets a "norm" of sexuality. The norming of sexuality insinuates there is a level of display or expression that is acceptable and expressions outside of those parameters must be policed and minimized. Scholarship must continue to center the perspectives of Black girls who dance to give educators greater insight into the humanity of their dance lives; their girlhoods.

This study explores Black girls' performance of feminine hip hop dance, including those dances deemed hypersexual by scholarship, as a site of resistance, liberation, and cultural literacy, at the intersections of race, gender, culture, age, sexuality, and institution. The focus of the dances explored exclude dances that fall under the category of breakdancing, since that dance has been explored most extensively as hip hop dance and is largely attributed to a masculinized form of dance. Dances included Twerking, Bucking, Booty Shaking, social dances such as the Nae Nae, Milly Rock, the Whoa, and various dance challenges. Dances will be discussed as they relate to the study. This study does not reify the subjectivity of hyper-sexualization and will simply refer to these dances as feminine hip hop dance, or hip hop dance.

Heretofore, break dancing is most often listed as the fourth pillar of hip hop, along with graffiti, rap, and djing (Irby, 2013; Pough, 2004; Rose, 1994). The image set forth by much historical hip hop literature portrays breaking as the primary dance style that accompanied the onset of the hip hop musical genre; thereby rendering invisible the women and dance styles that were also present. This constant oversight is part of the erasure of women's contribution to hip hop culture (Pough, 2004). Fab 5 Freddy, a producer of hip hop's first film, *Wild Style* (Ahearn, 1983), shared in an interview (Gale, 2013) that he chose breakdancing to complete his projection of hip hop as a culture, which he felt should include art, dance, and music. Banes (2004) portrayed breakdancing as an art form that was languishing and on the verge of being phased out for newer interests in New York City when the movie, *Wild Style*, renewed local interest and spurred national interest. It was the impetus for commercially subsequent successful breakdancing movies. Though breakdancing is projected as the dance that exemplifies hip hop culture, in *Wild Style*, an examination of rappers' lyrics in the movie, such as "shake it, shake, shake it", indicate more dances were occurring than just breakdancing.

The movie, *Wild Style*, is heralded in hip hop culture because it featured everyday culture of hip hop and the streets from whence it came (Pough, 2004). Many of the movies thereafter featured professional dancers who had mastered and perfected adapted codified dance moves that were influenced by street dances and the foundational culture of hip hop, yet still failed to center the perspective and contributions of Black girls. Gaunt (2018) noted the failure to acknowledge and value Black's girls as culture curators of hip hop in both scholarship and "popular music discourse continues to 'invisibilify' their contributions to musical Blackness, rendering their roles and influence – making them both invisible and vilified" (p. 96). This consistent and insistent invisibility of Black girl identity and epistemology is akin to an assault on Black bodies (Morris, 2016; Sealey-Ruiz, 2016) that has been recently pushed back upon in commercial films. It must continue to be pushed back upon in scholarship. Muhammad and Haddix (2016) posited that the unique intersectional oppression and marginalization of Black girls, imbues the study of research centered on Black girls with a foundational attention to equality of voice, perspective, and literacy that can be applied to other groups.

This study privileges the voice of the everyday Black girl hip hop dance participants; urging them to 'have their say' by using ethnodrama to report the research. In a framework of hip hop feminism, this research brings wreck (Pough, 2004) to the hegemonic and masculinized notion of breakdancing as the privileged fourth pillar of hip hop. The concept of bringing wreck in hip hop describes an act or performance that provokes respect from real or imagined observers because of the embedded skill and showmanship (Pough, 2004). Pough (2004) uses the concept of bringing wreck in academia to describe moments when "Black women's discourses disrupt dominant male discourses, break into the public sphere, and culturally influence the United States imaginary" (p. 12). In this way, Pough (2004) uses the concept of wreck to recognize the

agency of Black women in hip hop culture. This research brings wreck to the invisibility and demonized portrayal of Black feminine hip hop dancers and associated assumptions about them. This study explores how Black girls who dance hip hop experience/negotiate the politics of respectability and find spaces to extend this cultural literacy.

Significance of Problem

The policing of Black girls' bodies results in material consequences (Morris, 2016; Morris, 2019). Failure to critically unpack the location of this often-critiqued group may have residual impact on educators as they look to peer reviewed articles and resources to inform their own classroom practice and perceptions of students. With little to no insight as to the literacy embedded and exchanged within hip hop dance, literatures and advocacies to include hip hop in the classroom may also unintentionally inform some of the subjectivities used for the punishment and discipline of Black girls. As hip hop scholars teach other instructors about hip hop culture, the willful neglect of *this one particular category* could be viewed as encouraging other educators to view Black girl students and peers that participate in hip hop dance culture as bad or disrespectful. Likewise, conflating *all* hip hop feminine dance to twerking misinterprets the way the one dance fits into an overall vocabulary and culture of hip hop, and disproportionately focuses on observers' hypersexual subjectivities about the dance.

Teachers yearn for hip hop history to inform their foundational knowledge and bolster confidence in implementing hip hop pedagogies in the classroom (Irby, Hall, & Hill 2013; Irby, 2014). The dismissal of hip hop dance performance that resists the politics of respectability in scholarship reifies the patriarchal system of policing Black feminine bodies that hip hop feminism seeks to dismantle. Women have been involved in hip hop throughout its history (Cooper, 2019; Durham, Cooper & Morris, 2012; Love, 2012, 2015; Morgan, 1999; Powell,

2011; Rose 1994) and “women in hip hop create a space to redefine themselves, become empowered, and make their own decisions” (Johnson, 2015, p. 380). In the previous decade, hip hop scholars often marginalized women seen in videos as props, hoes, models, video vixens, and strippers. Some scholars even lamented the emergence of the feminine heteronormative dance style that emerged and overshadowed the emulation of masculine break dancing, described as b-girling (Story, 2007; Washington, 2007). More recent inquiry into Black girls twerking online still largely positions them in a deficit frame (Gaunt, 2015, n.d., 2018). The vilification of hip hop “leads to moral panic and public outcry that serves to alienate the hip hop generation from other members of the Black community” (Pough, 2004, p. 19), already a counter-public sphere. Further, the moral panic combined with respectability politics leave Black girls as open targets of sanctioned social, academic, and domestic attack (Carney et al., 2019; Baker & Epstein, 2019; Gaunt, 2015).

In the fight for equality amongst racialized and gendered groups, the voices of Black girls and their needs are often submerged due to the overwhelming quantitative evidence of the plight of Black boys in schools and society (Brown 2013; Love, 2012; Muhammad & Haddix 2016; Powell, 2011). In k-12 schools, Black girls are suspended five to six times more than their White counterparts (Blake & Epstein, 2019; Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014; Muhammad & Haddix, 2016; Wun, 2016) whereas most discipline and suspensions were for non-violent, subjective reasons. Suspensions are not only relegated to students that struggle academically, but also include honor students (Morris, 2016). Reasons include talking, talking back to the teacher, chewing gum, going to the trash can, dress code violations, and other reasons that fulfill an authority’s determination of defiant or disruptive. While suspension rates are quantifiable and somewhat concrete, more elusive are the punishments and micro-aggressions that Black girls

experience in school that do not result in suspension but may inform students' opinions of institutionalized education as well as their own self-outlook (Morris, 2016, 2019a, 2019b). Beyond the emotional and spirit-murder outcomes of being misunderstood (Love, 2019), Black girls are in danger of being physically harmed by school police and resource officers, who are often responsible for school discipline (Morris, 2019). These officers rarely receive any training specifically related to black and brown girls, relying instead, on their own common sense (Morris, 2019). Two examples of this kind of thinking are when a resource officer in Dallas, TX intervened in a fight between two girls, slamming one twelve-year old to the ground and breaking her clavicle, and when a resource officer followed a fifteen-year girl and held her face to the hot concrete after intercepting her call to her mother because of an illness (Cooper, 2019; Morris, 2019).

The theory of adultification, informed by empirical quantitative research suggests that Black girls in the age range of 5-14 are viewed as being less innocent and more adult-like than their White peers (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017). A survey of 325 multi-racial and ethnic adults across the United States revealed that adult perceptions of Black girls, in comparison to White girls, is that they: (a) seem older than White girls of the same age; (b) need less nurturing; (c) need less protection; (d) need to be supported less; (e) need to be comforted less; (f) are more independent; (g) know more about adult topics; and (8) know more about sex. This view could be a contributor to increased punishments in schools and society for Black girls, and the reason their hip hop dance performance is viewed through an adult sexual lens. Two years later, focus groups were used for a follow up study to gain qualitative data from girls and women across ages 12 to over 60 years old (Blake & Epstein, 2019), which revealed that adultification bias was remembered and experienced as consistent and pervasive. The latter adultification study also

revealed stereotypes of hypersexuality was a common source of adultification bias. Hypersexual has historically been an oft used descriptor of African American dance from outside observers.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how Black girls negotiate the politics of respectability in regard to their hip hop dance performance, along with a case study mandated peripheral inquiry of how feminine hip hop dance functions as literacy. A hip hop feminist theoretical framework is used to center the experiences of Black girls as valuable creators and participants of hip hop culture, and recognizes practices of the dance as literacy (Richardson, 2013); it also makes visible the agentic uses of dance and disruptions of patriarchy.

Research Questions

Overarching Questions

- How do African American girls in elementary, middle, and high school grades negotiate the politics of respectability in regard to their hip hop dance performance?
- How does hip hop feminine dance function as literacy in the lives of three school-aged Black girls?

Guiding Research Questions

- How do the participants disrupt ideas of patriarchy with their dance?
- How do the participants perform hip hop culture?
- How do these girls acquire and exchange the literacy in various socio-cultural contexts (cypher)?
- What spaces afford the expression of these dances free from the politics of respectability?

Definition of Term

feminine hip hop dance – dances that are performed to hip hop music not inclusive of break dancing

Theoretical Framework

Hip Hop Feminism

If there is anything that hip hop feminists like
Love, Cooper, Brown, Hall, Boylorn, Pough, & Morgan
taught me, it's:
I have a voice and that voice deserves to be heard in its native language
My voice, as a Black woman, matters,
my story, as a Black woman matters.
Black girls matter.
We don't have to shut up and make ourselves smaller to appease society
Turn down for what?

This study is framed by hip hop feminist theory. A primary goal of hip hop feminism is that it “seeks to examine rap music and culture through a Black feminist lens that questions the misogyny and sexism within the art form but recognizes the sexual agency of women who utilize the culture to express themselves and their sexual desires” (Love, 2012, p.23). In this frame, the liberation of women’s sexuality is celebrated against the back drop of the repressive politics of respectability (Durham et al., 2013; Johnson, 2015). Though many aspects of hip hop have found validation in society and education despite concerns of violence and misogyny in some rap lyrics by viewing the location of rappers through an intersectional lens, Black female bodies that perform feminine hip hop dance remain vilified in society and research largely due to etic perceptions that link sexual performance with the dance (Gaunt, 2015, n.d., 2018). Even Kyra Gaunt, who has framed much of her recent scholarship around Black girls twerking online, admitted that her etic orientation to the dance was a limitation; her lack of hip hop acculturation delimited her from “recogniz[ing] black erotic social dancing as something other than

hypersexual adolescent play linked to some kind of moral panic which has always been associated with youth music” (Gaunt, 2015. p. 260). A hip hop feminist framework in this research privileges and safeguards the voices of the youth dancers, as opposed to the viewers of the dance (Carney Hernandez, & Wallace, 2016; Garner, Hill, Robinson, and Callier, 2019; Gaunt, 2015; Richardson, 2013).

Joan Morgan (1999) initiated a brand of feminism that resisted the victim localized stance of second wave feminism and acknowledged the desire of some form of patriarchy in her seminal text, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost* (Peoples, 2008). Scholars of the post-civil rights era, who constitute the first generation of hip hop, seek to extend feminist principles of dismantling systems of patriarchy by centering the subjectivities of feminist hip hop culture. Pulling from strategies of Black feminism and feminism, hip hop feminism is political in its intervention of critiques of more complex and contemporary issues facing women of color today, such as hyper-masculinity, heteronormativity, patriarchy, systems of marginalization, and the xenophobic space of hip hop to the ends of social justice goals (Brown, 2013; Cooper, 2019; Durham, 2007; Love, 2012; Morgan, 1999; Morris, 2019; Peoples, 2008; Pough, 2004; Story, 2007). Hip hop feminism advocates, celebrates, interrogates, and protects Black girlhood in research, theory, and praxis by elevating and centering their pleasures, literacies, lived experiences, and systemic oppressions (Brown, 2012; Carney, et al., 2016; Garner, et al., 2019; Gaunt, 2018; Hall, 2012; Morris, 2016; Turner, 2017). Hip Hop feminists advise an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1991) to inquiries and assumptions of Black women and girlhood behavior to account for different systems of oppression, such as age, race, and gender, that uniquely and collectively complicate and color their everyday experiences (Cooper, 2018; Johnson, 2015; Love, 2019, Morris, 2019a).

Within hip hop feminism, there are different levels of support for different genres of rap music. The Crunk Feminist Collection, a group of hip hop feminist scholars that speak from a cultural and unapologetic hip hop perspective, regularly infuses hip hop cultural vocabulary and colloquialisms into academic writing and theoretical constructs (Cooper, Morris, & Boylorn, 2017). The writing in this research mirrors that construct. This kind of percussiveness brings wreck to written scholarship, and what counts as smart language. They distinguish themselves as hip hop *generation* feminists: they acknowledge the impact of the music and culture as a life-story wall-paper while maintaining a criticality towards misogynistic, homophobic, and patriarchal elements. They also acknowledge that hip hop is not a singular component of their feminism.

Hip hop feminists recognize that women, as producers and consumers of hip hop, reflect the hip hop aesthetic of dissonance and harmony (Cooper et al., 2017; Petchauer, 2015) in contradictory and complex relationship with the instances of misogyny present in the music, and within their lived experience (Johnson, 2015; Morgan, 1999; Peoples, 2008). Hip hop feminists revel in the disruptiveness of hegemonic constructs that seek to impede the joy, progress, peace, mental health, and spiritual health of Black women and girls (Brown, 2012; Turner, 2017). Hip hop feminism takes a stance of sexual liberation. With an emphasis on creative expression alongside and beyond academic projects, hip hop feminists celebrate women's sexual subjectivity and embrace a pro-sex stance against the pressures of respectability politics (Cooper, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Durham, Cooper & Morris, 2013; Johnson, 2015; Garner et al., 2019; Morgan, 2015).

When young ladies and women in hip hop don't adhere to the politics of respectability, they are often thought to ascribe to a politics of irreverence (Chepp, 2015). Whereas the politics

of respectability is viewed as a pious, conservative, and respectful way of self-presentation, irreverence is viewed as exhibiting openly self-degrading actions, which do not exemplify moral fiber and contributes to, instead of resists, patriarchy and misogyny (Chepp, 2015). These views are documented in physical contexts, as well as on social media and YouTube commentary of the performance of young Black girls (Gaunt, 2015).

This kind of binary of positive and negative, as well as high and low culture, is also what hip hop feminists espouse to disrupt (Morgan, 1999; Pough, 2004). Much of the judgment of Black girl hip hop dancers is due to the assumption they are either dancing sexually or are inviting sexual attention. A body of hip hop feminist works took issue with depictions of women that perpetuate the archetype of the jezebel (Powell, 2011; Rose, 1994; Story, 2007; Washington; 2007). Hip hop feminists also recognized a need to address and theorize Black women and girlhood pleasures (Brown, 2012; Chepp; Hall, 2012; Morgan, 2015). It is this hegemonic fixity on the equation of feminine hip hop dance and associated literacies and modalities with the jezebel trope and label of hypersexuality that denies the dancer the celebration of sexual and gendered freedom that hip hop feminism also purports to exalt. Chepp (2015) invites a non-binary expanded view of sexuality that accounts for the messiness that cannot be neatly fit into the either the politics of respectability or irreverence.

The politics of irreverence is echoed in anti-respectability methodologies promoted by hip hop feminists to promote, encourage, and investigate Black girlhood pleasures and joy without using a deficit frame or further exploiting their vulnerabilities (Garner et al., 2017). *Uncovering Black Girlhood(s): Black Girl Pleasures as Anti-respectability Methodology* writers, Garner, Hill, Robinson and Callier (2019) urge those “who love Black girls”: to revise prescribed notions of equating Black girlhood pleasures with sexuality, and to refrain from disavowing

Black girl's agency over their own bodies and sexuality. They believe that if Black girls are given sex education, they should be entrusted to make decisions about their bodies. This trust would do much to absolve reductive and regulatory perceptions and practices that shame, defame, and blame Black girls' bodies. In this way Black girls might be viewed as their whole selves instead of focusing on one fractured part as the entirety of their being. The research in this study is alignment with their emphasis on letting Black girls be the guide to their own needs by centering their perspectives: "it is through our listening to Black girls differently and generating theory and praxis based on who Black girls say they are that we have moved away from dominant and simplistic ways of hearing and attempting to guide Black girls" (Garner et al., 2019, pp. 191-192).

The ambivalence within hip hop feminist scholarship to fully embrace the perspectives, pleasures, and survival mechanisms of Black girls in the hip hop culture was evidenced in a hip hop panel discussion organized by Christina Carney in 2014; where the panel was a "community-based extension of the graduate conference *Feminist and Queer of Color Critique* held at the University of California, San Diego" (Carney et al., 2016). The uproar of consternation among the group was caused by a music video of three young Black high school girls who formed a group called P.T.A.F. (Pretty and Take All Fades) rapping a song entitled "I'm a boss as bitch", which included in the refrain: "I'm a boss ass bitch bitch bitch bitch". The video was displayed both in its original content, and its subsequent form after the group was signed to a record deal. The first video featured the girls with no make-up and everyday casual hair styles rapping explicit lyrics about their control and agency of themselves sexually, personally, and socially. In the second video, each of the girls had colored wigs, make-up artists, greater production value, and lyrics that were toned down, though still sexually charged. Two

panelists immediately played a video of their own finding that indicated the girls were ratchet; validation that the poor representation of the young performers did and should not represent *them* as Black women. The debate that ensued was characterized as “volatile” (Carney et al., 2016, p. 415). People get heated and righteously discontent about those politics of respectability (Higginbotham, 1993)!

Performance Studies

“The root metaphor of text underpins the supremacy of Western knowledge systems by erasing the vast realm of human knowledge and meaningful action that is unlettered”

(Conquergood, p. 35, 2002).

Performance Studies is concerned with how groups and individuals *perform* culture. Conquergood employs performance studies as a paradigm, theory, and praxis (Johnson, 2013). Concerned with integrating thinking/doing binaries in academia, Conquergood (2013a) conceptualizes Performance Studies as a “caravan: a heterogeneous ensemble of ideas and methods on the move” (p.30). Performance Studies considers performance broadly (Conrad, 2008) in its analysis of performance in practically every way that performance can be considered: ceremonies, jokes, winks songs, dances, rituals (such as group responses to prayer), theatrical events, etc. (Conrad 2008, Conquergood 2013b) where by performance methodologically becomes the unit of analysis. These small bits of culture that are made visible within its larger whirlpool of energies around a moral center, support Geertz’s (1973) ability to use a “fleck of culture as the starting point for thick description and wrest worlds from winks (Conquergood, 2013b, p. 17). Tyson (1988) similarly describes culture as the circumstance of socially telling and understanding jokes and metaphors.

This genre instructs ethnographers to be reflective and reflexive in their positionality, whereas reflexivity is indicative of accounting “for the circumstances under which the research is conducted, the knowledge produced and the influence he or she has on the other in the ethnographic moment” (in reference to Conquergood, Johnson, 2013, p. 8). Madison (2006) clarifies reflectiveness as the state in which the researcher considers his/her own actions, whereas reflexivity is a deeper inner acknowledgement and analysis of how he/she is contemplating his/her actions.

Co-performative witnessing is “a politics of the body deeply in action with the others’ (Madison, 2007, p. 826). To introduce this concept, Conquergood (2013c, p. 37) recounts Douglas’s (1969) invitation to come to the *location* of research and “thoughtfully analyze the sounds that shall pass through the chambers of his soul, and if he is not thus impressed, it will only be because ‘there is no flesh in his obdurate heart’”. Whereas Conquergood interpreted this as an invitation to participation, I view it as an invitation to observe with eyes, ears, heart, and Spirit. Performance Studies uses ethnographic methods in the observation of and/or participation in performance (Conrad, 2008).

Conquergood (1986) posited research representation is always a political act, and as such, the researcher should acknowledge he is indeed a performer in the research and not just a distant observer. He felt that this stance deconstructs the power relation of rigid positions of object-observer in positivist research. In this way, traditional theatre of representation with its emphasis on emotional impact would meet the measures of Douglas more adequately. Co-performative witnessing also locates the researcher physically in the same spaces as the observer to obtain a greater sense of the native experience. However, reflectivity and reflexivity remind the researcher that he or she is indeed a visitor whose presence has political indications and possible

outcomes (Conquergood, 2013b; Madison, 2006). Polluck (1989) also believes that performance is political and is the “the embodied meaning making process” (p.20). Madison (2007) asserts sound is necessary to truly understand words along with their interpretive quality of rhythm. The performance enlivens that which is determined absent (Polluck 1998). The modalities of performance are agentic in crossing discipline, language, and structural borders (Conquergood 2013a; Madison, 2007).

The advocacy of a written text along with the performed text is the distinguishing criteria of performance studies from ethnodrama. Conquergood believed that “the best way to understand how people made meaning of their lives and how they resisted oppression was to study how they performed their identities and how those identities spoke back to structural forms of power” (as quoted by Johnson, 2013, p. 7). The assumption that cultural performances are “dynamic, ephemeral, volatile, but nonetheless repeated and recognized events” (Conquergood, 1986, p. 22) makes it compatible with the goals of Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre: to highlight and *repeat* an event. Natural street representations of events (such as a witness reenacting a fight or accident to inform bystanders) serves as a model for performance and is also compatible with the focus of all iterations of performance by the performance studies genre (Brecht & Bentley 1949; Breen 1982; Conrad 2008).

The combination of hip hop feminism and performance studies as theoretical frameworks accounts for the ephemerality of non-verbal communications and examples of socio-cultural literacy. Hip hop feminism upholds the girls who perform hip hop dance as a central focus, and performance studies correlates various physical responses and dispositions with hip hop culture. The participants’ encounters with the politics of respectability are contextualized by their sociocultural dance practices. The participants’ socio-cultural practices are contextualized by a

performance studies perspective of how those practices are meaningful. Combined, these theoretical frameworks support the interrogation of feminine hip hop dance in the lives of three school-aged Black girls.

Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter outlines the problem, the significance of the problem, the purpose of the research, the research questions, and theoretical framework of this study. Chapter Two includes a review of the relevant literature on dance history, the politics of respectability, literacy beyond the written text, as well as the correlation of literacy, hip hop and dance. Gaps in the literature are also reflected in Chapter Two. Next, Chapter Three discusses the research design and methods used for this study. Chapter Four then follows with the qualitative findings from the study tied to the research questions. In conclusion, Chapter Five discusses and interprets the findings while providing implications for research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Dance History

African dance, rooted in a distinctive musical tradition, was one of the most important of the cultural arts carried across the Middle Passage. This dance tradition proved remarkably resilient and flexible. It was so vital in binding together and nurturing communities of Africans that it did not decline and die out in its new land, as the arts of oppressed minorities have done, but instead retained its power as Africans became African Americans. Despite the discrimination and marginalization endured by African Americans, their dance survived and became increasingly important in American culture.

(Glass, 2007, p. 3).

Dance is a Black literacy that scholars name for its value to “affirm the lives, spirit, language, and knowledge of Black people and culture” (Johnson, Jackson, Stovall, & Baszile, 2017, p. 63). The high value placed on dance as a medium for fun, religious worship, and inter-community connectedness that was exhibited in Africa has persisted within the African American community today; in turn, greatly influencing American mainstream culture (Glass, 2007; Huntington, 2007). Attempts to colonize African American dance finds its roots in the era of slavery; when dances, musical rhythms, and audible sounds of group participation from dances like the Ring Shout and the Buzzard Lope opened the mystical gates of cultural performance (Glass, 2007). African American dance has historically been accused of being overly sexual or offensive to Christian sensibilities; sentiments which persist today.

Concomitantly, it has been historically maligned and adored by society. Historical incidents of inspired observers attempting to co-op and commodify African American dances shadows and nurtures the hegemonic oppression of feminine hip hop dance.

Barbara Glass (2007) traced the history of African American dance throughout the ages; beginning in West Africa, where most African Americans originate. Captive Africans that crossed the Middle Passage into the United States were a diverse group of people with as many as “fifty different languages, art traditions, and religions” (Glass, 2007, p. 6). In Africa, freestyle, remixed, and ritualized dance were all important dance constructs for individual and collective celebration, representation, and communication within major life events as well as daily life. European people in America recognized and denounced both the worship-filled nature, and fluid freedom of arm, hips, legs, and torso of the African dances. West African dances reliant on pelvic and hip movements were some of the dance attributes that especially caused consternation for White people. One such ritual dance in Africa, called the Gelede, is performed by men adorned in artificial breasts and buttocks to honor, satirize, and ask for help from their feminine higher power; “The Great Mother” (Glass, 2007, p. 8). For them, sexuality was a source and provocation of honor and reverence, not degradation and shame. The sound of the drums informed and exchanged commentary with dancing bodies. The traditional African practice and use of mask-making to complete ritualized messages in tandem with specific dances, was seemingly successfully suppressed in America during slavery, but reemerged in New Orleans in Mardi Gras. Dance and the music, however, persisted.

One dance that persisted from slavery until the time of press (Glass, 2007) is the Ring Shout. It is still danced at the Georgia Sea Islands but can be seen as a remnant in a variety of dances subsequent to the decline of its popularity. The Ring Shout was a communal worship

tradition that slaves remixed into their burgeoning Christian conversions. Even though it was all good just a week ago (Jay-Z & Too Short, 1998), there is evidence that even in 1865, there was conflict within the Black culture over what could be considered acceptable and respectable dance: Black ministers aided and abetted the eradication of the Ring Shout because of its entanglement with Africanist ritual (Glass, 2007). However, the same attributes of the dance were seemingly agentic in connecting participants (direct and indirect) with Christianity's Holy Spirit. The dance is characterized by movement in a circular direction, while dancers verbally engage with each other by singing call and response improvised hymns (shouts). Glass (2007) describes the interplay between song and dance as pantomime, because dancers would often bodily represent the words of the song (imagine pantomiming dances like the Sprinkler or Lawn Mower). Visualizing the Ring Shout brings to mind numerous call response and pantomime-like dances of words found currently at Go Go music performances (a musical genre originating from Washington, DC), or the multitudes of groups that Swag and Surf.

Ring Shout dancers often used a stick or their feet to improvise the creations of beats (musical driving rhythms) since drums were indicted and banned for their communicative attributes after slaves revolted at the Stono River in North, Carolina in 1739 (Glass, 2007). Glass (2007) noted African dance was ultimately characterized by earth-grounding movements, improvisation, community collaboration (claps and cheers in participation with the dancer), performing dances within lines or circles, bodily articulation of different sounds, responsive movement to the lead of the drum, pantomime, the use of hand props, and competition. These same attributes could be said of hip hop dance today. The popularized Soul Train Line, Electric Slide, impromptu dance circles, and The Kappa Alpha Psi Inc. fraternity's cane dancing are all examples of contemporary iterations of these dance attributes.

While formal European dances also utilized line and circle formations, and individual dances, contrasting characteristics were status-laden or politically driven dance events, erect posture, and skyward (as opposed to earthly) orientation of body and arms. In time, both dance styles influenced the other. White people held both disdain and fascination for the seductive, intricate, and artful dances of the slaves and subsequently freed Black people (Glass, 2007). This fascination was enacted on stage as White people created a performance venue that supported their intrigue of perceived characteristics of Black people, especially their dances.

The imitation of Black dance fueled support for minstrelsy from 1840–1900. White people painted their faces Black as a device in their creation of minstrelsy; a performance genre that imitates, satirizes, and mocks, Black culture for the education and entertainment of other White people. Black people subsequently found employment as minstrel workers, and therefore continued to perform the stereotypical attributes of Black people emphasized by the genre's founders (Glass, 2007). They used their experience as slaves as an important marketing tool when billing their performances; touting *authentic* representations of their actual experiences as slaves on plantations. Black people built upon these paid performance opportunities and eventually remixed the genre while capitalizing on their new extended audiences and performance venues. So much so that in the early 1900s Black-written and directed shows with all Black casts attracted huge audiences on Broadway (Glass, 2007).

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, minstrelsy productions began to transition into musical productions as Black producers of plays loosened the stark stereotypical representations of themselves, and traded plantation rags for elegant clothing. While dance and musical performance created space for Black creatives to gain audiences locally and across the globe, it was not holistically accepted by members of the Black community that supported more

traditional ways of gaining respect, and viable careers. Black women in the south were rightfully feeling themselves and ready to extend their own influence, as they were excelling academically and within civic leadership. Black women were ready to heal the world by utilizing the resourcefulness and network of communications afforded national organizations.

The Politics of Respectability

Shortly after Anna Julia Cooper's (1892, 2016) *A Voice from the South* and Ida B. Wells' (1892, 2014) compilations in *On Lynchings* were published, and a few decades after Harriet Tubman successfully lead 150 African American soldiers in the Combahee River Raid (1863), freeing over 700 slaves (George, 2020), Black women celebrated another momentous victory of leadership after a long-fought battle for the recognition of their humanity. Black women were finally successful in establishing national charters for their own social clubs after White national clubs repeatedly denied their admission on the grounds of having lack of virtue. The National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was a dream realized in 1896: a confirmation of their determination and badge of their morality. Shortly after, in 1900, Black Baptist church women were successful in nationally organizing themselves into an auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention, called the Women's Convention (WC), reaching membership of nearly a million members by 1903 (Higginbotham, 1993). Both groups wanted racial uplift by focusing on the poor: the WC wanted to work *with* and empower the poor, and the NACW wanted to speak *for* the poor. They wanted to combat racism by flawlessly showing and proving Black women were worthy of respect.

The WC encouraged professional and impeccable domestic service amongst its largely poor members; establishing the first Black women owned and operated school. Though the NACW championed the cause of the poor, they did so because they accepted the inevitability of

being regarded and therefore treated in the same manner as the rest of their race. The WC, largely made up of Black middle-class women, worked closely with the NACW. Each group supported the others' conferences and conventions, and actively used those platforms, along with written literature to share updates among respective members. When there were rumblings in the WC that the NACW exhibited snobbery to the poor, Mary Terrell addressed the concern in her NACW presidential address:

Even though we wish to shun them, and hold ourselves entirely aloof from them, we cannot escape the consequences of their acts. So, that if the call of duty were disregarded altogether, policy and self-preservation would demand that we go down among the lowly, the illiterate, and even the vicious to whom we are bound by the ties of race and sex, and put every possible effort to uplift and reclaim them. (Higginbotham, 1993, p. 206)

The politics of respectability is a term coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham to describe the social construct promoted by Black Baptist church women and club women in the south to target, sanction, and inculcate other Black women's actions into systematic and standardized actions that promoted propriety and respect from observers (1993). Building upon Habermas's view of the public sphere, Higginbotham (1993) elucidates Black women in the Black church as a viable public sphere that operates as a dimensional counter public. In her work, *Righteous Discontent, the Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880 – 1920*, Higginbotham (1993) maps the origins, tenets, and effects of the politics of respectability. United in their goals for racial justice, social uplift, and community respect, both groups felt that White people could not be trusted to promote their best interests (Cooper, 1892, 2016; Wells-Barnett, 1892, 2014; Higginbotham, 1993). Leadership of the WC, which was closely associated with and

sometimes one in the same as the leadership of the NAWC, embarked on plans to save themselves and their communities.

