Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Amelia Howell April 15, 2018

Booty Hop and the Snake: Race, Gender, and Identity in an Atlanta Strip Club

By

Amelia Howell

Dr. Liv Nilson-Stutz

Adviser

Department of Anthropology

Dr. Liv Nilson-Stutz

Adviser

Dr. Beretta Smith-Shomade

Committee Member

Dr. Jenny Chio

Committee Member

2018

Booty Hop and the Snake: Race, Gender, and Identity in an Atlanta Strip Club

By

Amelia Howell

Dr. Liv Nilson-Stutz

Adviser

An abstract of a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Anthropology Department

2018

Abstract

Booty Hop and the Snake: Race, Gender, and Identity in an Atlanta Strip Club

By Amelia Howell

Atlanta is widely regarded for its quality, quantity, and variety of strip clubs available. The venues have been popularized for both their entertainment value and their imperfect reputation. This narrative does not include all the complexities that exist within the strip club like it being a booming hub of culture, expression, and identity. This ethnography explores how meaning is made out of a strip club beyond just being a source of entertainment. Strip clubs are sites of gendered performance, economic sustainability, racial separation, community, and much more. This analysis is unique in that it illuminates ideas of culture within a strip club by including both anthropological and black feminist theory frames. Typically strip club literature is produced from a gender studies or feminist lens in which the focus does not include larger discussions of culture. The following research focuses on the club Ebony is Atlanta, a club that predominantly employs, advertises, and attracts black individuals. This ethnography is divided into three sections: *Space* gives a glimpse into the location and environment of Ebony, *Place* discusses the different facets of how meaning is made out of strip clubs, and *The Individual* explores the personalities, personas, and identities of the dancers within the strip club. These sections intend to illuminate the complexities and depth of culture that exists within a strip club and how this strip club can be thought of as a black geography. Quotations from dancers as well as stories from experiences inside the club are used to shape a complex picture of Ebony. This research would not have been possible without the kindness and of a handful of individuals at Ebony who shared their stories and lives with me even if it was only for a brief moment in time. I hope this ethnography accurately portrays their voices and allows others to include these voices in larger discussions of race, gender, and sexuality to which they are largely excluded from. Ultimately, I hope this research will broaden the conversation of race, gender, and sexuality in the U.S. and

allow for more opportunity for black female dancers to be heard in conversations that directly impact them.

Booty Hop and the Snake: Race, Gender, and Identity in an Atlanta Strip Club

By

Amelia Howell

Dr. Liv Nilson-Stutz

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Anthropology Department

2018

Acknowledgements

Thank you, Dr. Stutz, for supporting my project all the way through. I enjoyed all of our meetings and your helpful feedback. Thank you for helping me keep calm, problem solve, and have a positive attitude for all of the roadblocks that came up during this project. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Chio and Dr. Smith-Shomade, for your helpful comments and questions. A special thank you to Sharon Hsieh for helping assisting me with the statistical analysis and Mandy Chan for assisting me with Excel and Powerpoint. Finally, thank you to Bob Rogers of StreetGrace for doing the work that you do and taking the time to meet with me.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

EXECUTIVE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB

NO

PHOTOGRAPHY OR VIDEO RECORDING ALLOWED

NO RECORDING DEVICES OF ANY KIND USED INSIDE PREMISES

NO

PHOTOGRAPHY OR VIDEO RECORDING ALLOWED

NO RECORDING DEVICES OF ANY KIND USED INSIDE PREMISES

For Your Protection and Ours

All Customers Are subject to Being

Searched. No weapons of any Kind

Allowed on Premise. Guns,

Knives, etc, are strictly Prohibited.

Entering a Fantasy World

"When you are working you have to put on a whole different persona. I think a lot of people vibe with me at my job like as far as customers because of that they can sense that and know that. But I still have to be very dominant and assertive and apply myself because you're like a salesperson. You have to sell yourself in order to make money up in here. It's a fantasy world you feel me." – Amethyst (friend, dancer, and future nurse)

When I mention the term "strip club," what comes to mind? What about "stripper?"

I am always amazed at how much weight these terms can carry. It seems as though people know everything about strip clubs or strippers without ever have gone to or known either. The various stereotyped images about these terms seem to outweigh the voices of the people who interact, work, and actively engage in strip club culture. Just like other people and places that are deemed "taboo" in dominant American society, people focus more heavily on reproduced images of these topics rather than first-hand experience. My interest in studying strip clubs stemmed from both an interest in unpacking strip club culture as well as a frustration with the dominant discourse regarding these spaces. Through my experiences and the people I have met, this ethnography will discuss the performance of identity through strip dancing and strip club culture.

This research focuses on a strip club in Atlanta called Ebony. This club employs predominantly black individuals as well as attracts a predominantly black audience. Being in Atlanta provides an interesting opportunity to this strip club. Atlanta is commonly deemed the "black Mecca." As a city, Atlanta has a reputation of having a strong influence of black political power and culture. Although there are more complexities to black life in Atlanta that just politics and culture, the context of the city cannot be overlooked when researching black geographies within. I am focusing on this particular strip club as a black geography within the larger geography of Atlanta. In this research, black geography is thought of as a space that not only inhabits black individuals but also is a predominant location of black cultural life and resistance.

Exploring this club provides insight into expressions of race, gender, and culture that demonstrates the nuances and complexities of understanding identity.

Race became one of the most prominent themes throughout my research because the stripping industry as a whole largely supports a black and white dichotomy. In Atlanta, there are "black clubs" and "white clubs" with only a handful of clubs that blur this racial dichotomy. Racial fluidity and mixing does occur however, there is a notable and obvious emphasis towards strip clubs being either predominantly black or predominantly white.

Initially I was hesitant to pursue this strip club because I was not sure how my whiteness would impact my research about black identity and black cultural expression. I decided to continue to pursue it because I was fascinated by the idea and there is minimal research done on race in the stripping industry. Race, power, and sexual identity are all limited topics within strip club literature. There have been a few prominent black scholars such as Mireille Miller-Young and Patricia Hill Collins who have highlighted racial and gender differences when it comes to fetishizing and sexualizing others, but the research on this topic rarely exists in departments outside of African American Studies or Gender studies. Bringing an anthropological lens to ideas about race, gender, and the sex industry provides for new insights into how individuals are both affected by the industry and use the industry to their advantage. This research sheds lights on racial and gender biases in the U.S., the sexualized production of race, and the performance of race and gender.

The structure of the strip club is an interesting place because as an institution it allows for people to quickly earn a lot of money and without having prior experience or schooling. The strip club then becomes an attractive opportunity for people who have fewer economic opportunities and options, which tends to disproportionately affect black women. As a structure, the strip club enforces a hyper sexualized display of the body in connection to economic possibility and freedom. The structure of the space then becomes a viable economic opportunity for black women who do not have other means of income besides working in the domestic

sphere however, domestic labor is not as profitable and the women are vulnerable to being in a private sphere with a potential abusive employer. Therefore, the structure of the stripping industry attracts individuals who are disproportionately restricted by their economic, political, and social positionality. For some people, entering the stripping industry is not a choice but rather the only viable option.

This ethnography is written through my stories and experiences within the strip club. It is my friendship with a dancer at the club and our relationship that guides this ethnography. It is through our relationship that I realized in order to talk about blackness I need to discuss my whiteness and how I impact the space. How race is defined is often relational. Legal definitions of what is “black” and what is “white” are constantly in flux. Outside of these definitions however, people bring their own interpretations to their race and how they self-identify. Race in this research will be discussed in terms of how the individual defines themselves and how outsiders define others. Although at times I refer to race as a black and white binary, the reality is that people of different racial backgrounds interact constantly and these racial constructs are fluid. I use these categories not because I believe they are mutually exclusive but because the reality of the stripping industry is that it appeals to racial fetishes which results in the expectation and reality of “black” or “white” strip clubs.

This ethnography in ultimately intended to allow insight into expressions of race, gender, and cultural identity through strip dancing. I hope this research will allow the stories that have largely been excluded from existing literature to inspire others to expand their understanding of strip culture. This research will illuminate conspicuous displays of racialized and gendered stereotypes. By providing an anthropological lens into this space, it allows for a different perspective on discussions of race and gender in the U.S. which will ultimately allow for more complex understandings.

Awkward and Obvious: A Note on Subjectivity

It can be quite awkward to be at a strip club by yourself. I know people do it all the time, but these people usually come here looking for something... affection, conversation, admiration, a good time. I had no idea what I was looking for. I was a girl, sitting alone at the bar, fully clothed, drinking water, and wondering what I was doing here on a Thursday night. I knew I stood out. I knew my awkwardness could be picked up on from across the room. I tried my best to blend in, but my presence was obvious. I could sense people were wondering why I was there, but I also knew that no one realized how badly I wanted to be here in this moment. I wanted to feel the space; the smells, the sounds, the sights. I wanted to experience this exact moment as something completely unique and irreplicable. It was a strip club, yes. But underneath that title, it was also a fantasy land, an escape for men seeking affection, an economic source for young women, an occasional feeding ground for exploiters and traffickers, a visual playground for all, a community, a club…. It was sometimes all of these things and none of them depending on who you were and what you were seeking. It was a space that seemed to have a completely new atmosphere every time I visited. It was a space that I was not invited into yet welcomed when I went in anyways. I am grateful for the moments I was able to spend there and for the people who allowed me into an aspect of their lives even if it was just for a brief moment in time. I am especially grateful for one individual in particular who transformed my presence from being a complete outsider into a welcomed guest and friend and who largely shaped the course of this research.

“Hey baby, how are you doing tonight?”

I heard a soft female voice from behind my shoulder as a dancer pulled the chair out next to me and joined me at the bar. She wore a sparkly gold bikini and incredibly high heels. Her hair was cropped at her shoulders and had minimal makeup if any at all.

“I’m good. How are you?” I responded. “I’m good.” There was a long awkward pause. I was never really good at small talk. I looked away and took a sip of my water. I felt like she wanted to ask what I was doing there but did not want to judge. Usually I told everyone immediately that I was doing research because I did not want to mislead anyone, but earlier that night a dancer instantly walked away as soon as I mentioned it. I do not blame her. She was working to make money and not to entertain a stranger’s project. However, I did not want this new dancer to walk away. It was something in the way she sat so confidently next to me that made me feel less awkward sitting there alone. We attempted small talk briefly until she finally said “Ok, I have to ask. What are you doing here?” I felt both relieved to tell her about my intentions as if I had been holding in a secret and also afraid to get the same response as earlier. I told her I wanted to write an ethnography of a strip club for an honors thesis. She agreed to be interviewed and I was beyond ecstatic. Looking back on it, I think she was more interested in helping me out than the actual project. Nonetheless, she put her name in my phone as Amethyst and I thanked her endlessly. I assumed after this moment she was going to walk away and continue working. At least, that is what everyone who I had talked to on previous nights at the club did. To my surprise, Amethyst stayed and we continued talking.

I do not remember exactly who brought it up first or how we landed on this conversation topic, but that night, in that particular strip club, we sat at the bar as complete strangers both suffering from mild to severe nausea. My nausea was to be expected and normal for this time of the month. Amethyst had been throwing up in the bathroom all night and was relieved to just sit down. We exchanged advice such as drinking tea, resting, and I even offered my secret tip to cure nausea…. apple cider vinegar. While perhaps this conversation topic was weird for

meeting someone for the first time, I am not sure there was anything “normal” about our first encounter. I had never made a friend in a strip club before, and I got the feeling that Amethyst felt the same way about me. During our conversation, I initially thought I was sharing empathy for another person whose stomach was also upset. I acted like we were in the same seasick boat together, and while trying to think of things to say that would be supportive for a fellow friend in need, I blurted out “Maybe you should go home early. It sounds like you are really sick.”

I immediately regretted it as soon as I said it.

Perhaps these words would have been useful if this situation was me giving advice to a friend at school who could skip class that day or to a family member who was ill and could leave the office and work from home. However, in this moment, these words were weighted with privilege and an ignorance for someone who was not able to miss work even if she was not feeling well. I felt embarrassed. Nonetheless, Amethyst responded kindly and said she could not leave early because her shift did not end until 3am and she needed to make money that night.

As an aspiring anthropologist, I always try to be conscious of my positionality in relation to others. Since the moment I decided on which club I was going to do my research on, I have had endless conversations about the subjectivity of my research and the implications of writing about a space where I am a complete outsider. For some reason, my awareness of my positionality evaded me in this moment. It took a blunder for me to realize that Amethyst and I were not in the same boat after all. Yes, we both were nauseous. But, I *chose* to come to the club that night. Amethyst had to come for work. I came for research. She came to earn a living. I was able to leave at any time, so I stayed for two hours. She still had two more hours to work after I left.

While this moment was important as it was the first time I met Amethyst, it was also significant as a reminder to check my privilege. I am a wealthy, white female who is a full time student at Emory University. I have never worked in a strip club, nor do I think I ever will. I was born with certain characteristics that were stepping stones for a certain type of life. While I am

incredibly grateful for this life, I am aware that not everyone has been handed the same advantages as I have.

Ebony is a club whose staff is almost exclusively people of color, predominantly black and some latinx and asians. Through my conversations, I have learned that many of the staff do not come from wealthy backgrounds and their work here is their primary source of income. Majority of the customers are black as well, and I am almost always the only white person in the room. One time when I was playing pool with Amethyst and two customers, one of the men said to me “You look like you have never seen this many black people before.” He said it jokingly however, the point remains that I stood out. There are certain factors that I cannot change in my research. I cannot change the fact that I am a complete outsider in this space and I cannot change the fact that on the surface it may not look like I have anything in common with the people I am interacting with. Regardless, I chose to do my research at Ebony because from the first moment I stepped inside, I felt welcomed, safe, and excited by the possibility of doing research here.

Identity Politics and Performance: Literature Review

"Defining myself, as opposed to being defined by others, is one of the most difficult challenges I face."
Carol Moseley-Braun, first African American woman senator

"If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive."
Aurdre Lorde, Civil Rights activist and poet

How one should identify themselves begins to form as soon as we are born. The name we are given, our labeled sex, our labeled race, and our nationality are only the beginning to the construction of our identity narratives. These labels imposed upon us and the ones we create ourselves however, are never as simple as checking a box on a form. The categories used to define people whether it is labels used for race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, etc. are all culturally constructed and constantly in flux. Ideas about oneself are narratives that are never fixed.

To begin a study on the performance of identity, one must first acknowledge the complexities and the nuances of the term "identity." Perceptions of identity include a lot of factors including historical/social context as well as the agency of the individual to define themselves. Black women in the United States have had a long history of being the subjects of others' fascination and definitions. To contextualize this research on the performance of identity with black female strip dancers in the twenty first century, I will first discuss an overview of the history of sexualizing black women's bodies in the U.S. The following section then examines theories on race, performance, and identity and the third section compares existing strip club ethnographies.

A Brief History of the Sexualization of Black Female Bodies in the U.S.

In order to begin discussing how the social constructs of "blackness" and "femaleness" are negotiated in the present day, one must first understand the history of the various structures that attempted to define these terms in the U.S. Black women in the United States have a history that includes both the oppression and the reclamation of what it means to be both black and female. The following summary focuses specifically on the sexualization of these identities and how this history ultimately leads into how black female dancers today negotiate these identities in their performance. This history is thus essential in understanding American cultural perceptions of black female bodies and how these cultural ideas fall within the realm of the strip club.

