USING NEW ORLEANS BOUNCE TO EXPLORE A BLACK AND QUEER PLEASURE POLITIC

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This thesis serves as an analysis of New Orleans bounce as a site for asserting ideas about blackness that defies a politics of respectability while embracing the pleasurable, the queer, and the rachet. The genre prompts an informal discourse, centering on identity, place, and the body that engages and frames the music. With unapologetic sexuality and gendered concepts being the cornerstones of the music, there is room for bounce in national conversations about pleasure politics and the Black body as a host for agency. Centering the perspective of the local experience, this text explores bounce as a cultural product of New Orleans that has the potential to be seen as politically transformative. The resonation of the genre with its constituents prompts the question of how is Black feminine and queer sexuality created and deployed in the clubs, at birthday celebrations, on party buses, at block parties, and in childhood bedrooms, the music flows through? Contextualizing the music and its cultural significance, this text explicates what the shakers and MCs of New Orleans Bounce have to say about Black sexuality, queerness, race, and class. Defiant in relation to hegemonic ideas about sexuality and the body, yet culturally relevant, from the margins, bounce music places Black New Orleanians at the center of a universe that engages with the raunchy, the "real", and the pleasurable.
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It is imperative to show gratitude to my beloved city New Orleans, as this text is largely founded on it shaping and grounding my identity an ultimately my budding theory. To New Orleans’ finest, my mother, Latoya Brown, thank you for your care motivation throughout my journey through education. And to the shakers, swigglers, Bounce MCs, DJs and the listeners who keep the music alive and flowing through New Orleans and beyond, thank you.
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Introduction: What Does New Orleans Bounce Have To Say?

When initially seeking out a topic for my thesis, I intended to make black joy and pleasure central to whatever project that I chose. The vast library of scholarship documenting brutality against Black people—Black women and queer people in particular—is devastating and exhausting.¹ In the academy, many researchers often characterized New Orleans as a dispossessed space marked by some of the most dreadful aspects of the American deep south². In the shadows of one of the most prominent slave ports in the southern U.S., writing about New Orleans vibrates with a tone of tragedy and suffering felt by locals, transplants, and tourists alike. Situated at the swampy mouth of the Mississippi River, in a region known as “cancer alley” and in the path of regular hurricanes from the Gulf of Mexico, New Orleans has increasingly become characterized by Black suffering and tragedy. Residents of New Orleans live with environmental and man-made disasters as part of their everyday lives³. “Natural” disasters that stem from an anti-black culture of negligence concerning Black lives and spaces. From centuries of eroding coastlines exacerbated by natural gas production and the intentional environmental racism


enacted against primarily Black and indigenous areas in southern Louisiana, the situation of natural disasters most notably, Hurricane Katrina, continues to disproportionately harm Black and Brown people. What also exacerbates “natural” disasters and other environmental crises is the pervasiveness of poverty and decades of the structural disenfranchisement of Black people, especially down south⁴.

While this scholarship has been critically necessary and remains essentially transformative, I began to view my Black femme existence as primarily rooted in dark and habituated suffering. The most fulfilling, outstanding, and erotic parts of myself and my identity became marginal as I delved into research about the history of race- and gender-based oppression. For my own well-being and a desire to understand Black life in its full complexity, I began turning to emerging historical, cultural, and theoretical work that focused on the role of pleasure and joy as a political strategy deployed by Black women and queer people.⁵

Having been born and raised in New Orleans, I naturally began considering my hometown as a site for study. Many New Orleanians live life to the fullest amidst the oppressive political and economic climate of New Orleans. I have been surrounded by strategies of pleasure and joy my entire life. Whether it be from gathering with my closest family members, the

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celebration of life when one has passed through second lines, or communal block parties thrown to promote unity within a neighborhood\textsuperscript{6}.

While in the rest of United States, conventional leisure cultures are organized on the margins of one’s life, often in private or commercialized spaces a few times of the year, New Orleans is known the world over as a culture emanating with year-round pleasure publics, exuberant music, nourishing food, and an attitude toward living that cannot be found elsewhere. This reputation is derived in part from its commercialized tourist culture, which happens in small pockets of the city—the French Quarter, on Frenchmen Street, and Jazz Fest; it is also derived from the city’s non-commercialized cultures, in neighborhoods across the city, where black New Orleanians, who make up the majority of the city, celebrate during funeral processions, seasons of second lines, Super Sunday, and on party buses and trailers. Those most impacted by the disenfranchisement, neglect, and marginalization of Black people are also the cultural centers of the city.

More than any other place in the United States, residents of New Orleans socialize, dance and play music in the streets. Black New Orleanians not only make the tourism culture possible through its artistic and service labor, they are also the main drivers of local pleasure cultures, which nurture, enliven and sustain communities. Recently, the owners of the Joy Theater, which is located in the tourist district, denounced this fact by posting on their marquee: “Everything you love about New Orleans is because of black people.”. This message really gives props to

\textsuperscript{6} Second lines are also referred to as jazz funerals, but I have personally never heard a Black local ever say this. With roots in Congo Square where enslaved people would gather on Sundays, second lines are a social space in New Orleans that occurs every Sunday under the facilitation of a local social and pleasure club or can be commonly seen as monumental celebrations throughout life e.g. weddings, graduations, funerals, birthday parties. Evans, F. (2011). “Congo Square: African Roots In New Orleans”. University of Louisiana at Lafayette.
those that has had the city on its back, especially following the reconstruction period since Hurricane Katrina. It is the labor of Black New Orleanians that make the fantasy come true.

After immersing myself in the literature on New Orleans’ pleasure cultures, I thought that I would feel inspired to write but instead, I felt stuck. After reading countless pages of journals, novels, articles, zines, and everything else in between, it began to feel as though everything had already been said. During one of the many days that I spent working in coffee shops, reading, freewriting, and procrastinating, I took a break and walked across the street to the bookstore, hoping to find something on the bounce music scene that would inspire me or at least teach me something new. The only thing that I could find was Big Freedia’s memoir, buried between books about brass bands, historical and modern jazz clubs, and all the world-renowned classically trained musicians of New Orleans--Harry Connick Jr, the Marsalis brothers of the city, etc. I thought that maybe the books on Bounce music were in another section or inside the bookshelf behind where the live-in cat was resting. I asked the cashier if they knew of any other books on Bounce music and looking perplexed, they told me that Big Freedia’s book was the only thing that they could think of and that it is quite rare for there to be much literature on it at all.\(^7\)

This absence was a realization and a call to action. I knew bounce to be one of the most significant cultural developments in New Orleans’ recent history. Internationally known for its beats, dance styles, and lyrical honesty about sex, bounce emanates from local black neighborhoods, where listeners’ thoughts, bodies, and spirits are likely to rocket launch out of normative realms of propriety and hierarchy into a world where “That Beat” and those who love

it take centerstage. Through the bounce scene, working poor and working-class people, especially women and queer people, use music, lyrics, and movement to center their ideas, aesthetics, experiences, pleasures, ethics, bodies, and desires. And in turn, this culture creates pleasures that are weaved through people’s everyday lives, offering guidelines and orientations for thriving. As a black femme, I knew bounce culture to be an erotic, confrontational, exploratory pleasure culture where Black New Orleanians have a place to proudly assert their ratchetness, queerness, and their communities as meaningful. There is an immense cultural power that emanates from the bounce scene and places like the Desire and Melpomene projects still go largely unnoticed.

With my new Big Freedia memoir and a new guilty pleasure romance novel in tote, I left the bookstore determined to understand and share what the shakers and MCs of New Orleans bounce have to say about Black sexuality, queerness, race, class, and the political and social landscape of New Orleans. Most musical research on New Orleans focuses on what scholars find most notable about the city—its Jazz Age. Given that Black New Orleanians have a deeply embodied and multi-generational practice of using celebration and pleasure to survive oppression, what might the bounce music scene tell us about contemporary strategies deployed by feminine and queer black residents? This led me to my ultimate research question of how is defiant and transformative Black feminine and queer sexuality created and deployed in the clubs, at birthday celebrations, on party buses, at block parties, and in childhood bedrooms that bounce music flows through and what do they make possible? What knowledges circulate in the bounce scene? What is the role of Bounce culture in surviving and thriving in New Orleans? I also left excited to think about what fresh ideas bounce culture might add to Black queer and feminist

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8 “That Beat” is in reference to a bounce song.
scholarship, which has generated the most robust research and theory about the relationship between power, sex, pleasure, queerness, and black life. How might my city and its vibrant bounce culture contribute to scholarly conversations that have been so important in my own development?

This historically-grounded, literary review, research project delves into these questions. Drawing on scholarship on pleasure cultures in and beyond New Orleans, I will explore the shape and rhythms of cultural resistance in New Orleans’ bounce culture and consider what the non-normative pleasure cultures of working-class queer and femme Black New Orleanians can teach us about strategies of Black resistance, Black resilience (I know we are tired hearing that word, especially New Orleanians), and Black agency. Intending to provide insight into how these concepts can contribute to conversation with Black feminist and queer scholarship on rap and hip-hop culture. I will delve into the ways and degrees to which Bounce culture challenges southern hip-hop culture, which tends to shy away from centering the tales and rhymes of women (queer and cis-hetero) and gay men in general. And I will consider what the ratchet, shameless, and defiant in New Orleans bounce adds to the field of Black feminist and queer theory as the frameworks affirm and inform its listeners.