Both groups felt that Black people were partially to blame for disparaging perceptions of the community. Within the politics of respectability, this accountability belonged to mothers. Mothers were directed to ensure the home was kept tidy, the children were disciplined, and a good dinner was always on the table. Socially ill behaviors, such as smoking or drinking, were connected to the mother's neglect or failure to uphold one or more of these strict set of duties that would certainly render respectable children and adults. At the fifth Annual Session of the WC in 1904, mothers were directed by their president S. Willie Layten:

be stern, be firm and yet you can be kind and sympathetic. As a race we cannot afford to contribute ONE single life to the bad, though the individuals force it upon us. We are impoverished, unfortunately the minority or bad Negroes have given the race a questionable reputation; these degenerates are responsible for every discrimination we suffer. (Higginbotham, 1993, p. 202)

Those who did not adhere to the rules of respectability were depicted as race traitors who brought shame upon the entire race. Mothers were expected to control their daughters and instill in them the virtues of respectable self-presentation, especially in public.

The WC and the NACW felt that prescribed rules of behavior would help to wrest the bad from Negroes that exhibited maladaptive behavior. Jazz music, and the dancing it inspired, were thought by the church and club women to be low brow, and an enemy to the propriety of womanhood. Dance halls and spaces of dance that centered around the juke box, called nickelodeons, were thought to be incubators for the destruction of morality. Public displays of dance naturally violate two rules within the politics of respectability; always act like a lady

(Boylorn, 2017) and keep all hints of sensuality and sexuality in the home (Higginbotham, 1993). Still today, public codes of respectability require women and girls to “sit down, be still, look pretty, be quiet, not take up too much space, not demand attention, not make a scene and not talk (back)” (Boylorn, 2017, p.123). Racism is still being fought along lines.

The codes of respectability politics were indicators of class and/or good home-training. Those who did not adhere to those codes were looked down upon with disdain. Though the poor are most vulnerable to the effects of the politics of respectability, a moment in sports history exemplified the hypervisibility of Black girls that dare to be seen and heard. Riley Curry’s typical two-year-old behavior at her dad’s NBA post-game press conference was cited as a source of dismay by professional sports reporters (Boylorn, 2017). Though children have joined a parent at press conferences in the past, Riley’s vibrant energy, vocal insertions, and lack of parental obstruction of her behavior caused reporters to consider banning children from future press conferences. In *What If We Were Free? Riley Curry and Blackgirl Freedom*, Boylorn (2017) conjectured that if Riley were White or male, the reporters would have been much less concerned about her behavior. Respectability politics forces parents to teach their children how to be visible but mute for their own safety, which also restricts Black children’s freedom (Boylorn, 2017). This exemplifies Higginbotham’s (1993) finding that “respectability’s emphasis on individual behavior served inevitably to blame blacks for their victimization, and worse yet, to place an inordinate amount of blame on black women” (p. 202).

While the politics of respectability were agentive strategies to reject notions of animalism, and incivility, and inculcate progressive strategies to obtain social and professional equality, they also worked to reify stereotypes about Black women (Cooper, 2017). Hip hop feminists have generated performances aimed at self-definition and self-valuation (Johnson,

2015). The intent to silence, speak over, and speak for other women resulted in the policing the Black woman's body (Pough, 2004). The insistence that Black girls repress their sexuality and maintain a good girl subservient posture persists today. Though this strategy was intended to resist misogyny, it hegemonically reifies patriarchal notions that women and girls are only deserving of respect if they present themselves in an asexual manner (Richardson, 2013). Tools of respectability politics are so pervasive that actions and words of protest are swiftly muffled with hegemonic righteousness.

“It's hard to yell when the barrel's in ya mouth” (Jay-Z, 2003)! Violence and/or fear against Black women and girls are embedded mechanisms of the politics of respectability. The fear encompasses both the need to protect the subject from outside evils and aggressions, and the fear actions and representations will ultimately be used to characterize those that are non-participants of said actions or the particular sector of society being represented. The violence is a spiritual one: it constantly markets and justifies the shaming of persons and categorizes them as bad. The spiritual violence indicates if a Black girl is seen or heard in a way that the public has not sanctioned as lady-like behavior, then she does not deserve respect. It is also spiritually violent because it disavows home.

Dance History (Continued)

Though dance continued to be vilified in mainstream society, professional dancers found import in musicals, where dance and songs grounded the unscripted theatrical works. Black dances like the Cakewalk, Shimmy, Charleston, and Black Bottom became popular dances across the nation and prompted an expansion of dance spaces, into homes, clubs, and formalized spaces (Glass 2007). Glass (2007) notes that by the 1920s the dances, which called for free movement of the limbs, prompted clothes that also allowed more bodily latitude. During the 1920s, White people

began to codify these dances within dance classes and instructional books. In the 20s and 30s, promoters of marathon dance contests capitalized off dancers' possible arrests for hours of dancing that often drifted into Sunday, and collided with the church's ire and disdain for the welcome and showcase of African American dances. "These "hot dances" involved shoulder and hip shaking, close embrace, syncopated jazz rhythms, and animal pantomime as with the Bunny Hug, Turkey Trot, Camel Walk and Grizzly Bear" (Glass, 2007, p. 249). Within the next three decades, dance halls, school dances, dance marathons, rent parties, jooks, homes, and various other impromptu locations served as sites where dances were shared, spread, discovered, created, remixed, revived, and improvised (Glass, 2007). Dances such as the Lindy, Jitterbug, and, Big Apple were popularized within the African American community, and alternately observed, codified, commodified, and taught in books and classes by White people without crediting or honoring the sources (Glass 2007).

In the 50s television became the medium that showcased dance to teens across the nation mostly through *The American Bandstand*. Though Black dancers were sometimes admitted to the recording studio, they were rarely seen on camera. They did, however, serve as an inspiration and source of original dance for the White dancers on camera to copy (Glass, 2007). In 2017, my great Aunt Jean experientially confirmed that some of the moves danced by Black people were perceived as overly sexual, like the Twist, and were watered down for mainstream consumption (Glass, 2007). *American Bandstand* dominated television in the 60s, thanks to the soul and spirit of Black dance culture (Glass, 2007).

Soul Train was launched in the early 1970s, featuring predominantly Black dancers and their creative dances. More specifically, local urban neighborhood *teens* and their dances were the stars of the show. Golbert and Swain (2010) documented the birth and life of the show in, *Soul*

Train: The Hippest Trip in America. In the documentary, one of the O'Jays affectionately referred to those dancers as "these lil ghetto kids Pam Brown recruited dancers from recreation centers around LA." Like the *American Bandstand*, the host of *Soul Train*, Don Cornelius, did not want to violate respectability politics on television. Rosie Perez, one of the early dancers on the show confirmed Don Cornelius frowned upon some of his dancers performing moves that he viewed as sexual. He said, "When I first saw how the kids in LA danced, it was a little wild and crazy for me because I was from cool school in Chicago" (Golbert & Swain, 2010). However, the contagion of energy and marvel of skill was undeniable. Don Cornelius said of the first audition at the Los Angeles recreation center:

All the killers were there. The killer dancers. Demita Jo Freeman, and Patricia Davis, and Don Camel and Jimmy Scooby Doo and Ree Run. They were all at that first audition and they were kicking legs and feet high and spinning and doing the splits and flipping. If you had given me a choice, I would've said to all of em, please don't dance like that. But the television audience disagreed. (Golbert & Swain, 2010)

Without the dancers, the show may not have made it past the first season. He said initially he couldn't book acts, and so relied on the dancers. Don added one of his party staples from the 50s and 60s to the show to highlight the dancers: the soul train line. He acknowledged the soul train line as "the highlight of every show" (Golbert & Swain, 2010), and a staple for expressions of joy in community, family, and event gatherings among Black people. The kids were credited with being the most loyal and influential fans, who would also encourage their star parents to get on the show.

Disco spawned rival shows as it took the dance community by storm. *Soul Train* adapted to the shift in trend and played the best Black disco records. However, people felt this music took

the soul away. Don Cornelius then started a record label by recruiting popular Soul Train Dancers to create the group *Shalimar*. They integrated the hip hop Locking style of the mid 70s and also created the Moonwalk. Don Cornelius heeded to the influence of hip hop, and booked artists to appease Black culture.

Glass (2007) also concludes her genealogy of dance by describing hip hop's follow up to disco's domination of the 70s music and dance scene. Her historical account of hip hop dance at that time was exclusively characterized by Breakdancing. This seemingly precludes other dances to hip hop music at that time. As mentioned previously, in the lyrics from the first hip hop movie *Wild Style* (1982), a rapper says the lyrics, "shake it, shake shake it". In other scenes that feature rapping, women are seen around the periphery of the centered dancers moving their bodies to the rhythm of the music; however, those dances were not highlighted or revered as remarkable. This is yet another example of feminine hip hop dance being historically othered and excluded.

Literacy Beyond the Written Text

The study of hip hop culture for Black girls is an important exploration of literacy. Like Richardson's (2013) work grounded in the new literacies, this research also views African American new literacies as essential to the socio-cultural contexts that inform language and literacy in education. The socio-cultural view of literacy posits that reading and writing cannot be understood outside of the contexts of social practices (Gee, 2015; Gee, 2001; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). Historically, dance has always existed as a prominent social practice within hip hop dance; "popular music and dance have served as a primary means of cultural definition and explanation within Black culture" (Gaunt, 2015, p. 246). Feminine hip hop dance is a social practice of African American girls that are possibly parts of their primary and secondary Discourses; whereas primary Discourses are learned within the family and early stages of life

and secondary Discourses are learned outside the home (Gee, 1989; Gee, 2015; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). For example, a study of the digital hip hop texts used by three male adolescents revealed they were all inculcated into hip hop culture by older parental or authority figures (Joaquin, 2011). Barbara Glass's (2007) historicity of dance also revealed that dances were most often learned in the home from parents or siblings.

Hip Hop feminist, Elaine Richardson (2013) invoked Gee's (1996,1999) and Street's (1993, 2000) views that literacy exists beyond the print-centric views of letters and sounds as the only universally and politically neutral source of meaning making; literacy and modes of meaning making are heavily influenced by socio-cultural context and ideologies. She further explicated,

two major points in New Literacy Studies underscore the social nature of literacy: (1) people internalize or appropriate images, patterns, and words from the social activities in which they have participated and (2) meaning making and reading are connected to identity negotiation and broader dominating discourses in society that control beliefs about the way the world works. (Richardson, 2013, pp. 330 -331)

Practice and meaning making go hand in hand (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007).

Richardson (2013) utilized the method of discourse analysis to unveil discourse and literacy questions when, supported by adult mentors in an after-school program, African American middle school girls were asked questions about their bodies and lived experiences. Grounded in Black and hip hop feminisms, Richardson provoked the discussion of twerking by showing videos of girls twerking and then inviting one student to teach her how to twerk. She ultimately highlighted the narratives of two of the students that primarily contributed to the discussion. One student changed the topic entirely and detailed an experience of being harassed

by older boys on the bus that viewed her as a sexual object. Richardson noted that this young girl's objection and refusal of the boy's advances was looked upon favorably by the group; a viewpoint that agrees with the politics of respectability's preference for an asexual orientation of sexuality. The featured narrative of the other young girl detailed how she liked to twerk for fun and included a description of how a boy might join in from behind. Instead of Richardson probing with what she details as a hip hop feminist centered question, such as, "When you dance, how do you feel?" (Richardson, p.335), she asked more in-depth questions about how the dance made the *boys* feel, *their* arousal, and if *they* liked her more because of the dance. Richardson admitted that she had fallen victim to viewing the dance through the same patriarchal lens she wished to subvert. This young girls' account was not met favorably by the group, with some calling her nasty and the conversation ending with a peer saying that some girls like to dance that way to be popular. The feedback and probing disregarded the young ladies repeated statement that she was only having fun, and subsequent statement that she was not a ho and would not fall into the entrapment of early pregnancy because of her motherly guidance and college ambitions.

Perceptions of Black Girls that Twerk

When Black girls twerk, it is often viewed by those girls as adolescent play but may be perceived as being overtly sexual in nature. Online observers suffer from viewer sexualization and stereotypes that lend to "consistent and repetitive racist discourse around being loud, *ratchet*, hood rats or hypersexual..." (Gaunt, 2015). The visualization and perception of sex acts imagined by the viewer, though the dancer is often dancing alone, may not at all be the intentional embodiment of the dancer (Gaunt, 2015). This was found in Gaunt's (2015) analysis of 168 twerking videos; utilized to understand how online viewership collapses context and how that affects the online socialization and self-presentation of Black girls online in YouTube

videos. The politics of respectability encapsulates the way society reacted to and viewed the dancers. The patriarchal gaze, initiated by viewers often responded negatively to the dancers' presentation of sexuality; found to be common in women's social interactions as non-lesbian acts that also did not require or include the presence of men (Gaunt, 2015). Consideration for this form of sexual expression has largely been ignored in scholarship (Gaunt, 2015), though hip hop feminism seeks to expand the binary categories of sexuality. Gaunt noted that a limitation of her research was how the dancers viewed themselves as they danced. Conversely, this research expressly reflects the views of the dancers.

In, *Music, Misogynoir and Technology as a Weapon*, Gaunt (n.d.) expanded her investigation of over 650 YouTube uploaded videos of teens twerking videos. Though Gaunt tepidly takes on a hip hop feminist perspective by inquiring about how young girls feel about their own twerking online, she maintained an ardent focus on viewers of the dance, in what she calls context collapse. She describes this phenomenon as happening when viewers watch YouTube videos without regard to the immediate communal spaces in which the dance takes place (a party, a gathering among friends, family folly, etc.). In her analysis of viewer comments, she believes the context collapse is due, in large part, to the lyricism and subject matter of hip hop; the music largely employed in these videos. Gaunt problematizes the comments left under child twerk dancers for their contributions to molding the perceptions of Black girls.

Gaunt also problematizes hype-men in the videos. Within hip hop, rappers often have hype-men to accent certain words and promote audience engagement with the song. Hype-men are also often djs who add to the energy of a party or listening audience. Like dj hype-men, dance hype men generally encourage the dancer to bring wreck to the dance being performed, and or offer ideas for new moves or variations that the dancer immediately responds to within the

dance. This is the kind of audience/ music/ dancer call-response evidenced throughout the history of African American dance. In the twerk videos, Gaunt found off-camera male voices, which may sound like a younger sibling, blame-worthy of instigating or puppeteering the dancer's twerk performance. Gaunt ultimately surmised the profiteering and sharing of the young girls' videos on YouTube as sexploitation, that did not help or profit the dancers.

However, the deficit framing of the dancing couched within the constant use of the word sexploitation, and instigations of puppeteering evoked a visceral response which feels like abuse. This notion might seemingly be counteracted within the report when Gaunt credited using the term sexploitation as agentive in getting Google to finally respond to a young girl's request to have a video of herself twerking at nine-year old removed. This leaves a wondering about if Google would have responded the same way if they were implicitly charged with exploiting tween girls instead of sexploiting them. The constant and insistent coupling of sex with feminine hip hop dance performance, especially twerking, continues to reify the assumption of instead of dancing, these girls are primarily simulating sex. In my personal experience as a dancer, my dance moves and prowess in physically explicating sounds and beats are not in parallel alignment with my kinetic performativity embedded in true bedroom-sensual moments. By insisting on referring to the videos as sexploitation, focus on the perverted acts of adults as voyeurs of tween hip hop dance is subdued.

Though Gaunt may not have an internalized understanding of twerking, in her earlier work, she respectfully theorizes the embodied musical practice of Black girls as:

kinetic orality [which] is the social training ground upon which girls create a background of relatedness to one another; performances of race, ethnicity, and gender are embodied through song, chant, and percussive movement. By kinetic orality, I am referring to the

transmission and appropriation of musical ideals and social memories passed on jointly by word of mouth and by embodied musical gestures and formulas. (Gaunt, 2006, p.3)

It seems that in her more recent work, Gaunt moved away from her premise that a world of communication and interpretation existed beyond song lyrics or words. Gaunt cites Cornel West as creating the phrase “kinetic orality” when he wrote:

The concrete, everyday response to institutionalized terrorism – slavery or Jim Crowism – was to deploy weapons of kinetic orality, passionate physicality and combative spirituality to survive and dream of freedom. By kinetic orality, I mean dynamic repetitive and energetic rhetorical styles that form communities, e.g., antiphonal styles and linguistic innovations that accent fluid, improvisational identities... By passionate physicality, I mean bodily stylizations of the world, syncopations and polyrhythms that assert one’s somebodiness in a society in which one’s body has no [perceptible] public worth, only economic value as a laboring mechanism. (West, 1989, 93)

This is the same kind of assertion of *somebodiness* that is missing from Gaunt’s research on twerking videos. Instead of seizing the opportunity to further explore the kinetic orality embedded in the context of online media, Gaunt focused on the naivete and exploitation of Black girls dancing to songs that could in turn, increase song popularity and revenue for the artist and rarely monetization for the actual performer herself.

In a 2016 TEDx talk entitled, *How to Twerk: (Re)Stigmatizing Black Girls for Clickbait*, Gaunt more closely aligns twerking with young girls’ kinetic orality. She revealed that dance and musicality is a central component of Black girl play. She evoked musical songs set to bodily music and choreography like, “shake it to the East, shake it to the west, shake it to the one that you love best” to substantiate the claim. Though Gaunt historicizes twerking as dance originating

in the 90's as first mentioned by Dj Jubilee in 1992. This verbalization follows many other rap songs, like the one in *Wild Style*, that I conjecture as providing commentary on as opposed to inspiration for Black girls' dances. Gaunt notes, however that a group called the Baby Dolls, a Mardi Gras organization, traces their roots of twerking back to 1912. Unfortunately, Gaunt taints the historicity and literacy of this dance when she jokingly states "the behaviors of Black girls in online spaces is repeatedly the butt of jokes on the social web". I received this joke as a violence, as it reified the subordination of this dance in an academic space, prompting the audience to respond laughingly. This presumably served to assure some distance between her own behaviors and this posterior-oriented dance practice. She then continued the talk by explaining that she had compiled over 100 videos of Black girls privately twerking in their bedroom into a project which she named the "bottom lines" project (more chuckles were heard in the audience). The naming of this project inevitably strips the dancer of context and culture and again uses the Black girls' bodily tools of dance as a punch line; their dance as a joke.

Johnson (2015) is one of the few scholars that explored athleticism, showmanship, and agentive negotiations of the politics of respectability in feminine hip hop dance made by Spelman cheerleaders, whom she found were deeply knowledgeable and opinionated about tenets of feminism. In Johnson's (2015) article, *Just Because I Dance Like a Ho I'm Not a Ho*, cheerleaders acknowledged purposeful resistance to the politics of respectability on the field, while adhering to the politics of respectability off the field. It was also acknowledged that these student athlete/performers had the intrinsic privilege of being recognized as not only college students, but also as students at an esteemed academic institution because they were school dancers. Though it was not specifically iterated, the Spelman cheerleaders inferred that they

danced purposeful resistance. This study asks how young girls use feminine hip hop dance as a form of communication and resistance; what the dances *mean* in different times and spaces.

Literacy, Hip Hop, and Dance

Literacy is defined as “the process of using reading, writing, and oral language to extract, construct, integrate, and critique meaning through the interaction and involvement with multimodal texts in the context of socially situated practices” (Frankel, Becker, Rowe, and Pearson, 2016). Although Heath’s (1983) seminal study about the language differences in Tracton and Roadville ignited much interest in out of school literacies, it was not until new literacies came to the fore that socio-cultural influences gained more credence for its exemplification of and contribution to overall literacy (Hoffman, Martinez, & Danielson, 2016). Heath’s empirical evidence supported the notion socio-cultural context matters to literacy when she found that students having a home and school language (or literacy) match were more successful academically, and the converse was true of students who did not have a school/home literacy match. Feminine hip hop dance is a literacy that has not been readily embraced by school officials but is largely practiced and extended in socio-cultural contexts outside of school. Though society applauded Ron Clarke’s recognition of and celebration of hip hop feminine dance, as evidenced by the positive news articles and commentary about him doing dances like the Whip and Nae Nae with his students in a video that has been watched over 2.5 million times (Vales, 2016), this form of literacy often exists as sufficient reason for sanctioning and repudiation in schools.

The moment has come in education for “valuing of forms of literacy that may not be fully conventional” (Hoffman, Martinez, & Danielson, 2016). For many youth, hip hop is the way they communicate with and make sense of the world; it is one of their literacies. Hip hop itself is

“central to their language and literacy learning the process of using reading, writing and oral language ... it is [indeed] central to their language and literacy learning” (Kirkland, 2008, p.70). New literacies and pop culture in education have created a fertile ground to explore hip hop literacies in education (Alvermann, 2011; Joaquin, 2011). Black girls’ literacies are an important aspect of multiliteracies (Muhammed & Haddix, 2016).

Frankel, Becker, Rowe, and Pearson (2016) contended that negating the integration of the different kinds of literacy that children are engaged in outside of school, especially for students whose literacies are not privileged in school, has the residual effect of the students being viewed as not knowing enough about literacy. This acknowledgment corroborated Gee’s (2001) view that Discourse (with the big letter D) has as much to do with literacy, and, therefore, reading as phonological decoding. Gee (2001) noted these Discourses, or what Conquergood might call cultural performances, “integrates ways of talking, listening, reading, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and feeling (and using various objects, symbols, images, tools, and technologies) in the service of enacting meaningful socially situated identities and activities” (p.719).

Alvermann (2001) raised the concern that perhaps as an education institution, we are contributing to increasingly more struggling readers by turning our backs on their literacies as they may have turned their backs on school literacies. The inquiry of students’ out of school reading and the validation of pop culture texts as valuable reading pushed back on notions that students were not reading outside of school (Alvermann, Hagood, Heron-Hruby, Hughes, Williams, & Yoon, 2007). Texts function as social practices themselves; serving as interpersonal connections (Hagood, Alvermann, & Heron-Hruby, 2010). New literacy scholars viewed learners

as not only making meaning by performing cognitive functions, but also by social interactions mediated by culture.

The New London Group (1996) theorized that the concept of text must be expanded beyond the linguistic to include gestural forms of meaning making. The New London Group (1996) believed that literacy pedagogy should be extended to “account for the context of our culturally and linguistically and increasingly globalized societies, for the multifarious cultures that interrelate, and the plurality of texts that circulate” (p. 61). Educators are cautioned that ignoring or openly contesting the New London Group’s expanded notion of text and literacy encourages a more limited perspective on what it means to be equipped for school (Joaquin, 2011). In short, missing the opportunity to explore socio-cultural contexts of literacy, as well as failing to expand perceptions of what counts as text (Frankel et al., 2016), disallows educators the advantages of connecting meanings to the ways that students themselves make meanings. Feminine hip hop dance exists as a valuable literacy, and possibly text, that has been mired with misunderstanding and therefore excluded from inclusionary pedagogies.

Hip hop scholars cite overwhelming commercial success with youth pop culture in the U.S. and abroad as a greater indicator of classroom success if/when hip hop codes are adapted into classroom pedagogy (Hill & Petchauer, 2013). Emdin (2013) invoked a model of culture focused on pedagogy privileges the perspective of the learner and is important to undergird hip hop pedagogical practices. By centering the hip hop literacies of Black girls, academics and educators are able to better understand and account for multiple subjectivities in the adaptation of a Black girl literacies framework. Muhammed and Haddix (2016) described this framework as containing the following elements: (a) multiple; (b) tied to identities; (c) historical; (d) collaborative; (e) intellectual; and (f) political/ critical. Empirical research found that literacies

were often connected to and/or practiced alongside other literacies instead of one distinguishable literacy (Muhammed & Haddix, 2016). Additionally, Muhammed and Haddix (2016) found that “Black girl literacies are *tied to identity*” (p. 326).

Accounting for Black girls’ literacies would appropriately progress and expand pedagogical tools currently in place such as Hip Hop Based Education (HHBE). HHBE is a way to welcome students with hip hop literacies in the classroom. Hip Hop Based Education relies on both critical theory and culturally relevant pedagogy to advance its goals transmitting disciplinary knowledge, improving student motivation, teaching critical media literacy, and fostering critical consciousness in primarily K-12 educational settings (Irby et al., 2013). Hip Hop Based Education relies on the use of hip hop lyrical texts as pedagogical resources (Hill, 2009). Love (2015) utilized HHBE to take up the challenge of integrating hip hop in the elementary school classrooms in the article, *What is Hip-Hop-Based Education Doing in Nice Fields Such as Early Childhood and Elementary Education*. While acknowledging the inappropriateness of much rap music, Love points out that non-commercial rap music has plenty of appropriate selections. HHBE is lauded for its agency in outcomes of engagement, academic success, and critical reflection (Irby, et al., 2013) at the secondary level, but the elementary school has used hip hop more for memorizing facts, making learning fun, and for general rhyme schema (Love 2015).

By calling forth the need to recognize and explore hip hop identities in elementary school children, HHBE brings attention to the way that youth are influenced by hip hop through parents, community, and cultural pastimes (like family participation of feminine hip hop). This generational love and sharing of dance can be viewed on many social media platforms today. Love (2015) advocates the disruption of the negative perception of hip hop as a whole among

educators for this teaching framework to truly be effective. In this regard, Love (2015) researched children's "situated learning activities" (p.110) and imbued a socio-cultural stance to orient these activities. Love (2015) discovered when students could present their own forms of communication and literacy that extended beyond school, within the classroom, in accordance with Freirean (1993) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014), she was able to build on literacy that was important to them. She was able to establish a community of learning that valued the routines, gestures, and norms of each of the students, as well as engage in social justice-oriented questions about how their own hip hop identities could help them affect change and increase their academic success. In her class, a young female joined a rap cypher, which is often dominated by males, and brought wreck (Pough 2004) to the normalized image of a young female mc. Just as the girl in Love's class stepped up to project her own epistemology via rap, this research makes visible one of the ways that Black girls participate in hip hop culture, thus expanding opportunities for more students to "step up" if their literacy practices are recognized and understood. This work submits the need for inclusion of hip hop dance texts, beyond Breakdancing, as pedagogical resources.

The premise of HHBE is that cultural funds of knowledge and behaviors are created and engaged in by students in and out of school contexts, much like pop culture literacy. When educators call for culturally relevant teaching but fail to fully include aspects of a given culture, those marginalized students suffer. The educational importance of this research is to disrupt the material and/or cognitive criminalization of Black feminine bodies because of mis-interpretations of their subjectivities. As an often silenced and marginalized group in research, this inquiry privileges the subjectivities of Black girls and illuminates some of the tensions encountered when these modalities have intersected with societal norms. Hip Hop Based Education, Critical

Race English Education, arts-based, and other such pedagogical frameworks allow an entry-point for the literacy of hip hop feminist dance. Dance also allows the space for localized, student-generated response that is not simply a reproduction or regurgitation of what the instructor said or assigned as reading (Johnson et al., 2017). Within a Critical Race English Education (CREE) pedagogical framework, Black literacies are essential to combatting white-supremacy, anti-blackness, and metaphorical acts of violence inflicted upon students of color in the classroom when their own cultural texts and literacies are demonized, maligned, and ignored within curriculum, interpersonal communication, and classroom expectations for positive thought and behavior. This study will help instructors interested in implementing hip hop pedagogies understand and honor the contribution that Black girls make to hip hop culture.

Gaps in the Literature

Hip hop feminine dance is a form of cultural capital that has been overtly neglected in scholarship. Although Love (2012) acknowledged the agency of strippers in hip hop dance, there is a dearth of exploration of Black girls' self-perception of their hip hop dance. Much of the reticence in celebrating the performance of Black girls that dance hip hop stems from the Social Identity Theory perspective that hip hop videos reflect stereotypical depictions of women that in turn inform society's ideological outlook of them (Allison, 2012; Emerson, 2002; Powell, 2011). Associated performances are often demonized as being usurped with animalism and hyper-sexuality as informed by jezebel and sapphire tropes as well as historical exploitation and sexual plunder of Black women (Love, 2012; Powell, 2011; Story 2007; Washington, 2007). Johnson (2014) aided this view with her personal account of being a video model in a low budget video, where she misleadingly calls herself a video vixen (the term is usually reserved for women that have extensive experience in the market).

Washington (2007) shared discontent with the image of women in videos undermining the history and essence of hip hop culture, and therefore chose to highlight b-girls, female break dancers, as a group that upheld the core values of hip hop. While she acknowledged that women's continual presence in hip hop has been overlooked, "from park jams to night clubs and breaking crews" (2007, p. 83), she attributed this to the "progression of b-girls, female emcees, deejays and graffiti artists occur[ing] much slower than it did for men, so the complete history of women in hip hop is still being written" (2007, p.83). Those women in park jams and night clubs were not viewed as a viable object of study, like the b-girls, whom she noted were not physically able to consistently execute as many dance moves as their male counterparts. In feminine hip hop dance however, girls *are* the masters and supreme executors of the genre.

Huntington (2007) recognized social hip hop dances are often done for celebration (such as the cabbage patch) and are then codified and used for commodification reasons: using hip hop as a universal mechanism to speak theoretically to laborers universally in Marxist systems of oppression. Huntington (2007) believed that dancers were able to exude their own statements through dance that may or may not perfectly align with the lyrics of the song being danced to. Huntington (2007) took an extensive view of social hip hop dances, their attributable agency, and their commodification of culture, but did not magnify the agency of school aged girls' feminine hip hop dance in relation to the politics of respectability. The heuristic Huntington (2007) provided to determine the agency of hip hop dances will be used in this study.

Society often conflates hip hop culture with rap music (Pough, 2004) and rap music videos, which affects how hip hop dance is perceived. A Black feminist lens of sexual scripting theory posited that youth enacted sexual scripts as seen in videos (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). This viewpoint seemingly denies the youth any agency in their own exhibition and critique of hip

hop culture. The conclusions of Stephens and Phillips' (2003) sexual scripting study were flawed, in that the scholars seemed to simply justify their own apriori assumptions of how students defined scripts instead of relying on student descriptions of scripts. The scholars script definitions varied from the student participants' descriptions of scripts, though the scholars used student feedback to justify their scripts. This was clear as the diva script was discussed. The student participants described the Diva script as being strong and pretty, whereas the scholars elucidated the Diva script as a description of a lighter skinned woman who gains her strength by focusing on men. The students were also less limited in their focus of only one skin color, for the diva script and chose Tweet, a singer who is not considered light-skinned, to fulfill their example of the script. Sexual scripting does not allow youth the flexibility of scripts that are more apt to their own intentions because the scripts themselves are created by researchers with apriori assumptions. This scripting, reifies the thoughts of perspectives that others have of the Black body (Story, 2007). If video models and dancers are negatively judged, with little to no respect given to their agency, young people may appear to pattern their images and actions from those video models and dancers and may receive that same harsh judgment from observers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Design

We change the world by changing the way we make it visible.

Denzin, 2002, p. 479

A one month and a half -long multiple case study of one Black girl hip hop dancer in elementary, middle, and high school, made visible each girl's hip hop dance performance encounters with the politics of respectability, and illuminated the sociocultural context of the literacy of the dance. Multiple case studies are used to provide understanding of "the particular but broader phenomenon of interest rather than the individual case per se" (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p. 296). Research was gathered using qualitative methods in an interpretive and performative framework using a hip hop feminist lens. Qualitative research is desirable when a researcher wants to understand the contexts of a participant's actions, and how those contexts influence actions (Maxwell, 2013); such as the politics of respectability present in particular contexts.