Black women have historically been victims of social, political, and economic oppression, but in response to every form of oppression there is resistance. Black women in the United States have never been passive subjects to the structures that have attempted to define them. To quote black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins (1990), "African American women have been neither passive victims of nor willing accomplices to their own domination… black women have a self-defined standpoint on their own oppression" (p.184). The following history will attempt to contextualize both the domination as well as the reclamation of a black female sexual identity.

Slavery:

Beginning in the seventeenth century, West African people were stolen by European colonizers for the purposes of slavery in the new world. According to black feminist scholar Hortense J. Spillers, a distinction needs to be made between the stolen *bodies* and *flesh* of these West African people (1987). While the physical bodies were bought, transported, and sold, it was the crimes against the *flesh* of these individuals that is forever seared, divided, and impacted in the African person's narrative (Spillers, 1987). In this example, the bodies refer to the physical being and the flesh refers to the impact of having black skin that forever carries the

reality of this history. For the African women subjected to slavery, they were imprisoned as victims of mental and physical violation, harassment, and rape by male overseers:

> A female body strung from a tree limb, or bleeding from the breast on any given day of field work because the 'overseer,' standing the length of a whip, has popped her flesh open, adds a lexical and living dimension to the narratives of women in culture and society (Davis 9). This materialized scene of unprotected female flesh - of female flesh 'ungendered' - offers a praxis and a theory, a text for living and for dying, and a method for reading both through their diverse mediations. (p. 62).

According to Spillers, the experiences of unprotected female flesh of African women forever impacted their individual narrative (1987). The abuse completely removed the individuality from the person and African slaves became interchangeable objects. However, it was not just the actions from a singular slave master that impacted the perception of African women's bodies. The slave economy of forced and vulnerable displays on auction blocks to be prodded and examined for purchase inevitably influenced a culture that emphasized power, difference, and a hypersexualized association with black bodies.

Black cultural studies and feminist scholar Mireille Miller-Young (2014) argues that the chained-up line of African women, men, and children not only was an explicit exercise and display of power, but also of difference between black and white identities all wrapped into a spectacle that was evidently pornographic. Scholar and historian Saidiya Hartman (1997) argues blackness provided an "imaginative surface" that linked the desires of the white master to impose upon the slave. Therefore, the captive body was a visual playground in which dominant gazes commodified and took voyeuristic pleasure from (Hartman, 1997; Miller-Young, 2014). Similarly, historian Walter Johnson stated that through the "gazing, touching, stripping, and analyzing aloud, the buyers read the slaves' bodies as if they were coded versions of their own imagined needs" (1999, p. 149). The process of "reading" these bodies at the slave market made others symbolically as well as literally identify black female bodies as economic, political, and social commodities (Miller-Young, 2014). These women were objects of capital as they performed free labor and they were objects of desire as their bodies were examined for signals

of their ability to reproduce and create wealth for the plantation, to perform sexual labor, and to nurse the children of their white owners (2014).

While the white enslavers may have placed a sexual identity on a black woman's body, enslaved individuals created their own perceptions of identity outside of this context. For instance, enslaved people created their own cultural life outside in what is known as the "black commons." The idea of a black commons is adopted from Marx's idea of commons meaning "people's land" (Roane, 2017). Black commons were formed on what is known as "the plot," or the space of land given to slaves by the enslaver to grow their own food in order to maximize profits from the rest of the plantation (Wynter, 1971). Enslaved people would gather here devoid of their masters. It is on this land that black cultural life was able to develop. One account from a formerly enslaved man James Deane in Maryland referenced a black commons along the riverside in which he stated, "My choice food was fish and crabs cooked in styles by my mother" (Roane, 2017). Although this example is just an account from one individual, it is nonetheless important in establishing that enslaved black women were more than sexual commodities. They were mothers, cooks, storytellers, healers, and participated in both the resistance to slavery and the development of black cultural life in the U.S.

Outside of this place of resistance however, slave owners continued to perpetuate a hypersexual association with black female bodies compared to those of white women. Slave owners justified their use of female slaves for the purposes of sexual pleasure and exploitation by stating claims such as it was the women's "relaxed morals" in which they willingly participated in these acts (Bartlett and Cambor, 1974; Leslie 1986; Miller-Young, 2014; White, 1999). The owners perpetuated an idea that black women were inherently indecent and overtly sexual beings. In effect, this association of sex with black female bodies simultaneously objectified and sexualized black women while preserving the purity of white female bodies. (Leslie 1986; Miller-Young, 2014; White, 1999). This dichotomy between perceptions of sexual deviance of black women and the purity of white women is not isolated to the time of slavery,

yet it has been a persistent assumption. For example, scholar Cindy Patton (1995) analyzed media about gay youth, youth of color, and white youth and the HIV/AIDs epidemic in the U.S. from 1985-1990 and found that in general "white working-/middle-class youth are [were] presumed uninfected; gay youth, yet to be infected; and youth of color, already infected" (p. 355). The assumption was that youth of color were sexually deviant and therefore were targeted by advertisements assuming they were already infected instead of advertising methods of protection.

Assumed Sexual Deviance:

The presumed sexual deviance of black women's bodies may have been initiated during slavery, yet their bodies continued to be objects of fascination for various institutions. In the 1800s, black women's bodies became objects of "scientific" attraction in what is known as racial science. One of the most infamous examples is the case of Saartjie Baartman more commonly known as Sarah Baartman or Hottentot Venus: A South African woman of the Khoi-San tribe who was put on display in an exhibit in London in 1810 and later an exhibit in Paris in 1814 as an entertainment source by being labeled a "freak" (Collins, 2006; Miranda and Spencer, 2009; Wright, 2013). The term "hottentot" was used in Europe as a derogatory term to describe what they perceived as primitive people to which Baartman was the epitome or "venus" (Wright, 2013). Baartman's renowned "freakishness" was due to what was deemed her "primitive genitalia" meaning her protruding buttocks and elongated labia minora. Although it was later recorded that the elongated labia was due to a customary manipulation practice by some African tribes, nineteenth century scientists still reported that these physical differences "distinguish[ed] these parts at once from those of any of the ordinary varieties of the human species" (Miller-Young, 2014). Baartman's figure was seen as evidence for racial biology, black sexual degeneracy, and black racial inferiority. These assumptions were not isolated to just Baartman, but they became "absolute" evidence of the difference of black female bodies and racial biological differences in general. These traits were assumed "primitive" differences and

appeared to support ideas that people of African descent were of a different and inferior race compared to people of non-African descent (Collins, 2006; Miller-Young, 2014).

Even after Baartman's premature death, drawings and casts were made of her body parts and continued to be placed on display. In addition to this example, black bodies were further examined for sexual deviance as seen in the early years of gynecology where enslaved women were used for experiments and further seen when black men were manipulated and exploited in the Tuskegee syphilis experiments. These experiments continued this sexual obsession with black people's bodies which demonstrates this cultural fascination went beyond the relationship between master and slave (Collins, 2006).

This fascination was not without pushback however, there was resistance to the treatment of Baartman and of black people in general who were victims of racial science. Even though Baartman was subjected to such humiliation, she has become an iconic figure in which black historical and feminist scholars refuse to forget her history. This resistance to the treatment of Baartman is optimized through the poetry of renowned poet, essayist, and playwright Elizabeth Alexander (2004). In her collection of poems in *The Venus Hottentot*, Alexander recognizes this historical subjugation of black female sexuality and as a form of resistance writes poems embracing her sensuality as a black woman. Although her poems were written over a century later, the reference to the exploitation of Baartman indicates both an unwillingness to forget her history and the shared history of a sexualized black female body. It is also important to note that the fascination with black women's bodies, particularly the buttocks, also extends into more recent history with a perpetuating emphasis on black women's buttocks in advertisements, films, music videos, pornography, photography, etc. While there remains a sexualization of black women's bodies, there also exists a large set of literature from black women reclaiming their sexuality and their bodies (Wyatt, 1998; Thompson, 2009; Lee, 2010; Sims, 2012).

Leading into the mid to late nineteenth century, the rise of photography and later film meant that this obsession with sexualizing the black body was no longer isolated to private spheres, exhibitions, or scientific studies. Photography and film were mediums that contributed to a broader distribution of images that once again perpetuated the idea of black female bodies as being inherently and overtly sexual. While initially semi-pornographic images of African women were used as part of European colonial documentation, black women began more frequently being used as subjects in boudoir images and académies in what is considered some of the earliest forms of pornography. In these early images, black women were often depicted attending to a white mistress by supporting the white woman's beauty as the main focus of the nude photograph (Miller-Young, 2014). These early pornographic images resemble popular paintings around the same time such as Manet's *Olympia* (1865) which depicts what appears to be a black female maid tending to a reclining nude white woman. Olympia is often compared to Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1532) which similarly depicts a reclining nude white woman with a black female maid or slave kneeling down with her back turned in the background of the painting. Titian's painting was made almost 300 years prior however, this emphasizes a deeply rooted history of depicting black women in subservient positions to white women and white female sexuality. The presence of the black woman in pornographic-esque images was used in contrast to the purity of the white women's sexuality. Miller-Young (2014) states that "the black woman is figured as having a separate and subordinate sexuality marked by the *unaesthetic weight of her black skin*" (p. 68) (Italics added). This quotation raises an important theme in which the pornographic gaze with which black women are seen is in conflict between both a fascination and "horror" of these bodies' difference.

Although early pornography featured black women, it is important to note that these images were rare and their roles in them were often reserved to assistants, concubines, and prostitutes (Miller-Young, 2014). In addition, since pornography was illegal in the United States until 1970, early porn models and actresses were forced into an underground sex scene

including but not limited to prostitution. Although both black and white women were involved in prostitution, black women were more likely to be criminalized for their work. In New York City in the 1930s, black women accounted for more than 50 percent of the arrests for prostitution. This rate was ten times higher than that of white prostitution arrests. In Harlem in 1935, 80 percent of the black women arrested were charged with "immoral sex behavior" (Miller-Young, 2014).

The history of the economy of sex work and its racial separation in the United States plays a key role in what will later influence the context of the black women's presence in strip clubs in the twenty first century.

Booming Black Aesthetic:

Before and after World War I and following World War II, major social transformations took place when African-Americans migrated from the South to northern urban centers. These urban centers and ghettos contained vibrant cultural nightlife including blues and jazz clubs, cabarets, dance halls, and theatrical performances. These areas were not only places for African-American cultural expression but they also were one of the few sources of capital for African-Americans at the time. Ideas of black power began to converge with black artistry which gave rise to a "black aesthetic" (Neal, 2014). In relation to the historical and cultural perceptions regarding black women as "sexually degenerate, and therefore, morally dangerous," black women became innovators in an entertainment based sexual economy of musical theater, cabaret, and burlesque (Miller-Young, 2014). One of the most iconic burlesque dancers was Josephine Baker. She was an African American dancer who moved to France where she was highly desired and celebrated. Barker played into the "primitive" and "wild" perceptions of black women as she wore banana skirts and performed bare breasted (Collins, 2006). In comparison to Baartman, one could argue that although Baker was still subjected to a Western male gaze, she had a strong reclamation over her sexual identity. An analysis of Barker's biography suggests that her performance was cautiously calculated and she played into the fantasies of Western men and reap higher wages and fame (Collins, 2006). Perhaps Barker can both be

analyzed as an example of the oppression of black women sexuality as she had to play into the western male fantasies in order to make a living as well as a form of resistance in that she seemed to have agency in how she depicted her own sexuality and sexual freedom. This argument continues to be relevant and is often a point of debate for scholars analyzing strip clubs (See section “The Benefits and Limitations in Current Strip Club Ethnographies”).

The 1920s was a time when previous racialized and sexualized ideas vastly started to transform with the booming popularity of black culture through jazz music. People of all different races gathered to experience the various black cultural performances that were saturated with expressions of black sexuality (Miller-Young, 2014). However, during the prohibition era, campaigns to eliminate the red-light districts drove these various spaces of black cultural performances into margins that disproportionately affected the economic opportunities for black women. Black women mainly had to choose between the two options of domestic labor and prostitution. According to Miller-Young’s research on the history of black women in the pornography industry, many black women chose prostitution over domestic labor because domestic labor isolated them in white households in which they had limited mobility, little income, and were often exposed to sexualized violence from their employers.

Even though many black women were in danger of being arrested for working as prostitutes, the fact that many of these women (both educated and not) chose sex work over domestic labor demonstrates that perhaps they felt more control over their bodies as sex workers than domestic workers. Miller-Young (2014) states that black actresses and models involved in the early pornography industry were also likely involved in various forms of sex work as a way of survival. Although economic circumstances may have compelled women to enter the sex industry, the industry provided a space for black women “to exhibit economic self-reliance and individual self-respect, make choices about their labor, contest prevailing black middle-class sexual and gender values, and struggle against the meanings and modes of control that disciplined black female sexuality at every turn” (Miller-Young, 2014, p. 49). The

reliance on the sex work industry to financially support black women introduces an interesting dynamic between having limited options for economic mobility and identifying a sense of agency within those circumstances.

From the 1920s to the 1950s, black female porn actors were depicted in highly fetishized and racialized films which began to change by the 1960s with what is termed “soul porn.” Soul porn references a new trend in porn where white consumers began to desire black aesthetic and appropriated what they deemed “soul” in these films. Information regarding black actors in porn is limited until the 1970s with the rise of what is deemed “The Golden Era” of porn. Therefore, the following history of black actors in porn relies heavily on the research of Miller-Young (2014).

With the inclusion of black actors in pornography, black audiences also began to desire themselves in these films marking a transition in sexual media from being for the sole purpose of white domination and pleasure to including more black actors and audience interest. In the 1960s, black erotic models were emerging into mainstream media for the first time including black women being featured in *Playboy* magazine. Erotic media, like other media such as magazines and film, were reflecting the transforming social climate of the civil rights and black power era. The image of the black body now represented a more dynamic sexuality with more African-Americans interested in and creating their own erotic media. It was during the 1960s and 70s that African-American activism and culture began to transform the way black Americans saw themselves in what Miller-Young states is epitomized by the phrase “Black is Beautiful.”

In the 1960s, it was not just the porn industry that was presenting new sexual themes but sexual media emerged out of the private sphere and was becoming more accessible to the public. Porn films were viewed in adult theaters, Hollywood began showing more nudity, and burlesque shows began transforming into racy topless and nude strip shows (Miller-Young,

2014). These newly popular strip shows were more similar to what is presented at strip clubs today.

However, even with the increased presence of African-Americans in both creating and consuming more dynamic erotic media, the porn industry during the Civil Rights era was still predominantly owned and controlled by white males who frequently continued to fetishize black sexuality. For example, one of the first all-black cast pornographic films was ironically called *Black is Beautiful* and it was a sex-ploitation film that equated black sexuality by appropriating "Africanness" in that the actors were dressed in "traditional" African clothing and were practicing what was supposed to be seen as an African sexual custom. The themes present in this film paralleled historical assumptions about inherent loose sexual morals and deviance in people of African descent (Miller-Young, 2014). While black sexuality was becoming more present and dynamic in various media, the same hegemonic ideas about this sexuality that had been present since slavery in the U.S. were continuously perpetuated even through the late twentieth century.

Transforming and Complicating Labels:

While up until this point this history has largely focused on social and economic pressures that conjured assumptions about black sexuality, political reports in the 1960s placed yet another layer on the complex structures placed upon black women in the U.S. In 1965, the Assistant Secretary of Labor to President Lyndon Johnson, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, published a report on African American families focusing on the roots of black poverty titled *The Negro Family: the Case for National Action*. This report is more commonly known as the "Moynihan Report" in which it sparked huge controversy for "blaming the victims," in this case African-American women, as the root of black poverty. While during slavery black women's sexual and reproductive abilities were desirable traits for the wealth of white masters, the Moynihan Report blamed African-American women for the "deterioration of the fabric of the Negro society" and the "deterioration of the Negro family." This report constructed poor black women as bad

mothers who raised degenerate children, emasculated black men, and abused taxpayer money through the welfare system (Crenshaw, 2000; Miller-Young, 2014; Spillers, 1987). Black female sexuality was now framed as a "drain on social resources, [and] an economic liability." This report is yet another shift and layer in the history of sexualizing black female bodies that added an additional structure in an attempt to categorize black women.