In addition to reviewing secondary literature on pleasures cultures, blackness, and queerness in and beyond New Orleans, I will provide a retrospective analysis of Bounce culture that centers my experiences growing up immersed in Bounce culture. In my childhood, Bounce music was not a site of academic knowledge, but it was an exciting and pleasurable site that helped me make sense of our world in New Orleans. Bounce has been a core part of my memories of my childhood where I admired and tried to emulate all the shakers. I will examine Bounce music as part of the soundtrack of not only Black New Orleans but also my own Black
feminist formations. The “Social Shakedown” on the radio’s Q93 every Saturday, the late nights I spent with my cousins in our shared room shaking, and all the girls who got in trouble at school for shaking at dances were central to how I would begin seeing the world and the way that the world saw Black girls and women. The music would provide structure as it was something that you could count on hearing and enjoying every Saturday on 93.3 FM. It would serve as a container as it would hold together communities with the way that DJs bring entire neighborhoods and whomever the neighbors choose to invite to block parties. The music provided me with a language, as it taught me some of the first few things about sex, intimate partnerships, the other wards and projects of my city that I had personally never been to, and placed an emphasis on words that we were taught as young people to never say out loud or too loud (e.g. pussy, dick, fuck, freak, and the list of hushed words goes on). And last but certainly not least, the music would also be my unofficial guide on how to catch “That Beat.”

A significant portion of my research does come from the Amistad Research Center’s NOLA Hip-Hop and Bounce Archive as it contains hours of interviews with prominent Bounce artists, rappers, DJs, producers, and notable New Orleans community members. This archive would prove to be so resourceful as the anecdotes, vulnerability, and transparency of those interviewed would be useful in exploring my overall research question. Their stories were heartfelt, informative, and a life-saver for me writing about a research topic with limited archival materials.

In Chapter 1, I will examine what Bounce music is, its characteristics, and what makes it unique. Based off foundational Bounce songs—older and contemporary--, I will explore the

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9 A DJ or Block party can be used interchangeably. A DJ does not refer to a person who is a Disc Jockey but a party within a neighborhood that is usually open to the community.
common narratives, sounds, and movements in its songs and dances. I will also explain the
genre’s musical and dance characteristics in its context in New Orleans, a place and culture that
shapes its sound and movement. Lastly, I will consider the rise of “Sissy Bounce” in post
Hurricane Katrina New Orleans and its unique variations from pre-Katrina bounce culture.

Chapter 2 examines the role of the physical body in Bounce culture. Diverging from
analyses that study the Black body as a metaphorical or imagined concept, I focus on the actual
body of the shakers asking: “What are the effects of centering bodily movements in a culture?
When one shakes, what are the personal effects? And how might those effects resonate in the
social and political realms? My thoughts on the shakers are framed by Black Feminist thought,
which argues that the body has been and is a critical site for resistance. What one does with one’s
body, scholars argue, can say just as much if not more than the tongue.

Chapter 3 examines the contours of contemporary academic scholarship on the politics of
pleasure cultures and the potential of New Orleans Bounce’s contributions. This chapters applies
the framework and relevance of rachet and hip-hop feminism to Bounce music, which asserts
most urban music as rounds for messiness, ambiguity, and all the things in between dichotomies.
Using the lyrics of notable bounce music as a tool to explore the idea of urban feminisms that are
relevant to Black New Orleanian women and femmes.

In chapter 4, I connect what I have to say about Bounce with its cultural and social
relevance to not only New Orleans but the larger canon of Black feminist literature and media
discussing cultural outlets as sites for resistance, liberation, and escape. As noted by hip-hop
feminists, urban music just gets it or “keeps it real”, takes into account the reality of its
constituents while crafting a space that feels otherworldly because you—who was once at the
margin—is now at the center.
Through this project, I will create a new story about New Orleans informed by the language, movements, and desires of its "movers and shakers," its cultural producers. Too often, New Orleans’ lore is constructed through the lens of the tourist and tourist industry publicists. It is framed as an easy-going place of pleasure and indulgence where all forms of good times can roll. In this narrative, visitors can be on vacation, taking time to escape everyday life by listening to music, eating food, and participating in a Caribbean-like environment and rich culture. But by centering the tourist experience, locals often find themselves at the margins of the city’s stories and interests\(^\text{10}\). The typical Black working-class New Orleanian is not considered to be as much of a citizen of the city as an employee, but rather someone from which labor can be extracted, a servant to the big-eyed tourist who is just dying to experience authentic southern Black culture. Lynell Thomas’, whose work examines racialized tourism in New Orleans, writes: “Black residents, if they appear at all in this narrative, appear as secondary characters who are either servile or exotic - always inferior to whites and never possessing agency over their own lives”\(^\text{11}\). This project counters such narratives and seeks to provide insight into the complexity of Black working-class experience in New Orleans, particularly the lives of black women and queer people.


Chapter 1: What Characterizes Bounce Music

Scholars and locals alike consider DJ Jimi’s “Where Dey At” to be the first Bounce track; it has since been sampled in countless local and internationally acclaimed records\(^\text{12}\). And if you ask locals like my mother, it was women artists trailblazing Bounce like Ms. Tee, Cheeky Blakk, and Mia X that would get people talking about the sexual and in-your-face nature of the genre.

Understanding the experiences of low-income Black New Orleanians. This chapter examines the defining characteristics of New Orleans bounce: its beats; its call and response framework; some important themes typically addressed in bounce lyrics; and significant historical events from which bounce has evolved.

The Roots of Bounce

Like many Black musical forms in the United States, bounce culture is rooted in the long history of the African diaspora\(^\text{13}\). Just as historians have documented connections between the musical cultures of West Africa and New Orleans’ Congo Square, jazz, and second line funeral processions, so too do they understand West Africa as an important root of contemporary bounce music and culture\(^\text{14}\). New Orleans bounce cultures center circle dancing, call and response, testimonials, and storytelling as a means of conveying values, dreams, ideals, morals, and ethics.


Bounce, like other African descendent cultures in the South, is undeniably an offshoot of historical conditions and cultural practices of the African diaspora\textsuperscript{15}.

Bounce culture is simultaneously very much a product of the local and present environment—specifically the racial politics of New Orleans public housing and disaster management. Initiated by the federal government as a pathway for entering the housing market, housing projects in New Orleans proliferated after the 1950s. And not unlike circumstances in other urban areas, these projects generated racial stratification, which was exacerbated by white flight, redlining, and underemployment. In the early years of New Orleans housing projects, Black residents described them as a desirable alternative to the many decaying and abandoned homes in the city\textsuperscript{16}. And later, as many of the projects and neighborhoods adjacent to them became plagued by poverty and vulnerable to an alarming amount of violence, many community members still embraced where they were from.

Violence as a force within New Orleans is something highlighted within the local hip-hop scene. The backdrop of the places like the Magnolia and Calliope projects in the 1990s created the branding of New Orleans rap that served as a soundtrack for the persistent murders, incarceration, and poverty that has continuously plagued Black New Orleans neighborhoods and projects. In Big Freedia’s memoir, she narrates losing many loved ones, mentors, musical peers,\textsuperscript{15,16}

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and prominent neighborhood figures throughout her life\textsuperscript{17}. Because of the frequency of funerals, repasts (the social celebration after the burial) have been an important location in the bounce scene. Sissy Nobby explained that repasts became places where artists could share their new music and prominent community members who died would often be honored with a commemorative record\textsuperscript{18}.

Nowhere is the importance of housing projects to bounce culture made more evident than in the lyrics and shout-outs of bounce music, where housing projects often emerge as main characters\textsuperscript{19}. As much as housing projects were sites of racial oppression, they were simultaneously the places where bounce music was written, recorded, played, and circulated. From uptown to downtown, artists embraced the projects, regularly shouting out neighborhoods, wards, and specific projects, all the while playing New Orleans brass band-inspired beats. The up-tempo synthetics sound of DJ Mannie Fresh and Gregory D’s “Buck Jump Time” is one of the earliest examples of performers celebrating housing projects and neighborhoods. Known by many locals as “Project Rap,” the hook of the song lists out housing projects and wards throughout New Orleans from uptown, downtown, and the west bank.\textsuperscript{20} At the time that the song

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{17} Freedia and Balin, N. (2015). “God Save the Queen Diva!”
\bibitem{20} A ward is a division of a town that indicates a distinct neighborhood. Formerly a way to divide electoral districts prior to 1912, the wards are still commonly referred to and claimed by residents. New Orleans has seventeen wards.
\end{thebibliography}
was circulating in 1989, there were well over 20% of the New Orleans Black population was living in housing projects\textsuperscript{21}.

How To Make a Hit Bounce Song

The excitement of New Orleans bounce culture derives in no small part from its beats. Typically, at a pace of 95-125 BPM, the average song is fast- and dance paced. The foundational bounce beats can be compared to what some genres dub a “riddim”, an instrumental constantly layered on or sampled in a genre. Two of the most prominent beats are the “Drag Rap” and “Brown” beats\textsuperscript{22}. Commonly also referred to as the “Triggaman” beat, the instrumental from the 1986 song “The Drag Rap” by The Showboys, a rap group from Queens, New York, would be credited with making one of the most frequently used beats in the genre. Similarly, the “Brown” beat from Bay area-based artist DJ Cameron Paul’s 1987 mixtape series, “Beats and Pieces” would be another component of the hottest bounce records throughout the 1990s\textsuperscript{23}. The sample-reliant genre often incorporates many adlibs over the polyrhythmic beat throughout the typical song\textsuperscript{24}. A polyrhythmic beat is the use of more than one rhythm simultaneously to create one sound of overlapping beats. The overlapping rhythms are meant to complement each other and bring out elements of the beat that may not have been focused on if not highlighted by other sounds. Concisely put by bounce artist Sissy Nobby, “It’s different but you’ll like it because it's

\textsuperscript{22} Miller, M. (2012). “Where They At”.
An 808\textsuperscript{25}. The 808 drums on a bounce song seem to be what brings a familiar rhythm or sound to a genre that just sounds so “different” as put by many bounce artists and their listeners.