Madison (1998) recommended the use of interpretive and critical frameworks in feminist undertakings so that the everyday quotidian knowledge of the participants can be honored, extended, and conjoined by the expert knowledge of the researcher. Madison (1998) attributed this line of thinking to Patricia Hill Collins (1988), who also insisted that when gathering research from disenfranchised oppressed participants, using standardized techniques, the researcher must be conscious and reflexive about it. This method of care is in line with autoethnographic techniques that insert the researcher into the research matter. Prasad (2005)

stated that “part of crafting feminist research is therefore to personalize it by providing many more autobiographical details and by laying bare some of the messier realities of the research account that are usually left out of conventional research accounts” (p. 173). Practicing reflexivity as a researcher requires constant consideration of one’s own position within the research, acknowledging her own assumptions, and accepting that those assumptions have moral and political consequences beyond the classroom and research (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2000). Patton (2002) cited reflexivity as one of the central strategic themes of contemporary, postmodern qualitative inquiry. He viewed it as a way for researchers to own their perspective. While the researcher’s reflexive state is a deep inner acknowledgement and analysis of how the researcher is contemplating her actions, reflectiveness must also be adhered to; which is the process of the researcher considering his or her own actions (Madison, 2006).

Hip hop feminism demands that we listen to and center the female experience in hip hop culture (Cooper, 2018). Qualitative interviews and performative studies observations helped provide thick description (Geertz, 1973) on the topic of feminine hip hop dance and the negotiations of the politics of respectability from the perspective of the participants (deMarrais, 2004). In qualitative research, the questions are the heart of the research and can be amended as the research demands and progresses, unlike quantitative research that starts with the questions (Maxwell, 2013). In case study research, multiple data sources are desired for data triangulation. This research encompasses multiple data sources as well as multiple tools for analysis for data triangulation.

Subjectivity Statement

As a current faculty instructor at a two-year college, which marks my twenty third year of serving various instructional roles for standard-based educational goals, I continue to find my

own dance practice combustible but also constrained in the classroom. I have always danced in a variety of settings from as far back as I can remember. Although I saw how much joy dance brought my parents and their ‘company’ when my brother and I were called from our respective places to perform singularly or together (my other brother wasn’t as gifted in dance, so he mostly looked on from the sidelines), I never thought dance had any real value. That is until I moved to Los Angeles to pursue an acting career and found that my ability to *dance* was the commodity that allowed me to break into the industry; first with a professional dance agent, and then with a professional acting and print agent. I endured rigorous dance auditions and booked professional jobs as a hip hop dancer in music videos and national commercials. At approximately the same time that I began my professional performance career, I entered the field of Education as a short and long-term substitute teacher; and at other times, a full-time, non-certificated teacher at a high school. Following the instinct to “use what I know”, I often utilized theatrical-based constructs in the classroom and pedagogically promoted movement among students to bolster understandings.

Unsurprisingly, both of my daughters are avid dancers. Through them, I became more aware of the impact of the intersection between the politics of respectability and feminine hip hop dance. In Elementary school, my older daughter had become acculturated by her peers and teachers to believe that dances like the Nae Nae, as well as other local hip hop dances, were bad. When she danced with her local all Black dance team and saw that they were all doing the Nae Nae she initially refused to join in, sharing that she had been taught at school, and believed, that it was a bad dance. Her dance team assured her that the dances were just dances they did and weren’t bad. Later, she joined me as I tutored, and served as a movement instigator at an after-school program with a group of middle and high school students. At one our sessions, I allowed the Nae Nae to be a focused activity, and was able to master (bring wreck to) the Nae Nae based

on the students doing the dance, and initially coaching me in the dance cypher. On that day, my daughter still had not fully learned/internalized (mastered/ brought wreck to) the dance in a way that would allow her to showcase her own style. After those experiences, she realized that it was just a dance and was proud of herself when she mastered it. She was also proud of her cultural performance. From that moment, she viewed similar cultural performances with admiration and sought to maintain an updated cultural vocabulary of dance.

By contrast, my younger daughter started being reprimanded for her dancing in school as early as Pre-K. One of the topics of a parent-teacher conference was the concern the teacher had about my daughter twerking when they were allowed dance time in class. I explained to my daughter that certain dances were perceived as negative, and therefore, should not be done in public. She consequently put herself in “twerk rehab”. There were times when twerk-worthy songs would come on the radio and she would continue the mantra that she was in “twerk rehab”. At another conference for her in the second grade, a teacher asked me, with great excitement, if I could guess what my child was doing as they waited in the hallway outside of the gym before they entered a school assembly. Just as my mind began to conjure various scenarios of violence, the teacher said, “she was dancing!”. I quickly explained that we danced every day at home as part of our normal routine; even dancing together or against each other at times in dance battles. My living room was fashioned as make-shift dance studio, comprised of a large mirror and bare wooden flooring. Around the time of this parent/teacher conference, my kids and I would often turn on the strobe lights, play music over the large karaoke machine speaker, and dance full out (performance-like energy) on a consistent basis. When the same daughter was reprimanded for twerking at recess in the fourth grade, she was able to articulate her various reasons for twerking:

she said she twerks “when she is happy, when she is excited, when she celebrates, when she is having fun”, etc.

These experiences motivated me to want to know more about the intentions and socio-cultural literacy of feminine hip hop dancers, their encounters with the politics of respectability, and where safe spaces for the dance are found. I entered the research space with an emic perspective, which allowed me to build trust with the student participants and to listen, observe, and analyze data in an intimate and whole-body kind of a way.

Site of Research

Data were collected in a city that lies in the heart of a Southeastern state in the U.S.

Participant Selection

The participants consisted of three student case samples and those students’ parents or guardians as informants. The students were drawn from the following subcategorized school levels: one from grades K-5, one from grades 6-8, and one from grades 9-12. Participants were chosen using criterion-based and network selection (deMarrais, 2004). The criteria for selection of the students was that they are Black girls that enjoy and regularly practice/perform hip hop dance and have encountered the politics of respectability as a result of their dancing (reprimanded, redirected, shamed, etc.). Permission slips were given to parents, and when they affirmed their approval to seek consent from their student daughters, consent was sought from student participants.

The network selection strategy for research participants is akin to snowball sampling in that persons known to the researcher can recommend others that fit the selection criteria (deMarrais, 2004). Personal contacts were used to launch the recruitment process. The initial call for research (Appendix A) was placed on social media, and amongst friends and colleagues;

it was not publicly advertised at a school institution or dance class. Participants and referrals were sought from people on a parent call list I had from my daughters' former dance classes (no longer in official operation). My daughters in middle and elementary school also recommended friends that danced a lot around school. I asked personal contacts to share contacts of possible participants who met the eligibility requirement and might have an interest in participating in the research. I then used my telephone screen (Appendix B) to call potential participants. When the participants agreed to participate in the research, permission forms were disseminated to both children (Appendix E) and their parents (Appendix D). Participants from each grade section were chosen based on ascending order of returned permission slips. The initial interviews were then scheduled.

The pseudonyms used to refer to each case (primary participant) and their informants/mothers are listed in Table 1. Names of flowers were purposely chosen to represent each of the Black girls and women participants, as a steadfast reminder of their innate beauty and delicateness amidst multiple landscapes. Pseudonyms were chosen after the initial interview to reflect qualities of the flower, its names, or current allusions in pop culture, based on information gleaned from the interview. Shamrock was a seventeen-year-old eleventh grade high school student, Sunflower was a thirteen-year-old eighth grade middle school student, and Rose was an eight-year-old third grade elementary school student. Table 1 illustrates that the mothers are all near the same age, though the students are a cross-section of grades and ages. Each participant has one older or younger sibling that also lives in the home.

Table 1*Pseudonyms and Ages of Participants*

Case	Research Role	Pseudonym	Grade Level	Age
Case 1	Participant	Shamrock	11th	17
	Informant	Daisy		Early 40s
Case 2	Participant	Sunflower	8th	13
	Informant	Lotus		Early 40s
Case 3	Participant	Rose	3rd	8
	Informant	Stargazer		Early 40s

As listed in the initial call for research (Appendix A), each of the three primary participants identified as a Black girl who loves to dance to hip hop music and has been reprimanded, redirected, or shamed because of it at school, on a dance team, in the community, or some other place. No participants dropped from the study.

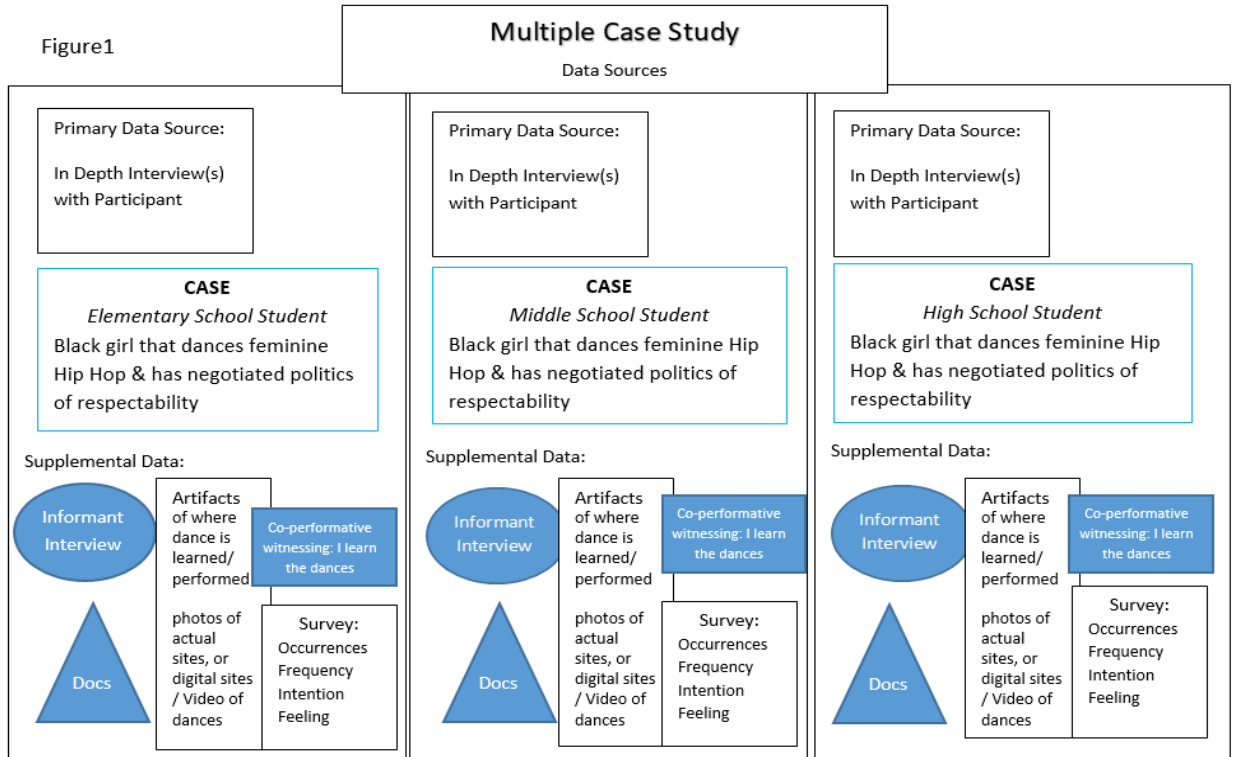
Data Sources and Collection

Case study does not depend solely on ethnographic or direct participant observation for quality inquiry (Yin, 2014). Multiple forms of data were gathered (See Figure 1) to provide insight and context in the socio-cultural aspects and literacy attributes of Black girl’s hip hop dance practice. The primary data were gathered from in-depth interviews, which are personal and semi-structured interviews that hinges on the interviewer-interviewee relationship (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) with each participant from each case in the beginning of the research cycle. The prior knowledge and interactions with some of the research participants, as well as the network selection of participant(s) aided in the establishment of credibility of the researcher with the

participants. An interview protocol (Appendix G, H) was used to ask open-ended questions (Patton, 2002). Interview questions were piloted by asking my daughters, then in 4th and 8th grades, the research questions.

Figure 1

Data Sources



Three to four semi-structured interviews (Appendix H) were taken over a month to a month and a half of lapsed time with each case sample (Black girls who dance hip hop). These interviews served as the primary data source that revealed the contexts and details of the phenomenon (experiences with the politics of respectability). The first in-person interview lasted approximately 37 minutes for the Elementary and Middle School participant and a little over an hour for the high school student participant. Subsequent interviews with the primary participants ranged from 2 to 12 minutes; conducted both in person, and via telephone (video and/or audio).

Parts of the interview were video recorded when dances were being demonstrated, taught, or performed. For example, Sunflower taught me a dance during her interview, which was recorded, and Rose chose to dance during her initial interview. Approximately four interviews with each informant parent (mother of each primary participant) ranged from 3 to 40 minutes, and were also conducted both in person and over the phone.

Immediately after semi-structured interviews, field notes written in a journal captured analytic memos, which were reflective and reflexive about the interview experience. Interviews were transcribed within a week after each interview. When writing or reading the transcriptions, analytic memos were noted directly on the transcription, along with probes for future questions and then transferred to the research journal. Follow up interviews followed the format of informal conversational interviews that allowed questions to be asked according to the context of conversation (Patton, 2002), as a follow up to questions from the first interview, a follow up to surveys, and as follow up to memos or questions about my own analytic memos or field notes.

Observations of the case took place passively (by viewing content of dance examples) and actively (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) in terms of real time dance performances in informal or formal dance spaces. Co-performative witnessing (Spry, 2011) was used to allow the researcher to learn and/or become acquainted with the dances described as well as to deepen understanding of each participant in an embodied way. The videos helped me study the performance of the participants and embody those dances in presentation. Sunflower directly taught me a dance and supported that learning by directing me to a thread of dance challenges featuring the dance. Through these processes, I was able to experience the full arc of literacy attainment, which started from discomfort and some embarrassment about my abilities, to mastery. As a scholarArtist (Nielson, 2005), a professional artist that utilizes those sensibilities in research, I listened to

songs (Appendix J) that participants shared as their favorite songs (or radio station in one instance), and watched dances co-performatively; effectively feeling the soul of the dances throughout my body. In line with performative methodologies (Bochner, 2000; Conquergood, 2013 c, Mienczakowski, 2001; Spry, 2011), as I listened and interacted with participants, I mentally conducted a character study to inform the creation of a scripted character. This was done by taking mental note of intonations, pauses, gestures, and areas of the interview that seem to emotionally vibrate and then immediately translating those mental notes to analytics memos in a dated notepad as well as reflections that may have been shared or occurred before and after the interview.

Artifacts, such as videos (of formalized and impromptu dance performances, dance challenges, and dancing during interviews) formal surveys (Appendix F), and informal surveys (in the form of text messages), provided more in-depth understanding of the sociocultural context of the dance in each case. Printed weekly surveys (Appendix F) were given to each participant in the beginning of the research period. The surveys were designed to get an idea of dance frequency and capture real time dance scenarios that happened during the research phase. The surveys were disseminated in colored notebooks and collected when participants confirmed some of the sheets were notated. Informal surveys, in the form of text messages, also revealed the frequency of dance, over the course of a day. Photos showing the context of hip hop dance spaces and/or performances were also analyzed in regard to their socio-cultural contexts and presence of respectability politics. All data served the purposes of triangulation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014) in the interpretation of data. The sources of data showed the variances, stability, and perceived frequency or correlation of the case with the phenomenon. Ultimately, data collection

evolved throughout the research period as interview and feedback indicated (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

Data Management

Data were stored on a private drive. When all interviews were completed and transcribed, transcriptions were analyzed individually and collectively multiple times from various perspectives.

Data Analysis

Performance studies methodologies of observation were used to view data from different perspectives (Conrad, 2008; Conquergood, 2013b; Smith, 1993). Attention was given to gestures, words, actions, or inactions, as well as intonations, and emphasis. Inside jokes (Conquergood, 2013b, 2013c) were also given great import and holistically compared among participants. This particular methodology is important to note because the original intention of this research project was to follow a traditional process of data collection and analysis and translate the collected data into a dramatic format *after* it was analyzed in a traditional sense. However, the entanglement between performance methodologies and traditional tools of academic data collection proved to be, as Run-DMC might say, *Tricky* (Simmons, McDaniels, Fleger, & Averre, 1986). While focusing on maintaining an ardent and faithful marriage to the traditions of academia, performance methodologies refused to be the silent side-piece and was a constant accompaniment along the entire journey. Performance methodologies were utilized in each phase of research collection, analysis, and representation (Conrad, 2008; Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995; Spry, 2011,). This tension is sometimes evident in this section's description of the followed methodology.

To make multiple case assertions, each case had to first be analyzed individually. Each participant's interview responses were analyzed line by line. The analysis was then organized into categories and overarching themes. The themes were built by following Stake's (2006) guidance: the two research questions were used to interrogate and develop findings for each individual case. The evidence in each case was analyzed individually for the level and complexity of the presence of each theme.

All answers to questions were placed side by side on a spread sheet to compare the similarities and differences in each case. The level of complexity in aiding the development of assertions for each case were rated as High, Medium, or Low, which illuminated cross-case assertions. Worksheets provided by Stake (2006) were used to guide this process. Attention was paid as to whether the evidence extended or limited assertions to be made for the final report. Cross-case assertions were made based on the evidence gathered. The collective experience of the cases, after careful individual analysis, was analyzed to make assertions about Black girl feminine hip hop dancers' negotiations with the politics of respectability and the dances functioned as a sociocultural literacy.

The identification of themes prompted creative imagery about the participants. Scrivener was used to storyboard/categorize and ultimately, subcategorize data that fit under the themes, which prompted deeper analysis and organization of each theme. Each category was written on the top line of a digital index card in the system and corresponding interview evidence/summary, was written on the body of the index card. In this way, I was able to categorize data under themes for cross case analysis. Categories indicated examples of agency, hip hop cultural attributes, dancing with family, examples of politics of respectability encounters, various reasons and responses to twerking, instances of humor, etc. Each overarching theme identified the

pervasive essence (Morse, 2008) evidenced throughout the data. Each identified theme was further analyzed before it was submitted as a finding. Agency was one such theme.

The following heuristic provided by Huntington (2007) was used to analyze the agency of the dances:

1. Indicate what bodies are being researched (Black female bodies)
2. Define their routine activities, no matter how trivial or important, no matter what they must be
3. Look at the collective politics pressing on the bodies
4. After completing the definition of the body and what it is doing, look at the assumptions others have for that body and the way the writing body says something different depending on the circumstances and contexts

Essentially, each piece of data (primary interview, informant interview, artifacts, journals, etc.) was analyzed for direct and indirect evidence of feminine hip hop dance agency in the disruption of the politics of respectability, and how the literacy is exchanged (Figure 2).

Categories and themes provided the framework for dramatic vignettes that further revealed nuances of relationships, spoken and unspoken rules, and physical contexts that impacted dance performances. This form of arts-based analysis stemmed from listening with the heart. As mentioned previously, this form of methodology does not wait to be attended to: it finds you wherever you are. For example, one day, the data infiltrated my imagination and passive thoughts. I constantly 'heard in my mind' many of the dance terms repeated from the student participants that were associated with their encounters with the politics of respectability, which inspired a scene that started to form in my mind. I wrote down the words I heard, and the images I envisioned of seeing everyone say the words individually in succession. Transcripts and spread sheets were then reviewed to verify and record words that were used as described. A scenario of the mothers being interrogated began to develop. While I passively considered the need to make a choice between having the participants possibly all interact, or possibly be

represented as a composite character, I was unsure of why I imagined the mothers in a state of being blamed and put on the defense. I recorded the scenes as imagined.

This process allowed me to realize I was placing more emphasis on the compelling stories and perspectives of the mothers than the students. The hip hop feminist theoretical perspective that frames this study demanded the centering of the hip hop *primary participant's* perspective. I then viewed spreadsheets with only student responses on them and re-read interview transcripts of only student responses. This process allowed me to re-center the student voices. A written script that positioned the students as interrogated by the politics of respectability highlighted the palpable tension felt amongst the mothers as a byproduct of this social construct. More importantly, the script reveals the participant's perspectives and utilizations of dance to communicate, and the agency of each participant embodied in when, where, and how they choose to dance.

If the traditional case study analysis by Stake (2006) was followed and arts-based interrogation saved until the end of the findings and reporting process of research, a resulting performative work might have fit neatly into a dramatic structure that would reflect the themes as acts and the categories as scenes. Indeed question 1 may have been illuminated in act 1 and question 2 illuminated in act 2. However, in the two act-play created from the research, both questions are constantly being revealed simultaneously throughout the drama. Placing the script in a particular section was also challenging because all phases of the research are represented therein: the research problem, theoretical framework, researcher subjectivity, research findings, and implications. The script was placed in the Findings section because ultimately, it is the research report (Saldaña, 2011; Mienczakowski, 2001). By allowing audiences to ruminate about the depicted events on their own, or unguided by performers, ethnodrama resists assuming more

authority than the informants. While traditional textual reporting is often recommended, the efficacy of alternative presentations is found to be paramount to imbue understandings between participants, stakeholders, and evaluators (Hall, Ahn, & Greene, 2012). Presentational texts allow for multiple interpretations as well as reveals the author's subjectivity (Hall et al., 2012). Having insight as to how the literacy operates in this multiple case analysis provided greater context and understanding to scenarios of misinterpretation that result in encounters with the politics of respectability.

Assumptions and Limitations

Tension in this research innately existed within the case and the phenomenon. The politics of respectability influences behaviors viewed as protective and respectful in young people. The topic of investigation insinuates a promotion of promiscuous behavior and research into such a topic could reify stereotypes that encourage instead of disrupting perceptions of feminine hip hop dance. This tension is theoretically reified in that hip hop feminism promotes sexual freedom. However, the case study approach encourages a peripheral inquiry of a phenomenon's context (Yin, 2014). While some dances may be viewed as more acceptable in society than others, an assumption of this research is that the dances (or dance moves) that may motivate experiences with the politics of respectability often exist in discourse with other dance moves that do not. Consequently, this research investigates how hip hop dance functions as literacy. This research hopes to widen the space of understanding for Black girl literacies, just as, *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* (Morris, 2016), centered the subjective voices of Black girls that have encountered aggressions and microaggressions in the classroom and invited alternative perceptions of those literacies.

An additional tension in this research is the utilization of arts-based methodologies in data collection, analysis, and reporting. This research illuminates the whole-process methodology of arts-based measures with aims to widen that space of acceptance for literacy practices imbedded in feminine hip hop dance by relying on the efficacy of ethnodrama, where performance is assumed to have the capabilities of transformative agency (Mienczakowski, 2001; Saldaña, 2011) to communicate to the hearts of viewers as well as stand academically as a research report. Ethnodrama is a presentation methodology that is mired with tensions. While ethnodrama is grounded in the lived realities of research, the drama portion of the research shares a theatrical aesthetic demand; to entertain. The aesthetic quality of the performed ethnodrama stands center-stage with the accuracy of represented or presented data. Saldaña asserts that it should “be an entertainingly informative experience for an audience, one that is aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative” (2005, p.14). However, including research citations is thought to bore the vitality of the drama with semantics of academia (Saldaña, 2011; Saldaña, 2015). This methodology supports the illumination of literacy practices imbedded in feminine hip hop dance by relying on the efficacy of ethnodrama.

While ethnodrama is grounded in the lived realities of research, the drama portion of the research shares a theatrical aesthetic demand; to entertain. The aesthetic quality of the performed ethnodrama stands center-stage with the accuracy of represented or presented data. Saldaña asserts that it should “be an entertainingly informative experience for an audience, one that is aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative” (2005, p.14). Producing quality research that is entertaining or appeals to aesthetic sensibilities is a consistent tension in performed research (Vandover, 2014). Conquergood (2003) cautioned that there must be a balance between ethics of research and art. Ethnodramatists agree that artistry and aesthetics

should not subvert research goals and validity, nor should the story be embellished by the seduction of telling a juicier narrative (Denzin, 2014; Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995; Mienczakowski, 2009). Sometimes fictions are created but they still adhere to the same themes, discoveries, and the heart of the research (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010). These fictions can also help to support the anonymity of the participants.

A fundamental tenet of ethnodrama is that it must be performed before a live audience (Mienczakowski, 2001; Saldaña, 2011). The platform of ethnodrama translates the observation of multimodalities of the data and aims to portray the subjects, or characters observed and the nuanced and detailed rhythms of their lives in an authentic and real way that compels the viewer to realize the data as well (Saldaña, 2008). This care of presentation aims to have the audience co-performatively walk in the shoes of the participant and/or researcher. One measure of the validity or efficacy of ethnodrama is its ability to create verisimilitude (Denzin, 2014; Saldaña, 2003). This verisimilitude aids the thick description of research; whereas thick description, quite simply, deals with how deeply a cultural observation is described, as well as how clearly that description is perceived by the receivers of that description; “it is the ability to create a rich, contextualized description of an event to verisimilitude and transferability of findings” (Freeman, 2014, p. 827). It is important to note that like Autoethnography, in this research, the script represents both process and product (Spry, 2011); it is indicative of both the analysis and findings of the research. After the script was created, it was disseminated to all participants for feedback to ensure its accuracy. The hope is that the verisimilitude created will speak to the hearts of audiences and thus, positively influence social and/or political change because of the empathy created.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The research findings in this section are presented in two distinctly different formats. The first format is a written script that was developed from the data. Most of the words of the participants are direct quotes from research data collected. This presentation of the findings follows the mantra of ‘show not tell’ that is espoused in writing that is meant to be performed. Though some parts are made up, the script is in alignment with the *truthiness*, or core truth of the data collected during the research period. The script is entitled, *Queens in Training*. After the script, the findings are espoused and presented in a traditional academic format, as recommended by Conquergood (2013c). Those findings follow the complex paths and intersections of hip hop dance that elusively evade containment in the lives of the three research subjects.

Ethnodrama

Queens in Training

Setting: Inside a building with white cinderblock walls, a sign reads Queens in Training on the outside door. Inside, three young girls (Shamrock, Rose, and Sunflower) sit side by side at a table in what looks like an interrogation room. Each of the young girls’ mothers (Daisy, Stargazer, and Lotus) sit in an adjoining observation room. Jasmine, a youth advocate and mentor, sits in the corner of the room with a notepad in hand. The Queens in Training facilitator, Pora, addresses the group.

Pora: Hello parents. Thank you for attending our inaugural Queens in Training Workshop. I'm sure you are wondering by now why you and your daughters were selected to attend this special session. (*everyone murmurs*). Well, each was dancing.

Stargazer: Oh Lord

Pora: And there was a serious violation of the politics of respectability. Now, as upright women and mothers, I wanted to bring you together, and stage this "intervention" of sorts, so that we might right this wrong and continue the ultimate and most important pursuit of equality.

Daisy: What? The politics of respectability

Lotus: I'm sorry, but can you please clarify who you are?

Pora: Thank you for asking. As a founding member of Queens in Training, I am here as a representative of the politics of respectability board... on which I am a third-generation legacy. We have stood the test of time throughout history and our ideologies are echoed in most environments where class and propriety are still cherished and upheld. I will clarify our stance by reading to you some of our perspectives on mothers and how we ought to carry ourselves in public. (*in response to looks*) Now don't get offended, this is all for racial uplift! We simply must present ourselves in a commendatory fashion at all times, so that we may be as respected as White men and women when we apply for employment, learn in schools, and go about society. Might I remind you that I come from a time, I mean my grandmother, my mother, *and* I come from a time when Black women were openly displayed as lascivious and sexually wanton in publications and entertainment outlets. Well, might I remind you that not much has changed! My mother believed in the tenets of the politics of respectability so much that she named me Pora...

the POR stands for politics of respectability. And yes, the way I carry myself demands respect everywhere I go. The only way to have our own backs, as my daughter would say, is to live a life where you present yourself as professional and God-fearing... not hot and horny; not a thot as the young people say. Leave that nighttime behavior to the men. I am sure this is not something you haven't heard from your own mothers (*to herself*) I hope. (*they all somewhat agree*). Good.

(Reads perspectives)

I will begin with a quote from one of our great leaders, then president S. Willie Layten in 1904 at the 5th Annual Session of the Women's Convention: "Mothers, be firm and yet you can be kind and sympathetic. As a race we cannot afford to contribute ONE single life to the bad, though the individuals force it upon us. We are impoverished, unfortunately the minority or bad Negroes have given the race a questionable reputation; these degenerates are responsible for every discrimination we suffer".

(peers at the mothers to ensure they are still listening)

Secondly, Keep your homes tidy! I will again quote our ancestor Nannie Burroughs with a relevant, as the young people say, instruction for today: "a woman who keeps a dirty home and tolerates trifling, shiftless, inmates is as great an enemy to the race as the man who devotes his life to persecuting and maligning the race". I love to quote when the meaning lasts! In other words, you live dirty in your home, you live dirty in the world, and make us all look dirty!

Now this is for everyone: there should be no chewing gum, especially in public, no smoking, and no drinking. As my wise ancestors have indicated, these poor habits can often be traced back to a poor dinner (*she peers at the window to indicate instruction to*

the mothers). In other words, you must act like a lady at ALL times! No ifs, ands, or butts. Definitely no butts! They belong only glued to your seat or hidden behind respectable clothes. Do you all understand where I'm coming from?

(Shamrock, Rose, and Sunflower still look slightly confused. They glance at each other, and Sunflower chokes down a smirk. Rose smiles for a brief second but quickly retracts it as she looks toward her mother).

Pora (cont.): Now, we have allowed a youth advocate to be present while each child is being questioned, who works somewhat like a lawyer, because if found guilty of violating the politics of respectability, any of the following may happen:

1. Labeling of sexual impropriety: whore, slut, etc. *(pauses to ensure this sinks in)*
2. The child may be treated as an adult, which involves being judged more and suffering harsher penalties than White counterparts in school and society
3. A domino effect of every other Black person suffering for your own indiscriminate decisions and lack of discernment.
4. And of course, as I stated before, this will all be viewed as the production of the stewardship, or lack thereof, of the mother

Shall we begin?

Stargazer: Wait, do you know my mama?

Daisy: I know. You not about to tell my mama are you

Pora: I know all of you. We are everywhere. Luckily, we didn't have to contact your mothers...

TOO much. You followed the rules a little better than your daughters. I guess your mothers were a bit more... in tune. Ladies, please step out into the hallway, I will speak this young lady first.

(Sunflower, and Rose exit)

Shamrock: *(Shamrock dances to Mary Did You Know)*

Stargazer, Daisy, & Lotus: (*Stargazer, Daisy, and Lotus all clap*) (*overlapping*) That was good/ That was beautiful

Daisy: My baby did that!

Pora: (*looks up to silence the mothers*) Interesting. Hello, Shamrock?

Shamrock: Yes mam

Pora: Well *that* was nice. Young lady, who led you to start dancing as you do

Shamrock: Dancing came naturally. I don't remember ever learning it. I started choreographed dance with Ballet in school. It was fun! Teachers were nice, we did a bunch.

Pora: I'm here to investigate an incident of twerking

Shamrock: (*remains calm and cool*) (*emphatically*) I don't wanna twerk around teachers or older people, cause they don't like to see it, so its disrespectful

Pora: I saw your performance at the parade and all kinds of elderly were there. Some of them said

(*Daisy interrupts by banging on the window. She gives the indication that Pora should not repeat what the people in the crowd may have said. Pora adjusts the question*).

Pora (cont.): Well, some of the comments about what they saw were, um, not very agreeable we might say.

Daisy: (*Daisy explaining to the other mothers*) Oh my God, I hope he does not go into detail! Some of those people were so cruel how they talked about those little girls. And I have to be honest, it did get to me because they would say things like, 'why would you let your daughter dance like that, look at what they have on, they look like little...' oh my God, she better not break my baby down.

Pora: I mean, what can you expect when you are walking down the street at a community parade
twerking!

Shamrock: I *buck* in band sometimes

Jasmine: I didn't know there was a difference

Shamrock: bucking is different than twerking cause you don't have to move your butt. You are
dropping down more. And sometimes people don't feel like moving their butt and just do
the hand motions

Pora: Well, how do you think it made people feel to have to watch that?