The Moynihan report was also in part responding to the presence of black women during the Civil Rights movement. The Civil Rights movement was the peak of black resistance to oppression up until this point. Black women were key figures of this movement including but not limited to Rosa Parks, Ella Baker, Dorothy Height, Ericka Huggins, Myrlie Evers, Mamie Bradley, and Septima Clark. Some of these women knew each other, others made their mark decades apart. These women were often the unsung heroes of the Civil Rights movement. It is important to note that while the media and porn industries played out ideas of a sexualized black female body and the government framed black women as the root of problems in black communities, black women were defining themselves as powerful voices and activists of the resistance.

The Moynihan report was influential in equating black women with the controlling image of the "welfare queen." Throughout the 1960s and 70s, black women were caught between being deemed a financial burden, being objects of fetishized desire in erotic media, and being activists in their own pursuit for civil equality. In 1973, a magazine titled *Players* became successful men's magazine that was termed a black sexual lifestyle magazine (Gifford, 2010; Miller-Young, 2014). Unlike previous fetishized pornographic images, this magazine was headed by black writers and editors including some black women. The models used demonstrated a range of black beauty and Miller-Young states that these images "reflect[ed] the embrace of alternative aesthetics for women's bodies in black and Latino communities." The range of aesthetics included smaller figures to "curvier" body shapes that were not prominent or desired in white pornography. This magazine not only spotlighted and expanded ideas of black

beauty and desire, but it also featured articles of current events, black cultural life, and opinion pieces relevant to life in the U.S. in the aftermath of the height of the Civil Rights era. This magazine perhaps reiterates the same argument presented with Josephine Baker. On one hand, black women are still under an oppressed sexual gaze but on the other hand they are also reclaiming their sexuality with this magazine. The magazine received comments from readers such as "This magazine really did something to let the black woman express herself to the world in this manner. You can believe me, whenever I get the money, I will get your year thing" (Miller-Young, 2014). Readers responded to the expanding sense of sexual agency in these models and expanding ideas of what is considered "beautiful" and "sexy" in popular media. This magazine is an example of how black women negotiated and pushed back against cultural assumptions about their presence in society.

Leading into the 1980s, black women developed a stronger presence in popular culture through television, film, and music. For the purposes of this research, I will mainly focus on their presence in music and pornography because it is through these videos and artists that images of the strip club and hypersexualized black women appear more frequently. However, the following focus of this essay does not negate the increase of black women in other forms of popular, political, and social culture.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the black woman's sexual identity became conflated with the idea of the "ho." The rise in hip hop produced an updated image of the sexualized Jezebel now the ho (Collins, 2006; Miller-Young, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2008). Popular media that exploits black people is referred to as "blaxploitation" (Sims, 2006). Such media frame black women into stereotypical roles such as mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas only continue to reiterate and justify their oppression (Collins, 2006). The popular and repeated images of black women in hip hop videos resemble those of soft core porn. The sexualized nature of black women in these videos is viewed by both black and white viewers alike.

The sexualization of black women continued well into the twenty first century especially with the pornographic nature in the rise of hip hop. Black female hip hop and rap artist in the 90s however resisted many of these stereotypes. For example, Queen Latifah's song *U.N.I.T.Y* released in 1994 won a Grammy, an NAACP Image Award, and a Soul Train music award (Collins, 2006). This song features lines such as "Every time I hear a brother call a girl a bitch or a ho/ Trying to make a sister feel low/ You know all of that's got to go." In addition to Queen Latifah, other black female hip hop artists in the 90s such as Salt n' Pepa, Erykah Badu, Lauryn Hill, and Missy Elliot depicted a similar independent and strong black female voice in contrast to popular tropes (Collins, 2006).

Leading into the twenty-first century, the image of the black female body became more complex with the rise of new media. New media allows for individuals who previously did not have a large presence in the media an opportunity to present their voice. The Internet as a tool has been used to perpetuate similar themes as well as reclaim and resist them. A more recent analysis of the sexualization of black women's bodies is in the chapter Body in Section III.

Negotiating Identity

Throughout the history of the sexualization of black female bodies in the U.S., black women were imposed with many contradictions of what it meant to be both black and female in the United States. These contradictions and concepts are important in trying to unpack the term "blackness" and how it is used today. The following section presents arguments for the negotiations of blackness as an identity, how this identity is explored, and how this identity is performed.

The term "identity" is relative as well as situational. This fluidity is essential in understanding that individuals negotiate identity within the social structures where they exist. can be described as *negotiating identity*. This negotiation is essential to thinking about how the individuals in my research identify themselves in that there is a constant battle between

presenting and re-presenting one's identity. How one negotiates their identity and expresses it is subject to change at any moment.

Negotiating identity falls within the conflicts between social structure and the ability of the individual to exercise agency within it (Bratman, 2007; Bourdieu and Coleman, 1991). Sociologist Stryker (1980) believes that the understanding of society is created through the actions of the individuals while at the same time these actions are produced within and influenced by the same social structure. In other words, individuals can make choices within and change a social structure while still be influenced by the same structure. In addition to these ideas, the individual or the "self" as Mead (1934) argues is grown out of one's mind and it is through interactions with others helps that it maintains the individual. The mind makes decisions based on the environment to what constructs the individual. These ideas are an essential base to begin the discussion of how an individual identity is constructed, performed, and negotiated within a given space such as a strip club.

Race is commonly understood within the sciences as a socially and culturally constructed idea. This construct however, does not dismiss the real effects and everyday impact of being divided into what can appear to be a hierarchy of racial categories. How then does status get ascribed to race? According to sociologists Omi and Winant (1994), racial formation in the U.S. was through a series of social, economic, and political forces. Racial formation was initiated when European colonialists identified people with dark skin as non-human. This label then made it acceptable for colonialists to enslave these people who they did not view as humans. The label slave then evolved into the label of black people. At the same time, European colonialists were framing themselves in opposition to this evolution where they were considered as human, free, and white. The evolution from non-human to slave to black person is an interesting way of structuring the way black people are framed by others today. Framing race as such leads to ideas of "racial etiquette" where people stereotype how people of certain races should act and exist. Other racial theory scholars such as historian Hartman (2007)

argues that there is a social death ascribed to black skin. Hartman explores the idea that even in the aftermath of slavery, many black people still experience skewed life chances, higher incarceration rates, less access to education and healthcare, etc. Black people then fall victim to this "social death" due to the color of their skin. Sociologist Browne (2015) argues that being black means one is constantly seeing themselves through the eyes of someone else. Having black skin means one is always thinking of themselves based on how others frame them. When thinking of the context of black women in the strip club, these scholars' ideas lead into questions of how are these women expected to act? How are they framed by social, economic, and political structures? How do they create a sense of agency within this space?

Blackness however, is not just an identity that is defined by its oppression. Individuals have the ability to negotiate their own sense of what blackness means to them. Blackness as an identity can also be thought of by the individual as resistance to the same oppressive structures attempting to define it.

In the ethnographic film *Black Is.. Black Ain't* by Marlon Briggs (2005), he explores the idea of "blackness" through interviews with various black scholars, community leaders, artists, teenagers, etc. Throughout the film, ideas of blackness inevitably vary from one individual to the next. For example, the film shows a group of black Americans who moved into the wilderness and formed a tribe to replicate their African ancestry, which according to them makes them feel "black." Briggs challenges this fetishization with African culture making one "more black" by including political activist and academic Angela Davis' statement where she said "I love kente cloth. I wear kente cloth and have kente cloth in my house, but I don't confuse that with my identity. Because I can wear kente cloth if I want, but I can put on a pair of jeans and I feel just as black as I did when I had the kente cloth on" (Johnson, 2003). Within this film both the members of the tribe and Davis identify as black. These variations demonstrate that blackness itself is not a singular identity but it is flexible. One variation of this term does not make someone "more black" than the next.

This film along with other scholars emphasize the importance of individuality in defining blackness. To articulate this idea as it relates to blackness, Riggs uses an overarching metaphor that blackness is like a pot of gumbo. The flavor of each pot of gumbo changes depending on who is making it and what ingredients they have. These ingredients then simmer together to create a distinct flavor and richness that classifies this dish. Each pot of gumbo is different depending on what ingredients were included, yet it is nonetheless gumbo. Using this metaphor, each individual is different depending on what identities (or ingredients) such as a female, male, gay, straight, etc. classify their identity, yet at the end of the day they are all people within the black community. African American studies scholars argue that the path to discovering one's blackness is individual and not the same for everyone (Briggs, 2005; Hartman, 2007).

While blackness may have a variety of definitions depending on the individual, this film along with other scholars note the importance of discussing intersectionality when defining these terms. For example, the race-sex dynamic of being black and female is described by sociologist Helen Hacker and historian William Chafe as having inescapable physical attributes that function to systematically define the possibilities of the individual from birth (King 1988). These various systematic oppressions are often what is referred to as intersectionality. The dancers at the club that I research mainly fall within the intersections of being people of color, women, and oftentimes being from impoverished backgrounds. The intersections of these identity markers all affect the initial opportunities for success that these women have access to. These systematic oppressions all influence how or why certain women dance at strip clubs and how others see these dancers.

As observed through the history section, ideas about blackness and femininity have been manipulated, appropriated, and confused by both blacks and whites. Hortense Spillers once stated that "black womanhood is socially constructed in complex ways that render black women as both belonging to and alien to what it means to be black and a woman, and are

simultaneously insiders and outsiders to these taught and policed categories" (Miller-Young, 2014). This quotation raises two important themes. One theme is that the labels "black" and "woman" are complex terms that vary depending on who is using them. The second theme is that black womanhood has often been a topic of interest for individuals who are neither black nor female. Therefore, these terms have been continuously defined and re-defined by varying economic, social, political, and historical narratives that neither one singular definition nor one person can definitively define for everyone. That being said, the topic of identity in this research largely asks the participants to provide their own emic perspective of their identity.

According to afro-pessimist theorist R.L. (2013), black people supply both a political and libidinal economy for the dominant culture. This theorist argue that black people are exploited for political purposes as well as pleasurable purposes. These theorists say that the dominant culture can sexualize black bodies, but this can also be appropriated by black people as well. This negotiation between agency and structure is between how black people own their sexual identity and how it is also owned by the same structure. The history of the sexualization of black female bodies in the U.S. demonstrates this libidinal economy of whites sexualizing black women but at the same time women taking this sexual identity and performing it for whites (think Josephine baker). Did she truly have these decisions? Was it limited circumstances that only allowed burlesque dancing as an economic source? How did she feel she was making choices within this structure?

With the increase depiction of strip clubs and hypersexual black female dancers in the media starting in the 1980s, one can argue that this conversation of identity between lived experience and media representation began to influence the context of strip clubs with mainly black female dancers. In other words, black female dancers are caught between an individual expression of a sexual black female identity and the cultural creation and representation of the same identity based on historical narratives and media representation. It is also worth noting

that these ideas are not always obvious and one can be in conflict with these expectations without consciously being aware of it.

While the dominating force of popular media has the ability to influence messages about identity, this ability to influence does not mean that all audiences unquestioningly accept what is presented to them in the media. According to identity and media scholar Catherine R. Squires, audiences interpret media content based on one's "social location" or ways in which social identities, such as race, gender, or class position individuals and groups within a society's power structures, institutions, and inter-group tensions (2009). This definition does not claim that every individual with the same social location will interpret every source of media the same way, but it does mean that they are more likely to be influenced similarly. Squires (2009) continues to argue that current ideas about race (and gender) have been shaped through the combination of individuals, institutions, and cultural movements. Therefore, one can relate these ideas to how individual identities of race and gender are expressed in the strip club to how these dancers interpret these constructs through a complex historical narrative and current media productions.

The complex dynamic of negotiating identities especially when considering the various intersections that they fall under lead into how one understands how to perform a given identity. Perhaps the complex structures that are layered on top of one another that attempt to categorize black female identity can best be described by scholar Paul Gilroy's Theory of Diaspora. Gilroy associates the term "being" with transhistorical and boundless ideas and the term "becoming" with roots in historical situatedness and contingency (Johnson, 2003). Therefore, both "being" and "becoming" identities are sites of performance. In other words, while some identities might be assigned at birth, individuals may learn how to become these identities instead of what they know as being these identities. This social learning of identities and how to perform them is the basis for the following anthropological theories of performance.

The following is an overview of performance theory from two influential scholars. I will be using these ideas of performance in everyday life to question the performance of race, gender, and cultural identity. I chose these two scholars because their theories conflict with each other, yet both can relate to the topic of the strip club. The following information is derived from Turner's (2000) book *The Anthropology of Performance*.

One way of looking at performance theory is to say that everyone is performing all the time. Anthropologist Erving Goffman argues that all social interaction is staged. According to Goffman, individuals prepare "backstage" in which they interact with others while wearing "masks" and playing "roles." Based on these ideas, a black female dancer at a strip club would not just be transforming into ideas of blackness or femaleness when entering work, but would always performing how she interprets these identities in her daily life. However, these performances of blackness and femaleness may not be the same within and outside of the club.

Unlike Goffman's interpretation that people are always performing identities, anthropologist Victor Turner argues that people perform in inherently dramatic moments such as chaotic or crisis situations. In these situations (arguments, combats, rites of passage), individuals show others what they are doing or have done which Turner claims these actions take on a "performed-for-an-audience" aspect. While a strip club a crisis situation, there is a rite of passage aspect that each dancer goes through that could qualify for this analysis. Rites of passage are classified by an individual being stripped of an aspect of their original identity and being prepared and transformed for a new phase of their life with a new identity. In general, large life events such as circumcisions, weddings, and funerals classify rites of passage. However, on a smaller scale, when individuals enter the space of a strip club, they remove markers of their identity as an individual in society and they transform into a new persona that they then act out for the next few hours. Turner's theories would suggest that these dancers are ultimately performing a new identity when they enter the club.

Performance theory is useful when applied to discussions about identity because the idea is not fixed. How are dancer's defining themselves? When are they defining themselves? And how do they demonstrate this self-realization? This ethnography will explore these questions as well as the interactions between structures and the individual.

Both Goffman and Turner's ideas of performance contextualize how dancers negotiate identities of blackness and femaleness in their daily life and within the context of the club. These theories are relevant to my research and will be further expanded in the following chapters.

The Realities and Limitations in Current Strip Club Literature and Ethnographies

Strip clubs have often been the topic of fascination and debate for many gender studies scholars and feminists. While there has been a large debate regarding whether the women in this line of work are helpless victims in a male centered industry or figures of empowered and confident females, many of the ethnographic work on strip clubs focuses on broadening these academic and social perceptions. Many ethnographic work tends to fall into the current feminist understanding of strip clubs in that dancers experience a little bit of both sides of the argument. While strip clubs have been a hot topic for feminists and gender studies scholars, literature on strip clubs is limited within the social sciences. This lack of representation could be for a variety of reasons including some of the limitations I experienced myself as discussed in the Research Methods section.