In addition to its unique beats, a central element to bounce culture is its call-and-response interactive style. The MC or DJ typically asks a question, such as “What’s the name of your school?” or “What ward are you from?” and the audience responds by shouting out, with pride, a high school, neighborhood, ward, or housing project. Participants also respond to DJs with a dance known as shaking, popping, clacking, and (s)wiggling (sometimes referred to as twerking by those outside New Orleans). The DJ calls out or instructs the crowd to do a dance move and the participants respond by doing said dance. Instructions given by the MC or DJ can be more subjective as the artist typically expresses a desire for what they would like the crowd to do, for example, "Make that ass go..." or “Release ya wiggle”\textsuperscript{26}. DJ Jubilee is known for calling out dances and instructions for the crowd to follow as part of his DJing at local school dances and parties. Some of the most recognizable dance instructions in his songs are “Do the beeny weeny” or “Walk it like a dog”\textsuperscript{27}. Audience participation is pivotal and fills out the structure of the song. Their response is so central that without the audience’s participation, the performance of a bounce song is not complete.

\textsuperscript{25} An 808 is a sequenced drum machine that produces a rhythmic synthetic beat over 16 “loops” that is usually followed by a drum sound. This drum sound can be repeated, creating a pattern of beats that can be layered over each other for a polyrhythmic sound (Crooke, 2018). To give an idea of what all that sounds like when it comes together, some examples of the most familiar 808 beats are the production for Afrika Bambaataa’s Planet Rock or Marvin Gaye’s Sexual Healing (Baker, 2013; Norris, 2015); Hobbs, H. Sissy Nobby Interview.


\textsuperscript{27} Sarig. \textit{Third Coast}
In addition to its eclectic beats and call-and-response style, the lyrics of a New Orleans Bounce song are key drivers of its popularity. Often sexually explicit and unapologetically so, the lyrics are usually filled with very brash, obscene, and frank details about desire, sexual skills, intimate practices, and relationships. It is common to hear artists like Big Freedia proudly proclaim being a “dickeater” or Magnolia Shorty’s iconic reference to being a “monkey on that dick”. And unlike most southern rap music, women and queers are regular writers of songs and have a nonjudgmental space to take pride in their sexual skills, desires, and agency.

The Multiplicity of Bounce

Over the last three decades, the genre has evolved to the point of having distinct subgenres that are often played based on the occasion or vibe that the DJ is going for. These changes can be heard in its beats, instrumentals, and sampling; they can also be seen in the demographics of its leading artists. Given the dispersion of Bounce music beyond New Orleans, especially after Hurricane Katrina, the sounds from women in Bounce would influence a larger southern rap sound that we can hear in the songs of more recent artists like Megan Thee Stallion or Cardi B, both of whom have sampled various bounce songs in their discography. The sound produced by women in bounce has more influence than it has been led on as it resonated with the local and now more recently, many constituents of rap in general. Since the 2010s, there has been an emergence of a more commercial or “clean” bounce that is reaching a wider audience due to its resonance with more mainstream electronic dance music. For example, Nicky Da B’s

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28 Throughout the text, I will use multiple pronouns when referring to bounce artist Big Freedia, as they have indicated that they like being addressed by any pronouns as they stated to feel uncomfortable with “labels”.
2012 song “Express Yourself” and the sampling of Big Freedia’s Explode on Beyonce’s 2022
song, “Break My Soul” blasted New Orleans bounce throughout the world.

A more lowkey subgenre has also been created to complement the original fast-paced
bounce and is not heavily reliant on the dance of listeners. “Dipping” music, for example, still
has the foundational elements of a typical bounce song but is slightly slower. Dipping is typically
a dance considered to be gender-neutral, as it is not deemed feminine or masculine to dip with a
song and refers to the motion of the dance that accompanies the music; it incorporates the
movement of the shoulders and dipping of the body in a lowering motion\(^30\).

Another subgenre is “R&B bounce,” which involves chopping and speeding up samples
of popular R&B and top 40 hits. This typically requires minimal work by producers but still
garner success as the songs are already familiar to the general public and are given the extra flare
of an equally familiar bounce beat. You can hear chopped and sped up versions of Anita Baker’s
greatest hits and even Adele.

Beyond the mainstream commercialized appropriations of bounce, one of the most
prominent evolutions of the genre is the emergence of sissy bounce. If you have been to a
DJ/Block Party, listened to the Q93 past 7 pm on Saturdays, or a club performance, you have
heard it. The pioneering DJs and rappers in the early years of the Bounce scene were typically
cis-gendered heterosexual men and a few cis-gendered heterosexual women. Yet gay,
transgender, and gender non-conforming bounce artists have been performing at clubs and social

\(^{30}\) Not much literature formally details what dipping is, but this article talks about the emergence
“Blakk Tatted is the ‘Dip King’ in New Orleans”. Net News Ledger.
https://www.netnewsledger.com/2021/11/15/blakk-tatted-is-crowned-the-dip-king-in-new-
orleans/.
events since the late 90s. As the genre has garnered popularity, the presence of openly queer artists has become characteristic of the genre. Referring to this emergence of more queer artists, their sound, and vernacular within bounce, some characterize the recent evolution of the genre as “Sissy Bounce,” with one of its most internationally famous artists, Big Freedia dubbed locally with the honorific nickname “The Queen of Bounce.”

Since the emergence of “Sissy Bounce” in the mid to late 1990s, New Orleans Bounce gained a reputation for welcoming, celebrating, and centering gay men, trans women, and gender-fluid artists within southern hip-hop. Artists like Big Freedia credits the primarily black woman following bounce for the success of sissy bounce artists like himself, Sissy Nobby, Katey Red, and Vockah Redu. This was not only a very important historical shift in the discourse and world-building project of New Orleans, but it also signaled a major departure from the anti-black ideology that stereotypes black communities and rap artists as generally more homophobic. The prominence of queer artists in conjunction with the women artists defied dominant notions of who was entitled to be the face or vanguard of southern rap musical genres.

“Sissy” is a classification that was commonly used to address gay men and trans women in urban neighborhoods in the 90s and early 2000s. Sissy has historically been used in a derogatory way but in the context of New Orleans queer friend groups, it has ultimately been claimed by those as an honorific or courtesy title. “Sissy” usually precedes the person’s name, for example, Sissy Nobby. The use of sissy to categorize people would become a phenomenon

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32 Freedia and Balin, N. “God Save the Queen Diva!”.
33 ibid.
in Bounce as more gay men, trans women, and gender non-conforming people would launch their careers locally and eventually come to the forefront of the scene. The term “sissy bounce” would come to proliferation following the publication of an article by Allison Fensterstock, an ethnomusicologist who wrote an article about bounce’s “new chapter” as “sissies” began to take over following the success and backing of queer artists by local record labels.\(^{34}\)

While the gender and sexual dynamics are significant in Sissy Bounce, there is little difference between Sissy Bounce and the Bounce genre. It can be observed that Sissy Bounce has had an influence on the increase of BPM in a song with a tendency to rely on eclectic beats more than lyrics or flow. There still is the incorporation of choruses and catchy phrases embedded throughout verses, but there has been a shift from songs in the 1990s that were six to eight minutes long.\(^{35}\) This is a general trend in the genre that holds true for most new bounce artists regardless of sexual orientation or subgenre within bounce.\(^{36}\) When the genre was first taking off, songs typically were longer. For example, Mia X’s “Da Payback”, which is now considered one of the most iconic bounce tracks of all time had an intro, four verses, a hook, and a bridge. She was rhyming on the beat for a total of four minutes and twenty-four seconds, which is an edited version from the original eight-minute recording. X herself has said, “I’m from that first hip hop generation of just spittin’”\(^{37}\). In comparison, “Explode” is about a minute shorter.

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\(^{34}\) Fensterstock, A. “Sissy Strut”.


\(^{36}\) See Supahbadd. (2022). Bedroom [Song].

and has repetitive phrases throughout the entire song, one of them being the now iconic line “Release your Wiggle”. In conjunction with the shift in relying on multiple verses, bridges, and hooks like in the genre’s early days, the songs have become faster and more chopped by producers in the studio. And like many early bounce songs, Sissy Bounce has the components of the hottest bounce records. From the use of familiar beats to the reliance on instructing the listener to dance, Sissy bounce, like all new bounce, is an extension of the beats that were coming out in the late 1980s and all the 1990s.

It is the performers that make Sissy Bounce or LGBTQ+ bounce artists seem like a new subgenre. By researchers and journalists, they have been clumped into a category of their own based on sexuality and gender performance/embodiment. It is not the sexually explicit nature of it or the fact that they are talking about “dick”, “trades” or “boyfriends” but really the body writing and performing the sexually explicit songs.

After The Levees Break

A major turning point for bounce was the seemingly irreparable damage of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Many disaster capitalists and anti-black leaders would see opportunity in the displacement and disregard for the Black citizens of New Orleans.38 Louisiana congressman, Richard Baker would be quoted less than two weeks after Katrina saying to lobbyists, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did"39. Implying a

38 A disaster capitalist can be defined as someone looking to for "opportunities for continued economic expansion" (Fletcher, 2012). See Fletcher, Robert. (2012). Capitalizing on chaos: Climate change and disaster capitalism. *Ephemera: theory and politics in organization.*
long-term desire for ridding the city of low-income Black people, there was not much sympathy
from those that were uprooted and significantly inconvenienced and set back by the storm.