Shamrock: It felt sad when my mom told me that she heard people spoke negatively about
dances on dance team because We Just Came to Dance! I expected the public to be more
supportive because we dancers are doing something with our lives instead of being out
doing drugs or other things. We are dedicated to dancing. With the majorette team, I
practiced for two to three hours a day for seven days a week. I practice with the color
guard in the band pretty much every day in season and I dance daily in school as a
member of the dance program. We do all kinds of dance: modern, tap, jazz, and some hip
hop.

Pora: (*shakes head. Muttering to herself*) hip hop in schools...

Shamrock: It's nothing bad. We usually dance to old school hip hop like Kris Kross, *Jump*,
Jump Jump, or a hip hop Christmas song or something like that. I wouldn't want to listen to any
song with cussing in it and then the principal walk in.

Pora: Yeah, I don't know how you could do well in school while listening to that kind of crap
music

Jasmine: Hmm. (*commenting/self-questioning*) The principal walks in

Shamrock: (*hearing and responding to Jasmine*) Cause they like to do special checks. Secret checks

Jasmine: Wow, I wonder if they do that in all the classes

Pora: (*silencing Jasmine's commentary*) Some classes require closer monitoring than others

Shamrock: I'm usually ahead in school. I complete all of my homework and schoolwork in class.

Pora: Hmmm. Well you seem like a nice enough young lady. Why do you dance to this hip hop music?

Shamrock: Its fun! It puts me in a better spirit and makes me happy. I dance with my friends... with my brother. I dance to aggravate my mom or my boyfriend. One time when my boyfriend was on the phone, my brother and I were doing the silent dance challenge and he was getting so aggravated! One time when my mom was cooking and I started twerking on her to aggravate her and she started twerking back on me.

Pora: I knew it! The mom (*looks at the observation glass*)! That's where they all get it from

Stargazer: (*yells out from the interrogation room*). No they don't. I don't even like music. Mm mmm.

Shamrock: I was at home... with my *momma*... and we were just joking around! Like I said, there's a time and a place! I agree that you shouldn't twerk at school, or around teachers, or around older people. Dances like the *shoot* and *Whoa* are okay because they are fun to do and they are still respectful.

Pora: Shoot? Whoa? That's exactly what I say when I look at the stuff. Shoot (*expressing frustration*)! Whoa (*as if telling a horse to slow down*). Ahh. I don't get it. Why don't you

listen to some nice music like they play on 95.1, or some good country music, like GA
FL line... Jason Aldean, um....

Shamrock: I do

Pora: (*in shock/disbelief*) What?

Shamrock: I turned my momma on to it too. I listen to 97.2. Me and my friends dance to the
music. I like some country music. I like...

Pora: (*puzzled*). I need a break. (*she exits*) (*Rose and Sunflower reenter*)

Sunflower and Rose: (*overlapping*) What did she say? What's up with that lady? Does she
know your grandmother?

Shamrock: I won't tripping. She just acting how all the older ladies do at church. What was
funny though is she started saying I should listen to music other than hip hop and she was
surprised when I said I listened to country music and 97.2

Rose: yeah, I like all kinds of music,

Sunflower: me too!

Shamrock: But she was saying something about getting caught dancing in public? I don't know
what she talking bout, I don't ever get caught

Sunflower: I know that's right! She sound like she doing too much!

Rose, Sunflower, and Shamrock: (*they all laugh, they make up a song and dance about still
dancing.*) We still dancing, we still dancing, we dance in the car,

Rose: we break it down in the car

Sunflower: we stay lit in the car

Rose, Sunflower, and Shamrock: We still dancing, we still dancing

Sunflower: We dance in the grocery store

Rose: we dance all through Wal-Mart,

Shamrock: We dance in Family Dolla

Daisy: yeah, an old man *caught* her dancing in Family Dolla yesterday, and she was like Ooop, that old man saw me! For the most part, I don't even recall them having music when she's dancing, it's just the point that she is doing something crazy, I think it's more for comical entertainment piece to see if I'm gon laugh.

Rose, Sunflower, and Shamrock: We still dancing we still dancing

Shamrock: we dance in the restaurant

Sunflower: We dance at the house,

Rose: we dance in the street

Sunflower: We dance online

Shamrock: we dance on the snap

Sunflower: we dance on the gram

Rose: we dance on the book

Shamrock: we do a dub smash

Rose, Sunflower, and Shamrock: We still dancing, we still dancing

Sunflower: We dance at a wedding

Rose: We dance at church

Shamrock: While the preacher's preaching...

(Everybody stops)

Stargazer: *(to herself)* Thank the Lord for momentary peace.

Sunflower/ Rose: (overlap)What!

Stargazer: If only for a moment

Shamrock: Well, we was sitting down and the preacher started preaching, and I was tryna aggravate my mom, cause I always aggravate my mom. And the preacher started hitting a rhythm... he always hit a rhythm

Daisy: You know I think she notices everybody in the church. Well normally, we sit by a brother who always, he's very vocal. And its funny cause whenever he starts saying yeah, or amen, or something, you can actually kind of count it, and we would normally sit there and count and see how quick they come. I know that sounds bad (laughing), but that's what we do. She's laughing cause she know we do it, and it's like okay, it's about time to go home now, cause he's saying yeah, yeah, and the more frequent he gets, the quicker we go home. A new lady sat in our area today, and she was working along with him (*Shamrock giggles*), so we had a good time that day... other than her harassing me. I hadn't had any pain meds so I was just feeling some type of way that morning, but um,

Shamrock: All I wanted was to hold her hand, all she had to do was to give me her hand. (*Daisy laughs*)

Jasmine: Your mom or the other lady

Shamrock: Her (*indicates she is referring to her mom in the observation booth*)

Daisy: (*overlapping*) Me. I didn't wanna hold her hand. I didn't wanna hold her hand. But umm, yeah, she be dancing at church, in church too.

(*Lotus and Daisy laugh*)

Jasmine: Why were you trying to hold your mom's hand

Shamrock: I was trying to aggravate her

Daisy: I just wasn't feeling well that day, and she is always doing something to try and make me laugh

Shamrock: And my mission was accomplished

Jasmine: *(to the girls)* Ladies, this seems like a good time for a restroom and water break. I will just play this video here until Pora is ready to resume.

(A movie begins and immediately captures Stargazer's attention. A message flashes on the screen to the parents that says LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU OBSERVE)

Stargazer: What *(movie resumes)* Oh. Okay

(The girls use Shamrock's phone to play music and begin making up a dance, which involves jumping, twirling, doing splits, bucking, twerking, etc.)

Stargazer: *(yells out)*. Turn it down! Oh, they can't hear me. All I can observe is constant movement in front of my movie. It's like on school breaks, I can take it the first couple of days, but by day three, my nerves are shot! All that jumping, movement, and singing are bad for my nerves after a long day of work.

(Pora reenters the room and everyone is immediately still and silent when they see the doorknob turn.)

Pora: Okay. I am ready to resume now. I had to regroup! I will speak to this young lady next *(indicating to Sunflower)*.

Sunflower: *(Sunflower does the No Mentions Dance Challenge and then freestyles.)*

Pora: Hello, and you are Sunflower, in the 8th grade, is that right.

Sunflower: yes

Pora: So, you dance hip hop I see.

Sunflower: I started with ballet at 5 and I did hip hop and I do cheer, so I incorporate each one into my dance style.

Pora: I'm here to investigate an incident of twerking

Sunflower: an incident of twerking... what are you talking about?

Pora: I will ask the questions here. Were you dancing in class?

Sunflower: Oh, the teacher let us listen to dance to music on our headphones, and I didn't even realize I had started dancing! And then I got in trouble!

Pora: Well good. And how did you feel about yourself when that happened?

Sunflower: I felt embarrassed when the teacher said, "stop it, we are in class"

Pora: Do you really think dancing should be allowed during learning time?

Sunflower: Teachers should accept dancing in class as long as the student is doing her work

Pora: You don't see your dancing as a distraction to other students.

Sunflower: No

Pora: Is this the first time you were reprimanded for dancing in class

Sunflower: No. The first time was in the third or fourth grade. And I feel that was just discrimination because there was a white girl doing the exact same dance as me with the exact same moves and the teacher didn't say anything to her. It seems like dance was okay in Kindergarten through second, but around third or fourth grade, their attitudes changed.

Pora: Well how do you think the teacher feels when it looks like you are not taking the class seriously?

Sunflower: I think in those instances teachers are doing too much getting mad about little things

Pora: well actually, the incident I was talking about was

Sunflower: (laughs), oh, the class was dancing and the teacher came out and told everyone to sit down. Well, we really didn't have no business doing this but she had walked out of class and we went on the Smart Board and went to You Rube Played *Super Fly*, by Bruno

Mars. Everybody got out they seat and started dancing when she came back in, the room she didn't say nothin but she eventually told us to sit down

Pora: I would love to know the name of that teacher. Each one of you standing should have been sent to in-school suspension at the least. So, in school, you dance

Sunflower: during transition, in lunch, lots of places

Pora: What I was actually going to say is quite disturbing, I heard that you and your cheer squad danced in front of the whole entire school, and at one point you all found it necessary to pop your butts!

Sunflower: We had fun with it! It was for winter wonderland. Everybody had a fun time. The crowd was engaged.

Pora: Yeah, I'm sure those little boys were ecstatic to see you throw it at em. And what, pray tell, were the reactions of the teachers

Sunflower: Some of the teachers were like oohh, they know they shouldn't be doing that. Other teachers were like that's neat, I like that. The crowd was yelling

Pora: Now I'm concerned about the teachers at your school! But that is my point, someone will always be there willing to take advantage of you, and let you make a fool of yourself.

What does your mom think about dancing like that... twerking, and popping your butt out.

Sunflower: I have fun when I'm twerking, so my mom doesn't mind, but she don't want me to do it in public cause it can put a bad label on yourself

Pora: (*raises eyebrows*) Well I am happy to hear she has advocated *some* limitations

Lotus: I just think it's a part of our culture. That its just associated with Black girls... their booty shake cause of the way we're built, it's just a part of our culture. You see that coming from the way Rastafarians or Jamaicans dance, they dance kind of sexually, okay. Umm,

as opposed to other cultures, particularly Caucasian Cultures, you can tell there's a difference in the way African Americans dance and the way Caucasians dance

Stargazer: Well I'm not a big fan of twerking, and a lot of gyrating in a sexual manner. I do think there are levels to twerking.

(ladies agree)

Lotus: Today, I feel is maybe a little bit more raunchier (they laugh), but even though when I was coming up, the raunchiness or the booty shaking was just coming out, but we didn't do it as raunchy as they did. We popped the booty but now they do a lot more grinding and everything with it. It more sexual and more seductive as far as appearances are concerned.

Daisy: I honestly don't care. I support whatever makes her happy.

Lotus: I don't see anything *wrong* with it. It's just the music of their generation.

Stargazer: She can get a lil carried away for my taste. I would like her to be more tame with it.

Lotus: Yeah, I'm constantly telling her to tone it down

Stargazer: Well I shouldn't even be in here cause I have encouraged her to do nothing against the, politics, the policy, the what she say?

Lotus and Daisy: *(in unison)* the politics of respectability

Pora: and the coach! My God, what kind of oversight do you have on that team?

Sunflower: Well one time the coach did not accept me and the other co-captain's choreography because she said it was not school appropriate.

Pora: I'm sure it wasn't! What were you all doing *this time*?

Sunflower: It was a hitch kick!

Pora: Well, I still say the coach made a prudent decision. Legs need to stay knee length and below, preferably stuck together. Well did you understand her position?

Sunflower: I felt bad cause she was discrediting my work! So after we were shut out, we told her to find someone else to make up the dance. So she hired choreographers, but they were respectful and asked us our opinion about certain dances, so we worked together. And after that, we started back making up dances again. We even made up one last week! But we used a choreographer for the last performance.

Pora: Mmm. I can only imagine how you feel or what you must be thinking when you dance.

Sunflower: I feel happy. Its fun! I like the social experience and it gives me a chance to express my creativity. I feel like I'm free falling and energetic when I dance. If I'm sad, I do sadder, slower dance moves, and if I'm angry I like to jump and stuff.

Pora: Well, I never locate a problem without thinking of a solution. I think you need to expand your, music vocabulary, shall I say, try music beyond hip hop.

Sunflower: I listen to a variety of music and I like a variety of dance. One time there was this girl at a party who was free styling, and she ended up in the middle of a dance circle, and I thought it looked really unique, but people said she was doing too much.

Pora: Dear God. PLEASE don't ever be the girl in the middle of a dance circle. We need a break. I need a moment to cleanse my Spirit. Excuse me for a moment (*exits*)

Lotus: I try to tell her that you will be judged by the way you carry yourself. That's exactly why I tell her to never be that girl dancing in the middle of a circle.

Stargazer: I know. I try to tell mine, people will look at you and associate certain things and behaviors. I don't want her characterized negatively because she is just being herself. Everybody doesn't understand that

Daisy: I do think twice about outsiders' opinions. That was ultimately one reason I didn't feel as bad taking her off the majorette team. She is not a stripper. But even if she was, that doesn't make you a bad person

(slight palpable silence amongst the mothers)

Lotus: A girl at a party who is just moving side to side may be labeled as a sweet girl, kind of shy/ But a girl in the middle of the floor twerking, dropping it low will give a different impression. It's a double standard- a guy doesn't carry this burden for his dance and may be viewed as entertaining. They don't assume the guy is fast or is having issues

(Rose, and Shamrock return)

Sunflower: *(Sunflower starts doing a dance from a dance challenge. Shamrock joins in and Rose quickly learns it and joins in as well. Jasmine also tries to learn the dance)* You can't stop this surf. You can't stop this wave. You can't stop this Whoa. I got sauce for days.

(Pora reenters and everyone becomes completely silent and still again.)

Pora: Well, time is certainly moving at a snail's pace. And you, young lady, you will be my final interview. Please give us leave *(to Sunflower, and Shamrock)*

Rose: *(Rose performs her dance routine to Lil Mama's My Lip Gloss is Poppin)*

Pora: Hello, Rose? That's interesting, everyone else has a flower name.

Rose: yes

Pora: Why is that.

Rose: (*kind of fidgety and starting to move around*). Umm, I don't know. I think because we are beautiful, and unique, and we each have a special gift for people to appreciate, that comes from God?

Pora: Okay. Do you know why I'm here?

Rose: No

Pora: I'm here to investigate an incident of twerking

Rose: Oh.

Pora: You were twerking in school?

Rose: No, not in school. Cause my mommy says, "I don't like when you do that kind of dancing if you're gonna be twerking".

Pora: Well good. Someone has some good sense.

Stargazer: I mean have fun, but I don't think it's necessary to twerk and pop it.

Rose: I can dance like that on trips or out of town

Stargazer: Cause nobody know us there. (*laughs*)

Pora: (*raises eyebrows*) Well

Rose: Once my mommy kept telling me to stop dancing in the living room, but her friend was there and she said it was okay, so my mama said it was fine (*smiles proudly*)

Pora: What a friend. Well I hope you know about the dangers of presenting yourself in a particular manner

Rose: Yeah, I use a lot of hip when I pose and when I'm walking... a lot when I'm dancing. My sister thinks I'm tryna make my butt move and she says it doesn't need to be moving too much cause people in public may think I'm weird (*she starts singing and dancing*)

Pora: Well that's a smart sister. Is she older?

Rose: Yeah. Dancing in public would embarrass my mom and family.

Stargazer: It's okay if its nice and respectable. My thing is, if you can't do it in church, I don't
wanna see you do it in public

Pora: Well how do you think the teacher feels when it looks like you are not taking class
seriously?

Rose: (*she looks down, seemingly not paying attention, she is humming and kicking her legs*)

Stargazer: Movement helps Rose learn and study. When she didn't move one time, when I
made her be still and focus in class, her grades were not as good. The more I think about
it, I think when she is studying and doing stuff, a lot of time she is moving and dancing to
help her memorize, stuff. And so, I don't know, she is a kinesthetic kind of learner, and I
think that may be helps her as opposed to sitting still. And I remember once, um, I don't
know what grade she was in, maybe the second grade. One week, all week the teacher
was like Rose was moving around or something and she had good grades and the second
week she wasn't moving around and it was a drop in her grades and she said "mama, I
can't do both. I can't sit still and"... so she kind of noticed on her own that that made a
difference, that it was hard... like I can work on one thing or the other, but not at the
same time, so.

Pora: well actually, the incident I was talking about was

Rose: One time, I was planning to practice singing a song for church and I just started dancing
and spinning and everything. I don't know what happened.

Pora: No...

Rose: (*interjects again*) Oh yeah, my mom was putting up Christmas lights and I was dancing,
and a big shadow came and I got in trouble cause I was doing too many cartwheels

(Daisy and Lotus glance at Stargazer)

Stargazer: No. We were putting up Christmas lights outside and we have a huge flood light and we have the laser lights that go up in Christmas over the house, so she stood in front of the light to cast a shadow in front of the entire house, and she proceeded to dance and sing to her own lil tune. So I'm sure our neighbors enjoyed that brief show.

Daisy: What kind of dances were she doing?

Stargazer: Aah, I didn't know the name of it. Just looks like the same stuff she's always doing. Like the dance that the kids are doing, like that backpack kid dance, I don't know, and a whole bunch of other stuff. Sooo, she was just looking at the shadow and had realized, look what I just did. I was like Oh My God, like boo. My exact words were this aint that neighborhood! Stop it. *(laughs)*, and so, I don't know, I'm not a big music person, and um, so its hard sometimes for me to relate to all that jumping around, b-bopping and carrying around

(moms all laugh)

Pora: Hmmm. So young lady, let me ask you, what kind of *mood* are you in when you are dancing?

Rose: I feel like in that mood where you think like you're in a competition, and like okay, I'm in a competition, I gotta win so...

Pora: A competition? With who

Rose: I guess with imaginary teams, cause I feel like I'm in a competition.

Pora: Well, and just what are you thinking about?

Rose: Ummm, thinking about, like I said that thing a competition. And like I already said, but you gotta win you gotta win (pounds fist for emphasis). So I'll be like put on this certain outfit to pretend like I'm in a competition

Pora: Oh, so you're dressing like...

Jasmine: Sounds like dress up

Pora: (*grits teeth and looks at Jasmine*). Excuse me, I believe you have been doing a fine job.

(*She stares at Jasmine as if demanding that she remain quiet*). (*more to herself*) These girls try to dress up like these hoochies and THOTS they seem to find on the internet somewhere. But all this dress up and music just lends itself to an angry culture

Rose: Mmm, like if, let's say if my sister just got mad at me cause I did something, or I'm being mean to her just playing with music and dance. But since our Luxe is only playing one music, she knows cause our one... well there's a thing that she hears when I play music. So sometimes she gets mad at me for it. She's like (*in nagging voice*) "turn it down, turn it down" or she like plays her song. And I'm like, you know I was playing music. You know that right? So like, this morning, I was listening to my song, cause I was playing my Luxe stuff to do something to play songs. And she heard it cause I went in her room and my music was still playing and I heard it in her room. And then she was playing music too. I was like, can you cut it off, I wanted to listen to my music and dance. Annnd, my mom kind of gets mad at me, because when I'm dancing, she's like "What's all that thumping noise?" And I say, that's my music, she say, "Stop dancing or stop stomping all..." (*slows pacing, as she returns from mother/powerful voice to her own voice*) all the time sooooo

Pora: And young lady, this is the very reason we are here. You have sound guidance at home,
and yet you want to do this dance from the streets that

Rose: (*interjects*). I get my love of dance and music from my dad, and his mom, my grandma,
my dance teacher, my sister, lots of people

Pora: But I thought your sister was wise enough to

Rose: We still make up dances together. Its fun! We were learning the slow motion challenge the
other day (*Rose dances and animates the slow-motion challenge*)

Stargazer: And I don't have a problem with that... just not in front of the tv. when I was little I
used to paint and draw and do whatever else, my mom was always like oh no, you're
gonna make a mess, and so I feel like sometimes I'm still a frustrated artist, because I
didn't get to do that. And so with them, I go out my way to make sure that they have art
room, they have art supplies, they can get dirty in that one room and do what they need to
do. I guess what I'm starting to realize is that her dancing is just as much a outlet as her
art. Whereas I may have been putting it down on paper, she is expressing herself through
dance or whatever. Matter of fact, when she had to learn her math facts, I found a song
and kept playing it over and over so she would learn them and, start memorizing them. It
seems to have helped.

Lotus: Well, I've corrected Sunflower for twerking. It wasn't so much as correcting her, but
maybe just telling her to tone it down a little. Cause I don't want her to feel like, okay,
umm, its not cool to do this dance even though even in her generation people are doing it.

Daisy: Well I really admire the way she dances.

Lotus: Oh yeah, I am amazed by her dance. I admire her mobility and her ability.

Daisy: Yeah, me too. Cause I can't move like I used to with this illness.

Stargazer: I do admire her abilities. And I have no twerk muscles.

(ladies agree)

Pora: *(appears to be getting a little tired)* So, young lady. I'm thinking it may be the music you are listening to.

Rose: Oh, I listen to a lot of music. This one song by Winge, isn't real hip hop, but I like it.

(She searches for the song on her device and starts playing the song, and dancing to it).

And Shoe Game by Lil Mama. Alexa play.... Alexa, play, *(Alexa says: Here is a station you might like, Top Pop on Amazon Music)* Alexa, play what you gonna get for

Christmas by Dj D Ray. Play what you gon get her for Christmas by DJ City *(Alexa says: I can't find what you gonna get her for Christmas by DJ city)* I'm gon play something

else. Alexa, play, *(goes through different songs)*. Alexa, play Galloway girl by Ed

Sheeran. *(Alexa says: Galway Girl by Ed Sheeran, starting now on Amazon music)* *(Rose begins to sing loudly with the music... music plays loudly. She sings the song to the very end, with feeling)*

Pora: No. I didn't mean... I think it's a good time for a break. A short beak. *(she exits)*

(Jasmine summons Sunflower, and Shamrock to re-enter)

Sunflower and Shamrock: What did she ask you?

Rose: She was like, so *tell me about this dance you do*, and I just started talking all about my dance and then she said hip hop and then she said twerking. Now that I think about it, she might have heard about the time I was dancing on the table at school

Sunflower and Shamrock: What!

Rose: I didn't think about it, cause it was Pre-K

Sunflower: what grade are you in now?

Rose: 3rd

Stargazer: Yes, that girl was in the cafeteria, dancing on the table! And I asked her why did you do that, cause I do NOT send her to school for things like that, and she said, so they could see me!

(Pora reenters gathers the girls together)

Pora: Ladies, thank you for your time. Now that I've heard from you all, I would like to share my recommendations with you: One. There should be no dancing in school,

Rose: Yes mam

Pora: What so ever

(Sunflower and Shamrock look at each other)

Rose: Yes mam

Rose and Shamrock: *(overlapping)* But what about my cheer/color guard.

Pora: you popping your butt on the cheer squad and all the bucking yall seem to do on the color guard, makes you look like young strippers in training. I don't know why your mothers even let you participate *(looks at the observation window)*

Daisy: No mam. Let me outta here. *(Stargazer and Lotus calm her down)* No, that's the same kind of stuff I would hear when the girls would do the parades. Even if their shorts were short, they were wearing thick tights. Heck, her team wanted her to buck harder!

(When Pora looks down to read the next statement Shamrock throws Sunflower a quick Whoa and she catches it and does it. They both almost immediately return to straight faces. Rose can't help but to try and hide her amusement, but takes a cue and stares straight ahead)

Pora: Also, no dancing in public!

Sunflower, Rose, and Shamrock: yes mam. (*when she looks down, Sunflower makes a face and Shamrock does a quick challenge*)

Lotus: Oh Lord, she just did that face from that lil dance challenge

Daisy: I was just about to say. Shamrock just did that piece I know I have seen her practicing in that lil dance challenge she and her lil friend been practicing.

Lotus: Yep

Daisy: These girls are something else

(Pora looks at Shamrock who is looking cool as a cucumber as is holding herself so still in such a nonchalant way that she appears practically incapable of moving. Pora then turns her gaze to Rose, who is fidgeting around and then abruptly stops)

Rose: Oh sorry. (*Rose turns towards the observation window as if to apologize to her mother*)

Pora: (*looks at Sunflower who isn't saying anything, but appears to be becoming agitated*). Is there something you would like to say?

Sunflower: Me?

Pora: Yes you, you look bothered.

Sunflower: I mean, respectfully, this just seems like doing too much. I mean, I don't even know why we are here.... Why we are being treated like we have done something wrong. We all dance tastefully

Shamrock: I don't think we should treat anybody like that, because if they put a lot of work into doing that, they should be appreciated for all the hard work. And it's fun!

Sunflower & Rose: Yeah, it's fun.

Sunflower: What I'm trying to figure out is why we are in here getting interrogated about dance!

Shamrock: I know, I wake up dancing

Rose: me too!

Shamrock: That's what gets me ready for school! My friend calls me and we introduce each other to new music and dances or just vibe to the music while we get dressed. And I make good grades.

Sunflower: Yeah, I make up dances all the time with my friend and put them on the gram, or snap,

Shamrock: or Facebook, me too

Rose: well I'm always learning the dances off the internet

Sunflower: yeah, this is doing too much, cause she keep asking about twerking, and that's not the only dance I do

Shamrock and Rose: *(both overlapping)* me neither

Shamrock: I do contemporary, modern, ballet, tap, majorette

Rose: I do ballet, praise

Sunflower: I do praise, ballet, contemporary

Shamrock: And that's how I can switch up my dance styles so much

(Girls agree)

Rose: if my daddy don't care I don't know why she does *(sucks thumb)*

Sunflower: I know, my momma taught me

Sunflower and Shamrock: when and when not to twerk

Rose: yeah, my mama definitely doesn't like it when I twerk

Pora: Well thanks but no thanks for sharing. I see now why kids are doing so poorly these days.

You all need to learn to be quiet and listen and not just talk. Now as I said before, this is truly all for your own good, and the well-being of our entire race. We put these rules in

place to demand equal housing, equal citizenry, equal treatment in the courthouse, equal travel rights, equal community resources for our neighborhoods. The rules were put in place to stop lynchings; to stop us from being hunted and killed! When you show up looking like who done it and why, you erode our progress in a swipe! How can we expect people to treat us with respect when we are not showing up in a respectful manner? When we show up twisting and twerking with skirts and shorts up to your thighs, and we walk around town with our bonnets on our heads, and we are laughing all loud and popping gum? How can you expect teachers to see how brilliant you are and treat you like the descendants of our ancestors who started their own university in Lynchburg, VA? I know that you all do not consider hard work and discipline acts of love, but they are. Not only loving yourselves, but loving your whole race, because we all will be judged by what each of us does. Now these tenets were established between 1900 and 1920 and are still needed today. However, I have, as I have heard the young people say, remixed them a bit just for you. I have developed a motto for you all to follow, after I have read it, please repeat after me:

I will be excellent in my work. I will not twerk. My duties, I will never shirk. I will hold my head up high, and never lurk. When I see my people acting bad, I will not laugh, I won't even smirk.

Now, repeat after me.

(The girls start to look at each other)

Pora (cont.): Please know that I have locked all the doors and made an agreement with the school systems. Until you take these oaths of acculturation and assimilation. We will not

allow you to leave. *(Parents start to bang on windows, the girls look stunned)*. Now. I will really take a break. *(she exits)*

Fade to Black.

Act II.

Sunflower, Shamrock and Rose are seen teaching Jasmine the Whoa and some dance challenges.

(When Pora reenters, the Jasmine and Rose continue to dance. Only Sunflower and Shamrock stop dancing in time to prevent them from being caught. Both Jasmine and Rose are seen still dancing)

Pora: *(Pora scolds Jasmine as she catches her learning a dance)* No Mam! You all get your little hind parts glued to those seats right now. Jasmine! I cannot believe you. *(Jasmine takes it in)*. You have taken this youth advocate thing too far! Now I tried to bring you with me to train you in the right way, but I see you still can't get it together. You doing that same stuff I have to tell you about over and over

Jasmine: Mama, please!

(Everyone looks at each other somewhat shock. And then begin to figuratively eat the popcorn)

Pora: *(through gritted teeth)* Let me speak to you outside *(they begin to exit)*

Jasmine: *(walks stealthily out the door behind Pora with her head down)* Yes Mam

Hallway in front of the door.

Pora: What do you think you are doing? Are you trying to embarrass me through and through and undermine my professionalism and authority?

Jasmine: no mam

Pora: I brought you here as a professional to *try* and model what a *respectable* young lady looks and acts like! And I find you outside tryna drop it like it's hot. I bring you out here to

model brains and stewardship and you tryna model Black Chyna and Meg The Stallion!

And you wanna sit here and encourage them to have their skirts up to here

Jasmine: but nobody is dressed like that

Pora: And you want em to go out the house writhing around and shaking this and kicking that.

Jasmine: well, but it matters what the

Pora: This is life and death, and always has been for us. Do you understand how many of our ancestors were lynched, kidnapped, and maimed with no recourse for all sorts of random and minor reasons. We may not be hanging from trees like strange fruit, but we are still under the same weaponry. Why do you think these kids are being kicked out of schools and set on the street faster than you can whistle dixy? Do you understand the unwarranted *reputation* and the history of silenced rape we have had to overcome? The only way we can be safe in this racist world is to not give them a *reason* to look our way and target us. We've got to keep our head down and do the work without making a big show of our presence. But you wanna co-sign these little girls shaking their hind parts in grown mens' and White peoples' faces and then have the nerve to complain about the outcome. *And* you think that's cute? Aint nobody gone ever respect them acting like that, and aint nobody respectable gon respect you!

Jasmine: It's not dirty ma! It's not dirty! They are not dirty because they dance! This is not Dirty Dancing... and nobody puts baby in a corner. I am not dirty because I dance mom! (*Pora is somewhat shocked at this push back*). You had me thinking they were gon be pregnant, drinking, disrespectful, failing, disruptive, and none of it is true for them. They just like to dance! (beat) Listen ma. I'm sorry. I know that people in your generation went through so much racial danger, that resulted in real deaths and real disparities and real

inequities. And I know that had to affect how you moved in the world. And I'm sorry for not being more respectful towards your position and your experience. I can't imagine what it was like to have really be concerned about life and death everyday like that.

Pora: I'm just trying to keep yall safe... the way I know how.

Jasmine: I know mama. And I appreciate that. Its just who they are. I will stay focused on them because they are all kids. They are all *kids* mama. They are not bad or immoral people because they have dance talent and dance to hip hop music.

Pora: Woo but some of those lyrics.

Jasmine: Mama you know you like that Bruno Mars song.

Pora: (*looks around*) Don't. It's just that ... it has an old skool feel to it.

Jasmine: Mama, this is one of the ways our children are treated like adults.

Pora: I knew you were about to go to that adultification. You and these studies. Listen, I get that we have to work harder. That's why I still park in handicap. Black people are born two steps behind.

Jasmine: Yeah, people perceive them to know more about sex than their White peers, and so they are treated as more adult-like in that regard. So they are less protected against sexualization. And dance is one of the ways they are adultified. But they are *kids*, trained in jazz, and ballet, and modern, and tap. They praise dance! They just love to dance.

Pora: I know, that was kind of surprising.

Jasmine: And so you can imagine how they are treated or regarded when it pops up in school. What would happen if schools embraced this as a literacy – a communication.

Pora: Now I don't know...

Jasmine: I mean, if they at least didn't have to get punished, chastised, or berated if it shows up.

There are endless pedagogical ways it can be embraced. It's a gift. It doesn't take from their wonderment.