While this research is limited in quantity, it is also largely limited in the various types of clubs and workers that are presented in the literature. For the most part, the ethnographic literature is focused on predominantly wealthier clubs that cater to a white male or wealthy businessmen audience. The varying strip clubs that do not currently have a large presence in

academia are clubs that cater to different sexualities or genders other than heterosexual cisgender dancers and audiences, clubs whose workers and/or customers are predominantly people of color, international clubs, and non-wealthy clubs. This statement is not to say that these types of clubs are not mentioned in ethnographies rather these clubs are often used only as a comparison or brief narrative and are rarely given the attention of a whole book. The following comparison of ethnographies are a combination between ones found online and in the Woodruff Library. It is also worth noting that majority of the ethnographies I found online were the same ones located in the library unless I indicate otherwise.

Sociologist and gender studies scholar Bernadette Barton became interested in researching exotic dancers due to the aforementioned feminist debate over whether dancers are victims or empowered individuals. *Stripped: Inside the Lives of Exotic Dancers* is the product of interviews from 36 dancers, four clients, one owner, one bouncer, one DJ, and three partners of dancers collected from April 1998 to June 2003. While Barton (2003) did extensive research in strip clubs in three different cities in the US (Silverton, San Francisco, and Honolulu) including both high end and low-end clubs and straight as well as gay clubs, she is an outsider to the stripping world in that she has never worked in one of these spaces. While she admits she considering working as a dancer for her research, she decided against it citing it was not for her. Barton's ethnography works to give a detailed analysis from a variety of voices about what leads one to become a dancer, negotiating boundaries inside the club, and developing networks and relationships. Barton concludes that these women are eventually impacted negatively by this industry and closes her book with a chapter on sex workers who now work as sex activists aiming to improve the industry. This ethnography leans slightly more toward the former feminist perspective about strip clubs. Barton does not explicitly suggest that these women are victims of male dominance, but she does express sympathy for dancers since many have been involved in tough situations that have led to their work in the sex industry or that occurred during their time as workers.

Six years after this book was published former dancer and sociologist Mindy S. Bradley-Engen published an ethnography titled *Naked Lives: Inside the Worlds of Exotic Dance*. Bradley-Engen takes a different perspective on the lives of dancers as she relates her experiences to those of the dancers she interviews. Bradley-Engen criticizes Barton (2003) for taking the perspective of a "sympathetic outsider" due to her open disinterest and distaste for dancing herself and due to her overall conclusion that dancing causes long-term negative effects. In contrast, Bradley-Engen categorizes strip clubs into three different types: hustle clubs, show clubs, and social clubs. Bradley-Engen takes the perspective of Strauss's processual-order approach to discuss how members of the strip club interact within the structure and "do sex work." Notably, Bradley-Engen has extensive research with three years of participant observation as a dancer in at least thirty-seven clubs, two years of participant observation as a waitress, customer, and third party backstage and in dressing rooms in at least twelve clubs, and another three years of observation at numerous clubs throughout the US. The ethnography is a collection of fifty formal interviews as well as her participant observation. Bradley-Engen focuses heavily on the variety of experiences of dancers.

In 2017, Barton published a "completely revised and updated edition" of her 2003 ethnography titled *Stripped: More Stories from Exotic Dancers*. Barton was inspired by the "effects of economic recession (2008), rise of raunch (early 2000s) and hookup (mid-to late 2000s) cultures, and the dawn of the cell phone (2007)," which she observed to have changed a lot in strip clubs. The revised edition includes over sixty interviews and over two dozen new interviews in this version, 150 informal conversation, and 150 hours of observation. Barton explicitly states in this edition that she interviewed dancers in Silverton because that is where she lived, San Francisco because of its sexual diversity, and Honolulu for its racial and national diversity. She states that she interviewed many women from impoverished backgrounds, women of color, and women from sexual minorities. It is interesting that she includes these details in the revised edition because perhaps Barton also noticed a lack of diversity in strip club

literature in which she wanted to explicitly state the demographics of the population she studied. Another interesting change in this edition is that the final chapter largely compares stripping to pornography in which she condemns the pornography industry for misogyny, yet states that women in the stripping industry have more agency to refute and resist misogynistic customers and employers. Barton also states that it is part of her feminist work to support economic opportunities for women not take them away in which she recognizes that stripping is the best economic opportunity for some women. Perhaps the changes in the revised edition are in part due to previous criticism or due to the changes in culture that effected the strip club world.

In contrast to Barton's positionality and more aligned with Bradley-Engen's position of being a former dancer, *Flesh for Fantasy: Producing and Consuming Exotic Dance* is a collection of short stories written by 11 different dancers and edited by scholars and former dancers R. Danielle Egan, Katherine Frank, & Merri Lisa Johnson. The editors wanted to create an ethnography written by dancers because they were exhausted of researchers asking the same questions of if they felt empowered or oppressed. The ethnography is interesting in that it is revealed what each dancer finds important to discuss ranging from discussing friendships, customer experience, perceptions of them in their lives outside of work, and how they got into the industry in the first place. This rich collection of stories is beneficial in demonstrating the range of experiences that dancers encounter. In addition, it is also worth noting that the editors of this ethnography acknowledge that it is a privilege to have the resources to create this book and that not all former dancers have access to the same opportunities. While there were voices of a variety of dancers in this ethnography, these stories still were predominantly written by white women catering to wealthy heterosexual white audiences.

While these ethnographies focused on the US focus mainly on themes of feminism and gender studies, literature regarding sex work and similar working environments to strip clubs internationally tend to focus more on themes such as race and power imbalance. For example, *What's Love Got to Do With it?* by Denise Brennan examines the way in which local sex

workers in the Dominican Republic navigate an unequal global economy where tourists can purchase sex from local women. Brennan focuses on three major themes including travel from the developed to the undeveloped world, consumption of paid sex, and inequality. The aspects of inequality include power differences between race, class, gender, citizenship, and mobility. These themes are common in transnational studies, yet it is interesting that research on the sex industry in the US does frequently discuss power imbalance rather is focused largely on feminist themes.

Similarly to Brennen, *Illicit Flirtations: Labor, Migration, and Sex Trafficking in Tokyo* by Rhacel Parrenas has a large focus on the performances of Filipina hostess workers in clubs in Japan. Parrenas notes that these women often play into stereotypical perceptions of Filipina women being poor and having tragic life stories to gain more sympathy and more money from the Japanese business men regardless of whether these stories are true or not. This book plays on similar themes of power imbalances and how these women negotiate this power. It is also worth noting that Parrenas who was born in the Phillipines and educated in the US also plays into similar themes that are common in American based ethnographies about sex work. Parrenas contests the ideas that these hostesses in Japan are trafficked individuals as almost all the women work in this industry by choice. This ethnography is interesting in that Parrenas focuses on racial and power imbalance themes that is present in international ethnographies while also connecting it to themes common in the US ethnographies of arguing that these women are not oppressed individuals and are not trafficked.

While both Brennen and Parrenas did research on communities outside the US, Suzana Maia focused her ethnography on Brazilian dancers in New York in her book titled *Transnational Desires: Brazilian erotic dancers in New York*. Maia focuses on the intersections of nationality and representation of the body. Maia contradicts the popular opinion that migrant Brazilian dancers are victims of trafficking, poverty, and oppression by clarifying that many of these women are middle-class and choose this type of work because they find domestic work

demeaning. Maia's research focuses closely on identity performance particularly the performance of gender, nationality, race, and class. This research is most similar to the research I am doing as well. However, Maia does have the advantage in the she is also a middle class Brazilian women in which her positionality makes it easier to relate to her participants. Nonetheless, it is interesting that the only ethnography I could find that focuses closely on racial and identity themes similar to my research has to do with international immigrants. It is unclear why there is limited research on identity performance of local dancers in the US, however, my research is an attempt to fill that gap.

One documentary available online explores similar themes to my research. *Magic City: Inside the Atlanta Strip Club that Runs Hip Hop* directed by Lauren Greenfield demonstrates the performance of class through the markers of wealth that are displayed in the club Magic City. This film was released in 2015 on GQ.com. Greenfield is known for her photography and film focusing on ideas of excessive wealth. In this documentary, not only are customers throwing massive amounts of money at the dancers and on the floor, but the dancers also walk away with trash bags full of thousands of dollars. In addition, the club has a reputation for catering to famous rappers and hip-hop artists as well as being a gateway for musicians trying to break into mainstream success. Magic City is a club with predominantly and almost exclusively people of color dancers, workers, and customers. This documentary is interesting in depicting how extremely wealthy musicians and individuals display and perform class within the context of the club.

While this documentary plays into the idea of performing class within the context of the strip club, the ethnography by Siobhan Brooks titled *Unequal Desires: Race and Erotic Capital in the Stripping Industry* targets this overall question of why and how have black and Latina women been marginalized in the exotic dance community. Brooks used participant observation as well as interviews with Black and Latina women in New York City and Oakland, California. Brooks focused on employment opportunities, desirability, monetary earnings, and racial

positioning of the women she interviewed. She finds that black and Latina women are more exposed to violence, lower wages, and less access to better shifts or venues. This ethnography is incredibly influential to the research contributing to strip literature because it focuses exclusively on the gaps in strip club literature about the intersections of race and sexuality. It is the only ethnography that I could find that has an exclusive focus on marginalized women in the industry. While my research is not as extensive as Brooks, nor do I have the same positionality of being a woman of color or having worked in the industry, I hope my research can continue to supplement the gaps in current strip club literature as well as provide insight into how race, class, and gender are performed within the strip club.

Research Methods

Inside the club there is no touching, no photography, and no drugs… except sometimes. The club closes at two am, usually. The parking fee is $10 but only on certain days and the same is true for the cover fee. Some strip clubs may enforce their rules more strictly while some consider them as more of suggestions. Ebony is a club with clear but flexible rules. To be a researcher in this space means that I also have to be flexible. My research methods include participant observation, interviews, online data analysis, and contacting outside organizations. Within these techniques however, flexibility proved to be the most useful research method of all.

Choosing a Club:

I originally chose a different club for research but had to change locations after they had an undetermined reopening date after closing for renovations. My original research question was tailored to that place, so when I realize this space was not going to work out my project was lost in terms of direction. I knew I wanted to continue to pursue the topic of strip clubs, so I set out one Tuesday night with my roommate for company, and we went to four different strip clubs to try to find a new space for research. The first club I went to was recommended by a fellow student who works on photo series of dancers in Atlanta. After that, I typed in “strip club” to google maps and chose clubs at random within the same star rating range of 3-3.5 (which seemed to be the average rating as far as I could tell at the time).

The first club I went to was huge. It had multiple stages with multiple poles and four young female dancers performing at the time. I sat at the bar with my roommate for about an hour. We were never approached by any dancers or staff besides the bartender to take our order. Understandably, dancers most likely did not approach us because they were more likely to get more money from the men at the bar than the two fully-clothed females. I had entered this

project with the mindset that I did not want to be a burden to anyone who was working, so I was not surprised or bothered by the lack of attention

After this club, we went to another where we were promptly rejected from entering the space because we were not accompanied by a male. We told them we were there to just hang out and the man behind the desk responded with “yeah… we don’t really do just hanging out.” I am not entirely sure what he meant exactly. I have since come to find out that certain strip clubs in Atlanta that have a similar entrance policy also sell sex. Regardless of whether this was one of those clubs or not, it was clear that women could not enter this club alone. This experience aligns with the majority of the stripping industry which caters to heterosexual men with little recognition of other genders or sexual preferences. This aspect is only one of the biases of an industry that seems to have a relatively exclusive target audience.

After our rejection at this club, the next club we went to was a small place located behind a building and off the main road. It was completely empty. I pushed the doors open only to be greeted by a dark room with neon lights. There were no customers or dancers even though the sign said open. While I was eventually able to speak to the manager who offered to help me with my research, this space ended up not working out. Even though I returned to the club on a busier day, I did not meet any dancers who were willing to be interviewed, and the one staff member who did express interest did not respond to my texts, calls, or emails. I also did not feel entirely comfortable going to this club by myself even if it was for research.

The fourth club we went to that night was Ebony. As we pulled in, we were stopped by the parking attendant who collects the parking fee. He started joking around and we found out he was from Ghana. We began talking and agreed on our favorite Ghanaian food: jollof. He let us park for half price and welcomed us into the club. Inside of the club, my roommate and I decided to play a game of pool before we sat at the bar or the tables by the stage. Soon after we started playing, a dancer came around and hugged both of us. She started making small talk and told us to come see her on stage when we were done with our game and hugged us once

more. My roommate and I were shocked to say the least. We had been at this club for less than 10 minutes and already had made two new friends. We could not believe the amount of interactions we were having and how friendly people were to us especially compared to the previous three clubs.

After our game of pool, we walked to the seating area. There were less than 10 customers, but notably almost half were female. Up until this point, we had been the only female customers in each club we went to. I watched their faces as they watched the dancers on stage and they were equally amazed and the talent and strength. Once we saw the girl we met earlier take the stage, we walked up to give her money. It was our first time doing this. The dancer could tell we were shy and helped us out by guiding us through it. She stuck out her butt and twerked and told us to tuck the money into her g string. After the money was secure, we all smiled and said our goodbyes. She went back to her dance and my roommate and I left the club. Before we got in our car however, we were stopped by the security and parking attendant… They wanted to know who won the game of pool. Ebony stood out to me for a variety of reasons. The most notable was the friendliness of the staff. Secondly, the crowd had a lot of female customers and third, it was also the only club that night where all the dancers and customers were black. I felt the most excited about doing research at this club and decided to pursue it for my project.

Participant Observation:

I went to the club at least once a week for 10 weeks, and the weeks were not always consecutive. I stayed for at least 1 hour each time. I tried to go at a variety of times including once during the day, twice during the early evening, once on a special occasion, twice on popular nights during the weekend, and the rest were between 10pm-1am on Thursday nights.

Going at different times was useful because the environment of the club changes drastically from day to night and weekday to weekend.

I would always introduce myself as a researcher and have casual conversations with anyone who was willing. I took notes on a private folder on my phone, which looked like I was texting and fit in with the casual environment of the club. I found that playing pool was a great way to break down barriers as well as experience a popular aspect of the strip club. I also participated in other activities such as buying drinks, dances, and tipping dancers. Bringing friends to the club was a useful technique in seeing how customers experience the club. Having a friend or a group with me also helped me integrate into the culture of the club because not many people go to the strip club alone. Sharing drinks, hookah, or marijuana is also a common social practice inside the club. When I participated in these social activities, it helped eliminate barriers between me and the people at the club. For instance, Amethyst told me she thought I was uptight at first and only revealed this to me when we finally had a drink and shared a hookah together. Drinking and smoking are integral aspects of the club and almost everyone participates in this culture, so it made sense that I did as well.

Interviews:

I had two semi-structured interviews with dancers who work at Ebony. The interviews lasted 20 minutes, were recorded and later transcribed, and are anonymous. To find interviewees I asked people if they were interested and got their phone number so we could set up a time outside of the club. Most of the people I approached were willing to be interviewed at the club, but I could not do so because I did not have permission from the manager which is essential for IRB. Although eight dancers said they were willing to be interviewed, only one ultimately responded and followed through. I tried to meet Amethyst outside of the club for an

interview, but she was unable. Amethyst eventually got permission from the day manager to interview, which is how I was able to interview her and another dancer at the club.