Whether residents of the housing projects had the resources to evacuate or not, Katrina would
serve as a catalyst for displacement and gentrification projects under the guise of “cleaning up”
or “reconstructing” the city. There could not have been a more perfect disaster for such an anti-
black national and state government as it would not only push thousands of Black people out of
the city (many of whom would not return) but many people would die in the storm and from the
aftermath of it 40.

The gross abandonment of New Orleans and the many black citizens that inhabit the city has become one of the most prominent case studies of structural anti-black racism or “ethnic
cleansing.” Economic and political leaders reduced black New Orleanians to bodies and
statistics; denying us the social status of citizens and the benefits associated with citizenship with
it 41. Treated simply as migrant bodies, seeking refuge in their own country, Black New
Orleanians would be watching local and national political figures handle their situations as
though they were trivial, not actually their reality with significant implications. The ties that
many Black locals have to New Orleans would be taken lightly as it would be seen as collateral
to the perfect disaster for a city looking to alter the demographic of the city to draw in a new one.
Many would not return to the only homes they had ever known. Even after the water receded, the
people and neighborhoods that were central to New Orleans’ culture would continue to erode,

Disaster Med Public Health Prep. 2(4):215-23. Doi: 10.1097/DMP.0b013e31818aaf55. PMID:
18756175.; Simo, G. Poverty in New Orleans.
under anti-black and anti-poor policies that sought to literally wash people and their way of life away.

   Yet, even in the face of these pressures, Black New Orleanians lived lives that were far more complex than total oppression. Many responded and took a powerful role in shaping their new circumstances. Hurricane Katrina is merely not what happened to the Black people of New Orleans but also what the Black people of New Orleans would do with their circumstances. While many New Orleanians could not or decided not to return, they brought some of the most significant parts of New Orleans culture with them to other parts of the country\textsuperscript{42}. From their recipes, their colloquial, and of course the music, they brought something from home with them.

   Displaced New Orleanians also brought bounce culture with them. Scholars and artists of bounce music cite Hurricane Katrina as a turning point for the genre\textsuperscript{43}. For about five years prior to Katrina, starting around 2000, bounce seemed to be declining in popularity. After Katrina, forced to leave behind their city, many artists tried to make a name in Houston performing at clubs for locals and New Orleans transplants like themselves. At the same time, displaced locals in Houston sought to connect to the culture of the city that they were forced to leave behind. While the city healed, bounce was having a revival that would propel its now larger status a prominent musical force hailing from the deep south.

   In New Orleans, in the months after the levees broke, Sissy bounce had an especially sharp rise in popularity after Katrina. New Orleans clubs and bars felt the city’s urgent need to

\textsuperscript{42} Mock, Brentin. “A History of New Orleans Public Housing”; Freedia and Balin. “God Save The Queen Diva!”.

\textsuperscript{43} Kish, Z. (2009). ” My FEMA People”: Hip-Hop as Disaster Recovery in the Katrina Diaspora. \textit{American Quarterly}, 61(3), 671-692.; Miller, M. “Where They At”.; Freedia and Balin, N. “God Save the Queen Diva!”.
get the party started again and began calling whoever they could get to draw crowds to a city that had lost its population by the thousands. Bounce artists were some of the first musicians to start performing in the city as many traditional New Orleans rappers remained in Houston and Atlanta, where they tried their hand at making a living performing there. Many of those returning Bounce artists available in the months after the storm were gay and they picked up significant slack wherever they could. The eagerness of queer bounce artists to return to the city and begin making music and dancing again gave Sissy Bounce the catalyst that would launch it to where we see it today.

Another significant shift that resulted from the displacement of New Orleanians after the storm was a change in audiences and venues. With many natives not returning home and an influx of long-term transplants for years after Katrina, Bounce artists witnessed their audiences and venues changing. It was no longer just the DJs or clubs that catered to primarily local Black residents that many sissy bounce artists would perform, it was now swanky cabarets, dive bars, pubs, and concert venues frequented by many nonblack yuppies looking to tap into the local music scene. Many clubs and bar rooms would not open back up following the storm. In an article highlighting this dynamic following the opportunity for “urban renewal” that Hurricane Katrina provided, Roberto Barrios describes the years following the storm as “a space-clearing moment that opened up a new frontier in the neighborhood's social landscape”. There would be a wave in the criminalization of Black spaces pertinent to the Black social and pleasure scene such as second lines and DJs held under the Claiborne bridge near the Tremé neighborhood.

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44 Hobbs, H. Sissy Nobby Interview.; Freedia and Balin, N. “God Save the Queen Diva!”.

45 The Tremé neighborhood is cited as America’s oldest Black neighborhood. A site designated as a red-light district by the local government and home to the roots of New Orleans Jazz, the
A critique of the local radio play regarding bounce music has been the lack of airplay for sissy bounce songs. Some queer artists believe that the Social Shakedown is not enough. Many sissy bounce artists want to be played on a more consistent basis outside of the designated time for sissy bounce which is usually on Saturday evenings after 7 pm. In an interview, Sissy Nobby poses the question “What about the sissies, what about the punks that go in in the club and perform?”

The stations do tend to play some bounce songs on the radio during regular hours but they are more lowkey “dipping songs” that usually have a male rapper over the more toned-down beat and flow. The choice in choosing the less raunchy and more palatable choice for frequent radio airplay

Another product of the storm was the reconfiguration of the housing developments in the city as they would take on new forms years following the storm. Part of the urban renewal project would be the destruction and renovations of housing projects throughout the city. Many would be turned into mixed-income housing. Although it was reported that a few of the housing projects scheduled to be destructed or renovated were undamaged following the storm, the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) would still call for the construction to ensue, resulting in a mass housing relocation process for those residents that still lived there. In an interview for Amistad Research Center’s NOLA Hip Hop and Bounce archive, bounce legend


46 Hobbs. H. Sissy Nobby Interview.
47 Goddard, N. “Public Housing”
Cheeky Blakk commented on the loss and relaunch of housing projects following Hurricane Katrina ensuring that bounce culture would be fine because “the people are the projects...in order to know the stories going on, you gotta talk to the people”\(^{48}\). Talk of the projects is talk of the people. Hearing about the conditions of the projects and the politics surrounding them gives more nuance to the importance of framing the projects in New Orleans Hip-Hop. These neighborhoods and projects are also where the music is happening it. It is where the party buses have their pick-up spots for birthday parties and other special occasions, where the repasts of the beloved community members once lived, and weekend DJs take place. Space is so important in the curation of the sounds of narrative hailing from the streets and as the city evolves, so do the sounds that serve as the score of the city.

**Conclusion**

To understand bounce as a musical genre, one must understand the political and social landscape for its formation. Rooted in the African diaspora and the “hoods” of New Orleans, bounce is a key vehicle through which Black New Orleanians create pleasure-based worlds. Bounce culture places black, queer and working poor people and their homes at the center of the universe. Through exciting beats, call and response participation, and shout outs and lyrics, bounce artists create a space for joyful movement and local pride. And through countless songs, the experiences of America’s “others”—low income, black, women and queer people—are elevated and celebrated.

Using Bounce music and the culture that accompanies it, I will touch on the components of New Orleans that sets the scene for the Black New Orleanian experiences and (im)possibility

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of Black working-class urban life. Significant elements of music, dance, sociability, are informed by the city’s workings and history. A worldview outside the realm of hegemony and placed along the margins makes way for transformation or reconfiguration of what is central to our society. What is subversive seems otherworldly. As a cultural product from a group that has historically been marginalized, seen as an inconvenience to the larger structure of the city, and now conveniently and strategically displaced, the music that comes from the most silenced tends to be the loudest.

Chapter 2: The Shakers and The Power of “The Black Body”

To best understand the power and potential of bounce culture, one must focus attention on its dancers. As much as bounce is a musical culture, it is also a dancing culture. It is an immersive sound experience that only has meaning in relationship to the city’s collective urge to dance. All dancers in the bounce scene, whether shakers, shoulder-dancers or dippers, transform and complete the music, making it much more than just sounds. The genre emerges and becomes itself, with or without an MC, but not without dancers. Dancers give the song what it needs, someone who will interpret, express and validate it. The best music in the bounce scene is only so because dancers made it so.

This chapter examines the defining characteristics of dance in bounce culture and analyzes the significance of the bodies that do the dancing. Drawing on scholarship in Black feminist, womanist, and queer studies, this chapter examines the ways that bounce dancing instigates pleasure not only in dancers’ individual bodies but in the social body of New Orleans. While it is important that we acknowledge the harm that has been inflicted upon Black bodies, it is also essential to examine the ways in which bodies are grounds for transcendence and pleasure. Those that experience racialized and gendered subjugation navigate from that position
towards agentive self-definition through expressions of joy like dancing. There is room for both to be explicated and I hope to use this chapter to hone on the scholarship regarding the historical construction of the Black body, particularly in the case of Black women who have historically been made out to be a spectacle and mere item to be commodified. I then zoom in on the role of the Black body in bounce, arguing that bounce dancing provides a fertile ground where New Orleanians experience their own and others’ bodies in transformative and liberating ways. After describing the various types of bounce dancing, I will specifically consider the primacy of the butt and “ass-shaking” in bounce, exploring the ways that dancers elevate and give agency to the black body, its desires, and sexuality. In a nation where European and Euro-American dominant discourses have long framed black women’s bodies as sexually deviant, I argue that the bodies of bounce dancers create a culture of bodily power and resistance among New Orleanians and women and queers.