Pora: But you know hip hop

Jasmine: The thing about that mom, is even when hip hop dance is mentioned in a respectful way, breakdancing gets all the credit. This masculinized form of dance is what Fab 5 Freddy threw out there as the dance to represent the culture. True it was being done. But these dances these girls do, carry the culture. They are hip hop. And they say their own thing aside from the music when they dance. They represent time, relationship, ancestry, culture. When you see Black girls dancing, imagine Rose dancing with her grandma's shades on and her grandma saying, go on, go on. Imagine that Sunflower was able to capture dances in video with her friend before she passed away. Imagine Shamrock and her mom and brother dancing in the kitchen to maintain joy in the house. These are some of the things they talked to me about as they showed me dances or shared their dance experiences. There is so much more to imagine than what we have assumed we should think about when we see them dance.

Pora: Okay, Okay. I brought you here... Wait. Let's go back in. I have something to say to everybody.

Jasmine: Are we okay?

Pora: Yes. *(they hug)* Let's go back in. *(they reenter the room)*. Moms, everyone, thank you for coming to this Queens in Training event. Moms you really have done a phenomenal job with your girls. I had lower expectations, but I am indeed open to new thought. *(to the girls)* I thank you all for opening my eyes to this dance, literacy *(looks at Jasmine)*, as my

educator daughter has described your constant dancing. These eyes may be squinting, but they are opening. I came here to help you fix your crown and live a little higher, and you have adjusted mine. Thank you. I really really want to hear you. I would like for each of you to tell me, again, perhaps: what is it you wish people like me knew about your love of dance, and I will listen.

Rose: Well I don't dance in school... cause I know I'm gonna get in trouble... Cause my teacher is picky... about stuff

Pora: Well, I was meaning more of I will listen to what you want to say about why you dance, or what you want people to know

Rose: Oh, when I'm like in my favorite song, or I'm in the groove, and I'm like, yeah, let's go, we gotta get this party started, I cannot stop dancing. Unless, I'm out of breath and about to fall out, I cannot stop dancing.

Sunflower: Yeah, like, when I'm with my friends, and like the good music comes on, which is alllll day. Um, me and my friends, we just dance for fun after school. We dance for long periods of time. Like, when I hear Lil baby, and NBA Youngboy, and like Realest in it. Okay, so those are my favorite songs, and when they came on I started dancing to them. Like, when those songs come, I'm like Oh, that's my song, it kind of gets me hype and stuff, I just can't sit down. Like those songs made me happy and stuff.

Shamrock: I would agree with that. Like I said, me and my friend wake up dancing. We are probably gonna record a challenge when I go over to her house. And yesterday we went to a party and we made up a dance together and we gon record that too. But like I said, when I'm performing, I don't listen to what people say. I'm focused on what I got to do. If they don't like it, they don't have to come out and support. And when I listen to my

pop music....If I'm gonna listen to that song I'm gonna listen to it, plus I don't care what people think. If I hear a good song, I think it would put me in a better spirit. Dances like the *shoot*, and *Whoa* and all that Ms. Jasmine was talking about earlier, I think that stuff is respectful cause its fun to do

Jasmine: Sounds like a lot of joy! Thank you all for coming, and for teaching me the dances, and for sharing your art with us. We have pizza waiting for everyone in the lobby.

Daisy: Okay! Cause I was getting hungry

Lotus: I mean! That was eye opening though

Stargazer; It really was. I think I feel a little bit better knowing that I'm not alone in living with someone who dances and moves all the time

Lotus and Daisy: (*agree*) no you're not

(*credits roll*)

Shamrock, Rose and Sunflower exit the room and give each other and their mothers hugs. They begin dancing down the hall as they go to the lobby for pizza

THE END

Academic Report

The purpose of this study was to understand how feminine hip hop dance functions as literacy in the daily lives of three school-aged Black Girls, and how they encounter, experience, and internalize the politics of respectability (Higginbotham, 1993) in regard to their feminine hip hop dance performance. These understandings will help to inform K-12 teachers about feminine hip hop dance as a multimodal literacy (Katz, 2008) that students may bring to the classroom. Hip Hop Feminist Theory asks that we honor the lives, experiences, practices, and viewpoints of

women and girls that are members of hip hop culture with research and interrogation (Richardson, 2013). It also encourages push back on the mandates of the politics of respectability, which is grounded in patriarchy. These understandings might extend research and pedagogies that will invite inclusivity and cultural recognition of *feminine* hip hop dance as a foundational component of hip hop culture; important for the undergirding of hip hop education programs in schools, such as Hip Hop Based Education, and the culture of hip hop at large. Finally, these understandings might help to inform apriori assumptions about the intentions of hip hop feminine dancers and their contexts of the dances; thereby pushing back on underlying assumptions that are in alignment with theories of adultification and provoke school disciplines and corrections. The embedded assumptions of the politics of respectability, as it intersects with the theory of adultification, is that young girls invite or provoke sexual attention when they perform and dress in a manner consistent with hip hop feminine dance; which is viewed as engaging in woman-like, and jezebel-like behavior (Gaunt,2015; 2018).

This section presents research findings of the inquiry into Shamrock's, Sunflower's, and Rose's lives of dance, with special focus on hip hop dance. The politics of respectability, from its inception, has always targeted the mother (Higginbotham, 1993). Therefore, Daisy's, Lotus's, and Stargazer's (mother informant) perspectives about dance and their own negotiations with respectability politics are also presented. This chapter is organized by the four findings of the research. These overarching themes are then further sub-divided into categories. The first and second findings (themes) align with research question two's inquiry into the sociocultural aspects of the dance. Finding (theme) three provides insight into the first question regarding the participants' negotiations with the politics of respectability. In alignment with case study research, this order provides the context to understand the phenomenon (Black girls that dance

hip hop's encounters with the Politics of Respectability) from the perspective of the participants.

The four findings (themes) highlighted in this research are:

1. Dance happens throughout the ages: a case of three flowers.
2. Dance happens everywhere.
3. Hip hop feminine dance is a practice of literacy
4. Hip hop feminine dance is an agentive act of Black Girlhood joy, resistance, and respect.

The first finding, *Dance Happens Throughout the Ages: A Case of Three Flowers* provides context about the salience of dance in the lives of each case. This finding provides a window for the reader into each primary participant's normal dance behaviors, origins of dance in their lives, influences on their dance styles, their musical tastes, and their physicalized demeanors. This finding also includes participant informants' perceptions of their dance. These insights, as well as those in the other findings, came directly from participant interview responses, submitted data, and the researchers' observations.

The section that follows reveals and explores the second finding: *Dance happens everywhere*. This finding is subcategorized into places where the dances happen: home, school-based functions, and the internet. Each of the three places are further dissected to reveal the way feminine hip hop dance literacy is exchanged and acquired in each environment. Dance at home is further divided by subcategories of: Parents, Uncles, and Grandmas and Dance, Siblings and Dance, and Friends and Dance. Dance at School is further divided by Extracurricular Activities and in school dance activities that happen in Lunchrooms, Classrooms, and Hallways. Dance and the internet is fortified by exploring the subcategories: Dance Challenges and Learning the Whoa

(a popular dance that is embedded in many of the dance challenges as well as many impromptu and choreographed youth dances).

The next section presents the third finding: *Hip Hop Feminine dance is a Practice of Literacy*. This finding is further interrogated by the following three subcategories: Dancing to Send a Message, At Home Dance Mediates a Switching of Leader/Follower and Teacher/Student Roles, and the Dialogic Nature of Dance. In this section, it is important to keep in mind literacy goes beyond the written text. Sociocultural literacies reveal those practices and Discourses (Gee, 2015) acculturated and learned outside of traditional classroom models.

The last section reveals the fourth finding: *Hip Hop Feminine dance is an Agentive Act of Black Girlhood Joy, Resistance, and Respect* in regard to and in negotiation with the politics of respectability. This section maps each case's agentive responses to the politics of respectability. Shamrock bucked patriarchy and the politics of respectability, Sunflower circumvented adults "doing too much", and Rose navigated respectability politics stemming from home that sought to tone her down. This section additionally identifies Spaces of Freedom that allowed each of the participants to enact their own dance ideologies. Throughout the findings, in alignment with performative writing and research, participant's own words are used. The findings section weaves in and out of participant experiences, presented as vignettes or dialogue taken directly from research data as they relate to each individual finding/theme.

This study yielded insight into the following research questions:

Overarching Questions

- How do African American girls in elementary, middle, and high school grades negotiate the politics of respectability in regard to their hip hop dance performance?
- How does hip hop feminine dance function as literacy in the lives of three school-aged Black girls?

Guiding Research Questions

- How do the participants disrupt ideas of patriarchy with their dance?
- How do the participants perform hip hop culture?
- How do these girls acquire and exchange the literacy in various socio-cultural contexts (cypher)?
- What spaces afford the expression of these dances free from the politics of respectability?

Finding 1 - Dance Happens Throughout the Ages: A Case of Three Flowers

Dance was a life-long practice for each of the three participants. Each embody the hip hop colloquialism: I'm not new to this, I'm true to this! This section traces the elements of dance present throughout each of their lives.

Shamrock

Shamrock is a 17 year old 11th grade High school student. Shamrock describes her dance style as inventive and creative freestyle: "I think of stuff off the top of my head and I just put it together". She does all of the current popular dances "sometimes.. [but] not much". She is a current member of the "color guard... with the flags" on her high school band, which follows the stylistic tradition of HBCU marching bands. She is also former majorette team dancer. She sometimes "add[s] majorette dances with hip hop to make it different". It only takes her "five minutes" to learn a new dance.

Shamrock doesn't remember a time in her life when she didn't know how to dance. She says, "I think it came naturally... I don't think I ever learned how to do it, I just do it". However, she shares that her first memories of dance are when she took ballet in Elementary school. Shamrock continues to take dance classes in high school, which requires some performances outside of traditional school hours. She describes her musical taste as diverse: "It's a lot. I like

rap, pop, R&B, and sometimes country”. She says that she dances “every day”. Daisy describes her dance style as follows:

to me she’s a really soft dancer. I mean with all the things she’s really done, I think she does modern a lot better or easier than other things. Um, it’s very pretty.... I think it’s pretty feminine and not so hard; hard and harsh like other things like when she was on the majorette dance team. That was a little rougher. I mean that was nice too. She did a good job then too, umm. There were a lot more moves ...a lot more acrobatic things with them doing a lot of kicks and splits, and she does that now, but more on a softer edge.

Daisy views Shamrock’s dancing as positive. While Daisy enjoys dancing as well, she expressed the inability to dance and move around as much as she used to because of a health condition. Conversely, she is comforted by Shamrock’s dance progression. She noted that Shamrock’s confidence in performance has evolved over the years:

It’s like, in the beginning, she started out shy, but she really likes to dance. But now that she’s older, and I guess she’s had more opportunities to dance, to be in front of crowds... I think she’s gotten past the shyness of it, and what people say about her. So now she more enjoys it, and it kind of comes out in the dance and in the performance.

Daisy and Shamrock were often in close proximity or co-participants in each other’s interviews. I initially encouraged a separate private space for each interview, but the palpable bond and comfort shared between the two prompted me to allow them to take the lead on the set-up of the interview. Sometimes Shamrock’s little brother was nearby, but he didn’t directly participate much during the interview. Shamrock’s younger brother often serves as a co-conspirator in her dance follies.

In the interviews, Shamrock presented herself in a very calm and even-keeled demeanor with such stillness in her body, that it would almost seem as if she could disappear. During Daisy's third interview, she even exclaimed about Shamrock, "I don't know why she is acting so shy". However, through observation of the videos of Shamrock dancing with her majorette and flags teams, and reading the survey where Shamrock self-described herself as doing a "silent dance challenge" with her brother to "aggravate her boyfriend", I felt that the behavioral presentation she shared with me in the interviews was a part of her disciplined self-control; her rouse. As I tried to find the words to convey this thought, Shamrock submitted a more salient description; she said she was "gangsta". The shared cultural understanding between Daisy, Shamrock, and I, of what she meant to convey by her use of the common hip hop vernacular, 'gangsta', caused us all to laugh. It was meant to signify that she is in control of, and agentive in her own desires; she presents herself as soft and feminine with a strong unshakable persona. As she says, "[she] does what [she] want[s] to do." The analytic memo and transcripts revealed that every time I arrived at Daisy's and Shamrock's home for an interview, Daisy would indicate Shamrock "was dancing right before you came in the door". These near second misses of live observation of dancing in the home were in sharp juxtaposition to the calm and collected young lady that appeared before me.

Sunflower

Sunflower is a thirteen-year-old eighth grade Middle school student. She is a cheer co-captain and an equestrian. Describing her style as "unique", she elaborates, "not a lot of people dance the way I do. A lot of people stick to one thing. I kind of like to go abroad and do others". When probing to find out if Sunflower viewed good dancing as essentialist (an inborn natural trait of Black girls or Women) she shared her belief that "80 [percent of the Black people in her

school had] no rhythm, and 20 percent are really good”. She remembers first learning to dance at five years old, when she took “ballet, [then] started to everything else”. She elaborates: “I did hip hop, then I started with cheer.” Her musical dance preferences include: “a variety, but I like hip hop and some contemporary”. She describes herself as dancing “every day”, or “almost every day”. She dances “in the car, in the hallways in school, at parties, in dance circles [cyphers] at lunch, and in dance circles [cyphers] at parties. Sunflower often co-choreographs dance routines for her cheer squad. Sunflower has cheer practice twice a week after school and performs at games twice a week. She shared that hip hop is the music she likes to dance to most.

Sunflower has a younger brother. Both she and her mother, Lotus, agree that her mother influenced her love of dance. When asked to describe Sunflower’s dance style, Lotus describes her dance style along with her general social and academic disposition. She said Lotus is

free spirited. [She] knows all the latest dance moves [and] feels comfortable dancing.

[She] will dance any time you know, music, or a song comes on that she likes. [She is] generally happy, friendly, [and] outgoing. [She] makes all As, things like that”.

Lotus notes the origin of Sunflower’s dance may have come from her. Lotus proudly shared her views about Sunflower’s dance evolution:

I also think [about] when she first started dancing, as far as ballet is concerned, and just looking at how she has evolved from being not very comfortable to just being comfortable; you know, period. In front of others and just by herself, cause she’ll just dance by herself when she thinks no one is looking or when she doesn’t notice someone is in the room. Umm, she’ll just dance in the car, and one time we were driving and a song came on and she just broke out dancing and the people in the car next to us were just smiling, you know (you can hear the smile in her voice in the interview recording).

Lotus is ambivalent about her cultural understanding of the new age hip hop dances and the need to protect oneself from the dangers of misinterpretation and negative judgment that may result from the performance of *particular* dances. Lotus shared:

I see nothing wrong with it, ummm, you know it's just the music of her generation. It's just like when I was growing up, Kool Moe Dee, Prince, that was the music of my generation. When it gets to the twerking part, I kind of try to explain to her that its okay to twerk but just maybe do it a lit bit tastefully I guess? If we see a White girl or Asian girl, especially an Asian girl twerking, we'll laugh. And if we see an African American girl do it, she's twerking, you may not find it as funny because they feel like that's to be expected of their culture, and then again the way she dances, they may think she is fast, things like that, because again, it's kind of looking more towards, or associated more with stripper or dancer type moves. Even though stripper type moves are not associated with one racial group, they typically will probably assume that it's associated with African American girl.

She does not have a problem knowing that her daughter is usually upstairs in her room making up dances that might ultimately be shared on social media.

In the interviews, Sunflower presented herself as a joyful, confident, and articulate young lady. She readily shared videos of her recorded dance and introduced and guided my learning of the dance, the Whoah. Sunflower's dance style was smooth and confident in her video. I realized that the prior year, I observed Sunflower's dance team and made a mental note of her exceptional accuracy and skill that stood out from most of the other cheerleaders.

Rose

Rose is an eight-year-old third grade Elementary school student. In addition to dance, she excels in soccer, basketball, and modeling. Rose describes her dance style as “coool, funny, like moving around a lot, spinning a lot, uh, doing, like, like different types of stuff.” When asked about how she first learned to dance, she shares:

Actually, I’ve went to a gymnastics and a dance class, but I soon grew out of that dance class, when my sister got out, I was, I spent like a few more years in there and I was like, I gotta get out (deep inhale/laugh) so, I got out that dance class, but I was in gymnastics too.

Rose describes a performance as her first dance memory:

we did a performance to Tutus and Tennis Shoes...um like when we did other performances, too on stage...like, we did that Christmas performance once, and, and Tutus and Tennis Shoes was like our big hit. We would do like a lot [of] performance[s].

She describes herself as dancing “24/7”. She asserts that hip hop music is what she likes to dance to most. She also listens to pop, country, and r&b, as evidenced by the songs she chose selected and/or danced to over the research period (see Appendix M).

Rose enjoys making up dances with her older sister but is also warned by her sister about which dances she should not do. Stargazer says the following to describe Rose as a dancer:

she’s a very good dancer. She dances all the time, from the time she wakes up, til the time she goes to bed. I’m watching tv and she’s dancing, across my tv, she is dancing in the car, she is dancing in the store, she just does not sit still and likes to dance. She gets it honestly and she’s pretty fluid with it, and I would say she’s pretty good at it ... I don’t know if there was ever a time where she didn’t know how to dance. I don’t think it was

that she learned to dance. Like I put her in ballet and tried to, um, let's do something constructive with this. But, umm, she's extremely athletic and I think that carries over into dance, and so she likes to watch stuff and mimic it. Like whatever it is. It could be liturgical, it can be hip hop, it can be her spinning around on her toes like a ballerina and her doing jumps across the living room, its just, whatever comes to her mind, at that moment.

Stargazer is not a huge fan of hip hop dance or music in general. Stargazer recognizes her discomfort with Rose dancing in physical indoor spaces they share together, though she does not want to stifle Rose's creative energy. Stargazer often feels that Rose needs to "tone it down" because she doesn't stifle herself when she is dancing.

Finding 2 - Dance Happens Everywhere

Question 2 asked, how Black girls in grade school acquire and exchange hip hop feminine dance literacy in various socio-cultural contexts (cypher)? Though scholarship asserts hip hop culture and dance are incubated at home (Joaquin, 2011; Glass, 2007), the findings in this research illuminate *how* the literacy is acquired and exchanged in various sociocultural contexts. The most profound aspect of this inquiry is that each case was found to be dancing far more than any of us (case, informants, researcher) expected! Dance was such an integral part of their being that it often went unnoticed, or unattended to as a remarkable action.

Each of the participants described the site of dance as dependent upon wherever they physically occupied space. The impetus for many impromptu performances were: hearing a favorite song, thinking of a song or beat, or interpreting audible sounds as a dance beat. Music serves as a trigger for impromptu dance amongst the cases, but hearing a *favorite* song, especially prompted an automatic combustion of dance amongst the participants.

Sunflower attempted to pinpoint a moment that she dances and clarified that the ‘moment’ is continuous. She shared that she is moved to dance when she is with friends, “when good music comes on... alllll day!” Rose describes how an ordinary chore provoked dancing, “I was in the sunroom and she was outside and we were cleaning and I was thinking of a song that I recently heard and I started dancing to it with a broom (laughing to herself). It was hilarious, I just started laughing.”

Shamrock says that her impromptu church movement is motivated by the rhythmic audible responses of the preacher and/or members of the congregation. She and Daisy described one of her impromptu performances to the preacher’s speaking in the following raw interview transcript:

Interviewer: Were they playing music or were you dancing to his speaking

Shamrock: speaking

Interviewer: (we all laugh) was he starting to hit a rhythm?

Shamrock: He always hit a rhythm

Daisy: You know I think she notices everybody in the church. Well normally, we sit by a brother who always, he’s very vocal. And its funny cause whenever he starts saying yeah, or amen, or something, you can actually kind of count it, and we would normally sit there and count and see how quick they come. I know that sounds bad (laughing), but that’s what we do. She’s laughing cause she know we do it, and it’s like okay, it’s about time to go home now, cause he’s saying yeah, yeah, and the more frequent he gets, the quicker we go home. A new lady sat in our area today, and she was working along with him (Shamrock giggles), so we

had a good time today... other than her harassing me. I hadn't had any pain meds so I was just feeling some type of way this morning, but um,

Shamrock: All I wanted was to hold her hand, all she had to do was to give me her hand. (Daisy laughing)

Interviewer: Your mom or the other lady

Shamrock: her

Daisy: (overlapping) Me. I didn't wanna hold her hand. I didn't wanna hold her hand. But umm, yeah, she be dancing at church, in church too.

Rose said that she dances,

if there is music playing, I'm like hey. My mom is like, you gotta sit down once in a while ..., cause like, if I'm in the store and they're playing my favorite song, of course I gotta dance to it. So I dance, and if we're in the roads, and I'm dancing, my mom is like kid [you] can't dance in the road you can get run over by a car cause my mom is just that kind of person. When I'm doing my modeling photo shoots and stuff I always start dancing, cause like, if we're at a park or in an open space.

Though it could not be completely contained, this theme is divided into three main categories of sociocultural context: dance at home, dance at school, and dance on the internet. These categories under the theme of dance happens everywhere reveal how hip hop feminine dance literacy is acquired and exchanged individually, and with family, friends, peers, and unknown persons over the internet.









Dance at home





The sociocultural context of dance for the participants was present in each of their homes. There, dance was mediated by interactions with self and others in person, over the phone, and via

the internet. Figure 2 illuminates the ways in which the literacy was acquired and exchanged in these contexts for the participants and reflects the further divisions of this category. The acquisition and exchange model shows the transference of dances taught and learned. When the dance is only learned, and not taught, it is represented as an acquisition.

Figure 2

Acquisition and Exchange of Dance at Home

		 Acquisition and Exchange	
		 Acquisition	
Role of person to the participant	Dance Acquisition and/or Exchange	Participant	Description of Acquisition/Exchange and Mediation tools
Father/step father		Sunflower, Rose	Family to person mediated by shared physical space
Mother		Shamrock, Rose	Student Participant teaches, learns from or with, or communicates by dances with mediated by shared physical space
Brother		Shamrock, Sunflower	Student Participant teaches, learns from or with, or communicates by dances with brother mediated by shared physical space
Sister		Rose	Student Participant teaches and learns dances from sister mediated by shared physical space
Uncle		Shamrock	Student Participant learns dances from uncles mediated by shared physical space
Television		Shamrock	Student Participant learns dances from Anonymous persons / Artists to by observing

			recorded performance mediated by television (videos, dance television shows)
Friend		Shamrock, Sunflower, Rose	Student Participant teaches and learns dances from friends mediated by shared physical space
Friend		Shamrock	Student Participant teaches and learns dances from friends mediated by cell phone video technology
Friend		Shamrock, Sunflower	Student Participant teach and learn dances from friends mediated by sharing and observing recorded performance mediated by social media (Facebook, Dubsmash, Instagram, SnapChat,)
Social Media		Shamrock, Sunflower, Rose	Student participants learn dances from various persons by observing recorded person mediated by social media (Dubsmash, You Tube, TikTok, Instagram, Snap Chat, etc.)

Parents, Uncles, & Grandmas and Dance

For each of the cases, home is a space of acquisition for hip hop feminine dance (Gee, 1989). However, just because they get it from home, don't necessarily mean they get from they mama! Juevenile's popular song, "She Get it from Her Mama" mirrors the colloquialism, "the apple don't fall far from the tree", which is an apt conclusion as it relates to both Sunflower and Shamrock. For each of the young girls in this study, home serves as the place where feminine hip hop dance is born and incubated. Each primary participant absorbed music and dance in the home at a young age. Though in one case, it was *not* influenced by the mother.

Sunflower credits her mom as influencing her love of dance, saying, "she used to love to dance, so we used to dance together". Lotus agreed, stating, "I think she gets her love for dance from me. Sometimes when a song comes on she breaks out in dance and I break out in dance and we just have fun

together.” Sunflower notes that it was out of these dance sessions that her mom sought spaces to extend her talent, “So my mom would just put on music and I would just dance to it, and she was like: Oh, you need to do dance classes”. Lotus shared that she is personally “kinda getting into this new rap music they play on the radio; especially if it has a good beat”. However, Lotus shared that Sunflower’s dance is also encouraged by her step-father: “Now, she does dance with her step-father as well... they kind of get in the kitchen and do some of the latest dance moves or whatever, and that’s basically it”.

Shamrock may not remember a time when she didn’t know how to dance, because as Daisy describes it, her dancing developed along with her walking: “[she] would dance to music that other family members would play, when she saw things on tv... probably [at the age of] about one or two. She would always dance and sing to lil stuff like Dora and Barney, and lil stuff like that, so, she would always... “. Shamrock shared that technology influenced her dance life at an early age: “I used to watch dancing shows”. Daisy affirmed the memory and clarified Shamrock’s young uncles were partially responsible for integrating hip hop in the home:

my brothers are younger than me, they are probably about ten years younger than me. And to be honest with you, at the time, they were growing up with her, you know, so a lot of times you’d hear a lot of that, and she’d dance...And of course she would see the music videos on tv and she would dance along with the people that she saw on tv.

Daisy shared she learned to dance by watching television as a child as well. As a youth, Daisy was immersed in hip hop culture, watching *Yo MTV Raps* and plastering posters of hip hop artists all over her bedroom wall. She notes that because of the limitation of Hip Hop television shows, she grew up with a diverse musical taste in music, and encourages her children to listen to a variety music as well. Shamrock noted a preference for listening to a variety of music as well, and actually credits herself as

inspiring her mother to listen to pop, country, and some rock music. Daisy and Shamrock debated who actually took the leadership role musically.

Rose credits her father, among many others as influencers of her love of dance:

My dad, cause my mom never approved, like my dad approves of me dancing, my mom just doesn't like me when I'm dancing. Uh, my dance teacher, my sister, of course, she's the one that helps me with a lot. She taught me how to pose for pictures and stuff. Um, a lot of people actually... did, so. Can't name them all. But like my grandma in South Carolina, she loves when I dance. One time I came out with my clothes backwards and I didn't know, she was like ooh, and I started dancing, she's like ooh go on go on and I had her shades on too, she's like ooh go on go on, so, yeah, a lot of people actually.

While Lotus and Daisy both expressed their love of dancing, and growing up enjoying hip hop music (amongst other music in pop culture), Stargazer maintains that she is not the root of Rose's dancing:

so I said some of the stuff she does, is certainly nothing that I taught her, (laughs), it's just stuff that may come, I don't want to say naturally to her, but is just instinctual....

Yeah, I think people would be like, oh my, what is she doing that's like, what's her mama doing at home. You know that type of thing because a lot of people figure she had to have gotten that from somewhere, but certainly I don't even have whatever muscle you need to have in your back to twerk, I don't have. And so, she did not get that from me.

Ummm, so I can't teach her how to do that. I don't even watch um, videos, and stuff like that.... I don't know, I'm not a big music person, and um, so its hard sometimes for me to relate to all that jumping around, b-bopping and carrying around

Further distancing herself from Rose's dance foundations, Stargazer credits her husband as the probable source of her daughters' love for music: "I think they get more of that from their dad... music and his love of music, than they get it from me. I didn't grow up dancing and twirling around. I got a feeling if I tried to my mama would tell me to sit down even now."

Siblings and Dance

One way that participants maintain dance as a constant in their homes, thereby extending their dance literacy, is by participating in planned and/or impromptu performances with their siblings, although there is a disparity of age differences between them. Shamrock is ten years older than her younger brother, Sunflower is nine years older than her younger brother, and Rose is four years younger than her older sister.

Daisy shares the following story of an impromptu concert reenactment to illustrate that constant, and spontaneous nature of dance performance between her kids at home:

especially, she's at home and we don't have a set thing to do... like for instance today, she's dancing or mimicking something. Matter of fact, right before you came in the door we were talking, we were mimicking concerts, and I think who did you, you said, umm, NBA Youngboy, it's like, here's him at his concert, so she had to get him [her little brother] involved, and she was like this is how he does at his concert... and she's like come on man, you gotta hype me up (kids giggle), so they're hyping each other up you know, so this is stuff they do all the time.

Lotus echoes the sentiment that dance among siblings is common in her home as well:

Every once in a while, in the evening times or whatever, we'll shut off the television and stuff. So, it's me her and my son, and we'll hook up the beats with the telephone and we'll just play music, and its loud in the house and we're all just dancing. And that's

exactly what happened because I think we were trying to clean the house and waiting for people to come over and playing and she just broke out in a dance and I broke out in a dance, and my son broke out in a dance.

Rose listed her sister as a major influencer of her love of dance. Her sister serves as a source of inspiration, “she’s the one that helps me with a lot”, and critique. Rose shares that she quickly picks up new dances that her sister teaches her. She elaborates that she learns new dances in

bout in a sss, like a minute cause I’m like, so if I’m doing like a new, my sister teaches me a dance, she teaches me the move, I’m like I already have that move in my head, I’m like yep, I got it.

She also cites siblings, among parents and the internet as dance acquisition sources:

Cause basically their older siblings or younger siblings tell them or they just look it up on the internet and they find stuff that’s like ooh that’s gonna be interesting, or their parents just might tell em. I don’t know.

While dance between siblings is common in Stargazer’s home, she maintains her disregard for the organized movement overall; especially when she was watching tv. Stargazer shared in her first interview:

I do not like... she and her sister both have a habit, the way our den is set up like the tv is the couch then it’s a big open space then there’s a fireplace and a tv and they like to use that space to parade around and dance when I’m trying to watch tv or when I just need two minutes in the afternoon to decompress. All of that extraneous gets on my last nerves after working all day. So a lot of times I’m just

like Ay ay, go upstairs with all that. Go in the guest house. You know, just remove that from my presence.

The commonality of these occurrences is confirmed in a subsequent interview from Stargazer: she danced all Thanksgiving break, during every Hallmark movie (with laugh in voice), during every Lifetime movie, every time they broke out in song she felt the need to break out and dance. Um, constantly, in front of the tv (laughs). And she told me that she was dancing upstairs in her room several days and I was like ‘what’s all that noise, and ‘we’re dancing. She and her sister were dancing and I think they choreographed a couple of routines since they were off for break. So it’s just been non-stop.

Friends and Dance

Shamrock literally woke up dancing with friends as a day-starter. She shared that she and a friend would wake up in the morning, call each other on the phone, and start dancing. In that space, they sometimes introduced new dances to each other, or simply enjoyed each other’s dance company as they prepared for school each day. Daisy embraces dance as a constant entertainment and communication mechanism within her home:

around the house, normally, if she is here with her friends, like let’s say for instance, they’ll play music and they’ll dance and they do modern dance, they do the popular dances now that everyone else does, just because both my kids like to dance. Um, they probably have every Just Dance video game, and they like Just Dance. So you see a lot of them battling themselves and friends during the time that they’re here, and just a part of them having fun. So, the good thing about Just Dance is its all types, all genres of music. Anywhere from Rihanna to Britney Spears, to African Dance and things like that. I

mean, it's a positive thing. You could kind of tell that it's something that she really likes to do.

Dance and School

Extracurricular Activities

School-sponsored activities, such as color guard (band flag team), cheer, and dance class serve as physical dance transaction sites; providing the training and perfecting grounds for choreography and dance. These activities require investments of time and commitment as well as kinesthetic coordination. As students perform, their dance literacies are exchanged with school personnel, students, and members of the community.

Shamrock's flag team activities offered the most school-based hip hop thematic dance opportunities. Her high school band's HBCU band style is intrinsically intertwined with hip hop songs and dance styles. Shamrock explained that during the games, the color guards, who are positioned in the spectator bleachers, mirror the dances done by the majorette dancers on the ground, without the complete liberal motion of the dancers. While they don't go into the same detail as the floor level dancers, she agreed that they still groove. Though I asked if they still grooved, and Shamrock agreed, after viewing video of Shamrock's color guard, and observing the rhythmic syncopation of her team with the band; performing movements such as bending at the waist and popping back up (ensuring a full hair flip), and other energy-charged dance moves involving precise arm and hip movements, a description of the team's dance performance might more aptly be described as breaking it down (or bringing wreck)! While band *performances* allow the team to execute planned choreography, Shamrock shared that band *practices* serve as a dual space of both performance perfection, *and* a social space where dance challenges and impromptu dances are practiced with friends.