Interviews were challenging for a variety of reasons. Dancers can often lead extremely private lives for fear of being judged or misrepresented. It can be a challenge for dancers to feel comfortable enough to interview with an outsider unless they know you beforehand, you were recommended by one of the other dancers, or they take a chance on you. In addition, the timing of interviews was challenging in that many of the employees at the club did not have a lot of free time outside of when they worked. Amethyst could only interview during the day because there were fewer customers during the day than at night. I could only meet during the day if I skipped class and there was only so much class I could miss before it started to affect the possibility of completing this project. In addition, the club was only closed one day a week which understandably people did not want to take time interviewing with me because it was the one day a week they could pursue outside projects, visit family, rest, etc. As another attempt to gather interviews, I was offered the opportunity to interview former dancers through a non-profit organization in Atlanta. I have been in communication with the CEO of this organization since November 2017 however, the organization is incredibly busy and has yet to follow through despite repeated emails, phone calls, and texts. I would have liked more interviews for this project but circumstances made obtaining them challenging to which I tried my best to get data in other ways such as participant observation and gathering data online.

Online Data Collection:

I analyzed numerical and visual data from social media accounts belonging to a list of 23 strip clubs in Atlanta in addition to analyzing linguistic data from yelp reviews of the same list of clubs. I looked at the number of followers of each social media account and the types of photos each club was posting to see how each club was representing themselves. The purpose was to

see what were the trends, differences, and if these representations potentially affected the dancers' performance. On Yelp, I looked at what each customer felt was important to review about each club and what terms they used. The purpose once again was to see the trends, differences, and if these categorizations potentially affected the dancers' performance.

Outside organizations:

I communicated with a non-profit organization in Atlanta called Street Grace that works to protect and rehabilitate previously trafficked individuals. I contacted this organization along with two more that work on issues related to sex-trafficking after the Office of Undergraduate Research at Emory strongly suggested that I should not return to the strip club until meeting with experts in this area. Ultimately, I was able to get a hold of one organization (Street Grace) and meet with the CEO Bob Rogers in November 2017. I did not return to the club for four weeks until I was able to meet with Rogers. After this meeting, I carefully evaluated the safety of my research and ultimately decided to continue going to the club at least once a week, but after this moment I always brought a friend. I do not think bringing a friend was necessary and I truly always felt safe at this club, but it was just an extra precaution recommended by Rogers. I used the information I learned from this organization to discuss the connection between sex-trafficking and strip clubs in Atlanta.

Terminology:

I use the terms black and white to define race except when the person uses another term. If I am using a quote from a scholar, I try to search how they identify themselves, but if I cannot find it, I used how their race is identified online. I refer to clubs who advertise online as "black clubs" or "white clubs" to emphasize the way these clubs are branding themselves.

Part I.

Space and Place

Location

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1rRt_qkA-EqElDXjjiG98r-Nz0V6yNfS8&usp=sharing (link to interactive map)

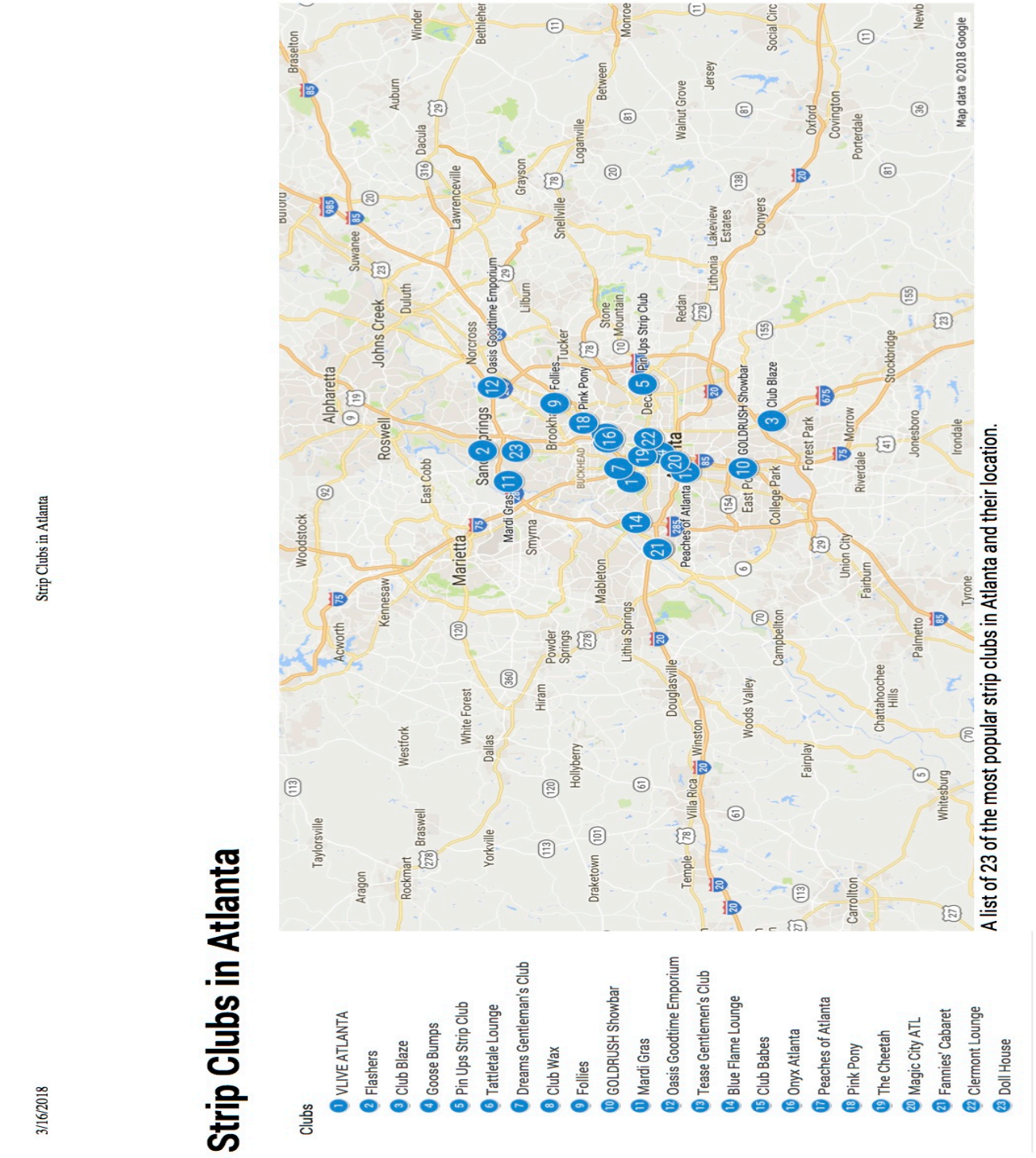


Figure 1. Map of 23 Clubs in Atlanta

Scenes from Inside

“Let your hair down girl!”

Pretending to block me from entering the club, one of the security guards mimicked pulling a hair tie out and shaking his nonexistent long hair. He would not let me pass because he said I did not look like I was ready to have fun tonight. The other guards told me to ignore him and come on in, but he was insistent.

“Let them curls fly. Go ahead and take out your bun!”

My friend and I were caught between the other guards saying to forgive him because he had too much to drink and the one guard insisting that I let my hair down. I finally took out my bun and as promised he let us go in. The other guards apologized and told me I could put my hair up if I wanted. It was sweet they apologized, but I really did not mind.

After a game of pool, Amethyst was called over by a customer. The interaction was brief and she came back after about 5 minutes. The man was with another dancer at the time, but wanted to show Amethyst that he kept the $2 bill she had once given him.

“Are you Asian too?!” The shot girl asked my friend as she held out her hand for a high five.

A man taps on a dancer’s shoulder and asks for a dance. Without turning around, she tells him to hold on one second while she pulls over the pile of cash on the ground from her previous dance. She never

turns around to face the man. She dances only with her backside to him, removes her clothes, collects her cash, and moves on.

There are about ten customers and almost double as many girls if you include dancers, shot girls, and waitresses. I sat at the bar opposite a handful of older men. I watched the younger men interact and dance with the women near the stage. They were ordering drinks, spending money, and tipping the girls. The older men were watching television, which usually played sports or reality TV. The older men only really interacted with the dancers when they were approached by them.

In the midst of raining dollar bills, a customer placed a one dollar bill between the butt cheeks of one of the dancers. She continued her dance with the bill between her cheeks careful to not let it fall until the song was over.

In a discussion about our most recent films that we are making, the parking attendant tells me that he is struggling right now because he needs to find a new main actress. All of the actresses in his film are dancers from the club, and one of them was killed last year. Jokisha "Kisha" Brown was pursuing acting and modeling while dancing at the club and was shot the night before her 36th birthday in what the police declared a "targeted" and "heinous" act. Brown was tragically killed while in her car further down the road from the club on her way to a makeup appointment, and the killer was never found.

As my friend and I were leaving the club one night, we walked over to tip the dancer on stage. Expecting to tuck the money in the side of her G-string as per usual, the dancer instead laid on her back and pulled her bikini to the side to expose her entire genitalia. The club is full nudity, but I have never seen a girl expose and rub her genitals to entice a customer. I never saw this action again in this club or any other club.

"Are you a dancer here?" A customer asked me as I stood alone by the pool tables. I was wearing black leggings, tennis shoes, a Bruno mars T-shirt, and a cardigan that almost touched the floor. My backpack sat next to me collecting ashes from the leftover cigarettes on the table above. "No, I'm just hanging out." I responded. We were both confused. I do not know a single dancer who covers their entire body in clothing and I do not think he knew a single person with a backpack in the strip club.

"You look lost." "The bathrooms are in the back." "Can I help you with something?" …. "No thanks, I am just here to hang out."

Tonight the dancers pulled out all the stops. One move was when one girl would squat and twerk and the other girl would stand on her knees and twerk higher up both holding on to the pole. Another move was that a girl would bend over backwards and another girl would stick her head between the other's legs, flip herself upside down and twerk in the air.

After our interview, Amethyst returned and said "By the way, I am also half Indian. My dad's black and my mom's Indian."

Full Throttle Thursdays

The first time I heard about the Clermont Lounge was through a friend at school who wanted to go because Lady Gaga and the cast of *The Hunger Games* had been there. The first time I heard about Cheetah was by a stranger telling me I had to go at least once but only to eat a steak at the five-star restaurant inside. Magic City was usually mentioned in relation to celebrities and music. Pink Pony was always suggested for first time strip club goers and Follies was always gossiped about for rumored illegal activity. Regardless of whether these rumors are true or not, it is clear that each of these clubs has a reputation. People who had never been to these clubs were even talking about them as if they had. The reputations of each strip club in Atlanta led me to wonder about how these perceptions are constructed.

Every strip club caters to a particular audience. Whatever each club advertises is what audience that club will draw in. While I originally wanted to exclusively focus on the dancers' sense of identity, I realized it was naive to assume that individual identity could be performed within a space without being influenced by the space itself. How is the club advertising itself to the outside world? How are these advertisements replicated on the inside of the club? This section will be useful in outlining the structure of the stripping industry that dancers navigate.

Strip clubs in Atlanta predominantly advertise in a digital space. Each club has their own website and at least one social media account. In order to understand the scope of the audience being reached by these advertisements, I analyzed the number of followers on the three dominant advertising platforms for strip clubs: Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. I am analyzing 23 strip clubs that were taken from a list called "The Best Strip Clubs in Atlanta" on Yelp, which includes a wide range of clubs from a variety of ratings. The clubs that are excluded from this analysis are clubs with male strippers, swinger clubs, and clubs that are not reviewed on Yelp. While there are more strip clubs in Atlanta, this list of 23 clubs has a wide range of star ratings,

cost ratings, and customer reviews which makes it an accurate list to analyze the breadth of strip clubs in Atlanta.

The following graphs display the number of followers for each strip club on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. These graphs intend to demonstrate the assumed amount of people these posts and advertisements are reaching.