Legacy of Black “bodies”

Scholars argue that Blackness has consistently served as a container for society’s sexuality. Everything that is sexually deviant is Black or adjacent to Blackness. As Europeans and European Americans othered and un-gendered Black bodies, blackness defined the bounds of the deviant and thus the concept of otherness. The average Black citizen in the United States has had their place in the country shift from essentially being considered property to partially a person (3/5 to be exact) to a citizen with disputed and conditional civil rights and liberties. Most contemporarily, a citizen living in the shadows of their previous status or rather the lack thereof;

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the Black body’s identity is clearly not fixed. As the positionality of Blackness shifts, so does everything else.

Much literature has identified the relationship the United States has historically and structurally had with the Black body and its exploitation of it. These texts ground our contemporary understanding of the body and its policing. The objectification of the Black body has used the constructs of gender and sexuality as a tool to strip the body of its free will, self-definition, and ultimately, its humanity\(^50\). The Black body has also served as an icon indicative of immorality and the embodiment of sexuality. It has been studied on the physical bodies of Black people and theorized at the expense of homogenizing Black sexuality and Black bodies.

Commonly cited by many scholars as one of the earliest documented examples of the Black woman’s body under microscopic examination, the life of Sarah Baartman and her legacy is commonly referred to in discourse about the objectification of the Black body. Baartman was asserted by European pseudoscientists to be the personification of sexuality, sexual deviancy in particular. Four years before her death in 1815, Baartman arrived on a boat with other cargo to the shores of London under the control of a museum materials transporter, Baartman would be subjected to being paraded around Europe, going by the name, The Hottentot Venus\(^51\). The etymology of the derogatory term “Hottentot” is from the Eurocentric classification system for race that would label those of South African descent as such due to their association of South African groups with primitivism. Venus would accompany Hottentot because of the association

\(^{50}\) Farley, A. P. The black body as fetish object.; Gilman, S. L. Black bodies, white bodies.

with the goddess that represents the female body. Baartman would literally be showcased on a
tour around Europe mainly showcasing her large buttocks and breasts. Baartman and other
African-descended people’s bodies put on display have left an impression on the Western
conceptualization of the Black woman’s body as a sexualized spectacle\textsuperscript{52}.

The treatment of the Black booty gives an understanding of the need for an assertion of
bodily autonomy for black women and femmes at their own discretion. Black Americans have
not been given much space to define themselves and their own communities. Having labels and
characteristics projected onto the self as a primary form of identification can be damaging to a
point that requires a need for world-building that is not rested on the dehumanization of the
Black body. As Audre Lorde argued in her 1978 essay, “The Uses of the Erotic,” creative and
effective forms of empowerment are essential to any marginalized group\textsuperscript{53}. Black pleasure that
exudes agency rewrites sexual scripts which have always been largely informed by
antiblackness\textsuperscript{54}. Black feminist and queer theorists argue that the most unappealing aspects of
black sexuality have the possibility to serve as a site for transformative practices and
discussions\textsuperscript{55}. What has been left behind or marginalized is actually where the most resistance to
hegemony is. Instead of a hyper fixation on falling into rigid categories of civil society, leaning
into what falls outside the hegemony gives more grace for fluidity, ambiguity, and just time to
figure things out.

\textsuperscript{52} Magubane, Z. Which bodies matter?
https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/556202.
The Dancers

Originating in New Orleans, “shoulder-work” or “shoulder-hustle” is a style of bounce dance that has been popularized by masculine dancers who emphasize the movement of the shoulders and arms in a fast circular or upwards motion of the upper body\textsuperscript{56}. Shoulder work also incorporates “footwork” that draws from the style of foot movements in second-line dancing. Although popularized by male or more masculine dancers but has been, shoulder work is not exclusive to them as people of all genders and sexual orientations.

Another style of dance popularized by New Orleanians has been “dipping.” It is exactly what the dance is called, the movement of the body in a downward and upright motion while bending the knees. This dance also emphasizes the shoulders, which move up and down, with one arm swinging every time the body dips; this dance is often referred to as the “Peter Pan”\textsuperscript{57}. Dipping emerged as the R&B subgenre of bounce was created; in this subgenre, internationally famous R&B songs are set to slower-paced bounce beats. Dipping, which accompanied the pace of the music would require less work than shaking or incorporating shoulder or footwork as it would not be fitting for the fast pace. Dipping is seen as a more gender-neutral way of dancing to a bounce song, as more masculine listeners are more likely to dance to a song with that style as it requires less emphasis on the lower body movement.

Many bounce dancers, and particularly the ones that are most well know, are considered “shakers.” Shakers is a condensed way of referring to dancers that “shake that ass” or engage in “ass-shaking,” twerking, or popping. Older generations in New Orleans often reference shaking

\textsuperscript{56} Description of dance moves such as shoulder work is detailed in an NPR interview with Big Freedia. Smith, R. (2013, January 27). “Big Freedia Lays Out the Basics of Bounce”. \textit{NPR}. https://www.npr.org/transcripts/170276604.

\textsuperscript{57} Freedia and Balin, N. “God Save the Queen Diva!”, p. 226.
as “popping” or “p-popping” (pussy-popping), as younger generations refer to it as shaking.

Shakers are regular crowd members in any bounce scene who shake their ass along to the music.

Shaking has been coded as something feminine due to most shakers being women and gay men/queer people.

Sometimes shakers become professional “background” performers on bounce stages, in clubs, and in music videos. Some of the most prominent artists, like Sissy Nobby and Fifth Ward Weebie, began as background dancers for other artists before pursuing their own careers as bounce MCs. Bounce dancers who work with MCs are as famous among locals as MCs.

Dancers that hail from New Orleans are often known by name and understood for the pivotal role they play in the culture; they are elevated above the commercialized or amateur twerker that is often trivialized in the dominant culture.

Whether at a backyard birthday party, block party or club, or other social setting, shakers are bounce’s best hype man. Shakers play a pivotal role in guiding and inspiring others to join in.

In an interview from the NOLA Hip-Hop and Bounce archives, bounce artist Cheeky Blakk emphasizes the criticality of the shakers numerous times. The first dancers who shake are crucial to the reception of any bounce song. Shakers’ reactions indicate to the crowd the quality of the song and, if positive, will often inspire others to also let loose and feel “That Beat.” The way that shakers ride the beat at parties guides other participants into a space of letting go and letting loose. They complete the beat. The shakers are just as much of a guide to a good time as the musicians and DJs are. The way that the “shakers” interact with the beat says something about the music and their comfort in the environment. They facilitate a process that enables

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58 Hobbs, H. Cheeky Blakk Interview.
59 Ibid.
participants to create and take up space in whatever way the music calls to them. If the shakers shake just so, a whole room, block, or yard will be filled with shaking, swiggling, dipping, and reluctant dancers who nod their heads and tap their feet to the beat. Simply put, if the Shakers are not doing their thing, then the song just is not doing enough.

There is no one reason why shakers get pleasure from shaking their asses. Shaking, on the dancer’s own account, can be for a spectrum of reasons that range from the sensual to youthful competitiveness. Some enjoy putting on a performance for the artist that they are working with. Others have a streak of competitiveness and enjoy competing with another shaker at a party or the privacy of their homes because they believe that they are genuinely the best and no one can out do them. For those who have making money at the forefront of their minds, shaking to the newest bounce song at a local "booty” club is a way to capitalize on their sensuality. A child may shake to embody a kind of femininity that she admires in her family and does so in a way that is not inherently sexual or with the gaze of a heterosexual man in mind. (Though if taken out of the context of a local DJ or school dance, they would likely be misread and labeled age-inappropriate even though there is no sexual intent.) Some do it to express their sexuality or sensuality. And many others just do it for fun when listening to bounce music. Overall, regardless of the reason or feeling, shaking is compelling and pleasurable for many New Orleanians.

Janelle Hobson argues that much of the twerking done by Black women is often done on their own account and appeals to “erotic appeal and sexual agency”\textsuperscript{60}. Self-actualization through the body is typically done where one feels safest to be in their body. Those who characterize

\textsuperscript{60} Hobson, J. Remnants of Venus.
shaking merely as a form of self-objectification, obscure the ways in which the black booty is a means for the whole being of the shaker to access feelings of belonging, pleasure, and power. Many shakers feel it sparks something within that feels like a power-up. Those outside of the bounce culture often characterize ass-shakers as sexual spectacles, to be consumed, caricatured, or, even worse, assaulted by unwanted ass-grabbing. But in the context of bounce culture, the subjective power within the dancer is really what it is all about. Riding the waves of the music, the lyrics, and the energy within the room, shakers exert a powerful agency as they give their entire body over to a beat. When in the right space and to the right song, shakers literally and metaphorically let loose, sometimes even ending up dancing on their heads. Hitting splits in the middle of the dancefloor, on top of somebody’s car, or one leg up on the DJ booth, dancers “cut up,” sometimes inspiring a spontaneous competition of who can outdo the other on the dancefloor. The dancers are spectacular but in a since that affirms them as it is okay to be in this body, and does not have to look a certain way, as long as you are on beat, you are just fine.

The best shakers display an inner force that allows them to release movement. Without this inner power, it is difficult to release the movements that the best shakers do. This power that enacts the force of bodily movement is gained through numerous ways for the dancer. It can be ignited from the pleasure of embodying the sexy, being deemed the best shaker, or appealing to the most erotic parts of one’s self. In bounce, the booty operates as more than a non-functional

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61 Beyond voicing one’s thoughts, the use of the body as a way of resisting arises in the work of Stephanie Camp who largely frames the body as a tool for political statements and presents the idea of one being able to possess multiple social bodies (2002); Camp, S. (2002). The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, 1830-1861. The Journal of Southern History, 68(3), 533–572.
object, a spectacle, or something to be enacted; it is the means through which shakers express agency and a force that is to be reckoned with.