As a cheer co-captain on her cheer team, Sunflower served as a leader and choreographer. She choreographed or co-choreographed dance routines that her team performed for school and community events.

Lunchrooms, Classrooms, and Hallways

Participant interviews revealed lunchrooms, classrooms, and hallways as popular locations of impromptu dance for themselves as well as their peers. Sunflower described a variety of scenarios in which she and her fellow students found opportunities for both planned, and spontaneous dance at school:

like when we're in the hallways, in transition, we'll just kind of goof off. Umm, we have parties, everybody will just get in the circle and dance... pep rallies and stuff. Sometimes when we're at lunch and we're kind of done and we just wanna, do what we wanna do.

Shamrock further detailed an instance the in-the-moment thinking and action that takes place at school lunch: "at lunch, I be talking to my friends and I just start dancing out of nowhere". Stargazer shared an exceptional story about Rose dancing at lunch, that will be shared in the next section. Sunflower also shared a memory of herself dancing without consciously realizing it when her "favorite song came on" as she listened to her headphones in the classroom.

Dance and the Internet

Web 2.0 technologies such as social media and YouTube exists as static and transverse sites across all locations for dance literacy. Though dances can be found using a specific (static) URL, participants create, learn, remix, and extend dances, which enables movement of the site/performance. Rose, at age eight, demonstrates her ability to navigate the internet via different technology devices. Rose shares that she most often *listens* to music "in my room; on

my Alexa”. (Alexa, and lap top computer) to find songs and dance challenges to sing along with, listen, and dance to. In the initial interview,

Social media mediates and extends the dance cypher from one select person or groups, to others locally, and worldwide. This nature is evident as Shamrock casually shares the post-production intentions of a new dance that she and friend made up together after I asked if she planned to record a new dance challenge she recently learned. She shared that they would probably record the new dance and when it is complete, “she’ll [the friend] probably put it on Snap Chat and send it to me”. When I asked Shamrock how dancers are featured on popular dance challenge sites, she said, “Probably do download Dubsmash or Musically, then post it on Instagram and do a whole bunch of hashtags “. However, Shamrock indicates that when she uploads videos, her target audience is her friends. As I try to ascertain if it is common for her friends to post dances for each other to see, she says, “mmm (I don’t know) it probably is, cause it’s a lot of people that be doing dances at [school] and they share it. They put it on Facebook and people just share it”.

Sunflower also shared her intentions to Snap Chat or Instagram a dance challenge that she and a friend recorded. As previously mentioned, the process of dancing and uploading the dances to an online platform is such an embedded part of Sunflower’s routine that when Lotus hears music, there is an expectancy that Sunflower is dancing, and possibly uploading videos. Lotus shared,

This week, okay, I didn’t see her dancing any this week, but normally she plays music, and the pattern is normally when music is on and I’m around she will start dancing. I guess that’s her natural inclination for her. So even though I heard music, I’m assuming she was. She does these you know, snap chat videos, and stuff. So, I’ve seen em and the

ones I have seen; she's dancing in them. So I'm assuming that what she was doing, even though I didn't visually watch her.

In fact, Sunflower showed me a dance video that she and two of her friends made in her bedroom. They were in a triangle formation, with two girls standing in the back and Sunflower on her knees down in the front. They performed a smooth and flowy move, in which they were leaning back and moving their arms from side to side. Each dancer appeared to be confident and appeared to enjoy herself.

Dance Challenges

All three participants shared knowledge and use of dance challenges. While the social media platform TikTok has become practically synonymous with dance challenges, especially in the quarantine season, interestingly, at the time of this data collection, the medium was not mentioned as a platform for learning dance challenges. Dance Challenges embody the elements and spirit of cyphers; the hip hop beat is “passed” among participants, dancers have to “bring wreck” to gain followers, go viral, or be included in a dance challenge compilation. Short, group dance routines have been a hallmark of hip hop culture.

Sunflower and Shamrock both shared their experiences choreographing original dance routines, that could possibly become dance challenges for others. Dance challenges allow people from diverse locales and cultures to speak the same language of dance. Rose also shared her familiarity with dance challenges. Interestingly, each participant shared *different* dance challenges that they knew or were learning (Table 2). Dances embedded in the routine are often recognizable to dancers, or they are often integrated as standard dances in later routines. The *Slow Motion Challenge*, shared by Rose, showcases many current popularized dances such as the Millie Rock, the Kodak Black, the hit them folks dance, and the Shmurda Dance. The *But it Still Jiggle Challenge*, highlights twerking, while the *No Cap Challenge* highlights the Whoa. I have

viewed each of the dances in the challenges performed in at least one other subsequent dance challenge. All participants demonstrated digital literacy in finding dance challenges on YouTube. Sunflower shared that dance challenges automatically appear in her social media feed, indicating that challenges also find her.

Table 2
Dance Challenges

	Dance Challenge 1	Dance Challenge 2	Dance Challenge 3
Shamrock	Silent Dance Battle Challenge , Silent Dance Battle Pt 1	Envy Me Dance Challenge	But It Still Jiggle Challenge
Sunflower	Laii No Cap Dance Challenge	La La Dance Challenge	
Rose	Slow Motion Challenge		

Dance challenges are usually short dance routines to a snippet of a hip hop song. The string of dancers that perform the challenges exemplify a true hip hop cypher, as each person or persons showcase the choreography and multiple possibilities of imaginative remix, by bringing wreck to the routine. These dance challenges capture scenes of accord, cooperation, and confidence among performers. Without knowing the dance language, many popularized moves were not recognizable to me as I initially viewed the Laii No Cap Dance Challenge Sunflower showed me. After several viewings, my blinders were lifted.

Learning The Whoa

In my years of teaching, I have learned that learning local dances can help me to learn local literacies. I therefore prepared myself to learn a dance if any of the participants were willing to teach me. Sunflower selected a challenge that featured a snippet of a song by NBA YoungBoy to

show me a dance called the Whoa, in response to my question about what dances she and her peers were doing. I initially could not recognize when the Whoa took place (it is both a subtle, yet commanding move of a coordinated arms hand and wrist: It would almost seem as if the dancer is about to mimic the same arm movements as a double dutch rope turner that abruptly stops the movement after one arm rotation, which would not be enough of a rotation for the jumper to jump more than once). Unable to recognize which dance was the Whoa, I kept asking Sunflower where it was and if I had missed it. She would say “there it is” on each video as I seemed to constantly miss it. I began to feel a bit, *illiterate*, and self-conscious as I frantically tried to find the Whoa to somehow, save face because I simply could not identify it. I felt that I could never learn the dance if I couldn’t discriminate the dance from other movements.

When Sunflower taught me how to do the Whoa, I tried my best, but laughed off my lack of coordination, because I secretly knew that I may have needed much longer than the allotted interview time to learn the dance in a way that I could *understand* the dance. I had to first learn the kinetic functions (basic moves) and how it may intersect with metaphysical intention (what is the feeling of the *dance*, what does the dance do). Instrumentally, the Whoa functions as a snare and syntactically as a period or statement. I practiced at home and everywhere. At this time, the Whoa was not known to my daughters, my niece in FL, or my nephews in VA; nor had I heard any of them mention the dance.

When I initially watched the challenges, I didn’t realize each person or persons were performing the exact same routine. However, after watching the challenges for some time in private, the pattern of the choreography finally dawned on me. Because it was obvious that I was challenged in identifying which dance actually was the Whoa when Sunflower shared it, she also advised me to watch the challenges that might come up in the You Tube feed or are associated

with the *Lai No Cap Challenge* and the *La La Challenge*. After multiple viewings of each dance challenge, I noticed that many of the movements were actually specific dances that were strewn together in unique ways (remixed) for each new challenge.

After I finally gained a working knowledge and ability to perform the Whoa, I found that I was given the key to a doorway of performance that had possibly been happening around me unnoticed. This was exemplified in one of my interactions with Shamrock. Shamrock invited me to her school's dance performance which, like the video she shared in the interview, featured largely modern dance. However, at the very end of the performance, when everyone was taking a bow, one performer on stage did the Whoa, evoking squealing delight from peers in the audience. Suddenly, numerous students on the stage and in the audience did the Whoa. The performers and student audience members seemed to delight in their covert communication, and perhaps the agency of the performers to insert their own dance into the performance. Many of the adults in the audience did not appear to be privy to this covert communication.

Finding 3

Hip Hop Feminine Dance is a Practice of Literacy

Dancing to Send a Message

Shamrock utilizes literacy components of dance with her mom and "inner circle" by wielding her dance as a comedic tool. Shamrock describes herself as using her dance to "aggravate" her mom or boyfriend, which is her performing dance moves to get an emotional rise out of the target. In the church scenario (detailed later), Shamrock's stated intention to "aggravate" her mom, seemed to take on the purpose of providing emotional support and cheer, since her mother admittedly was not feeling well. When describing her daily habits of dance, she

lists, dance class at school, “practice (band)... or I just come home and aggravate my mom and start dancing around her. Either she start dancing with me, or she tell me to get on”.

On Sunday of the survey, Shamrock documented, “my mom was cooking and I came up behind her and started twerking and then she started twerking on me”. The paradox of the situation is that while cooking, one’s focus is generally on making sure that nothing or no one is burned, and yet Shamrock used this time to twerk on her mother, which Shamrock previously recognized as a largely forbidden dance: “... you don’t wanna be twerking around teachers, or older people, cause they don’t like to see that... you should be respectful and stuff like that”. Daisy responded to Shamrock by twerking as well, thereby adding momentum, levity, and another layer of communication and shared knowledge to the joke. It is also the ultimate completion of a dance story: the exchange was made through dance instead of words.

Daisy also described herself as dancing to mediate a shift in mood with her son (the spirit of communication): “okay, a few minutes ago, you saw us in the kitchen, he was mad at me and I was trying to dance with him to make him happy”. Shamrock’s younger brother often serves as a side kick and co-creator of dance stories. The day before the twerking while cooking encounter with Daisy, Shamrock shared on a Saturday survey entry an account of her little brother assisting her in “aggravating” her boyfriend: they performed a silent dance battle challenge beside him as he attempted to have a *normal* conversation. She said, “he came over to my house and he was talking to my mom, so me and my brother was playing the silent dance battle challenge, and then I started dancing around him to get on his nerves.” Shamrock’s written choice of the word “playing” the dance challenge provides further insight into the intention of the dance, as well as the contextual meaning of her phrasings, “to aggravate” or “to get on his nerves”.

The silent dance battle challenge (The Wallace Family, 2018), found on YouTube, features a dance cypher between two people. Like it sounds, two people are taking turns going back and forth doing dances that will outdo the other in order to win a figurative battle. The stipulation of the silent dance battle challenge is that it must be done silently. The silence is more poignant in this dance challenge because the music is also imagined and non-existent, which gives way to an even greater focus on the interplay of the physicalized communication. The act of performing a silent dance battle therefore becomes metacommunication about: the interactive exchange between the two performers, and joint membership/participation in a cultural group that is built upon the literacy of various dance battles taking place as “the new wave” on the internet.

At Home Dance Mediates a Switching of Leader/Follower and Teacher/Student Roles

Sunflower, Shamrock, and Rose were clearly the subject-matter experts of hip hop feminine dance in the home. Just as translanguaging peer environments support a switching of teacher and student roles depending on whichever person had greater fluency in a particular language (Bauer et al., 2017), daughters were credited with being dance authorities. Each mother/informant shared an admiration or acknowledgement for the unique talents of rhythm and movement for their daughter/participant; acknowledging skill and ability that exceeded their own. While Stargazer denied the ability to inspire Rose’s dancing, because of her own lack of expertise in dance movement, Daisy described a sense of passing the baton to her daughter and watching her excel. She said,

me, just dealing with myself and the things I have to do with me not being as mobile as I once was, Um, with my coordination, just seeing her dance and thinking wow, I can’t do that. So, she’s growing, the good thing about that is she’s growing and surpassing mama, and I like that, you know.

Lotus and Sunflower captured a moment on video when Sunflower's expertise was summoned, and Lotus willingly assumed the role of student. It was a dual twerking video. The video showed her and Sunflower's reflection in bathroom mirror as they twerked back to back, while ensuring keep their faces were kept out of the video. Sunflower unpacked the video as follows:

actually, we were playing music, and, you know, we're just in the mirror, you know, and I'm still trying to keep abreast of the latest dance moves, and so I'll ask her to show me and she's tryna get me to... Oh God, I can't remember the dance or whatever, but it's some kind of something to do with the butt, you know what the girls are doing now.

When reflecting about Sunflower's dancing tendencies over the past weeks, Lotus realized an important insight. She noted,

I do like the way she dances though. Although I say it's a lil bit raunchier I do like the way, you know, she flows, the way her body flows with the music and stuff. I'm like hmm, I wish my body could flow like that, you know, nothing no insight or anything no. Its just normal.

The Dialogic Nature of Dance

Rose often envisions herself as a leader when she dances. She described herself as feeling "happy" and further describes happy as thinking of herself as a competitor in a competition. When asked in one of the interviews how dance makes her feel, she said, "Happy, like in that mood where you think like you're in a competition and like okay, I'm in a competition, I gotta win so". When she says, "I gotta when so", she does a little movement with her arm that seems to go along with her words that inspires a winning feeling in me when I reviewed the video. As Rose describes this competition, her words often take on a kinesthetic value as she seems to be almost choreographing her words with animated hand and upper body motions, although she is seated. When I asked Rose *who* she was in a competition with, she

elaborated, “with random people. I don’t really know, like teams. Like you have these imaginary teams and stuff and I feel like I’m in a competition.” Rose often revisited the theme of competition, an intrinsic component of hip hop, throughout the first interview; clarifying and illuminating its contribution to the dialogic nature of dance. Rose aligns both feeling and thought along with modalities of dress and movement within her hip hop dance performance. Rose later explained how thinking as a competitor extends into her modalities of dress. When I asked her to share what she is *thinking* about when she dances, she said,

thinking about, like I said, I’m thinking about I’m in a competition and like, I’m on stage, and like I said, we gotta win, we gotta win (pounds fist for emphasis). So, I’ll like put on this certain outfit to pretend like I’m in a competition.

Rose then adds a concrete example of this internal dance competition:

When we first moved into our house...mom got these bracelets, and I was like, and so my sister had em, and I was like, can I have em, and I was pretending I was in a dance competition... and sooo, I put on this certain outfit to act like I was in a dance battle, and sooo... yeah. It’s like if I lose, in my mind, I’m like so, we gotta get better at this or that. I’m saying, hey you need to be in this direction or that way, you need to be in this turn or this like where we begin and stuff. So, I’m like, so, you gotta copy me (demonstrates), so if I’m like this, or this, they gotta copy me.

Similarly, Shamrock describes dancing as a process that is intricately linked to thought processes. She says that when she dances, she thinks about, “what I should do next”. She adds, “In my head, I be nervous cause I don’t wanna do something that don’t look right”. This thinking implies a dialogic process of valuation and judgment when dancing or deciding *when* to dance.

Sunflower described the external dialogic nature of dance as a reason for its intrigue to her. When asked how dancing to hip hop makes her feel, she responded, “uh, its kind of, it’s fun, because I like the social experience and it gives me a chance to express my creativity. I get to interact with others and I get to express my creativity *with* others and see how they like to [respond and create through dance”. Sunflower clarified that this exchange takes place when she is dancing with other people for fun *and* performance “cause it gives me a chance to work *with them*”. Unlike when she is dancing by herself, “because it’s just me and what I like to do, and not what we all have to agree on”. Like Rose and Shamrock, Sunflower also shares internal cognitive processes embedded in her dancing that is tinged with motivation. She shared that what she thinks about when she is dancing “depends on the mood, but like, I think about how my day is going, what I want to improve and stuff.” She admitted that “sometimes” she thinks about someone she has an interest in when she dances, but it doesn’t affect her dance style.

Finding 4

Hip Hop Feminine Dance is an Agentive act of Black Girlhood Joy, Resistance, and Respect in Regard to and in Negotiations with the Politics of Respectability

Question 1 sought to find out what happens when Black girls that dance hip hop encounter the politics of respectability? When participants encountered the politics of respectability, they were agentive in their navigation of the social construct. However, mother-informants communicated their felt tensions in balancing their duties to support and limit the dance due to social outcomes of violating the politics of respectability. As it stands, the foundations of the politics of respectability are in direct contrast with attributes of hip hop culture and dance. ‘Go hard’, ‘it’s lit’, ‘fire’, ‘turn up’, etc. are all terms that echo the sentiments of ‘bring wreck’ and further illuminate hip hop’s intentions (embedded in external expressions) and determination to provide a palpable experience. Bringing wreck to the public sphere

(Pough,2004) is a metaphorical destruction of one's natural unedited environment with a hip hop offering that disavows mainstream rules of engagement. The intention and outcomes of hip hop performance are in direct conflict with respectability politics' goals of softness, quiet, reserved, and diminutive behavior (Higginbotham, 1993). Battle, or competition is another hip hop element that permeates throughout each of the four espoused cultural expressions of hip hop (dance, djing, rap, and graffiti). In this study, respectability politics also frowned upon, admonished, or aloofly missed opportunities to police hip hop injections into the public sphere by the cases. A peripheral view of the primary participant's encounters with the politics of respectability, revealed where the politics of respectability were most effective.

The politics of respectability presents itself in various forms. However, in each form, there is an overt or socially expected mandate that women/girls should follow rules of propriety and social expectation (Higginbotham, 1993). The cases in this study were able to navigate, overrule, and adjust to these expectations, or rules, in order to continue receiving their own internal gratification or agreement with their own internal systems of justice. Agency was determined by following a dance agency heuristic developed by Huntington (2007) (See Table 3).

Shamrock: Bucking Patriarchy and Respectability Politics

Shamrock practiced seven days a week, for two to three hours outside of school as a majorette dancer on a competition team. The majorette dance style that is the foundation for competitions at the secondary school level, is aptly described as *hip hop* majorette (Ussery, 2016). Popularized by the hit television show, "Bring it!", majorette dance style encompasses a variety of dance styles; lyrical, modern, jazz, hip hop, cheerleading, and some gymnastics (Ussery, 2016). It is the high energy style of majorette performance derived from and featured in

bands from Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs). Songs that are played or performed are largely popular hip hop and R&B songs. Majorette teams for secondary students only feature the dancers, and do not include a band.

Shamrock's calm, cool, soft-spoken and reserved demeanor that I experienced in our interviews was in sharp juxtaposition to the highly energetic, and vibrant dance style that is exemplary of competition majorette dance. However, a video observation of Shamrock's performance on the team confirmed that she possessed and willfully unleashed a commanding array of punctuated dance moves. Adorned in thigh length biker shorts, sports bras, and knee pads, Shamrock and her dance team dynamically performed dance moves such as: *bucking, hip rolls, heel stretches, hitch kicks, jumps, drops to the ground, a bridge to standing, and splits*. As Shamrock's team lined up to perform, audience members shouted words of encouragement to dancers and collectively chanted (ayyyy, ayyyy) to support and enliven the performance. Within the confines of the gym, the dancers were engulfed in cheers and sounds of support. However, public performances of this genre provoked a wider array of commentary.

Competition majorette dance is a genre of dance is openly contested in the public sphere largely because of the dance moves and costuming worn in performances by the school-aged performers. Costuming is generally consistent with body-fitting materials that are apparent in other dance genres such as ballet, modern dance, African dance, etc. The tight clothes combined with the staple Afro-centric 'Bucking' dance move, easily draws public critique. Shamrock noted that her majorette dance team, and her school flag team Bucked, but did not Twerk. While it was challenging for Shamrock to articulate the nuanced differences between the two dances (she initially stated that with Bucking, "you just don't squat"), she ultimately clarified that twerking focuses more on the butt than Bucking. She said, "I think Twerking and Bucking is two different

things cause people don't feel like moving they butt, so they just do the hand motions". Bucking, is therefore distinguished as more of a whole body dance that involves raising the arms, while dropping the body low in a wide-stance squatting position, whereas twerking focuses more solely on the movement of the butt. Ironically, Daisy shared that Shamrock was often disciplined on the dance team for not Bucking "hard enough".

The politics of respectability expectations for Shamrock's majorette team were especially palpable for her mother, Daisy, as an onlooker at the group's parade performances. Her lived experience exposed embedded assumptions about this dance genre and those that perform it: the dancers were wrong to dress and dance in this HBCU band performance style. As Daisy sat alone in a holiday parade crowd supporting her daughter, she heard adult onlookers say things like, "oh my God, why would they put their children on that", "why would let their kids dance like that", "they look like little...", and "I would never let my babies dance like that". The "that" was seemingly referring to instances of the widely used 'Bucking' dance move. Daisy shared that the producers of these comments were inclusive of a cross-section of gender and race demographics; they included males and females of various ethnicities.

Though Shamrock did not hear any of the comments herself, when her mother shared the experience with her, she says she felt sad when people spoke negatively about dances on dance team "cause people think about that and we just came to dance". However, she did not allow those experiences to shape her perceptions of all onlookers. She said, "I still view people the same cause not everyone thinks that way; everyone has their own mind". Shamrock expected the public to be more supportive of their dance group because "they're doing something with their life. Instead of [being] out doing drugs or other things... they're dedicated to dancing". When continuing to probe into how Shamrock felt about and responded to instances of critique and

negativity about her dance team she indicated that she “didn’t respond to it because [she] didn’t notice”. Shrugging her shoulders, she stated, “if this is what I want to do, I’m a do it. If they don’t like it, they don’t have to come out and support”. Daisy agreed, stating, “she doesn’t really care what people say. If she enjoys doing it and it makes her feel good, she does it.” In this example, Shamrock is agentive in following her own desires, despite public perception. She negotiates the politics of respectability by continuing to do as she pleases, in the face of public criticism, because she “just think[s] its fun”. Within the sphere of majorette dance, Shamrock remained agentive. She improvised her bucking when she didn’t *want* to focus on her butt. In her performance, she ‘bucks’ respectability politics that prescribe how a young lady should move, and she bucks patriarchal ownership of aggression.

While Shamrock negotiates the politics of respectability by adhering to a time and place philosophy largely in the school context, she is agentive in challenging hegemonic norms towards dance in the public sphere. She shared that she has “never gotten in trouble for dancing” because she “just know[s] not to do certain dances in certain places”, adding; “I don’t wanna twerk around teachers or older people, cause they don’t like to see it, so its disrespectful.” Shamrock exhibits deft negotiation of the Politics of Respectability when she covertly brings her dances into the church. Shamrock internalizes the rhythmic cadences that flow back and forth between the preacher and congregation members in the historical call and response tradition of Black churches, and instead of answering/engaging vocally, she remixes traditional audible response with her own flavor of covert dances to distract, uplift, and “aggravate” her mother. Uplift is used an objective of this performance because when Shamrock’s mother told the story of Shamrock dancing in church, previously detailed in dialogue form, she prefaces it by saying

that she didn't feel well that day. Shamrock is agentive in the way she circumvents social rules of standardized behavior and enacts dance as she wishes.

Sunflower: Circumventing 'Doing Too Much'

Sunflower most readily recounted instances of politics of respectability among the research participants. In one only one of four encounters with respectability politics she described, did she agreeably understand why she was being sanctioned or restricted. In an example in which Sunflower mentally noted the unfairness of a situation, she describes what happened when she danced to music that she was given permission to listen to in her classroom. She said, "I had my headphones in, and then my favorite song came on, and I caught myself dancing and they're [the teacher] like (stern whispery voice) *Stop it, we're in class.*" Noting that she "felt embarrassed" when this occurred, Sunflower critically analyzes the double standard of teachers allowing students to listen to music in headphones, while simultaneously disallowing dance. She shared that dancing did not cause her to stop paying attention to her work, but she was probably reprimanded because of the possibility of distracting others. This was an indication of Sunflower's metacognitive understanding that dancing enhanced instead of impeded her ability to focus. She perceived the teacher's reasoning of dance being a distraction to others as unjust because dance served as a support to her own academic success. For Sunflower, music and dance are inextricably linked. In this example, she was doing something natural to her primary discourse. She was bridging home and school discourses between home and school as a support to her learning but was instead treated like a trouble-maker.

Overall, Sunflower felt the teachers were overreaching in their negative concerns about dance, "sometimes I would just brush it off, but sometimes I would feel like the teachers were doing too much. They were just getting mad over little things. You would see someone else

doing it but when I do it it's a problem." Sunflower surmised that some of the sanctioning from teachers may have been racially motivated. She gives a description of a classroom experience when she and a white peer were doing the exact same dance moves, but she was the only one between them that got in trouble for it. She elaborates, "Umm, some were different colors, than I am, some were, I guess she didn't catch them. Sunflower continues to support her argument by adding, I felt cause we were doing the same dance, ...just at different time, but she didn't get in trouble. And then I did that same dance and she [the teacher] was like, "oh stop it, we're in a classroom setting". Sunflower believes that teachers should accept dancing in class, as long as the student is doing her work. After reflecting on her experiences with dance throughout her school career, Sunflower finds dance as more acceptable in schools until the third grade, where she noticed restrictions became more common, and she started experiencing getting in trouble for dancing.

Sunflower's next account took place within the school sport of cheerleading. As a co-captain and choreographer for her school's cheer team, Sunflower practiced twice a week and performed two additional days a week outside of school hours. Sunflower was dismayed that a traditional cheer/dance move had been sanctioned in the choreography she created. Her coach felt that the *hitch kick* in the dance did not meet the criteria of school appropriate. Sunflower did not agree with the sanctioning of such a classic and widely performed cheer move. Feeling that her time, efforts, and experience were discredited, Sunflower informed the coach that a professional choreographer was needed and accordingly withdrew her own choreographic input from the cheer squad. When the hired choreographers helped the squad, they respectfully sought Sunflower's and the other co-captain's opinions and suggestions for choreography. In this

encounter with the politics of respectability, Sunflower was agentive in gaining the respect from her coach she sought and felt she deserved.

At the close of the study, Sunflower was again creating choreography for the cheer team. Sunflower mentioned that in one of the final dance routines, which was a mixture of hip hop and cheer, the “team popped their butts” and the reactions from the teachers were of mixed approval; “some were entertained by the dance, and some thought it was inappropriate”. Sunflower ascertained this by the looks on the teachers’ faces. However, Sunflower was satisfied that the audience was “engaged” throughout the performance. Again, this exemplifies the agency in deriving her satisfaction from her own productive output, instead of basing it on the feedback of others.

Like Shamrock, Sunflower adheres to/negotiates the politics of respectability by enacting a ‘time and place’ ideology in her performance of twerking. Sunflower references her mother’s tutelage that twerking in public “can cause people to put a bad label on you; even if they don’t know you.” Her mother, Lotus, feels that “African American girls twerking sends a bad message because, though it is a double standard, girls are supposed to carry themselves as ladies”. Lotus notes that “a girl seen dancing on the sideline may be labeled as sweet or kind of shy, but a girl in the middle of the floor, twerking and dropping it low will give a different impression.” Sunflower shared observable evidence of this tendency with an example of a young lady whom she admired doing unique dances in the middle of a dance circle at a party and was consequently labeled as “doing too much” by her peers.

The time Sunflower agreed with sanctioning was when a teacher momentarily stepped out of the classroom, and the students used the SMART Board to play You Tube and dance to their favorite song. She noted on this occasion, the teacher allowed the students to dance for a

moment before telling them to stop. In this instance, Sunflower felt that manipulating the teacher's classroom technology was indeed "doing too much". Though the classroom proved a problematic space to dance, Sunflower reports that she and other students found transition time in hallways and lunch periods as spaces to act upon their inclinations to dance. Here, within a social setting that is seemingly aligned with the politics of respectability, she was able to agentively find spaces to dance during the school day.

Rose – "I don't need to stop. I know what to do"

For Rose, home was a place where she learned, nurtured, and evolved her dance performance, as well as where the most encounters with the politics of respectability were described. When I interviewed Rose, she was often in constant motion on each of the interviews. She often swayed and moved around as she spoke and was not shy about intermittently combusting in song. There were moments when my 'natural' instincts questioned if she was listening or engaged at times when she sporadically started moving around. However, her responses that indicated she was indeed listening. Additionally, the *consistency* of the constancy of movement, and Stargazer's interviews describing her constant movement, I realized that movement was a norm for Rose. Rose's inclinations for song, music, and dance often intersected and collided with Stargazer's goals of relaxation at home. Stargazer acknowledged that she wants to encourage Rose's performing arts evolution, but her patience is often strained by Rose's perpetual movement in close proximity to her. Because Stargazer experienced that her own creativity may have been stifled by her mom's need for constant order and disdain for mess, she intentioned spaces (away from her immediate presence) that would allow Rose to extend her own creativity.

Rose shared that the loud music that often accompanies her dance performance prompts Stargazer to instruct her to “turn it down”, or to “stop hopping around making a lot of noise as she dances.” Rose finds compliance in compromise as she “keeps dancing even though she turns the music down very low”. Rose also shared that Stargazer’s disapproval/sanctioning of her music and dance choices are often framed within questions such as, “Why are you always dancing like that?”, “Why are you doing that kind of style of dancing?”, and “I don't like when you do that kind of dancing”. When she does get in trouble for dancing at home, she says, “I’m fine with it”, but then I go upstairs and I do it again.” In these scenarios, Rose illustrates her agency in navigating dance restrictions and modifications as she cultivates her dance expression at home.

Stargazer is not the only source of politics of respectability collisions at home, her older sister also provides guidance in alignment with respectability politics. Though Rose identifies her older sister as a source of dance inspiration and collaboration, there are times when her co-choreographer attempts to adjust her performance. Notably, when Rose imitates her mother’s voice, it is authoritative and strong but not overbearing, but when she imitates her sister she alters her voice to represent a more annoying/nagging tone. Rose shares that when she and her older sister make up dances, her sister tells her, “you add too much sway to that, you need to stop that. You need to do like that”. She responds by saying things like, “I’m like okay, I get instructions I got it... I don’t need to stop, I know what to do”. Rose continued, “I always use my hips, so when I’m posing and stuff and when I’m walking, I have so much hip, that when I’m dancing, I’m like this (demonstrates), and it has so much hip (demonstrates)”. She physically and verbally demonstrates: “if I’m walking like this, my sister like, she thinks I’m tryna make my butt move and like no I’m walking with this, she’s like you need to stop walking like that cause it

looks like your butts moving too much, and your butt doesn't need to be moving too much, because she gets sick and tired of me walking like that". In this example, Rose agentively rebuffs her sister's assessment of her movement as "too much", and describes the utility in moving her hips "so much".

When prompted as to why her butt should not be moving too much, she responded, "I don't know. Probably if we're like in public, and I'm walking like this, people are gonna think I'm weird, like I have nothing to do people are gonna think I'm weird...and I am not weird." Embedded in Rose's response is a rejection of a projected negative assumptions about her kinesthetic expressions that utilized her rear end. Again, Rose agentively stands against and pushes back on norms of bodily movement / POR that prescribes rules for public physical existence. Rose also deftly analyzes her family as trying to shield *themselves* from negative public perception as a result of her dance display. She believes her mother's reasoning for not wanting her to dance in public is

cause I also would be embarrassing her, not only her but our family and like if I get too in it. Like one time, well she didn't stop me this time cause we were at a performance. And one performance we were at this thing for her thing she was doing outside, and this dude was singing and I was like ayyyyy (dancing), and she posted it on Instagram, and she wasn't really embarrassed of me like that time, like that kind of stuff.

Stargazer concurred that her general feeling is Rose's dancing is, "if its nice and respectable okay. Like I always tell her, if you wouldn't do it in church, I don't wanna see you do it out in public". Rose's example provides evidence of the positive outcomes of her resolve to dance in public, by noting the value in supplying a post-worthy moment to her mother's social media account.