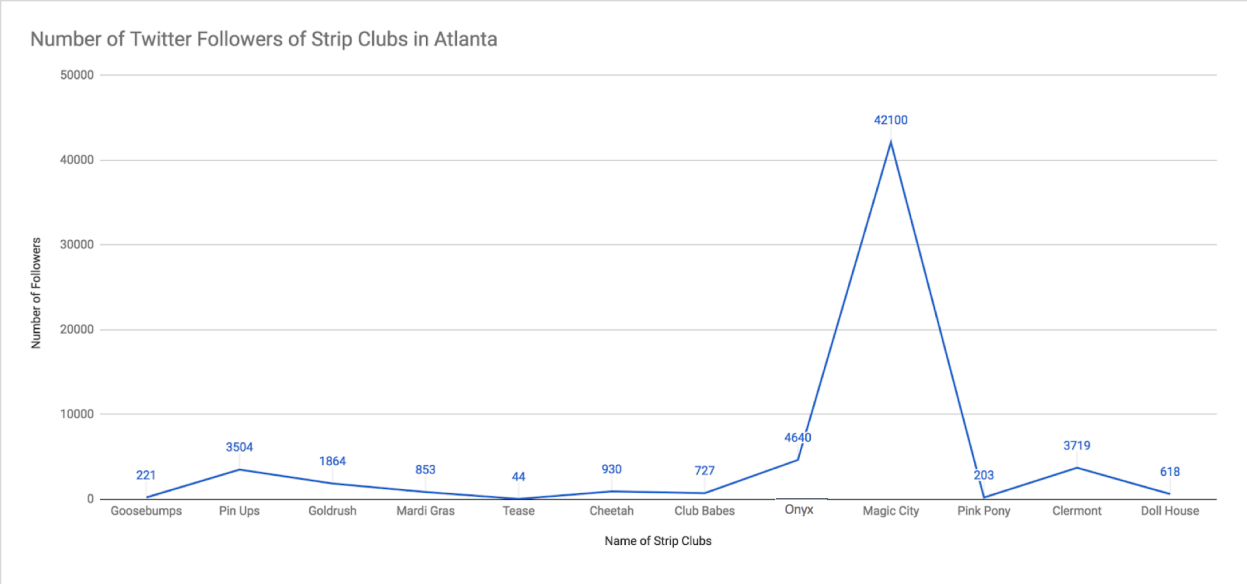


Figure 2. Number of Twitter Followers

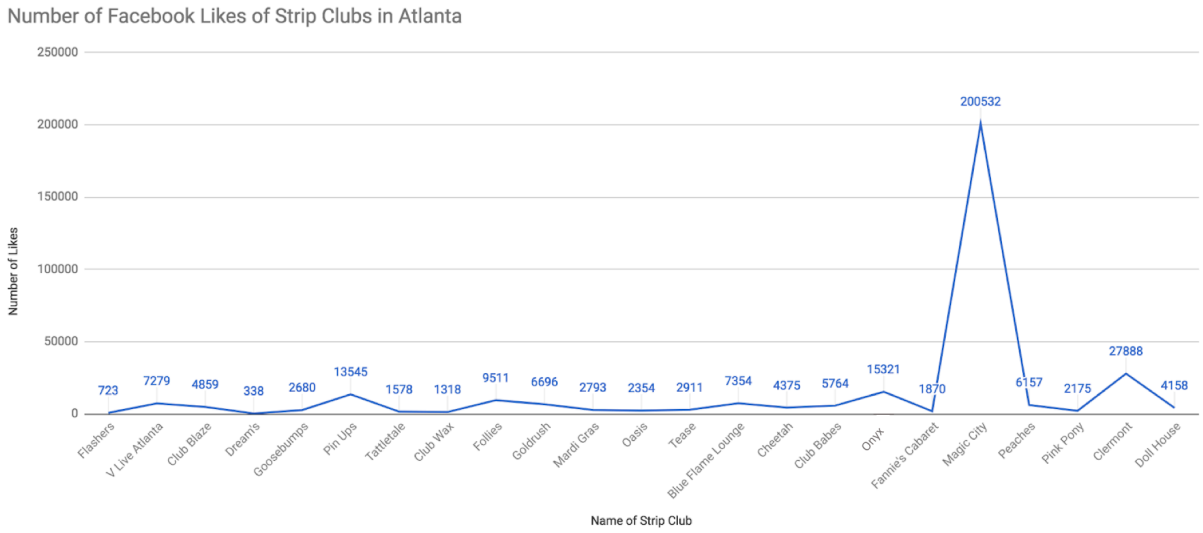


Figure 3. Number of Facebook Likes

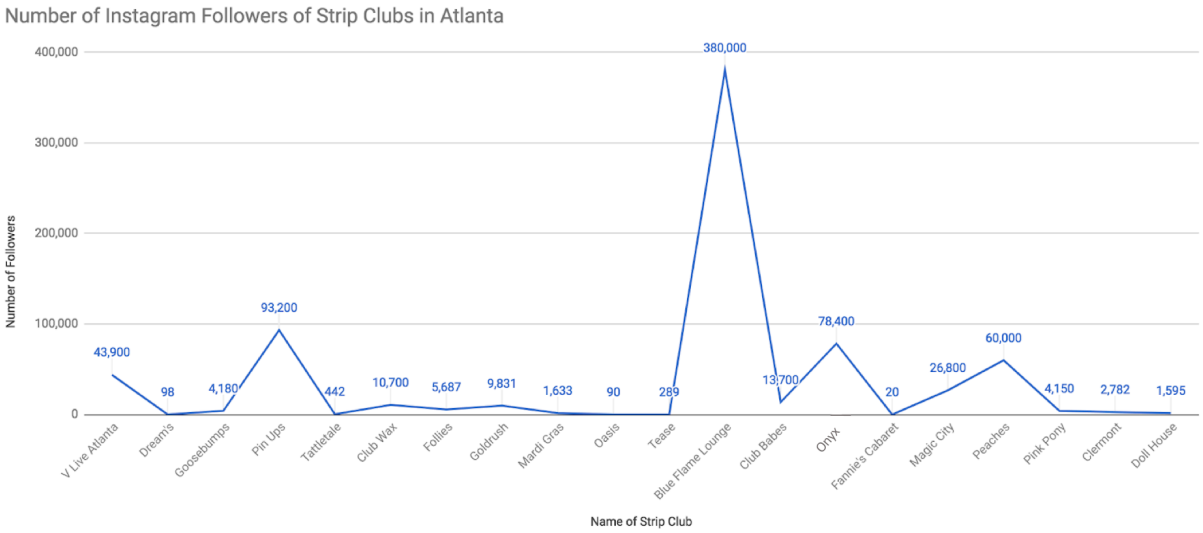


Figure 4. Number of Instagram Followers

In general Magic City is often an outlier. This club has 42,100 followers on Twitter, which is 38,381 more followers than the second most highly followed club on Twitter (Clermont Lounge). Magic City has 200,532 likes on Facebook, which is 172,644 more followers than the next most

liked club on Facebook (Clermont Lounge). This information is not surprising because Magic City has ties to celebrities and popular hip hop artists that have included its name in some of their lyrics. It is also not surprising that the Clermont Lounge comes is the second highest followed on these platforms because it similarly has a prominent reputation. Magic City however, does not come close to the number of followers for the Blue Flame Lounge on Instagram. On Instagram, Magic City has 26,800 followers whereas the Blue Flame Lounge has 380,000 (353,200 more followers). This difference suggests that perhaps Instagram is not the dominant platform for Magic City whereas it might be for other clubs. This information is helpful in visualizing strip clubs' large online presence and how they can use this online presence as advertisements for their space. In order to contextualize the total number of followers, the chart below ranks the clubs from highest to lowest total number of social media followers across all three platforms. The distinction between the bolded clubs and non-bolded clubs indicate clubs that advertise a racial preference, which becomes a major pattern and theme discussed in detail below.

Order	*Name of Strip Club*	*Total Social Media Following*
1	**Blue Flame Lounge**	**387,354**
2	**Magic City**	**269,432**
3	**Club Pin Ups**	**110,249**
4	**Onyx**	**98,361**
5	**Peaches**	**66,157**
6	**V Live Atlanta**	**51,179**
7	Clermont Lounge*	34,489
8	**Club Babes**	**20,191**
9	**Goldrush**	**18,391**
10	**Follies**	**15,198**
11	**Club Wax**	**12,018**

12	**Goosebumps**	**7,081**
13	Pink Pony	6,528
14	Doll House*	6,371
15	Cheetah	5,305
16	Mardi Gras	5,279
17	**Club Blaze**	**4,859**
18	**Tease**	**3,244**
19	Oasis	2,444
20	Tattletale	2,020
21	Fannie's Cabaret	1,890
22	Flashers	723
23	**Dream's**	**436**

Figure 5. Total Social Media Followers

* = no obvious racial bias
Clubs that exclusively advertise black women
Clubs that exclusively advertise white women

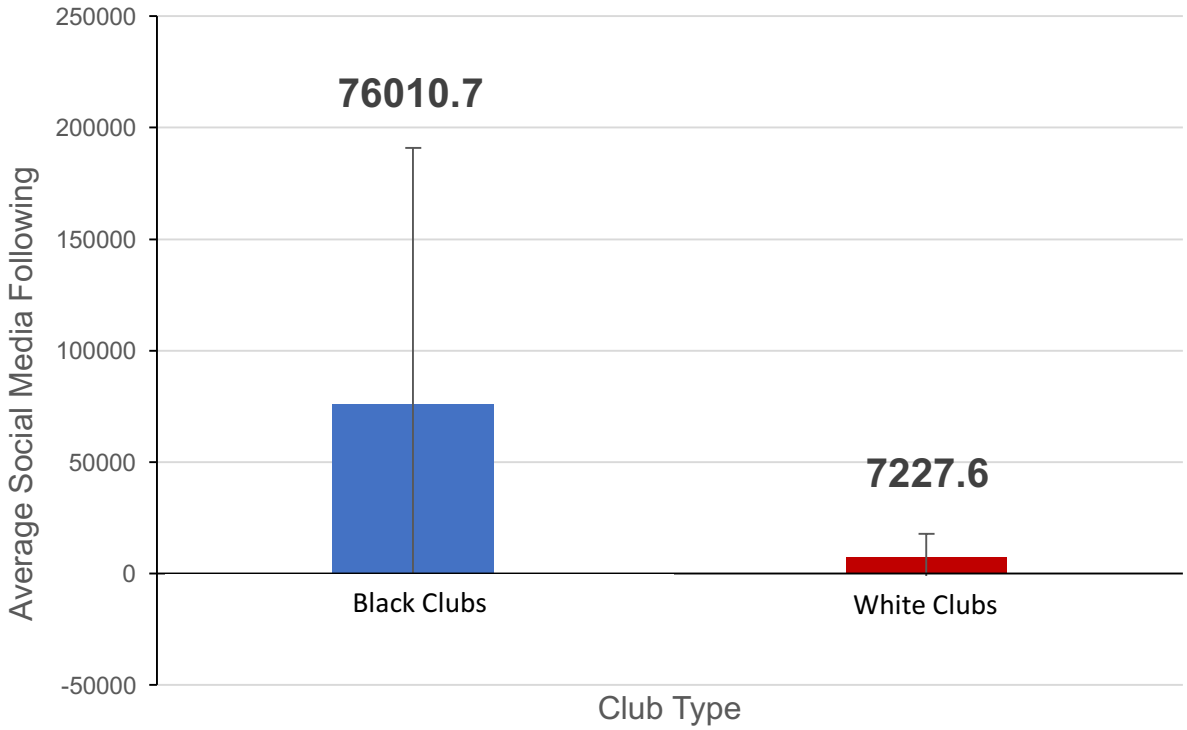


Figure 6. Total Average Social Media Following for Black Clubs and White Clubs

P value: .09

It is important to note that the total average followers for black clubs compared to white clubs had a P value of .09 in a two sample two tailed T test. This P value is not significant implying that this sample is too small to demonstrate any statistical significance within this set of data. Nonetheless, an analysis of the data is still important to express the patterns observed with the information available.

There are two important patterns revealed by the total social media following for each club. The first is that strip clubs predominantly advertise themselves as either having black women or white women. No clubs advertise other races and only two clubs (marked with an asterix in Figure 4) advertise images of both black and white women. Interestingly, Follies only advertises black women whereas people who reviewed the club online often praise it for having a variety of ethnicities. This decision to exclusively advertise black women leads into the second pattern observed that overall the most highly followed clubs all advertise black women. The

highest followed club that advertises exclusively white women falls at number 13 on this list in Figure 4 with a total social media following of 6,528. It is possible that Follies also noticed this trend and consciously chose to advertise a certain way in order to gain more followers.

Figure 5 demonstrates the differences in the total average number of followers for black clubs compared to white clubs. This graph visually shows the drastic difference in number of followers as seen the clubs that advertise black women with an average of 76010.7 followers compared to clubs that advertise white women/ have no obvious racial bias with an average 7227.6. This data suggests that perhaps people prefer to see black women advertised for strip clubs or even expect to see black women advertised for something sexual as opposed to white women. It is also possible that these highest followed clubs are simply more popular than others and therefore have more followers. Nonetheless, these patterns align with a larger history of associating black women as inherently sexual objects which could explain why more people follow these accounts as opposed to accounts advertising white women. In addition to just advertising black women, these clubs also tend to advertise black women in different poses than clubs who advertise white women. The following section analyses the difference in images advertised for different clubs.

Instagram Image Analysis

The reputation for each club differs drastically because strip clubs do not advertise their clubs in the same way even if they are using the same platforms. The images each club uses to contextualize themselves can range from humorous memes to completely nude women. The images from clubs advertising black women however, are notably different in general than those clubs advertising white women. This difference in images further emphasizes patterns of portraying and viewing black women's bodies as being overtly sexual and interchangeable objects for consumption.

To analyze these images, I screenshotted the first three lines of the Instagram page for the top four highest followed clubs advertising black women and the four highest followed clubs advertising white women. I chose to screenshot Instagram because these images appeared to be the same ones posted on their websites and other social media platforms.

While I originally wanted to analyze the top 5 of each type of club, the fifth highest followed club advertising black women is a private account. I was rejected from following over ten times until finally they accepted me after weeks of trying. I assume that they chose to be on private mode because this way they have less of a chance of being flagged for inappropriate images. However, these images are not notably different than the other clubs advertising black women. I decided not to include them in this analysis after all because it was just one more example that falls into the main patterns discussed below. It is also worth noting however, that each male that I asked to follow this club on my behalf was accepted almost immediately. Even my younger brother who is not yet 18 and who created an Instagram account just to help me with this project was approved to follow this club within 30 minutes of requesting. This club, and probably most of these clubs, aim their advertisements towards a heterosexual male audience. Since I do not fit within the target audience that is perhaps why I was rejected from following so many times.

I will not be using the actual images from Instagram in this paper because I do not have the rights. The following schemata charts demonstrate what types of images are portrayed on these accounts:

Key:

= No women in photo

= Professional photo shoot

= Image of women taken inside the club

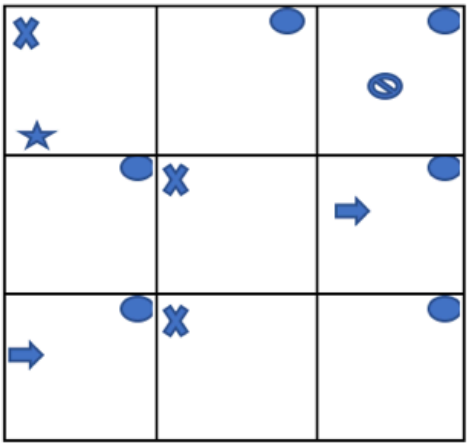
= Does not show the woman's face

= Woman is wearing clothes (more than just bra, underwear, or bikini)

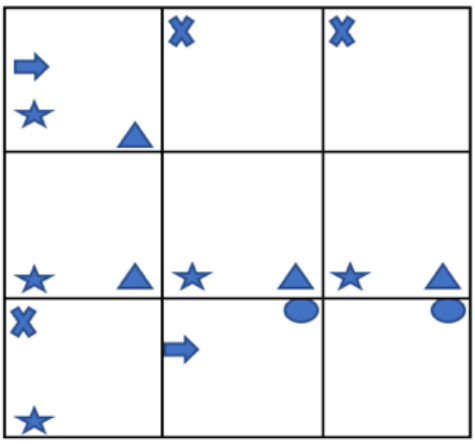
= Image makes reference to sports

= Image includes written text

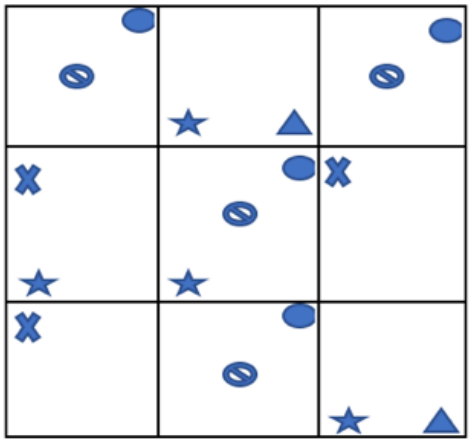
Top Four Highest Followed Clubs Advertising Black Women Instagram Schematic



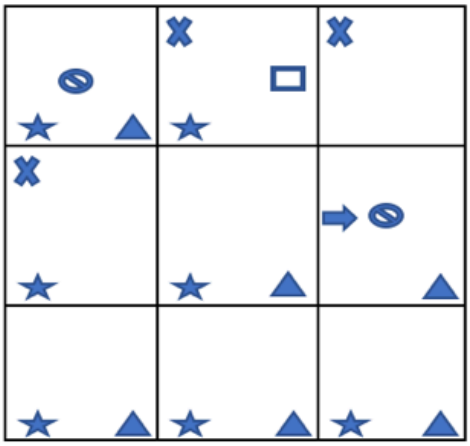
Blue Flame
Instagram followers: 385,000
Total followers: 387,354



Magic City
Instagram: 30,000
Total: 269,432



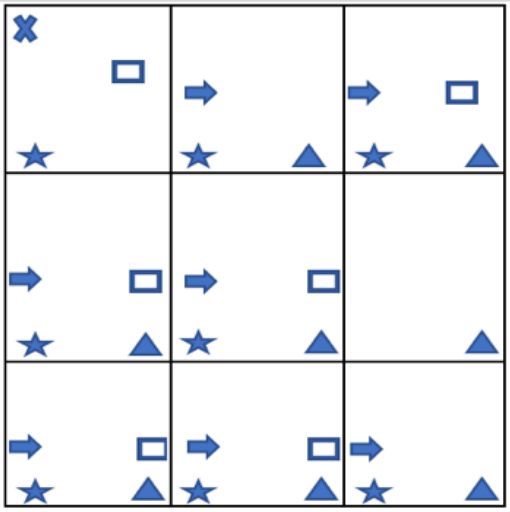
Pin Ups
Instagram: 95,600
Total: 110,249