In the presence of the force that drives shaking, shakers engage in a type of self-definition that render misogynoir and racism insignificant. Though the butt and ass shaking has been established within hegemonic discourse in the United States as mindless, sexual, and tasteless, shakers insist that the ass be a subject of “the conversation” and they move it in ways that assert their agency over it. A lack of desire to talk about what has happened to historically and structurally been done to Black women and queer people, primes them to be assigned another definition and characterization of their sexuality that was not made on their own accord. The lack of regard for Black femmes and their desires also leaves no space for self-definition, especially in the realm of the erotic. Embodying their ideas about their own sexual history, boundaries, desires, and even skills is an act of self-definition.

Conclusion

Underscoring the work of scholars that have written about the many ways that resistance manifests within the Black community, pleasure, as a framework for resistance, is the main priority of this text. Black feminist and queer scholarship have examined the ways that Black women and queer people have resisted harmful notions of their sexuality beyond respectability. Critiquing the pervasive and detrimental power of respectability politics, which seeks to uphold

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middle-class Black heteronormative norms as political ideals, Black feminist and queer scholars point to anti-racist strategies that have been embodied in dances, styles, amusement spaces, and vernacular of the Black working classes 64.

The emphasis on shaking the body in bounce is indicative of how body-forward New Orleans and its music is. And this body-forward approach, I have argued, is a part of an erotic politics of pleasure. The places where the raunchiest beats are being played and ass is being shaken is where we should take note of transformative body politics. In a larger discourse going on about body politics, the literal Black body should be at the forefront of the discussion as the Black body has significantly shaped the schema of the body in general. The Black body had been used as a criterion for basing what makes a good body or a bad body—what is normal and extraordinary.

The body politics of bounce contests the normative forms of objectification that have been projected onto Black people for centuries now. To pivot toward the subjectification of the Black body, there must be a consideration of the beauty, joy, confidence, and erotic appeal of the Black body 65. Subjectification is not merely what divests from hegemonic culture but it makes the ideas and actions of the subject a focal point. From the assertion of erotic agency to the funny, the competitive, or simply responsive to the beat, the movement of the black body, particularly the black booty, is grounded in the historical formations of how we have understood the Black body.

65 Lorde, A. Uses of the Erotic.
Another essential aspect of bounce culture that makes it compelling to New Orleanians is the ways in which artists use lyrics to articulate knowledge. Not unlike academics, bounce artists engage with ideas about desire, boundaries, sexual orientation, and intimate relationships. While their approach and delivery differs from discourses in a university setting, bounce artists create knowledge and assert values about life in New Orleans that not only resonate with listeners, but which many find useful to surviving and thriving. In this chapter, I invite readers to understand the work of bounce artists as not only cultural but also intellectual work. Drawing on Black feminist and womanist scholarship frameworks of ratchet and hip-hop feminisms, my analysis begins with the premise that bounce songs act as a hub, or public sphere, where the ideas of Black people, and especially Black women and queer people, can proliferate. As the discursive medium that takes seriously and centers the lives of those most impacted by marginalization, bounce lyricists articulate perspectives and ways of knowing that have too often been overlooked and undervalued due to its delivery. This chapter seriously considers what New Orleanians find exciting, pleasurable and useful in Bounce songs—its topics, perspectives, narratives and ideas.

The Rachet and Keeping it Real

Bounce is an excellent case study of what Black and queer womanist theorists call a post-respectability or disrespectability politics, as it embraces and amplifies “ratchetness.” The meaning of “ratchet” has shifted in the last few decades. Initially a distinct part of Black Louisiana vernacular, “ratchet” was originally used by working-class black people to describe having a great time. It began circulating more widely in 1999, the Louisiana classic “Do the Rachet” was released by the Shreveport rapper Anthony Mandigo, and then popularized by
Baton Rouge rapper, Lil Boosie. In these songs, the term described urban Black communities taking pleasure in a much-needed release or good time.\(^{66}\)

“Ratchet” has fluctuated in meaning and connotation in the mainstream. Rachet has evolved as a loaded racialized and gendered term. In a blog post “Exhuming the Ratchet before it’s Buried”, Heidi Lewis writes about the packaging of the rachet as every controlling image of Black women that has emerged from mainstream media.\(^{67}\) Co-opted, made derogatory, and wielded against Black people, especially Black women, “rachet” evokes imagery of a loud, unkept, and often promiscuous Black woman.\(^{68}\) This text defies the misogynoiristic definition of the rachet as it does not do justice to the transformative capabilities of rachet ideologies and behaviors.

In this text, I use “rachet” to describe loud and audacious release of inhibitions, particularly in the context of urban blackness. Like most constituents of hip hop, New Orleanians love bounce artists because they are not afraid of evoking the ratchet: they “keep it real” by sharing honest ideas in public that are often taboo in dominant discourse. They center people who are often made invisible in dominant discourse, and they do so in a bold/audacious and unapologetic way. In doing so, I argue that bounce artists make the most marginal people in the


\(^{68}\) Lewis, H. R. (2013). Exhuming the ratchet before it’s buried.
city feel seen and breathe life into ideas about sex and intimacy that are powerful. Bounce artists create knowledge about sexual autonomy and agency.

In the university, “rachet” has been reclaimed by Black feminist and womanist scholars as a framework for understanding black feminine autonomy and a worldview that centers pleasure in transformative spaces. This scholarship led to the emergence of “rachet feminism,” which privileges the perspectives and strategies of Black women and girls who reject respectability politics and instead embrace the loud, the extra, the bold, and the sexual as a source of self-definition, breathing room, liberation, and self-definition.

Hip-hop feminism is a sector of black feminism of the hip-hop generation that places an emphasis on cultural spaces in the formation of Black feminist thought. In a society that pushes Black women and girls to contain and limit themselves to norms of respectability, hip-hop feminism embraces nonessentialism, the ambiguous, and the messy, allowing for more fluidity all while championing community and locality. The room left for growth, change, and contradictions to exist is an element of how hip-hop frameworks aim to “keep it real”. In a world where people are trying to survive and live with the implications of structural injustices and marginalization, nothing is black-and-white and so clean, cut, and dry. The realness of hip-hop is its ability to latch onto the nuances of Black urban life and Bounce is exemplary of such.

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One of the most salient components of hip-hop feminism is the room that is left for contradictory ideas amongst black women and girls and across generations of black women and girls\textsuperscript{71}. For example, the use of one’s sexuality to affirm their power can be argued as another manifestation of heteropatriarchal ideas of finding value in women through their body and what it offers when intended to be merely consumed and objectified. It can also be argued that the blatant assertion of sexuality actively reconceptualizes feminine sexuality by making the pleasure of women central to sex. Displays of overt sexuality also push back against the dynamic of it as something exclusively done in the dark and quietly. It asserts sex as something that women can participate in and inform rather than have it something that is done to them or defined for them.

Many listeners and artists see the appeal of hip-hop being that it just “gets it” and “keeps it real” when representing New Orleanians and what matters in their lives\textsuperscript{72}. Bounce makes tangible and elevates the importance of the lives of working-class Black women and queer people in New Orleans. It provides real-world implications as it makes way for a reconceptualization of black sexual and queer thought. It is the use of their own vernacular, familiar bass-heavy beats, and references to prominent social sites and settings in New Orleans that makes people feel seen when they hear “That Beat”. That is why “That Beat” exists as its


own entity. It is not simply that but a concept that requires nuance to fully understand its grasp and influence over a culture.

The Loud, Audacious, and Unapologetic

The bounce genre makes room for many artists to say the unladylike, the unrespectable, the things that we have always wanted to say and just never had the space of confidence to, or just blatantly gay/queer. Sissy Bounce as a genre, makes room for discussion of queer sexual and intimate relationships in the most overt sense. A common way of describing the genre was how “real” it is. Rapper Ms. Tee would say “We’re not phony” when asked about what makes the genre relatable to the city’s listeners.73 There is an appeal in hearing all the things that you may think or not feel comfortable saying out loud being said by one of your favorite bounce artists on the mic in a local club or DJ. Hearing the raunchy, the ugly truth, things often thought to be kept private, or the outright inappropriate amplified through speakers gives volume to the ideas and people that have often been silenced. What would be deemed countercultural to the mainstream music scene is actually culturally specific, relevant, and a dominant framework within the Black New Orleans community.

Bounce artists deliver their ideas in a way that gets straight to the business of proclaiming what they have to say. There is no need to beat around the bush or bite one’s tongue. There is also no need to whisper what must be proclaimed. If being docile was the key to Black women and femmes getting what they want out of life and the world, then I would not be writing this text but alas. It also just is not characteristic of bounce to politely ask for something or make

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commentary on something that obviously matters to you or bothers you. That element is what many fans cite as the most appealing elements of the genre. This element is also what pushes back against a hegemonic notion of femininity that is associated with White womanhood, making the genre even more prolific in emboldening unapologetic Black womanhood as empowerment.

When thinking of the repression of women’s thoughts on relationships, sex, and financial support as symptomatic of a white heteropatriarchal approach to partnerships, there is something being said by the loud and unapologetic that is profound and relatable to many but said by few. The openness and unapologetic nature of Black women and femmes’ art or cultural products has been critiqued and irresponsibly reduced to mere noise when in actuality, it brings to light the things that have been forced in the dark. Regardless of one’s race, gender, or sexual orientation, topics like pleasurable sex and the exchange of money and tangible items in relationships have been treated as something to be seen subconsciously, never discussed, yet Black women and femmes have taken it upon themselves to talk about, perhaps with a catchy beat in the background. The “Beat” has been providing us fertile ground to discuss what white civil society has intended for behind closed doors.