I asked Stargazer in the first interview if she ever encouraged Rose to dance for people at gatherings, and she replied, “I have not. Cause I don’t ever know what I’m a get. So I would be very worried”. Stargazer shared,

I think sometimes she can get a lil carried away for my taste. I think that I would like for her to be a lil more tame with it. I think I’m not a big fan of twerking and, (choosing words) a lot of just, I don’t know, gyrating in a sexual manner, how about that, how bout we use that terminology for an eight year old, you know.... I don’t mind her dancing, but I don’t think it’s necessary to twerk and pop it (laughs), like okay, you can dance and you can have fun with it, but I think even if you’re doing it, I think, this is gon sound crazy, but I guess if anybody knows anything about hip hop, there are different levels to twerking.

One time that Stargazer’s worry was stirred was later in the study, when Rose agentively remixed an outside family experience that Stargazer intentioned as a traditional holiday event. Stargazer recounted in a frazzled tone,

we were putting up Christmas lights outside and we have a huge flood light and we have the laser lights that go up in Christmas over the house, so she stood in front of the light to cast a shadow in front of the entire house, and proceeded to dance and sing to her own lil tune. So I’m sure our neighbors enjoyed that brief show.

When I asked Rose about the incident, her contrast in response indicated the situational significance was drastically reduced. Rose’s initial response was, “ooh, I did get in trouble cause I was doing too many cartwheels”. I prompted her memory by adding that I heard she was dancing in the spotlight, to which she responded, “oh yeah, I did get in trouble for that”. While twerking, bucking, or another dance may be imagined to be the culprit of the sanction, Rose

shared, “I was just dancing, I don’t really know. I was just basically spinning around”. Stargazer confirmed that it wasn’t any *particular* dance that provoked her ire, but the presentation of dance within the particular location. She shared,

Aah, I didn’t know the name of it [the dance Rose enacted]. Just looks like the same stuff she’s always doing. Like the dance that the kids are doing, like that backpack kid dance [the floss]. Yeah, and a whole bunch of other stuff, sooo, she was just looking at the shadow and had realized, look what I just did.

When I submitted that Stargazer sounded a bit mortified by this experience, she agreed, “I was a lil bit, cause I was like Oh My God, like boo. My exact words was this aint that neighborhood! Stop it. (laughs)”. During and after this scenario, Rose presented herself as unfettered to critique. She agentively fulfilled her desire to seize the utility of the spotlight to magnify her performance and did not indicate regret, despite any consequences or corrections for doing so.

Finally, Rose’s instinct to performatively analyze physical settings to optimally showcase her performance was evidenced in school as early as Pre-K. Stargazer shared an upsetting “vivid memory”: “I got a call from the Pre-K principal, who I know, and [she] said hey Rose was dancing on the table in Pre-K. I got a call from the principal saying she was dancing on the table at lunch. She got home and I said, hey, what’s wrong with you, why are you dancing on the table? And her response was, how else are they going to see me (laughs)?”. Certainly, raised stages and raked theatre seating are evidence of the benefits of visibility to performance. Here, Rose agentively side-stepped the rules of respectability and followed her own norm.

Table 3*Feminine Hip Hop Dance as Agency*

CASE	Agentive Activity	The Bodies Being Researched	Routine Activities	Collective Politics Pressing on the Bodies	Assumptions others have for that body and how the body differs from them
Shamrock	Dancing in church	Black girl in high school	Dancing in church when preacher “hits a rhythm”	The Black Church is what birthed the politics of respectability.	Youth are expected to sit still and serious in church, but Shamrock dances to communicate with, entertain, and uplift her mother, which she calls “aggravating her”
Shamrock	Dancing on a majorette team	Black girl in high school	Bucking, doing splits, dancing with force	The politics of respectability advises demands that young ladies avoid any actions/dress that could be associated with sexuality	Shamrock finds public perception flawed: she “expected the public to be more supportive because the dancers are doing something with their life, instead of being out doing drugs or other things: they are dedicated to dancing”. Though she found public opinion sad, she continued to dance because it was what she wanted to do

Sunflower	Choreographer was sanctioned on cheer squad	Black Girl in Middle School	Lead the cheer team by choreographing dance routines and maintain mastery of cheers and jumps.	Cheerleaders are often considered school ambassadors. As such, actions are often critiqued to consider the way the <i>school</i> is being represented. They are expected to dance and cheer as advised by coaches	Sunflower valued the time and expertise that she contributed to the dance routine she helped choreographed. When the coach took out part of the dance she made up because she felt a hitch kick in the dance was inappropriate, Sunflower withdrew her assistance as choreographer, until hired choreographers solicited and respected her input. She felt that her input was discredited and refused to accept that treatment.
Sunflower	Dancing in class	Black Girl in Elementary School	Take notes Follow teacher's instructions Engage with lesson	Students are expected to follow strict rules of silence and bodily stillness, so as not to distract others. Students are expected to internalize and take accountability for their actions when reprimanded in class	Sunflower was reprimanded for doing the exact same dance in class that a White girl was doing, though the White girl was not reprimanded. Sunflower noted the unfairness of the instructor and instead of taking accountability for

class disruption, she determined that the teacher was doing too much.

CASE	Agentive Activity	The Bodies Being Researched	Routine Activities	Collective Politics Pressing on the Bodies	Assumptions others have for that body and how the body differs from them
Rose	Dancing on the lunchroom table	Black Girl in Pre-K	Eat lunch, sometimes talk to friends	Students are expected to focus on eating	Rose decided to dance on the lunchroom tables. Dismayed, her mother asked why she had done it. Rose replied, “so that people could see me”. Rose knew that she may not receive the appropriate visibility she desired by simply dancing on the floor, so she took corrective actions.
Rose	Twerking in the spotlight	Black Girl in Elementary School	Assist the installation of outdoor Christmas lights	Rose was expected to have fun simply assisting the installation of lights and maintain conservative sobriety of actions that would	Seeing an opportunity to dance in the spotlight, Rose did every and any dance that she could imagine. Without consideration for consequences, she seized the moment. Her mother

match the culture of
the neighborhood
corrected her action,
providing that “this was
not the neighborhood for
that”.

Rose	Dancing with too much sway	Black Girl in Elementary School	Choreographin g dance with sister	Rose is expected to make up a simple dance that would not be viewed as offensive	When Rose’s sister tells her that she is moving her butt to much or putting too much hip or sway in her movements, she replies, “okay, I get instructions I got it, I don’t need to stop, I know what to do”. Rose realizes that she uses her hips when she poses and walks at times because it stylistically matches what she is doing. Though her sister submits that the describes movements make her look weird and cause her to embarrass the family, Rose does not feel the movements are weird and she recognizes instances in public when the family, and her sister, appreciate her dancing
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Summary

The three cases in the study danced throughout the days and weeks as a normal habit and mode of communication with family, friends, peers, instructors, coaches, and classmates. For them, a time and place to dance existed across a wide continuum. While the school-aged Black girls were agentive in negotiating the politics of respectability, their mothers often serve as a crossing guard in the intersection of politics of respectability and feminine hip hop dance: trying to protect their daughters from the possible hurts of this intersectional collision. The politics of respectability was most readily apparent in the ideology of the parent-mothers.

The mother informants articulated the tensions between wanting to support their daughters in doing what they love, and trying to protect them from society's harsh judgement of it. As a result, parents sometimes wielded aspects of the politics of respectability into the psyche and discipline of their daughters. Stargazer referenced her tutelage to Rose when she shared, "a lot of times I will tell her stop, not here, there's a time and a place for everything". Lotus agreed to sharing almost duplicate messages with Sunflower. While Lotus and Stargazer provided anecdotal scenarios of the dangers, Daisy shared her lived experiences of members of the community making harsh and unflattering comments about her daughter's former majorette team as they performed in community parades. These were the kinds of experiences that ultimately supported her decision to pull Shamrock from the team. Stargazer's expression aptly summarized the parent's concerns:

I think people do look at you, you know, and associate that with certain things and certain behaviors and so, I wouldn't want her to be characterized a certain way because something she's doing when I know she's just being her, but everybody does not understand that.

Each of the parents wanted their daughters to be able to express themselves, but also wanted to keep them safe.

The politics of respectability often sets strict expectations for young girls in school and at home. The implicit and explicit expectations are enforced in kind. Even when home is a space of freedom, respectability politics can serve as a barrier when a Black girl is too seen or heard. Black girls are agentive in their negotiations of these constructs; finding diverse ways to satisfy their own desires for joy, expression, and movement balanced with respect for authority. At schools, many of the expectations that are the bedrock of respectability politics inform policies, assumptions, and interactions that equate literate dance practices with adult-like, or deviant behavior.

CHAPTER FIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Implications for pedagogy, future inquiries, and overall protections of Black girlhood are the three foci of Chapter 5. The purpose of this study was to understand how young Black girls live and negotiate their hip hop dance performance with the politics of respectability. An inquiry of their dance as literacy was a concomitant focus of the research. Three young Black girls representing Elementary, Middle, and High School along with their mothers, provided windows and insights into their daily worlds of dance to reveal encounters with the politics of respectability and validation for dance as both primary and secondary Discourses (Gee, 1989, 2001, 2015). Gee emphasized that one learns a Discourse by constantly practicing it in real life scenarios; whereas primary Discourses are learned in the home and secondary Discourses are learned outside the home. Figure 2 illustrates the numerous ways Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose obtained feminine hip hop dance as primary and secondary Discourses through a system of acquisition and exchange (Gee, 1989). The process of gaining literacy in a Discourse through acquisition and exchange works much like a cypher; knowledge is passed around, exchanged, and remixed by members of the inner circle.

The distinction of discourse (with a small d) versus Discourse (with a capital D) is important because it enables the parsing of hip hop feminine dance from being conflated with rap lyrics. Discourse (small d) refers to how language is used within a particular segment throughout

lengths of time. Discourse (big D) focuses on entire network of dress, behavior, mannerisms, words, etc. that confirms literacy within a particular group (Gee, 1989,2001, 2015a, 2015b).

Though both rap music and dance exist within hip hop Discourse, yet they contain separate and distinct Discourses. One obvious distinction is the reliance on spoken language vs performed language. Dancers are not as married to the subject matter of lyrics, like rappers may be.

Shamrock, Rose, and Sunflower indicated hip hop dancers take a hybrid approach to the representation of meaning when dancing; they are the authors of their dances and decide the meaning they want to wield. Their hybrid approach involves the analysis of sound, which may or may not be created by instruments, as well as an analysis of whether or not they choose to align, partner, or ignore lyrics of a song when ultimately deciding to perform a dance move.

The hip hop feminist research questions in this study not only centered the youth dancers' perspectives and experiences, they also centered hip hop feminist dance as an integral component of hip hop culture; therefore, prompting me to identify hip hop markers (Discourse) of cypher, knowledge of self, competition, swagger (self-confidence), etc. each participant consistently enacted as they wielded their hip hop dance literacies. A performance studies lens supported the attention to nuance and how participants performed (hip hop) culture (the Discourse of feminine hip hop dance), which included the way in which words, gestures, clothing, beliefs, language, and more combined in a particularly coded way (Gee, 1989, 2001, 2011, 2015a, 2015b).

Performance studies views dress, jokes, communication, language choice, etc. as cultural

performance largely the same way Gee views those same attributes as comprising Discourses.

The use of both hip hop feminism and performative studies provided a clearer view of the Discourse of hip hop feminine dance, and therefore how the literacy operated in various scenarios.

Using a performative studies lens affirmed hip hop as a cultural integration of arts and modalities; one being dance. Therefore, art as the underbelly of this research endeavor was consistently maintained. Along with what the participants said, I paid attention to what they didn't say, to their posture, to the subtext of jokes, to interactions with others, and other nuances that collectively communicated persona, perspective, and positioning. Interview responses and interactions viewed through feminist hip hop and performative studies lenses served arts-based methods of observation, analysis, reporting research findings, and communicating implications of the research. Traditional methods of analysis (e.g., individual, and cross-case analysis), along with arts based methods (e.g., storyboarding and character comparison) were used to categorize and thematically group units of data to maintain the fidelity of the youthful dancers' and their mothers' perspectives. Implications for classroom pedagogy and research, and study limitations provide the structural framework for this chapter.

Having fun is the primary reason that school-aged girls in this study gave for dancing hip hop, instead of dancing to sexually entice, as is often assumed to be the primary reason for dancing (especially dances that involve the backside). For Shamrock, Rose, and Sunflower,

practicing joy through dance was worth every reprimand, side-eye, correction, judgement, and underestimation they experienced through respectability politics. Girls that dance hip hop are often viewed as encompassing and extending a misogynistic and sexualized rap Discourse.

While hip hop feminine dance is readily recognized as a Discourse set apart from traditional dance genres, like ballet, it is less often recognized for its unique attributes within hip hop. The Discourse of Black girlhood was more prevalent (attendance to movement, rhythm games, owning a direct perspective) (Gaunt, 2006) than a demoralized rap Discourse. The theory of adultification (Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017) ties projected sexualization of Black girls to the manifestation of increased scrutiny, surveillance, microaggressions, and punitive measures by police, school officials, and other adults. Concomitantly, sexualized lenses that are often used when viewing Black girls' dancing is justified and supported by the politics of respectability. The politics of respectability also hold them (and their mothers) accountable for that perception.

Black girl dance, an integral aspect of Black girlhood joy, is often unprotected and under siege. Despite this constant tension, Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose demonstrated agency in constantly finding ways to enact and experience joy through dance. This joy and practice historically mark time and culture. The United States Senate recently unanimously passed a resolution that recognizes hip hop as an important facet of American culture and music (S. Res. 331, 2021), and the inaugural celebrations immediately went into effect in 2021. November will be celebrated as Hip Hop History Month, and August was designated as Hip Hop Recognition

Month. Additionally, August 11th, will honor the day Cool Herc and his *sister* planned and executed the block party that birthed hip hop, as “Hip Hop Celebration Day”. Senators were even encouraged to plan activities in support of the block party’s original objectives of peace and fun at that “Back to school Jam” on August 11th that sparked the creation of hip hop. This recognition may help to foster understanding and respect for girls that can’t stop, won’t stop dancing.

Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose illustrated the way the kinesthetic practice exists as a primary *and* secondary Discourses that can communicate across spoken languages, generations, and physical locations. When viewed and valued in this way, the punitive measures resultant from the subjectivities of adultification of Black girls can transition more rigorously into systems of protection. The new systems of protection must be embedded in practice, research, and purposed safe spaces for feminine hip hop dancers. The following sections will explore each in more detail.

Implications for Practice

Feminine Hip Hop Dance as Literacy

Accepting feminine hip hop dance as a normative literacy practice troubles traditionally practiced notions of what it means to allow students to authentically show up in without disarming their sociocultural literacies class (Emdin, 2021). Practice gives context, and situated meaning to literacy, or understood communication. Therefore, when hip hop feminine dance

practice shows up in class, it should be thoughtfully analyzed as an opportunity for more broad connection and an open window to authentic communication. Shamrock's, Sunflower's, and Rose's every day and everywhere hip hop dance performance exemplified some of the ways hip hop feminine dance is a form of literacy that can be used to create, critique, and exchange meaning. This fortification of "African American female literacies" (Richardson, 2003, p.77), which includes dance (Price-Dennis et al., 2017), expands Frankel, Becker, Rowe, and Pearson's (2016) definition of literacy as, "the process of using reading, writing, and oral language to extract, construct, integrate, and critique meaning through the interaction and involvement with multimodal texts in the context of socially situated practices". Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose exemplified ways in which hip hop feminine dance literacy subverts the hierarchy of words as the dominant and most precise medium to extract, construct, integrate, and critique meaning, highlighting the efficacy of movement. No words had to be said when Shamrock and her brother performed the silent challenge in close proximity to her boyfriend while he conducted a phone call. Sunflower's cheer team communicated a collective statement through movement and received positive feedback through student engagement. When Rose stood on the table to dance, her actions signaled to the authorities her appetite for performance and an outlet for her artistry. In each of these examples, meaning was communicated, received, and given feedback.

Along with the examples presented within the research, this literacy in motion is evidenced in a GAP clothing commercial (GAP, 2021) featuring an elementary school teacher

performing unique dances with each student as a personalized greeting, before each student enters the classroom. The teacher previously went viral because of his danced exchange of 75 unique handshakes for each of his students (Telusma, 2021). Because Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose introduced me to many of the singular dances linked together within dance challenges, I could clearly identify the Whoa and other elemental dances found in Dubsmash dance challenges or TikTok dances used as dance links in the featured handshakes. Therefore, in the GAP commercial, each individual danced greeting was a combination of collective cultural dances (words/text) in combination with other traditional and non-traditional movements, to create and convey an entire unique message (sentence/ idea), which was understood (literacy) and given feedback.

Viewing hip hop feminine dance as a new literacy and its inherent pedagogical, social, and political implications, importantly unbraids the hegemonic disenfranchisement of this significant cultural contribution and practice. Hip hop feminine dance affords Black girls an outlet in the midst of constant expectations to be still and quiet in traditional settings. In essence, dancing is one of the ways that *Hip Hop's Li'l Sistas Speak* (Love, 2012). Love (2012) gained insight into how six Black middle school and high school girls navigated and internalized hip hop in their lives within her book *Hip Hop Li'l Sistas Speak* based off what the students verbally shared with her. Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose provided further revelation about how young

Black girls navigate and internalize hip hop in their lives by showing and explaining how they let their bodies speak just as loudly as their words.

The acknowledgement of girl youth performance of hip hop feminine dance as a cultural and educational resource pushes back on the politics of respectability informed perspectives of it as deficit and deviant. The findings in this research, confirm and build upon research that describe hip hop as “an embodied, lived culture” (Durham et al., 2013, p. 727). For them, “hip-hop happens through the body when they dance, walk down the street, or recite their favorite rhymes” (Durham et al., 2013, p. 727). This is the kind of hip hop literacy enacted in this study. In an afterschool group organized by Ruth Nicole Brown and Jewel Kwakye, called Saving Our Lives Hearing Our Truths (SOLHOT), the literate expression of hip hop is recognized, celebrated, and utilized for critique, expression, and joy (Brown & Kwakye; 2012).

When viewed as text, Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose made clear the endless opportunities for dance (text) to be written and read. Remember, practice cannot be extracted from meaning (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Gee, 2015). In other words, when practice shifts, so does meaning. Shamrock wrote a song of healing through humor as she danced beside her mother within the confines of the church pew and others seated on the same row. Sunflower communicated confidence and the right to be heard as she withdrew and renewed her commitment to choreograph based on respect. She was then attentive to the cycle of communication as she instantaneously analyzed audience feedback as she danced. She

demonstrated, and analyzed, and assessed her position as an expert when she performed the same dance in class as her classmate, only to receive retribution for her excellence. Throughout the research, Sunflower critically articulated the positions of power in each situation. Rose articulated her cognitive processing as she danced and used the modality of clothing to punctuate the meaning of her performance.

As previously mentioned, all participants (including the researcher) were surprised by the constancy of dance by Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose. They danced for the sport of it, collectively and individually; continuously mastering elevated, modern, and classic dance techniques. The data revealed the vast transactional networks that contribute to the teaching, learning, and spreading of this literacy is vast and foundational to the intensely practiced skills that are assumed to be essentialist, or innately natural. This shifts an essentialist public perception from “all Black girls can dance”, to “some Black girls are committed dance practitioners”. The three girls often danced from morning until night in impromptu and planned spaces. They danced as they spoke or danced as communication with no words. They danced while thinking or danced to express feeling. They danced by themselves or with others (siblings, friends, strangers, parents, extended family, etc.). This finding is important because when this constancy of dance is considered as a quotidian and happenstance practice, it shifts the perception of intention when dance shows up in spaces such as the classroom, playground, lunch

room, or community space. When hip hop feminine dance is accepted as a literacy, it opens the door for extended practice and engagement with socio-cultural norms in the classroom.

Pedagogical Shift

If learning is connecting new information to what is already known, how might engaging the practice of hip hop dance mediate understandings and communications in the classroom? A pedagogical shift towards an artistic framework that embraces artistic expressions would do much to expand engagement and inspection of class topics. Following Black girls' literacies as a north star, as advocated by the Black Girl Literacy Collective, all students benefit from a renewed invitation to bring what they know into the classroom (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016; Price-Dennis et al., 2017; Sealey-Ruiz, 2016). The beacons sounded to bring pop culture literacies (Hagood et al., 2010), hip hop literacies, "*pedagogical love vests*" (Grey, 2020, p. 1), and Black girl literacies into the classroom are ever-more strengthened by possible engagements with hip hop feminine dance.

Muhammad (2020) advocates for the explicit design of curricular frameworks for Black and indigenous children of color to increase engagement and criticality in the classroom in her book *Cultivating Genius: An equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*. The four integral components of Muhammad's espoused framework, comprised of identity, skill, and intellectual development, along with criticality build upon and utilize the

intrinsic joy and engagement that are natural byproducts of working with identifiable texts. Hip hop feminine dance is one of the texts that would aptly align with Muhammad's framework. The universal and intergenerational appeal of hip hop feminine dance is evidenced in video game3s, social media platforms, You Tube, and new and old traditions, such as the soul train line or TikTok dance routines. It is a fertile time to support and embrace the literacy of hip hop feminine dance, and it's intrinsic joy in the classroom.

In the classroom, dance might be used to add context to historical time periods, analyzing the social aspects of the dance. Dances could be used in similar ways that Muhammad, advises songs be used to promote and integrate personal relevance, criticality, and joy into the classroom. Dances could be used to represent words, spellings, and feelings. Dance could be used to create connections and engagement amongst students. The popularity of dance challenges and TikTok dance snippets proves the efficacy and enticement of recorded dance that is shared via social media or a common medium. The classroom could allow its local online site to be used as this common space to share dances or creative videos that provide commentary or context to areas of foci. Groups of students could create and or learn various dances as a collective commentary. Shamrock's, Sunflower's, and Rose's dancing could be embraced as remixing the 3 Rs of learning to: Reading, Remixing, and Writing anew. Hip hop feminine dance exists as a viable option to engage learners like Rose, who learned better with movement.

Rose's propensity for movement emerged in every space she penetrated that may have socially or systemically called for stillness. Sunflower and Stargazer (Rose's mother) mother indicated music and movement were tools of curricular focus. Sunflower shared her heightened ability to concentrate on her schoolwork when she was able to listen to music in her headphones. Naturally, the sound prompted some movement. The efficacy of movement and its partnered sound/music in the classroom pushes back on the hegemonic perception of the perceived benefits of stillness and silence as a more fruitful study tool and environment than music and movement. Stargazer noted a marked decrease in academic attainment when Rose complied with her mandate to sit still and remain quiet in class. Rose was able to articulate her inability to focus on both being still and completing schoolwork at the same time; she could only focus on one or the other. In my own field notes, I noted Rose was constantly moving, leading me to believe she may not have been paying attention. After remembering Lotus's sharing of Rose's self-insight, I re-oriented my perspective and was able to see that Rose was indeed engaged with the interview and questions, although she was in constant motion. This is the kind of welcoming of ratchet expression (loud, moving, authentic) is what Emdin (2021) promotes as essential to advancing students in the classroom whose primary culture, or home discourse, does not match the dominant discourse and culture of the school and/or classroom. This speaks to the conundrum Heath (1983) spoke of years ago when she also found that students whose home culture did not match the school's culture, had more difficulties in school.

Students' discourses of knowledge attainment and focus existent on the margins of traditional school acceptance are impeded by traditional classroom norms. Within hip hop feminist and aligned ratchet frameworks, all students can freely bring their dance entanglements with Fortnite, TikTok, You Tube, and other social entities into the classroom as an added component of criticality. Schools are still largely training students to work in traditional 9 to 5 work environments, disregarding the practices of excellence, dedication, financial security, and personal fulfillment found in artistic careers. Schools and school systems can more heavily consider arts-based careers as viable career pathways such as the dance pathway at Shamrock's school. Shamrock's high school also integrated other artistic pathways of theatre and music into their curriculum. At Shamrock's school, her dance was viewed as a valuable resource. Even her Elementary school had a robust dance program. Noticeably, Shamrock seemed the most at ease with her integrations and negotiations of dance with her school environments. She is the only student participant that experienced dance as a supported school curriculum choice.

Pop-culture's practiced understanding of hip hop feminine dance is a potent nutrient to the new pedagogical soil that might embrace, utilize, and allow impromptu instances of this dance style in the classroom. This fertile soil is what is needed for what Bettina Love (2019) calls abolitionist teaching in her book *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*. Love defines abolitionist teaching as "the practice of working in solidarity with communities of color while drawing on the imagination, creativity,

refusal, (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing, rebellious spirit, boldness, determination, and subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice in and outside of schools” (p. 2). This kind of pedagogical focus works to create safe spaces for performative hip hop cultures in the classroom.

Safe Spaces

Hip hop feminism calls for a renewed politic, beyond the politics of respectability, that keeps Black girls safe (Cooper, 2018). Not only are safe spaces for girls that dance needed in the community, they are needed as a support connected to school and/or within the classroom. Grenita Hall (2012) changed her perspective of feminine hip hop dance in such a place. Hall’s initial perspective of classical dance as being a high culture value that would surely inspire and challenge the young Black girls she sought to help, changed to an unapologetic and celebratory valuation of the historical, social, and textual attributes of hip hop feminist dance. Hall arrived at this conclusion *after* she tried to engaging with Black girls Ruth Nicole Brown’s after school mentorship program for girls (SOLHOT). She joined SOLHOT with a narrowed perspective laced with respectability politics about what dances would be deemed acceptable in the group.

Hall’s theoretical dance position of straightened waist as she assumed that her training, objective stances, and research-based plans of how relationships should develop did not yield the connectivity outcomes that she desired. Hall found assurance from a member of a sister circle of dancers she danced with called the Urban Bush Women. Still in existence today, Urban Bush Women utilize dance performance ensemble to promote and historicize the stories of marginalized groups and people of color. Hall performed a piece called “Batty Moves” choreographed by the group’s own Jawole Zollar 2006 Summer Institute that resonated in her

spirit, and ultimately enriched the trajectory of her work with the middle school youth in SOLHOT, because of its brazen open embrace of the powers of the backside. Hall explicates the message of the dance as an apparent message that states: there will be no more apologies for the voluptuousness of my backside. No More” (p. 166). In other words, they discarded the politics and assumptions that deem such movements low-class, hypersexual, dirty, and perfunctory exhibition of dance as an essentialist aspect of Black girlhood and womanhood, that shackled their dance performative expressions. Zollar passed Hall the keys to this newfound freedom by advising her to “focus on having fun with the girls and finding a commonality, not telling them that their movements are inappropriate or their music too sexual” (p. 166). This advice is in direct opposition to the politics of respectability, but galvanized Hall to introduce her own version of the dance called the Batty Dance to the group. Within a hip hop dance cypher, the girls in Hall’s SOLHOT group “gyrate, shake, juke, drop, get low, and pop” (Hall, 2012, p. 165), thereby renegotiating and redefining labels originally meant to reductively define them, into ones that contribute to and affirm their self-concepts. Many teachers echo Hall’s initial objective and judgmental stance, which may impede them from crossing boundaries of understanding with their students in the classroom. In this example, once Hall embraced her own ratchet (as Emdin, 2021 recommends), she was able to support the ratchet genius within the group and allow the participants a safe space to communicate their needs, and also experience joy without retribution.

New Visibility

The overwhelming popularity of TikTok dances support the penetrability of this dance style across race, age, and gender identification. Grandmas, babies, families, teens, young adults, people of various ethnicities, and those with various body types are all joining in the craze of

recording themselves doing TikTok dances. Like the Apple Bottom and the Twist, many dances that originated on the social media site Dubsmash predominantly featuring Black dancers, (the site that was mentioned by most of my research participants during the research period instead of TikTok) were learned, popularized, and monetized by White TikTok influencers. The crediting of work is important both culturally and professionally. As Kyra Gaunt (2015, 2016) showcased in her research on twerking, many of the black girls featured in videos were attached to others' feeds that were monetized, without any of those financial gains being directed to the originators. In musical performer Lizzo's (2021) recent TED talk on twerking, she passionately shared the importance of giving Black people credit for originating twerking, and other historical cultural resources that are appropriated without attribution. She shared, "Black people carry the origins of this dance through our DNA, through our blood, through our bones...we made twerking the global and cultural phenomenon it is today." (2021, 3:54). She cites her reasoning for sharing and crediting Black people as being originators of this dance, is due to the erasures of creators seen on TikTok and other platforms.

Lizzo's speech follows a recent trend of an emergent social conscience that is committed to honoring the actual originators and choreographers of popularized dances. This recent shift was evidenced by the public's outcry and subsequent atonement of appropriation and erasure of Black dance creators when The Jimmy Fallon Show featured a White popular TikTok dance influencer, Addison Ray, performing viral TikTok dances on his show in March 2021

(Caramanica, 2021). Most of the dances performed were choreographed by Black people but none of the choreographers of any of the dances were given credit. In response to the backlash, Addison Rae acknowledged the choreographers and posted performances of herself dancing with them. Jimmy Fallon also featured many of the choreographers on his show. These responses are in line with a renewed social conscious to honor Black creators of dance.

In another example, retribution for a ripped off dance was given to a 14-year-old Black girl from Georgia who created the Renegade dance to K Camp's "Lottery", named Jalaiah Harmon. Jalaiah tried to secure her choreography credit after popular TikTok influencers made the dance go viral without tagging or mentioning her as the creator. Jalaiah's hopes for recognition were deflated until an official from Dubsmash referred her to a *New York Times* reporter that relayed a familiar story of content poaching by White performers with no credit (Wicker, 2020). Dubsmash often saw content created on its platform copied and popularized by influencers on TikTok. Like Shamrock, Rose, and Sunflower, Jalaiah was described as a dancer trained in classical, lyrical, ballet, hip hop, jazz, and tap (Larenz, 2013). Since the article giving Jalaiah her credit was published, she went on to gain over 2 million followers on TikTok. She was also featured on the talk show, ELLEN, and was subsequently hired to create a TikTok dance to help market and promote a box office film.

Moreover, Black creators have begun receiving copyrights to their dances. Keara Wilson, creator of Savage dance challenge, and The Nae Nae Twins, who created the savage challenge

remix, are young Black girls that recently received copyright for their work (Paulvikander, 2021). Young Deji, a young Black male teen who created the Whoa dance, also received copyright credit, along with two other choreographers of color (Paulvikander, 2021). The citation of contributions of Black girl choreographers and dancers restores the integrity and humanity of sharing knowledge and culture.

Dance and music intrinsically mark time and culture. Dance authorship can be used in the classroom to deepen context, understanding, engagement, and joy in a wide array of academic endeavors. Throughout the study, Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose spoke about or inferred the fun they had while dancing. Again, working in this way aptly lends itself to the Muhammad's (2020) framework for culturally and historically responsive teaching. The pedagogical shift that positions hip hop feminine dance as an asset instead of a deficit and reason for punishment would help to position class as a safe space for students to bring their resources of brilliance from home into the classroom.

Implications for Research

Hip Hop Feminism

Hip hop feminism is keenly invested in pushing back on the politics of respectability. The findings in this research suggest the participants in this study were agentive in their negotiations with respectability politics. By deftly adapting a “time and a place” modus operandi, they were largely able to circumvent scenarios that impeded their dance freedoms and forge spaces

for their dance performances, whether they were invited there or not. One reason some have shown reticence towards hip hop dancing is the perspective that Black girls were somewhat “mindlessly” following the “orders” of rap lyrics, or somehow agreeing with the subjugation of girls and women presented in some rap lyrics. However, the focus, consistency, and practice Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose each put towards their dances exemplifies the more complex relationship the dancers have with hip hop music, music in general, and sound overall.