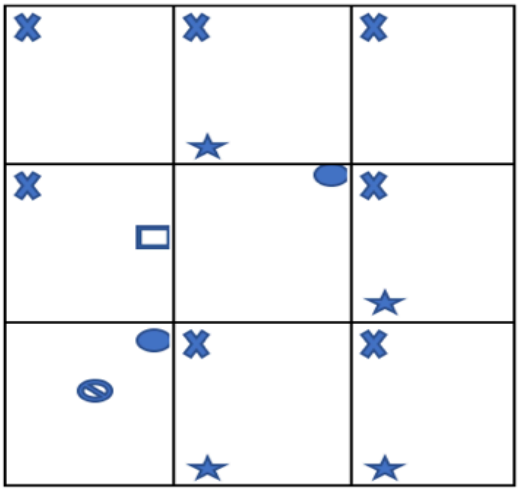
Onyx
Instagram: 82,200
Total: 98,361

Figure 7. Highest Followed Black Clubs Instagram Schemata

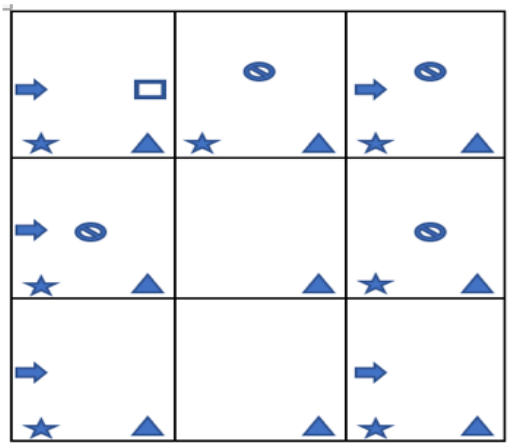
Top Four Highest Followed Clubs Advertising White Women Instagram Schematic



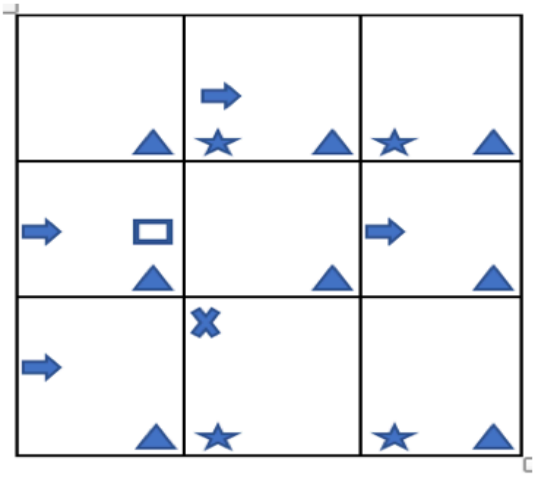
Pink Pony
Instagram followers: 4,286
Total followers: 6,528



Dollhouse
Instagram: 1,605
Total: 6,371



Cheetah
Instagram: 230
Total: 5,305



Mardi Gras
Instagram: 1,629
Total: 5,279

Figure 8. Highest Followed White Clubs Instagram Schemata

With these Instagram images, I am looking at five different questions: 1. Which clubs use images that appear to be taken in professional photoshoots as opposed to ones that appear to

be taken inside the club? 2. Which clubs use images that do not show the woman's faces? 3. Which clubs have women clothed? 4. How many images make references to sports? 5. How many images use written text as opposed to just objects?

1. Which clubs use images that appear to be taken in professional photoshoots as opposed to ones that appear to be taken inside the club?

Out of all 36 images in Figure 6, 11 seem to be professional images and 12 appear to be taken inside of the club. In Figure 7, 25 out of the 36 images appear to be professionally shot and only 2 out of 36 appear to be images of women taken inside of the club. For the highest followed clubs advertising black women, 31% of the images are professional and 33% are inside the club compared to 70% of the images being professional shots for clubs advertising white women and 6% being taken inside the club.

Professional shots compared to shots taken inside the club imply various meanings to the consumer. Professional shots imply that the club is wealthier and can afford such expenditures. In addition, these images use models as opposed to actual dancers in the club which makes the women in these photos feel more unattainable. A professional shot allows for fixed lighting and after effects to create unrealistic fetishized ideas of what an "ideal" woman looks like. In comparison, the shots taken inside the club have limited after effects or none at all meaning they are displaying "real" women that one can meet if they go to that club. Shots inside the club are less posed, have lower quality lighting, and display the context of where these women are located so one can physically visit these women if they so desire.

While the clubs advertising black women as seen above use essentially the same amount of professional shots as shots taken inside the clubs, the clubs advertising white women use drastically more professional shots with extremely limited shots taken inside the club. This difference suggests that clubs who advertise white women want their women to appear more "perfect" and more unattainable than someone who could just be found inside of a strip club. In a larger context, the emphasis on advertising white women outside of the context of the strip

club further emphasis the idea of white women's "purity" even though these images are still sexual. This emphasis on purity is particularly in contrast to a black woman's "inherent sexual deviancy" as discussed in the section A Brief History of the Sexualization of Black Women's Bodies in the U.S.

2. Which clubs use images that do not show the woman's faces?

Both Figures 6 and 7 show images of women without showing their face. Clubs that advertise black women only show slightly more images without the woman's face compared to clubs that advertise white women however, the way that these images are framed is not the same.

Many of the images that do not show the faces of the women for Figure 6 often focus on a particular body part instead. Most of the photos are framed on just the butt and sometimes the breasts. This focus on these body parts in particular connects to this fascination of black woman's bodies particularly their butt (i.e. Sarah Baartman). In comparison, the images that do not show the woman's face advertised by white clubs typically do not focus on one particular body part. These images often show the woman wearing a dress, a woman laying on expensive sheets, and a woman in her bra surrounded by champagne. These images are still objectifying the women but they feel more humanizing.

The focus on the black woman's body parts exclusively suggests to the consumer it is the most important part of her, these women are interchangeable bodies without faces, and these bodies are exclusively for their customers' enjoyment. The images without faces shown in Figure 7 similarly suggests that these women are interchangeable however, the fact that many of the women without their faces shown are less objectified for one particular body part and are more covered in clothing is perhaps more humanizing than some of the other images. Even though both white women and black women are objectified, the black women are shown in ways that are less flattering and more dehumanizing.

3. Which clubs have women clothed?

For this question, I am defining clothed as not nude and wearing more than just a bra, underwear, or bikini. I also did not consider completely see-through clothing as “clothed” because these women are totally exposed except for a thin layer of sheer fabric.

In general, clubs that advertise white women show them in clothing significantly more that clubs that advertise black women. The lack of clothing on the images of black women suggests similar patterns as mentioned in the first two questions. In this context, I would consider showing women wearing actual clothes more humanizing even if they are still being objectified.

4. How many images make references to sports?

This question was not something that I intended to look for when I started rather as I was going through the Instagram accounts, I was surprised by how many images the clubs posted referenced sports. Both figure 6 and figure 7 have images that reference sports however, figure 7 has significantly more. The advertisements are all for football. The emphasis on advertising that these clubs have sports games showing on their television screens demonstrates that these clubs are not just contextualizing themselves as a place to come view women, but one can also view sports. Viewing football and naked women seems to align with ideas of heterosexual masculinity in the United States. The work of dancers is often not to just titillate their customers rather it is to give them attention, comfort, and support through conversation. The allure of strip clubs is not always sexual, but it is also a place to boost confidence and masculinity. By advertising both women and sports, strip clubs are contextualizing themselves as a space to buttress stereotypical heterosexual male masculinity.

5. How many images use written text as opposed to just objects?

This question I similarly did not intend to look for before I started analyzing these Instagram accounts. To my surprise, many of the images for both figures 6 and 7 are text dominated. Some images only show written text and no women. The use of text suggests to me that these clubs are trying to advertise to their customers that strip clubs are a space that has more than just naked women. Some of the texts are motivational quotes, witty statements, or general updates about the club. These clubs are advertising themselves as an entertainment venue with individuality and personality.

Conclusion:

Full Throttle Thursdays is one of the themes days of the club. Other days include Money Bag Fridays and Wasted Wednesdays. This section is titled after one of the days of the club because it emphasizes the ways in which the strip club creates a certain structure that dancers, customers, and employees are expected to mimic. Full Throttle Thursdays are one of the more popular days at the club perhaps because “full throttle” implies the dancers will be moving faster and more intensely. The framing of each club thus inevitably effects the individual to reproduce these implied expectations.

The reproduction of the created structure of the strip club emphasizes the theories about structure and agency sociologist Stryker (1980) and anthropologist Mead (1934). Stryker theorizes that while individuals make up society, they are also produced and influenced by the same society. In terms of the club, the individual employees make up the environment of the club, but they are also influenced by the expectations and atmosphere of that same club. Mead (1934) argues that the individual is produced from the mind, yet one maintains the self through their interactions with others. In the context of the strip club, each employee has their own self but it is through the interactions with others inside the club that they produce their individual identity inside the club. Therefore, individuals are inevitably influenced by the structure of the

space in which they still retain free will but also are influenced to embody and reproduce aspects of the space.

If one works in a space that predominantly advertises objectifying images of butts, that might influence a dancer to perform more with her body in ways that aligns with the image of the club. Similarly if a club advertises women in expensive clothing and drinking champagne, that might influence a dancer to perform images of wealth.

In terms of racial differences in advertising, clubs advertising white women tend to focus less on one particular body part perhaps suggesting these women do more work talking to customers than dancing. Clubs advertising black women tend to focus on one particular body part more frequently suggesting these women do more work with their bodies in these clubs. The clubs are framing themselves in ways that both present an image to customers for what to expect and suggest to dancers how to tailor their performance. This analysis is not to suggest however, that identity construction only happens from the top down. Identity is constructed in numerous ways and is constantly changing. It is also true then that the dancers' sense of identity can shape the space as well. How the clubs identify their own space is nonetheless important as one of the ways in which identity is constructed among individuals interacting with the space. This Instagram analysis is important to show the patterns of how black women are portrayed in a public sphere and if these ideals become internalized and reproduced.

Attitude and Ass

In addition to the idea that individual identity is influenced by how the space is identifying itself, identity can also be influenced by how customers are framing the space. If customers contextualize a club as “friendly”, perhaps the club will start emphasizing that their dancers maintain this reputation and reproduce this personality marker. Another potential example could be if a club identifies themselves as “classy” then customers expect this identity marker and in turn the dancers perform “classy.” When one’s work requires constant interactions and relationship building, there is pressure to perform to the standards of outside individuals and the clubs. This section will analyze how the customers are identifying particular clubs and how they can potentially influence people who work inside the club to perform to these ideas.

For each of the 23 clubs, I read all of the Yelp reviews and counted how many comments made reference to the physical bodies of the dancers and their personality. The main themes present in almost every review was the cost of the club, reviews of the food, and reviews of the dancers’ bodies and personality. For the purposes of this research, I only focused on how reviewers were contextualizing the dancers. For each graph, I separated the comments for clubs that advertise bkack women and clubs that advertise white women to align with how each club advertises themselves as observed through their Instagram accounts.

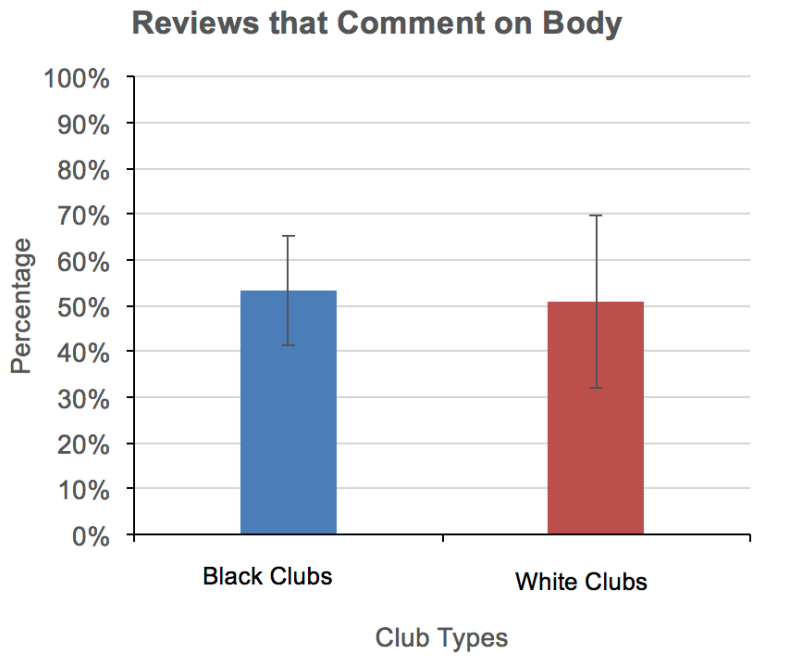


Figure 9. Total Average Percentages of Comments on the Body

P value = 0.735

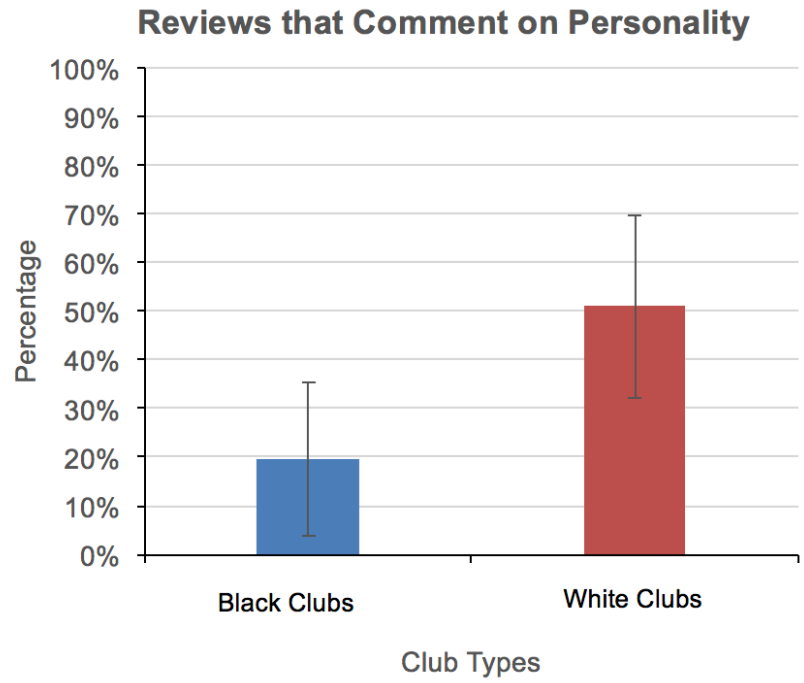


Figure 10. Total Average Comments on Personality

P value: .0006

To calculate whether these averages were statistically significant, the data was plugged into a two sample two tail T test. Below are my two initial hypotheses:

Hypothesis I: Reviews comment on the physical appearance and body of dancers at black clubs more than white clubs

Hypothesis II: Reviewers comment on the personality of dancers at white clubs more than black clubs

Hypothesis I was refuted meaning there was no statistically significant difference in the frequency of mentioning the body of the dancers between club types (Figure 8). I initially assumed that clubs advertising black women would have more reviews commenting on the body due to an analysis of club advertisements and a historical and cultural fascination with black women's bodies. There was potentially no statistical significance between the two types of clubs because it is in the nature of space of a strip club to emphasize, discuss, and review bodies. Therefore, bodies were reviewed in comments on both club types.

Hypothesis II was supported meaning there was statistical significance in the frequency of mentioning personality of the dancers between the two clubs (Figure 9). Reviews for clubs advertising white women mentioned the personality more than twice as much as the reviews of clubs advertising black women. I assumed this would be true for two reasons. The first is that by analyzing the history of the structures that sexualized black women's bodies and the Instagram accounts that show faceless images of interchangeable black body parts, I assumed that people would not be as interested in the personality of black women compared to their bodies. The second reason is that during my interview with Amethyst, she brought up when she used to work at a white club and I began to ask her about the differences between being a black woman working at a predominantly black club compared to a white club and she said:

"It's more amateur at these types of clubs [black clubs] because we are doing the flips, you got girls backflipping on stage, you got girls hanging from the ceiling. Versus, when you go to a caucasian orientated club, the girls aren't really dancing. They don't have to, they can just sit with the gentlemen and have a conversation and he'll slide you money. It's definitely different baby. It's definitely different. Don't get me wrong, it is."