Conceptualizing Bounce music as an articulation of a blackness that is very much real to many people pushes back against the notion of the genre as merely a replication of oversexualized, distasteful, and half-witted Black feminine sexuality and queerness. Our fears of perpetuating ugly stereotypes about black women can orient one to suppress aspects of their lives, particularly the ones with the possibility to be the most satisfying. Whether that be sexual suppression or just robbing one of a good time, suppressing the most fulfilling and erotic components of life can cause more harm than good. The choice to push back against hegemonic embodiments of femininity and take up space without inhibitions, asserts urban Black feminist
ideas more towards world-building than merely a contestation of white civil society. As Black girls, women, and femmes push back on traditional ideas of presenting one’s self, there is a rejection of one reality in pursuit of one that makes space for multiple realities. The ways that subjectivity is asserted in women’s hip-hop usually hones on sexuality, words of affirmation that uplift ideas of body positivity, self-sufficiency, and empowerment—sexual or not.

Assertion of Sexual Autonomy and Agency

A cornerstone of hip-hop feminist and ratchet politics is the grammar provided for talking about sexuality. Women from New Orleans have been contributing to a larger discourse and canon of women’s hip-hop, which has provided ample room for the discussion of sexual politics. An expression of sexual agency can come to fruition through the establishment of sexual demands, boundaries, and commentary. The sexual demands of women in bounce can sound something like “Come here bring that dick here” or “And make that tongue work for you. A licky-licky-licky-sucky-sucky-slurp it-licky-sucky”74.

Scholars like Joan Morgan, Brittany Cooper, and their peers have explicated what appeal Hip-hop feminism and its embracing of the raunchy for many Black women and girls. Nadia Brown and Lisa Young touch on the formation and necessity of ratchet politics for critiquing political systems that have constricted Black women and girls. Rachet behavior and lifestyles are seen not just ways of “simply about acting out. Instead, it is also a way of claiming some level of autonomy” 75. There is a need to restructure the narrative regarding Black women’s sexualities and academics have been working diligently to do so. Theorists like Morgan assert that

75 Brown, N. E., & Young, L. Ratchet politics.
reconstructing notions of black feminine sexuality must be done with pleasure at the center as we have taken a significant amount of time disputing misogynoiristic ideas about black femininity. Throughout all subgenres of hip-hop, we have seen women assert their agency in ways that they may not have been able to otherwise, and bounce music is another iteration of Black women assuming subjectivity on their own terms through music. We have seen mainstream female hip-hop artists like Lil Kim, Foxy Brown, Nicki Minaj, and others from the era of the genre use it to assert ideas about their agency.

In the classic 1993 song “Da Payback” by Mia X, throughout 4 verses, she discusses things ranging from centering women’s sexual pleasure, “trickin” on men, her expectations for men that she is sexually intimate with, practicing safe sex, and the often less-than-stellar experience of sex with men that do not satisfy her desires. With the opening lines of the song being, “I came here tonight to settle the score. Females are women and girls, not bitches and hoes. To all the niggas that's stunting off the weak-ass rhymes. It's payback time”, this song is like a response record to the wave of predominantly male bounce artists that often spoke of women in objectifying and hypersexual terms during the formation of the genre. X would see an opportunity in appealing to women constituents of bounce that wanted to hear a perspective that centered their needs and desires concerning sex, relationships, and financial stability. One of X’s biggest songs is not saying necessarily what all Black women from New Orleans feel but there is a significant number of listeners for whom the song resonates, whether they are heterosexual

Black women or not. Her commentary on sexual experiences is also exemplary of the cheeky and unapologetic nature of women in bounce. In the first verse of the song X comes out swinging.

You ain't seen no guts, don't get no guts

The closest thing to some pussy is your hand

"Biggity-bounce, baby, bounce"? Bitch, I ain't no ball

You get excited if I ride it, but your dick too small

Doing damage to my backbone? Please!

You're barely tickling the walls -- bitch, you're just a tease

Sometimes shocking and even funny, the flow of many early women and femme bounce artists would be 3-4 verses about their sexual relationship(s), the men in their lives, and their (dis)satisfaction with them. In the excerpt above, Mia X is expressing dissatisfaction with a sexual partner while also uplifting her own sexual skills, hence her partner’s excitement to be having sex with her. In general, women’s sexual pleasure is not at the forefront of conversations about sex but in bounce, it is the cornerstone for most hit songs. Listeners love the raunchy and unmerciful behavior coming from a woman. X's song payback is not just intended to be a response to the objectifying and derogatory ways that male bounce artists speak of women but also serves as space for discussing dissatisfaction from boasting, modestly endowed, overzealous lovers. The next few verses of the song, X goes in on her lovers to say the least. In the most witty and audacious way possible, X is asserting her needs and desires.

I ain't popping for no stunter, I use my head

And pop this pussy for a mink instead

I don't want no Shoney's or Denny's

But we could wine and dine at Copeland's, please
I don't need four golds in my mouth

But you can put Louis the Fourteenth in my house

I want a herringbone set and I want a purse

Bitch, I want to do me in verse

Met another nigga but he didn’t like rubbers

(What?!) So he couldn't be my lover

In verse 3, X provides her “trick” with a list of the things that she would like from him, especially over the things he presumes her to want from him. Instead of eating out at diners, she prefers the cloth napkins, fresh seafood, and one-page menus at finer local restaurants. Instead of some golds in her mouth, she wants a new furniture set. In this verse, she also begins to talk about another lover. This lover has expressed his disinterest in condom use, so she simply says that he cannot be with him. This establishment of a sexual boundary is one so important yet rarely mentioned in bounce songs produced and rapped by men. The establishment of structure in X’s relationship also is not exclusively materialistic as she is grappling with other dynamics of intimate partnerships.

The excerpt of verse 3 also showcases open dialogue being held in a rap song about having more than one partner. X has “tricks” that she is obviously intimate with, often in exchange for money or something of commercial value but it is also obvious that she establishes sexual relationships for her own sexual pleasure as well. Tricking to X is more than getting the money, furniture set, or fashionable accessories but also having an orgasm or two come from it. X’s autonomy in choosing who gets to indulge in being her trick also shows her agency in these relationships. Having sexual relationships with men than provide does not imply subjugation as X navigates multiple relationships with providers in an empowered and intentional sense.
The Uptown women, they hauling fast
And quick to knock a motherfucker on his ass
The Downtown women got poison taste
You could smell our perfume when we walk in the place
Sassy and classy, but don't forget
With the blink of a eye, we'll handle a bitch

In true New Orleans fashion X shouts out the women from uptown to downtown in this verse. She is not just talking about them as sexual objects and centering men or “dick” in the discussion but shouting out women and what makes them fly. She celebrates the simultaneous grace and assertive nature of New Orleans women. From their alluring perfume to -their ability to fight if need paired with their style and taste is championed. X is shouting out the women from all over New Orleans, not just focusing on one ward or part of town, she identifies the power and beauty in women across the city. She speaks of the women in way that departs from the way that women in New Orleans have been characterized in bounce songs put out by men. She does not see them as weak objects but alluring subjects with fight in them. X’s Payback appeals to New Orleans women and femmes as it discusses power dynamics and assertion in a way unique to them. It centers their experiences and desires and is delivered in the medium of song. This song will be blasted at parties, cookouts, in homes while cooking is being done, and so forth. It was meant to spark joy and allow for the listener to recharge and refuel in a world that does not center Black women and femmes’ commentary, desires, and humor.

The things said in X’s payback resonate with the generation of bounce listeners that include my mother’s generation and still resonate with listeners of a new generation like myself. The things discussed are still real and pertinent to issues and phenomena that women are still
trying to find grounding in talking about. X is in conversation with ideas that Black women and
femmes have not been given much room to talk about or have been heavily policed when
“given” the opportunity to talk about. An example of a chronicle of New Orleans for Black
femmes X’s work underlines the raunchy thematic of bounce and fleshes out what people want
to hear in her rhymes. From shouting out the women from various wards to referencing the
prominent clubs, bar rooms, and the projects and streets where communal gatherings typically
take place, X is resonating with an audience that does not mind letting her be a booming voice
for Black New Orleans women.

Conclusion

New Orleanians think and create knowledge about sex and intimate relationship Bounce
artists like Mia X, Cheeky Blakk, and Ms. Tee are examples of New Orleans bounce’s vanguards
and pioneers that have contributed to the discourse in rap, particularly southern rap, that talks
about women’s empowerment that shy away from coyness. There is no limitation in their
expression and there certainly is no need for it as their fanbase are drawn to their work because
of that element. It is the case that the women of early bounce music would make way for more
contemporary bounce artist like Supahbadd, Reup Reedy, or Vickeelo, it can also be argued that
given the context of the simultaneous proliferation of southern rap in general, that those
trailblazers of bounce’s early days have cleared a path for women in rap from all corners.
Chapter 4: What I Say About Bounce

The once counter-cultural genre that has now become popularized and even internationalized, requires the eyes of someone connected to the city not only by birth but culturally as I feel I do. I have had the chance to observe the communal aspects of the Bounce scene as a core component of it is its locality. From lyrics such as “6th ward Dumaine!”, “I’m talking about that boy out the 9th ward”, and “Where them hard heads hard hard hard heads let’s go!”, there is a focus on space and those that occupy New Orleans’ historically Black neighborhoods. My own observations are how much the genre can move people. I have seen it resonate with one’s body and thought as I have covered its possibilities in the previous two chapters. This section relies on a few of my own observations coming of age in post-Katrina New Orleans.