Feminist hip hop research can be extended by continuing the study of this dance in the lives of parents, teachers, and other professional adults. The finding that the girls constantly danced in every place imaginable provided a personal healing for me. Even as an adult, I still dance in cars, stores, restaurants... wherever I hear music, or feel the inclination to manipulate sound. I accepted this trait as an idiosyncrasy and an oddity. Like Shamrock, Sunflower, and Rose, the moments of joy I experienced were never worth sacrificing to appease the judgement that sometimes resulted from my impromptu dancing. This research has affirmed my home place in dance. However, I am left wondering how other women negotiate the politics of respectability in regard to their dance. Though Lotus and Sunflower were bonding through their mother daughter twerk session, Lotus was careful to make sure her face was not visible on camera. This research pushes back on some of the early hip hop feminist perspectives that video dancers and the like stole the hip hop shine away from the more authentic b-girls. This research expands the more recent hip hop works that resist ole skool reifications of slut shaming (Cooper,

2017). There are spaces for future research of Black girls', teachers', and other community leaders' negotiation and performance of hip hop dance inclinations within their lives and work spaces.

A hip hop feminist perspective can explore and interrogate aspects of hip hop feminine dance within Hip Hop Based Education and other hip hop inspired pedagogies in the classroom and school. A few years ago, two female Black teachers created back to school videos featuring themselves rapping, accompanied by their feminine hip hop dancing students. The videos expanded the catalogue of students' dancing hip hop alongside or in accompaniment of school officials. As referenced before, the Ron Clark Academy's videos of students performing hip hop feminine dances along with White male co-founder and teacher Ron Clark have often garnered positive feedback and great viewership. Even in the previously mentioned GAP commercial, the teacher was a Black male. Like the some of the earlier writings of hip hop feminists, I am wondering if rap is still the only hip hop modality Black women teachers feel comfortable expressing as a respectable representation of their teacher discourses. Each video exhibited literacy that functioned like a cypher, instead of the traditional hierarchy of authority model. Additionally, each video was indicative of time spent outside of the classroom. I wonder how hip feminine dance literacy is extended within the classroom space and possibly within the lessons. Noticeably, the videos feature school environments that are predominantly Black

demographically. This causes inquiry about how well hip hop culture is embraced in alternate demographically dominant schools as a sociocultural literacy and resource, and how is it policed.

Theory of Doing Too Much

Sunflower's criticality highlights an oft-ignored sector of possible research: when are teacher's actions perceived as "doing too much" by students, and how does it affect student learning outcomes? Sunflower chose the term "doing too much" to describe instances when a person's actions went beyond what was necessary for either a trivial or non-justifiable reason. Sunflower perceived some teachers to place more value on minor occurrences that may have troubled their personal biases, instead of focusing on the overall goal of teaching and learning. Sunflower demonstrated the flexibility in the term "doing too much" as she also shared peers gave the same label to a classmate that was going hard on the dance floor by doing a lot of original dances. While sunflower thought the dances were unique, others thought she was doing too much. How might teachers learn to access and adjust their personal actions in light of doing too much?

Arts Based Research

Feminist research is reflective and reflexive. As alluded to previously, working through a performative methodology mediated a personal healing with the politics of respectability. Now the labeling of fast, hot in the pants, and overtly sexual than hang over a Black girl dancer's head like a morning dew, had a name and category: the politics of respectability. The racial climate of

overt hostility and anger that the clubwomen had to endure was understandably counteracted by strategic behaviors to preserve their dignity, safety, and collective progress. Academic research must be expanded to accept the methods and presentation of arts-based research. As exhibited in this study, different modes of thinking, observing, and interpreting are used when research is grounded in artistic perspectives. Without it, the crisis of representation abounds. Post-modernism loses its espoused merit when academia only supports one mode of intellectual reasoning. Further inquiry into the efficacy of ethnodramas (scripted research), might ask how audience members or readers are informed or affected by the script or its production. In challenge to a performance studies mandate to add an academic accompaniment to the art-work, how does the academic pairing add or detract from the reader's ability to formulate their own conclusions?

Actor Network Theory

Actor Network Theory (Collon, 2004; Latour, 1991) is a compatible area of research with hip hop feminine dance that could also use as a theoretical lens of inquiry. Shamrock, Rose, and Sunflower indicated the various ways that dances 'find them', especially over the internet. Sunflower described the scenario of looking on social media and different dances pop into her dance feed. Even on YouTube, the suggestions of what will play next mediate the selection that may follow. In this way, I experienced the digital guidance of algorithms and found myself within an alternate world of dance challenges when I used You Tube to explore all the dance

challenges shared with me. The viral sensation of videos themselves mark the ability of posted videos to take off without user management. Kyra Gaunt (2018) explained this phenomenon of unmitigated video circulation and the negative effect it can have when a person is unable to remove a video from rotation. Further research into the interplay within the digital and material lives of students could be beneficial. Shamrock referenced her routine of watching friends dance online and/or creating dances with the expectation of viewership from schoolmates. How are localized algorithms instrumental in influencing material social networks in the lives of classmates and local peers?

Literacy

The everyday practice and communicative value exemplified within this research, affirm its value as a both primary and secondary Discourses (Gee, 1989, 2001, 2015; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). The social and cultural practices of dance were nurtured and understood by the continual interaction with the various dances. Daisy recognized and understood Shamrock's dancing in church as a symbol, or signal, that the service was ending. Rose utilized objects such as a table and spotlight to complete the "staging" of her performance, thus indicating her dialogic processes of viewing herself as a performer. When Sunflower started dancing in class with headphones on, she physically exemplified a dedicated cognitive focus resultant from being fully in her own comfort zone. Though it is tempting to want to ask what the dances mean in each time and space, as I did, it is important to conceptualize the dances *as* meaning. The dances are

intertwined and inseparable from context and meaning, as is other forms of literacy and Discourses (Gee, 2001).

I presented *To the TikTok You Don't Stop* at a 2021 *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* conference, to highlight the intergenerational literacy embedded in the presentation and learning of the short TikTok dance snippets. The conference title was derived from a line in an old Color Me Badd Song ("I Wanna Sex You Up") and therefore indicated the remix of an ole head (more veteran hip hop participant) learning the trade of the current youth movement. At the time of presentation, my daughter continually did a movement with her hands in response to something I said or in general. It was only after I found a dance challenge that I enjoyed and wished to present (the juju dance challenge), did I realize it was the exact dance she responded with in the car or house. My daughter did not recognize the dance challenge name when presented, but stated the dance is what she was doing! The dance transcended words or labeling titles. After I learned the dance, I understood why words did not always capture her soul-infused interpretation and response to what I was saying or doing. In essence, the dance itself was the meaning, which shifted according to context. In some instances, it was an agreement of what I said or did, sometimes it was a response of mockery, and other times it exemplified a generational disagreement. The gesture always had to be decoded according to context. Future research might inquire of these kinds of subversive modes of communication that take place in the classroom individually and collectively. It might additionally investigate the different ways

dance can be welcomed explicitly and implicitly in the classroom. In the same way, that I recognized the Whoa subversively performed at the end of the dance performance, once observers become aware of the dance vocabulary, opportunities for meaning exchange and interpretation are expanded. In this way, hip hop feminine dance might be explored as a form of translanguaging (Sahan & Rose, 2021). As demonstrated in this research, embracing hip hop culture and its embedded language present translanguaging opportunities that pacify the constant need to code-switch.

Limitations

Relying on description for what can be best appreciated by first-hand observation is a limitation of this research. Witnessing the performance of the many dance communications in context could provide a greater level of understanding. The research presented in this study does not seek or provide literal or figurative interpretations of the dances, like Huntington (2007) does when she speaks of the cabbage patch as metaphorically bucking the system. It instead maintains an ardent focus on what the dances meant to each participant in the moments of performance.

Summary

The exhaustive networks of acquisition and exchange of hip hop feminine dance as literacy illuminates this cultural practice as existent in each phase, shadow, and crevice of Shamrock's, Sunflower's, and Rose's lives. These young ladies exert their agency, their right to simply be (feel, express, diversify), their right to move, and their right to groove. When they

didn't have dance-sanctioned spaces to dance, they did what hip hop was founded on: they used available materials and made it do what it do (they relied on their genius to create needed resources). Rose found a spotlight on the side of a house and a stage on the lunchroom table. Sunflower and Shamrock created space to dance during class transition, school lunch, and the car. Their dancing did not waste time or attempt to sensualize onlookers. Their dance bridged engagement from high school to college, it provided comfort and companionship in isolated spaces, it helped them nurture relationships, it helped them to celebrate, and it helped them concentrate.

When you see Black girls dancing: imagine Rose's grandma saying, "Go Hollywood, get it." Imagine her and her older sister drift away from quarreling to effectively collaborate on dance routines and photo shoots; bridging their differences in age. Imagine Shamrock cheering up her mom, or creating faux concerts with her younger brother, though he is in elementary school and she only has one and a half years left in high school. Imagine her dancing with a friend to get energized and ready for school. Imagine Sunflower and her step-dad doing *the Whoa* in the kitchen or her entire family dancing together as they clean the house in preparation for guests. Imagine shared experiences that create memories that extend beyond death.

Sunflower shared one of her recent dance videos with her friends with me, which was the last video she was able to make before the friend passed away suddenly from an illness. The dance videos remain as enduring flowers of friendship, life, and existence.

Since the research period ended, the participants continued their creative lives with renewed vigor, confidence, and confirmation of their creativity. Rose became active in the film industry. Stargazer was reminiscent and grateful for her experience with this research when the director exclaimed the need for one of the child actors to have dance ability. In this moment, practice met opportunity, and Rose was chosen as the highlighted actor. Sunflower chose to attend the high school where classes were held as part of the dance pathway curriculum. Sunflower was one of the ten students chosen by the dance teacher to study dance with a college professor. At the last dance review before the pandemic, I was able to see both Sunflower and Shamrock dance together. From watching the videos and previous performances, I could see the growth that Daisy described as happening each year. I allowed the familiar tear to surface that always seem to come when I observe people's spirit artfully capture moments in dance. Shamrock was selected to continue color guard performance in college. When you see Black girls dancing, imagine 'A' students sharing Black girl joy. Imagine girls with hopes, goals, and feelings that just love to dance, cause it's fun.

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Appendix A

Recruitment / Advertisement

Black Girls in K-12 That Love to Dance Hip Hop needed for a Research Study

Dear Potential Research Participant:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled *Black Girls, Hip Hop Dance, and Respectability Politics (Feminine Hip Hop Dance)*. The purposes of this study are to explore how Black girls that dance hip hop experience being reprimanded, redirected, or shamed because of a dance (referred to as the politics of respectability), as well as find out how the dance has been a part of their lives; including how they learn and exchange knowledge of the dances.

- I am seeking Black girls in grades k-12, who loves to dance hip hop, and has been reprimanded, redirected, or shamed because of it at school, on a dance team, in the community, or some other place. One girl from Elementary, Middle, and High School will be chosen for the study.
- I am also seeking a parent or guardian of each girl to participate in the research to a lesser extent.

Your participation involves collaboration with the researcher over a one -month period of time. The research begins with an in-depth interview with the student about the research topics at the student's home, or at a location that is comfortable for her. During the interview, I will ask the student if she can show me some of the dances she speaks of personally, or on the internet. The student can skip any questions or demonstrations at any time during the research period.

I will view artifacts that are a part of the student's hip hop dance world, such as videos, dance brochures, pictures, and other such items. This interview should take one to two hours. I will need to interview the parent of guardian on the same or a different day to find out about the student's dance experiences from her/his perspective. This interview should be much shorter than the student's interview. Over the month, I will ask that both student and guardian maintain a log, that will be given, to briefly write dance occurrences as they happen or are remembered. I will check in with the pair briefly each week to collect the log. Brief follow up interviews/ conversations may take place throughout the research period as more experiences occur.

The researcher will dramatize the research to maintain the integrity of the voice of the participants, and to reach a wider audience beyond academia.

Participants will be represented anonymously in the research and there are no foreseeable risks for participation. The benefit of this research is that it may contribute to the understanding of a social/cultural practice of Black girls, which could impact classroom and social rules and practices that negatively affect them.

Because of the possible length of time of the first session, I would like to provide pizza (or something similar) to the home of the research participants. Participants may opt out of the research at any point during the research period.

If you are available to participate or would like additional information about this study, please feel free to call me LaTasha Price at (404) 840-0161 or send an e-mail to drprice@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

LaTasha Price

Appendix B

Eligibility of Screening Consent Script

Feminine Hip Hop Dance: Telephone Eligibility Screening Consent Script

Hello I am calling because you (or your daughter) indicated an interest in participating in a research study about Black girls and Hip Hop Dance.

My name is LaTasha Price and I am a researcher at the University of Georgia's Department of Language and Literacy Education.

[I have already spoken with your parent or guardian _____ , who has agreed to participate in the study and given me permission to contact you and find out if you are interested in participating in the study and if you meet the criteria to participate in the study?

The purpose of this research study is to understand how Black girls feel about their own dance performance and how they feel when others make them feel badly about it. We hope that this study will help advance fair treatment and inclusion of Black girls in schools and society. The study will take place over a one-month period of time and will involve interviewing the school aged dancer and a parent or guardian. The research will be conducted at your home, or a location that is comfortable to you. Do you think you might be interested in participating in that study?

{If No}: Thank you very much for your time.

{If Yes}:

At the end of this interview, we will tell you if you qualify or not to participate in the main study. If you don't qualify, all the information you gave me will be immediately destroyed).

But before enrolling people in this study, we need to ask you some questions to determine if you are eligible for our main study. And what I would now like to do is to ask you a series of questions about your daughter's hip hop dance experience. This phone call should take no more than 15 minutes of your time.

There is a possibility that some of these questions may make you uncomfortable or distressed; if so, please let me know. You don't have to answer those questions if you don't want to.

All information that I receive from you during this phone interview, including your name and any other information that can possibly identify you, will be strictly confidential and will be kept under lock and key. As the data is collected, a pseudonym will be used to replace identifying information. Remember, your participation is voluntary; you can refuse to answer any questions, or stop this phone interview at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Do I have your permission to ask you these questions?

Thank you.

Please spell your name for me.

Eligibility requirements:

[for parents]

Does your daughter racially identify as Black?

Does your child love to dance to hip hop music?

Has your child ever been reprimanded for dancing (with or without music)?

{If Yes to all three questions}:

Great! Your daughter meets the eligibility criteria to participate in this research.

In order to participate in this research, I will need both you and your daughter to read and sign a consent form. Only one girl from elementary, middle, and high school and a parent or guardian of each will be chosen to participate in the study.

If you like, I can go over the consent form with you now, and then leave it with you at a convenient location, and pick it up after you let me know you both have signed the form. Or, I can do the latter and simply drop it off to you and pick it up when it's ready, if you still agree to do the research.

Which would you like me to do?

- If the participant would like me to read the Consent form, I will read it to her

Where should I drop off the consent form (address)?

Is this the best phone number to reach you?

May I contact your daughter after this phone call to find out if she is eligible, and to explain the interview process?

If now is not a good time to call, when should I call?

{if yes}

What is her phone number?

{If NO to one of the Eligibility Requirements}

Thank you so much for your time. At this time, you do not meet the criteria for this research study.

.....
.....

Eligibility requirements:

[for students]

Do you identify as a Black girl?

Do you dance to hip hop or rap music often?

Have you ever gotten in trouble for dancing (at school, a certain way in a dance group, at home, etc)?

Great! You meet the eligibility criteria to participate in this research.

I will drop off the consent forms where your parent or guardian has instructed me to do so, and I will pick them up from you all when they have been completed.

Do you have any questions for me?

Do you know anyone else who might be interested in participating in this research?

What is a good name and contact number and/or email for that person?

Thank you so much for your time! I will contact you soon.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 404.840.0161 or by email at drprice@gmail.com. My faculty advisor and study supervisor is Dr. Donna Alvermann. Dr. Alvermann can be reached at 706.308.7195 or dalverma@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to Institutional Review Board, 609 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Appendix C

Consent for Artifact

Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research study entitled Black Girls, Hip Hop Dance, and Respectability Politics (Hip Hop Feminine Dance).

This research hopes to find out whether how Black girls in grades k-12 feel about their own hip hop dance performance, and how they have felt when they have been judged or treated negatively because of it. Your participation will involve allowing the researchers to use the information/data that were collected by your child's participation in dance events throughout her life. This could include family videos or pictures, or organized dance events. It is always your choice on what is shared. If you have an artifact that you would like to share but not include in research, it will be excluded from the research data pool.

Your participation, of course, is voluntary but would be greatly appreciated. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you agree to the use of your information/data for this research project, please simply sign on the line below; if you don't agree, none of your data will be included in the research and you can still participate in the program.

If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed.

The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. *After your initial name and contact information are collected, we will create a pseudonym for you and only refer to you and your child by that pseudonym throughout the research period.* Identifiable data, such as the video, will be stored in a private folder only viewable by the researcher and research records may be reviewed by departments at the University of Georgia responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

There are no known risks associated with this research. However, there will be only three student participants (one from elementary, middle, and high school), and one parent or guardian for each girl. I will use fake names and locations to mask the identity of the participants. The findings from this project may help to restore a perspective of children at play to a popular past time of Black girls, instead of supporting the view of it as adult behavior. This kind of view is thought to

contribute to increased suspensions and punishments for Black girls. The kind of understanding generated by this research could also inform classroom practice that will be more fair and engaging for all children.

The researcher conducting this study are: LaTasha Price. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me by phone at 404.840.0161, or email at drprice@gmail.com. You may also contact the supervisor of the study, Dr. Donna Alvermann, at 706.308.7195 or dalverma@uga.edu.

Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 629 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject’s Consent to Participate in Research:

I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Appendix D

Minor Assent Form

Minor Assent Form Feminine Hip Hop Dance

We are doing a research study to find out how children like you, that love to dance, feel when they get in trouble because of dancing. If you agree to be in the study, you will work with me over the period of one month, observing times that you dance, and reporting that back to me.

The study would begin with one interview that should last maybe an hour and a half. You would tell me all about how you learned to dance, when you started dancing, and how much you dance now. You would tell me about times when you have gotten in trouble because of your dancing, how that made you feel, and what your reaction was. You would allow me to take notes on our interactions, and video and audio record our interviews, but you can choose not to video record, and you choose not to audio record at any time, and no one will be upset. It is how research works!

You can also choose not to answer any questions at any time. If you don't want to teach them yourself, you could show me the dances in an online video. You would show me videos, pictures, writings or anything that you feel shows something about your life of dance. After our first interview, I will interview your parent or guardian.

After that, I will leave a survey with both you and your parent, to describe on the paper moments when you danced that day. I would pick up these surveys once a week, from both you and your parent or guardian, and leave you with a new one. At that time of pick up, we would have a brief conversational interview, maybe lasting ten to fifteen minutes, about anything you wanted to share about what happened that week when you danced.

Understanding how you really feel about doing dances that you love may help people to understand Black girls better and help them to be successful in school. Being in the study may help you to understand your own dancing better as a valuable cultural practice. We also hope that learning about this dance practice will help us to teach and understand reading in different ways, and that will help other children in the future.

You do not have to say "yes" if you don't want to. No one, including your parents, will be mad at you if you say "no" now or if you change your mind later. We have also asked your parent's permission to do this. Even if your parent says "yes," you can still say "no." Remember, you can ask us to stop at any time. Your grades in school will not be affected whether you say "yes" or "no."

I will use the information I collect in this study to publish a report about the topic. I will use fake names for you and your parent or guardian, and any location or building name throughout this project to make sure that other people cannot tell who you are. Only the researchers on this study, will know who you are. I intend to create a dramatic script from the information in the study that will be performed in some way. I will give you and you're your parent or guardian, an opportunity to review the script before it is finalized before performance. Only three girls and their parent or guardian will be chosen to participate in the study. I will use different names and locations so that people will not be able to guess who you are.

You can ask any questions that you have about this study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can contact LaTasha Price at drprice@uga.edu or at 404.840.0161. This study will be supervised by Dr. Donna Alvermann. You can also contact her at 706.308.7195 or dalverma@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu, or ask us next time.

Name of Child: _____ **Parental Permission on File:** Yes
 No**

*** (If "No," do not proceed with assent or research procedures.)*

(For Written Assent) Signing here means that you have read this paper or had it read to you and that you are willing to be in this study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign.

Signature of Child: _____ **Date:** _____

(For Verbal Assent) Indicate Child's Voluntary Response to Participation: Yes No

Signature of Researcher: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix E

Parent Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

CONSENT FORM

Black Girls, Hip Hop, and Respectability Politics (Feminine Hip Hop Dance)

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” A copy of this form will be given to you.

Investigator: LaTasha Price
Language and Literacy of Education Department at the University
of Georgia
404.840.0161 / drprice@uga.edu

Under the supervision of: Dr. Donna Alvermann
Language and Literacy of Education Department at the University
of Georgia
309M Aderhold Hall / 110 Carlton Street
Athens, Georgia 30602
706.308.7195 / dalverma@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study

In schools, Black girls are being suspended 5 – 6 times more than their peers for subjective reasons. It is increasingly important that we understand Black girl's subjectivities so that we create more supportive environments. The purposes of this study are to explore how Black girls that dance hip hop experience being reprimanded, redirected, or shamed because of a dance (referred to as the politics of respectability), as well as find out how the dance has been a part of their lives; including how they learn and exchange knowledge of the dances.

- I am seeking Black girls in grades k-12, who loves to dance hip hop, and has been reprimanded, redirected, or shamed because of it at school, on a dance team, in the community, or some other place. One girl from Elementary, Middle, and High School will be chosen for the study.
- I am also seeking a parent or guardian of each girl to participate in the research to a lesser extent.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, and you agree to give your child permission to participate, **YOU AND YOUR CHILD** will be asked to ...

- Work with the researcher over a one-month period of time.
- Share artifacts with me that are a part of the student's hip hop dance world, such as videos, dance brochures, pictures, and other such items.

YOUR CHILD will be asked to ...

- Have an in-depth discussion with the researcher about her hip hop dance experiences, especially times that she may have gotten in trouble or felt uncomfortable because of dancing. Share how dances are learned and shared as well as how she feels about dancing. The interview will be audio and video recorded.
 - I will attempt to learn some of the dances so that I can present them in a dramatization of the research
 - The interview will take place at the student's home, or at a location that is agreed upon by the child and guardian participant
 - This interview should take one to two hours.
 - The child and/or parent can opt out of any recording or skip any question asked.
- Demonstrate/teach me some of the dances referred to in the interview, or to show me on the internet.
- Keep a log to document instances that she dances during the week, or memories of dance times that were not shared. I will collect this each week.

YOU will be asked to ...

- Have a discussion about your child's dance experiences (how and where learned), as well as circumstances that have created discomfort for you and or your child because of her dancing or desire to dance a particular way.
 - This interview should last one hour.
 - Can be on the same or a different day as the child's interview
 - This will be audio recorded. However, the recording can be stopped or denied at any point during the interview.
- Keep a log or journal to document instances that your child dances during the week, or memories of dance times that were not shared. I will collect this each week.
-

- The researcher will dramatize the research to maintain the integrity of the voice of the participants, and to reach a wider audience beyond academia.
- Participants will be represented anonymously in the research and there are no foreseeable risks for participation.

Risks and discomforts

- One feeling of discomfort may result from the topic matter. If young girls get in trouble for dancing, it is assumed that they are doing something that seems provocative.
- As hip hop educators consider bringing hip hop culture in the classroom, this kind of research will help them to honor instead of demonize an aspect of the culture that is common to girls
- Data will be dramatized and coded without revealing any personal information about the participants
 - * Three girls, along with a parent or guardian for each were chosen as participants in the study.
 - Some participants may all inform one single character to further prevent possible recognition of participants
 - Original names, location, and identifiers will be given alternate names to aid in masking the identities of participants
 - Participants will be given the opportunity to give feedback on the character developed from their data.

Benefits

- The benefit of this research is that it may contribute to the understanding of a social/cultural practice of Black girls, which could impact classroom and social rules and practices that negatively affect them.
- Increased understanding of how Black girls think, and feel can help classroom practice become more fair and inclusive for all students.
- Instead of viewing Black girls dancing hip hop as provocative, society may begin to consider it as children at play; viewing little girls as children instead of little adults
- This research honors an aspect of hip hop culture that has been ignored and sometimes shunned.
- By honoring Black girls dance styles, it may increase the self- esteem of the participant because the research validates their own experiences, and natural ways of being
- By understanding how Black girls make meaning as they socialize, and outside of school, educators are better able to connect out of school and in school literacies.

Incentives for participation

Pizza or a similar meal will be provided at the time of the first interview session.

Audio/Video Recording

The audio recording will be transcribed so that the data can be analyzed. Video devices will be used to help the researcher learn the dance, and to help create the characters for the dramatization. Only the researcher will view the video recordings. When the research is

complete, data will be maintained in a private folder and then destroyed after seven years at the most.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview audio recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____ I do not want to have this interview audio recorded.

_____ I am willing to have this interview audio recorded.

_____ I do not want my child to have this interview audio recorded.

_____ I allow my child to have this audio interview audio recorded.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview video recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____ I do not want to have this interview video recorded.

_____ I am willing to have this interview video recorded.

_____ I do not want my child to have this interview video recorded.

_____ I allow my child to have this audio interview video recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality

After your initial name and contact information are collected, we will create a pseudonym for you and only refer to you and your child by that pseudonym throughout the research period. Identifiable data, such as the video, will be stored in a private folder only viewable by the researcher and research records may be reviewed by departments at the University of Georgia responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking part is voluntary

If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed. You may choose to stop your participation at any time during the study.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is LaTasha Price, a graduate student at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact LaTasha Price at drprice@uga.edu or at 404.840.0161, or the supervisor of the study, Dr. Donna Alvermann at 706.308.7195 or dalverma@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Appendix F

Dance Survey

Hip Hop Dance Today

The Secret Life of Girls and Hip Hop Dance

1. Did you dance any kind of hip hop today?

Yes

No

2. If you did dance hip hop today, where were you?

at school

at home

at dance class

in the car

in a store

Other (please specify)

3. What were you dancing to?

A song on the radio

A song streamed on the internet

A song you or someone else was singing

A song on television

Other (where did the song come from) Tell me about the experience. What made you move.

4. Did you get in trouble for dancing today?

Yes

No

If yes, tell me about it.

1

5. Were you dancing in a place that you felt you are not allowed to dance in?

Yes

No

If yes, tell me about it.

6. Tell me any stories that you might think of that involve your hip hop dance.

7. Would you like me to call you so that you can tell me the story instead of typing it?

Yes

No

Appendix G

Student Interview Guide for Data Collection

Hello, my name is LaTasha Price and I am Ph.D. student in the School of Education at the University of Georgia. Thank you so much for agreeing to allow me to record this interview! I am conducting a research project on the culture of Hip Hop dance for Black girls. I am wanting to find out how much this dance type is a part of their lives, and more specifically, times when they have been made to feel uncomfortable because of their dancing. Do you have any questions so far?

As we discussed in the consent, you are free to stop or pause the interview any point if the need arises. You may skip any questions as well. You may pause or stop any audio or video recording at any time. My recorded file will be stored on a private research drive and will be viewed by my advisor and possible other UGA official stakeholders.

This research may be published in various forms, to include a dramatized depiction of the research and analysis. Before the research is published, you will have the opportunity to view analysis and characterizations based on your research, and provide feedback. Your name will never be used in the publication or presentation of the research. Some of the characterizations in the final presentation may be based on a combination of research participants. I will use an alternative name instead of your name in the transcription of the audio to maintain your anonymity. Are you ready to begin?

The first thing I would like to know about is your musical and dance style:

- I. Dance and music background
 - A. What kind of music do you most like to dance to?
 - a. Where do you listen to this music?
 - b. Are there people in our life that do not approve of the kind of music you like? Tell me about it.
 - B. How would you describe your dance style?
 - C. Tell me about how you first learned to dance.
 - a. Tell me about the first memories you have of dancing?
 - D. How often do you dance a day?
 - a. Tell me about a time or times when you have “caught yourself” dancing without even realizing it.
 - b. Tell me about times that you cannot seem to stop yourself from dancing.
 - E. Tell me who influenced your love of dance?
 - F. Who do you look up to for dance now?
 - G. How long does it take you to learn a new dance?
 - H. What is your favorite song to dance to right now?
 - i. Does it have a particular kind of dance that goes along with it?
 1. Can you show me?
 - ii. How does the song inspire *you* to dance?

1. How does it make you feel?

Now that we have talked about your music and dance background, I want to talk more about how dancing to Hip Hop music makes you feel.

II. Dancing affect

- A. How do you feel when you dance?
- B. How does dancing affect your mood
- C. Do you dance when you are angry, mad, sad, happy?
- D. What are you thinking about when you dance?
 - a. Are you thinking about someone you like when you dance?
 - i. Can you tell me about a time this happened?
 - ii. Does this affect your dance style? How?
- E. If you had to put it in words, what are you saying when you dance?
- F. Do you feel accepted by others when you dance?

Now that we have talked about how dancing to Hip Hop music makes you feel, let's get into more detail about the dances. This is the section that I want to video to help me remember exactly how the dances are presented. Remember, you can pause or stop the recording at any time.

III. Dances

- a. What are your favorite dances?
- b. Can you give me a demonstration, or show me on the internet?

Now that we have talked about how you feel about your dancing, I would like to know how other people, like parents, adults, teachers, dance instructors, classmates, or other people interacted with you when they did not seem to approve of your dancing.

IV. Politics of Respectability

- a. Tell me about a time when you gotten in trouble or were “corrected” for dancing?
 - i. Where were you?
 - ii. How did it make you feel?
 - iii. What did you do?
 - iv. Did you tell anyone about it?
 - v. How did it affect your relationship with that person in the future?
 - vi. Did you or do you perform the same kind of dances around that person?
- b. Were you ever told not to do a particular dance in a certain location? Tell me about that.
 - i. Where were you, and what were you doing?
 - ii. Where do you feel free to dance the way you want to?

Appendix H

Parent Interview Guide for Data Collection

Hello, my name is LaTasha Price and I am Ph.D. student in the School of Education at the University of Georgia. Thank you so much for agreeing to allow me to record this interview! I am conducting a research project on the culture of Hip Hop dance for Black girls. I am wanting to find out how much this dance type is a part of their lives, and more specifically, times when they have been made to feel uncomfortable because of their dancing. Do you have any questions so far?

As we discussed in the consent, you are free to stop or pause the interview any point if the need arises. You may skip any questions as well. You may pause or stop any audio or video recording at any time. My recorded file will be stored on a private research drive and will be viewed by my advisor and possible other UGA official stakeholders.

This research may be published in various forms, to include a dramatized depiction of the research and analysis. Before the research is published, you will have the opportunity to view analysis and characterizations based on your research, and provide feedback. Your name will never be used in the publication or presentation of the research. Some of the characterizations in the final presentation may be based on a combination of research participants. I will use alternative names instead of the names of the research participants in the transcription of the audio to maintain your anonymity. Are you ready to begin?

The first thing I would like to know about your daughter as a dancer.

- I. How would you describe _____ (daughter/child) as a dancer?
 - a. When you think about her dancing, what memories come to mind?
- J. Tell me about when she first learned to dance?
- K. Tell me about

Now that we have talked about dance in your daughter's life, I am interested to know more about your view of dance.

- I. Do you dance at all?
 - a. Tell me about how you feel about dance.
 - b. What kind of music do you like to dance to
- II. What do you think about your daughter dancing to hip hop music?
 - a. What do you think about other little girls dancing to hip hop music?
 - b. How do you feel about her dancing to hip hop music?
- III. Are there certain times you don't agree with her dancing?
 - a. If so, tell me about it.
 - b. Can you tell me about times that she has been corrected for her dancing?
- IV. Do you consider how other people view her dances?
 - a. Tell me what that looks like?