My own feminist formations and thoughts have been shaped by the intersections of what I saw coming of age in the New Orleans public school system and how I now think of Bounce music as a subversive space. Ranging from issues that are structural and interpersonal, my resentment towards hegemonic structures that formulate ideas about identity, what is to be empowered, who is to be empowered, and what reigns supreme would be cultivated largely in classroom settings in my preadolescence. Policing ranging from the ways that I would see young girls were consistently sexualized via uniform policies, anti-black classroom rules and practices that would outlaw the use of “improper” English or grammar, and the literal presence of police officers in our schools, I would be brought up in an environment that would push constraint,

77 reference to people from the 7th ward neighborhood often referred to as 7th ward hard heads
repression, and uniformity as gospel, there would be no space for the culturally relevant and counterhegemonic concepts or practices for Black youth.

The condemning of the girls and the gay boys that would shake at the skating rink, the privacy of the bathrooms at their schools, and the dance circles at the parties, would ultimately serve my analysis on gender and sexuality within my own scholarship and formation of a respectability-defiant politics. I would wonder why the movements of our bodies were so condemned as we saw it as harmless and a replication of what we saw other girls in our neighborhoods or our own families doing it.

One of the first shakers that I would see live would be my auntie. I remember how on party buses for my cousin’s birthdays and at family cookouts always being the first one to start shaking. I always thought she was so fun and free as everyone would look on at her, some seeing it as humorous and other seeing it as less than. You could say whatever you want, the woman knew how to have a great time.

I remember nights where my cousin and I would stay up late with my auntie as she had many sleepless nights. We would watch late night television like the Forensic Files, old reruns of Showtime at the Apollo, and when the night would start to become morning and there was nothing but infomercials on the TV, she would turn on some music real low to not disturb our other family members sleeping in the next room. My auntie had these mixed CDs that she would burn on our family computer. The songs would jump from R&B classics by Monica, Brandy, and Keyshia Cole to bounce songs by Sissy Nobby and Magnolia Shorty. My cousin and I would dance together to the music in a tiny bedroom while my aunt would look on at us with a smirk on her face while also wondering where we learned some of our moves from.
School is where we surely saw many of the moves that we would try out in the bedrooms at night. School dances were not much of a thing for me as they were for my mom’s generation, so there was not much opportunity for my peers and I to dance around each other. Oddly enough, it was the girls’ restroom where I would become privvy to who were some of the best shakers in my grade. The girls’ restroom was like a sanctuary where there were usually no teachers or adults to not tell us what to do or to “stop doing that” or to stop being “fast-tailed”. The brief “dance breaks” or “battles” that would take place in the girls’ restroom would be my first insight into the ways that Black girls are often forced into a corner due to the projection of adult and sexual traits onto them. As experienced by most Black girls, there was little room for youthful exploration and embodiment. As I would get older, there would not be much of safe space for young people of my generation like my peers and I to dance to the beat that a generation before us was able to get so well-acquainted with. Twerking would be officially banned on school grounds and at school events at my high-school.Outside of school-grounds there were places for young people to be immersed in bounce culture such as personal family and communal gatherings and the popularity of party buses. It is just worth noting the decrease in youth-centered cultural and leisure spaces following the characterization of New Orleans public schools and Hurricane Katrina wiping out a significant number of neighborhood bars and clubs. There was also a more prominent teen nightlife scene

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78 The high school that I attended varies from those that most Black and Brown students attend in New Orleans as it was a selective enrollment magnet school with a majority white population.
79 The New Orleans Public School system is now the first and only fully charter school system in the nation. This wave of characterization would occur after Hurricane Katrina during the stage of the Recovery School District (RSD) (Buras, 2014).
prior to Hurricane Katrina as indicated by several bounce performers who got their start in the teen club circuit in the 1990s and early 2000s.\(^{80}\)

These anecdotes go to say that twerking is a display of the body and a response to the music that many Black New Orleanians know, and love is not merely a display of sexual agency it is a way of participating in a culture that does not center respectability or whiteness. We see it with the multi-generational participation in dancing to Bounce music. We see young children and older women dancing in similar manners, and it is not interpreted by those in their communities as sexual. While many shakers see themselves as sexual agents and their moves as sexy, there is still a larger cultural understanding of dancing to Bounce music.

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One of my fondest memories in my days or attempting to mobilize young people in New Orleans for political and communal efforts was an event that the local non-profit organization that I was a member of for several years was a block recruitment party that we threw for young people. My peers and I across all the programs within the organization would put our heads together to brainstorm an event that would draw a large crowd of young people who would potentially want to start organizing with us following our event if they realized that we were actually youth-centered and ran with culturally relevant programming. We would attend town halls, school board meetings, and other politically relevant events within the city but we never were in spaces where we could authentically recruit young people for our efforts. Targeting schools was out of the question because a lot of our politics within the organization revolved

\(^{80}\) Hobbs, H. Cheeky Blakk Interview.
around our dissent against the then-developing charter school-industrial complex within New Orleans post-Hurricane Katrina.

My peers and I discussed the lack of places for young people to congregate throughout the city. Following Hurricane Katrina, there would be a significant decline in neighborhood DJs and Block parties as the communal essence of the city had taken a significant hit. Thinking of what can garner a large crowd of young people, we just decided to throw a block party.

One of the videos that one of my comrades would make would be a “clacking video” compilation. She sourced a series of videos from her own collection and her friends twerking videos to make the marketing material. It would be an advertisement that we would all post on our social media and send to group messages to spread the word for the event. I vividly remember the flyer that some of the girls in the program made reading “Calling all clackers!!!” and “save the drama for your mama” amongst the other information shared.

We would plan to have a party bus that would serve as transportation for a meeting point somewhere in Central City and then we would have all the young people dropped off at the party location. At the block party, we would have just one table with some sign-up sheets and information about our programs and resources. The rest of the space was dedicated to cultivating a space for all the young people who came to just have a good time. In an unconfined area. In a place that did not cost money to get into. One that we took our best measures to assure safety and conflict-resolution methods in place if needed. All we really needed was some loud speakers, a fire DJ (courtesy of one of the self-proclaimed clackers of our organization), and a couple of sign-up sheets to get everyone’s information recorded. Making the literal space on a dance floor that catered primarily to bounce music for young people to come together in the name of
mobilization is one of the best examples of how I have seen the genre bring a considerable amount of people together.

Our recruitment event turned out to be a success. My peers and I definitely thought it would be a great idea for recruitment as it was one of the most accessible and low-risk ways to reach young people, but we did not realize the degree of interest the event would have. We made it through the night with many of leave-outs and silk presses had been sweated out, almost 100 signatures from interested young people, and a harm-free night of noncommercialized fun for Black youth. It was also a success in the sense that I saw many of my coworkers who I would organize with for a couple years let loose in a way that I had never seen before. It was nice to have created that space for not only other young people but ourselves to “clack”, socialize with young people from all over the city, and do politicking.

Conclusion

My life in New Orleans has shown me the various way that Bounce music can be received but it has ultimately showed me the power within it. It offers a possibility to the people of New Orleans like myself, my family, and peers of norms and rules that go beyond what is forced upon us as Black people. I saw the potential in Bounce as a tool for mobilizing and giving people and escape. As I have delved into Black feminist theory during my time in higher education, I have had memories of the girls who were policed and chastised for just participating in their culture. I applied my experiences in my critical inquiry of the black body and the history of the provisions set around it. As I look more into pleasure politics and how cultural forms stimulate the framework, I become more inclined to interject what it is that I have heard in my own community as I feel as though that it genuinely contributes to a thought about Black futurity that centers a transformative, pro-black, pro-rachet, joy.
Conclusion

Not only is Bounce music culturally engaging but also intellectually engaging. Bounce is a salient example of how marginalized ways of knowing that have been often overlooked and undervalued harbor the perspectives of those most impacted by marginalization. As cultural vanguards to Bounce how have the femmes of the music been making it resonate in the most transformative ways with their audience that is primarily other Black women and femmes? How does this distinctly localized music coming from New Orleans assert Black possibility and joy? My own observations and analysis of prominent songs and artists within the genre provide insight into the possibility that can emerge. It engages with ideas about sexuality, monogamy, heteronormativity, (dis)respectability, and community in ways that are atypical in academia but common within the spaces of the genre’s constituents. Bounce music can get pretty ratchet, ghetto, hood, or whatever racialized and gendered term that is often used interchangeably with the rest. Rather than having those that would like to theorize about gender and sexuality notions and constructs by only conducting that analysis in the academic and political realms, there is something valuable to gain from meeting Bounce artists and its consumers where they are and seeing their perspectives on all the things listed above. In doing so, they create much needed and desired knowledge about sexual autonomy and agency. This is the next big section where you help people understand what sexual autonomy and agency means to artists and the people who love them.

As concepts evolve from Black survival to Black futurity in scholarship, there is a need for exploring sites where Black pleasure is central and it is integral to Black world-building. As the genre garners more mainstream attention, the countercultural roots that begin along the margins of urban black New Orleans life must not be forgotten. From the DJs in the projects to
the clubs in London where the music is now played for inquisitive audiences, the genre still maintains its place as a site for discourse that is pertinent to the Black experience and chronicling the dynamics that shape the Black experience. Bounce’s role in expanding the conversation about Black life to cover Black women and queer people’s perspectives is a stride in hip-hop, that underscores the genre’s role in amplifying the narratives of those most hushed by white civil society.

The theories that make way for Bounce to enter a serious discussion about pleasure, the body, the importance in preserving black spaces that curate the culture, and feminist hip-hop lyricism, are informed by those elements within bounce music. My own understanding of concepts thanks to the genre’s role in my coming-of-age is indicative of how it can be used as a pedagogical tool within academia, which has historically left alternative modes of knowledge production such as popular black music out of its analysis.
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