This quote suggests that black women are expected to do more with their bodies to earn money whereas white women work more through conversation to earn money. It could be that this difference is an unspoken implied factor of each club: black women dance and white women talk. It also could be a difference created through a cultural emphasis on black women's bodies as opposed to their voice. When I asked Amethyst if she thought black dancers had to work harder to make the same amount of money as a white dancer, she was stumped by my question and said she did not know. Looking back at this moment, I do not think my question was well framed. Both enticing someone with your body and/or with your words is hard work that takes talent, practice, and performance. In my experience in going to a variety of strip clubs, black dancers typically do more pole work whereas white dancers typically do more floor work. Overall, every dancer dances and every dancer has conversations. However, it is curious that people tend to comment more on the personality of white dancers than of black dancers

Opportunities for Expanding this Research:

While it is interesting to state that certain clubs are framed more by personality and certain clubs are framed more by physical appearance, the terms used to define each club can vary. In a preliminary analysis of the types of terms used in the various reviews, many racialized terms such as ratchet or ghetto were used in relation to black clubs. In addition, commenters more frequently framed black dancers' personalities as having an "attitude" which aligns with stereotypes about black women being bossy, sassy, and/or stubborn. This linguistic analysis of terms used is interesting and deserves the attention of an entire project. I did not have the time,

linguistic, or statistical knowledge to contextualize these terms myself however, the preliminary research of the different terms used and in what context can be found in the appendix.

Conclusions:

The purpose of analyzing Yelp reviews was to see how customers were identifying each club. How do they classify the space? How do they categorize the dancers? What do they focus on when reviewing a strip club?

Separating this analysis into two charts depicting discussions of body and personality between clubs advertising white women and clubs advertising black women came after a series of trial and error attempts to sort this linguistic data. Focusing on how reviewers framed dancers in terms of body and personality is interesting as a theme because it is also observed somewhat in how the clubs advertise themselves. This similarity suggests that identity production of a space works in tandem with club advertisements, customer preference, and dancer performance. Once again, identity construction does not follow a simple pattern but is influenced by a variety of factors. The lesser focus on black women's personality as opposed to their body aligns with how clubs advertise themselves as well as Amethyst's quote. This pattern indicates that there is influence on identity coming from multiple different sources. This theme has been apparent since the beginning of slavery in the U.S. and still persists today (See "A Brief History of the Sexualization of Black Female Bodies.") The Instagram and Yelp data illustrates the ways in which black women are advertised, displayed, and consumed in ways that perpetuate the hypersexualization of the black body.

“Let’s Talk Money, I’ll Talk That”

3:30 a.m.: My friends and I all arrive safely home and ready to go to bed.

3:00 a.m.: While waiting for an Uber when leaving the club, a guy comes over to say “I’m proud of ya’ll.” We have no idea why he is proud of us.

2:45 a.m.: A talent recruiter for Ebony gives my friend his business card and says to call him. He wants her to work there. Everyone is excited for her to be what would appear to be the club’s only Asian dancer. She said she is not interested.

2:30 a.m.: The lights come on in the club and the MC tells everyone to leave.

2:00 a.m.: There are four dancers on the stage and money covering the entire platform. Men and women throw stacks of dollar bills into the air and watch it float down on the stage and on the dancers. The dancers are performing incredibly elaborate tricks and moves that I have never seen before. One girl bends over backwards and the other dancer stands on top of her bent knees and twerks while they hold on to each other with one hand for support. One girl climbs up to the top of the pole and flips upside down while another girl does floor work. They are not only working together but also complimenting each other’s dances. After each set, the dancers grab their clothes and leave the stage. Two other employees rush over to the stage and collect all the money in trash bags before the next set of dancers come on. They seem to be averaging two or three full trash bags a set. At the end of the night, all the girls will split the money.

1:45 a.m.: I have been watching a woman get a lap dance for over 30 minutes. Usually lap dances only last one song. The woman brought her own bag full of cash that is sitting beside her and every once in a while she takes out a stack and rubs the money over the dancer’s backside. I am almost certain I saw the woman’s fingers enter the dancer, but I am not sure. Whatever the case, I find this woman incredibly fascinating. She is sitting at a table in front of the stage, smoking hookah, and barely even looking at the dancer in front of her. This woman could not appear less interested except for when her she rubs the cash on the dancer. I suppose it does not matter to the woman *who* is dancing in front of her as much as knowing that she can have someone dance for her and can keep her there indefinitely.

1:30 a.m. A fight breaks out in front of us between a male customer and a female dancer. He touched her without paying and she is pissed. She tells him he can touch only if he pays for it and has no right to touch her when she is just passing by. Her tone is rightfully forceful and she is starting to draw attention. The customer seems shocked at her response. I do not think he expected her to care. Meanwhile another guy sees the drama and comes over and pays for a dance. It is unclear if he knew the first guy and was trying to save him from the drama or if he actually wanted a dance. Regardless, the dancer immediately transforms from being angry into being flirtatious and lovely with her new patron. I guess I should not be surprised since this flirty persona is a part of her job, but I am still amazed at how quickly she switched roles.

1:15 a.m. This is the second time I accidentally ran into a completely nude dancer. I have never seen Ebony so crowded. I notice I am walking along a collection of dollar bills, cigarette butts,

and spilt alcohol. I feel bad stepping on the abandoned one dollar bills, but I suppose if they have been discarded as such it might be ok. I do not want to pick them up in fear of a dancer thinking I am stealing their money.

1:00 a.m. We arrive at T-Pain's birthday bash.

It is not uncommon for rappers or hip-hop artists to host parties in strip clubs in Atlanta. Celebrities and strip clubs in Atlanta go hand in hand. It is commonly assumed that getting one's music played in strip clubs is the gateway for their songs to reach the mainstream audience and launch a career (Greenfield, 2015). For example, rapper Logic is known for being produced out of the club Magic City. Strip clubs not only produce celebrities but they also frequently host celebrities. T-pain hosted his birthday party at Ebony and according to Amethyst, he is at the club "all the time." Even my Uber driver on the way to the club was telling me about 2 Chainz party that she went to in a different strip club last year.

Partly due to this celebrity culture, but perhaps due to the structure of the strip club itself, inside the space there are massive displays of wealth. Customers show their status outside of the club by driving expensive cars and wearing designer clothing. Customers mainly show their status inside the club through ordering drinks, hookahs, and displaying their cash. Drinks cost on average $10 and hookah costs almost $50. Cash is handed to girls when a customer talks to them or requests a dance. If the girls are dancing, the girls will pull on the string of their outfit so the cash can be tucked inside or the customers throw the cash in the air. This style of displaying wealth is referred to and popularized by the saying "make it rain." This style is not as common as the others unless it is a crowded/popular night of the week. Customers who sit in the VIP area and order full bottle service is probably the most obvious display of wealth. I do not know the exact cost of the VIP section, but it is in the hundreds of dollars and one must order bottles of alcohol instead of individual drinks. My first night in the club I accidentally sat in the section, and I was incredibly grateful that a dancer told me to move before I was charged.

To an outsider, it can appear completely unnecessary to throw stacks of money in the air when trying to tip someone. To some more critical outsiders, even spending money at strip club could feel superfluous. So why do people do it? Why do people send hundreds to thousands of dollars at strip clubs on a given night and why do they do it so elaborately? According to anthropologists Haviland et al (2017), such elaborate displays of wealth are evidence of a prestige economy. The prestige economy is the sense of status and importance one gets by such displays. This analysis could potentially explain why the one woman receiving a lap dance on the night of T pain's birthday was not as interested in the dancer as she was in smoking hookah and rubbing the money over the dancer's backside. This prestige can possibly be more important to the customer than any transaction of wealth. The transaction of money can purchase a dancer's attention, her performing for you, and her talking to you. One could get these benefits by paying for them in a subtler manor, but the culture of large displays of wealth suggest that demonstrating prestige holds high importance within the club.

It is not only the customers who perform wealth but also the dancers. One night when I came to the club, the parking attendant, Moses, allowed me to park in the employee parking lot for free. He has always been friendly and we talk every time I go to the club. We usually bond over talking about films and this night he showed me the trailer of his latest film that he was working on. The dancers in the club act as the two main girls in the story. The plotline is that a woman wants to get her ex-boyfriend back, but he has a new girlfriend. The old girlfriend then starts competing with the new girlfriend and shows up where the other one works wearing expensive clothing, a lot of makeup, and carrying lots of money. I asked Moses what inspired him to make a film about two girls competing over a man and he responded that his inspiration was the women at the club. Moses said that as soon as one girl purchases a BMW another girl will also buy a BMW. The women will show up to the club in designer clothing, with new hair, new tattoos, and new accessories. He told me that once one girl buys something nice, the next girl will buy something "nicer." These displays of wealth are perhaps more conspicuous than the

grandiose displays from the customers, but they are nonetheless performances of wealth and status.

Even though Moses noted these competitive aspects, the two dancers interviewed had notably different views of wealth. Amethyst discussed that girls in the club are not just excessively spending the money they make, but having money means something different to each dancer:

"I've never been homeless since I've been able to dance and earn at it. So you know it's been taking care of me you feel me. It's a comfortable thing, because it's the fast life and it just like the fast life it goes by fast you know so you have to do something with it. You gotta take advantage of it, of this job, and use this money to advance or do the things that you want to do with your life goal oriented wise."

Amethyst considers the money she has been able to make from dancing a security. Being able to earn at dancing has allowed her escape poverty and not have to rely on someone else for finances. Referring to the stripping industry as the fast life is interesting because many dancers are saving their money to help pursue other interests. Amethyst continued by saying:

"An average day at work for me consists of anywhere from 10 to 12 hours. So it basically consumes my life because I'm here all goddamn day and night. That is until I get in school, that shit goin' change… But you know, you gotta get it, you gotta hustle. You gotta save money to make money you feel me so I'm here allll day."

Money for dancers is not exclusively for elaborate displays of wealth, but rather many dancers save this money for future goals. When I asked another woman what a successful dancer looks like to her she responded:

‘‘Me! In school, is doing more than dancing, and is saving her money. And knows what a long term investment is!" – anonymous dancer

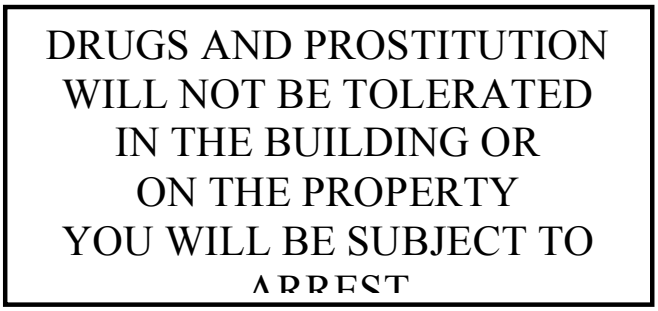
In terms of money and wealth, the strip club is a contradictory space. For many individuals who work at Ebony, this club is their only source of income. While this statement is not true for all of the women, many struggled financially previously and sought stripping as one of their only options for economic security. Amethyst grew up in foster care and started stripping

when she was 17. She is now 26 and told me that stripping has always kept her afloat financially and she has always been able to afford her own apartment and food without relying on anyone else. Stripping also allows her to save money for nursing school, which is what she ultimately wants to do. I label this space a contradiction because strip clubs for many employees are a means of survival which exists alongside the culture of displaying excessive amounts of wealth. Celebrities popularize strip clubs with images of wealth and partying, which oversimplifies the complexities of the financial situation inside of the club. In a sense, employees at the club perform multiple financial identities where they engage in this lavish lifestyle at the club while relying on this money to eventually pursue an alternative career.

The different performances and ideas of money within and outside the context of the strip club relates to Anthropologist's Tuner's ideas that certain actions can take on a "performed-for-an-audience" aspect. Turner's theory would suggest that dancers may take on this new identity and expression with money and wealth inside the club even if it is not their reality outside of the club. The performance is more so to appeal to the culture of the strip club than it is to appeal to their identity.

Beyond Fun and Games

Inside the bathroom at Ebony, there is a sign that reads:



I have always wondered why this sign is tucked away in the women's restroom. I would assume it should be placed at the entrance of the club like the other signs. Perhaps it is located in the bathrooms because as a club they are expected to have a sign rejecting prostitution and drugs, but they do not want it to scare away any potential customers. Ebony does not have a reputation for prostitution like some of the other clubs however, that does not mean it does not exist. Drugs on the other hand are more openly displayed at Ebony, which has a "weed guy" in the back selling marijuana. Marijuana is the only drug that I am aware of being sold at Ebony, and I have not seen or heard anyone else mention any other drugs at this club. It is quite possible however, that other illegal activity goes on that I am not aware of. It is not a secret that strip clubs overall have many connections to illegal activities. Aspects of danger and illegality also can identify the stripping industry.

"It was an overwhelming feeling that I had forfeited any chance at a meaningful future, that I was now a prostitute…I didn't understand my own victimization, and I took a lot of shame and blame and guilt on myself." – Rachel Thomas (06C), Emory College

This statement was uttered by Thomas during a speech she gave for Emory's "Take Back the Night Event" in the Fall of 2017. Thomas shared her story of being trafficked for prostitution and forced to strip at the club Magic City while being a student at Emory. Her attacker, Jimmie Lee

Jones, first approached her in a night club where he said she could be a model. After he tricked her into filling out “liability” forms, he blackmailed her and threatened to harm her parents if she ever went to the police. Eventually another student who was in the same situation talked to the police and Jimmie Lee Jones was arrested. Thomas has since finished her degree remotely and began speaking with other survivors (Compton and Ullman, 2017). This story may feel shocking to an outsider at first, but sex trafficking is a huge illegal industry in Atlanta. Thomas’s story is not as uncommon as one might assume.

According to CEO Bob Rogers of the non-profit organization Street Grace (See Research Methods), there is not enough information to accurately state the scale of human trafficking in Atlanta or the U.S. Majority of the industry has not been discovered by authorities yet, therefore the numbers from various news outlets are only predictions based on the information available. The following news sources focus specifically on Atlanta.

According to 11 Alive Atlanta, 83% of sex trafficking victims in the U.S. are citizens, 94% are women, the average age of the child victim is 15 and a half, and 63% of child sex trafficked victims were advertised online (Reed, 2018). The FBI states that Atlanta remains one of the largest sex trafficking hubs in the country (Taylor, 2016). According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, last year in Georgia there were 750 calls to the hotline and 256 cases reported. A Fox News article claimed that the average age of entry into being trafficked in Georgia is 13 and most authority only come into contact with these children when they turn 16 or 17 (Pozo, 2017).

With human trafficking being an epidemic in Atlanta, strip clubs can become hot spots for traffickers. Rogers states that strip clubs and the trafficking industry go hand in hand. Thomas was forced to strip at Magic City by her trafficker who suggested it was her only way to make an income. Traffickers will seek out victims at clubs or use strip clubs as a space to display their trafficked victims. Rogers advised me that I should always have someone at the club who is there watching me but nobody else knows that person is there with me. I took this

advice seriously and always brought a friend with me after that however, I had never felt uncomfortable or threatened by the space previously. Both of my interviewees mentioned that the safety of the club is one of the reasons they chose to work there.

Notably the interviewees spoke highly of the safety of the club whereas Rogers was extremely cautious about considering any club “safe.” He states that all strip clubs are aware of the trafficking problem, but he does not think they are doing everything they can to prevent it. In 2016, Senate Bill 8 was passed which was created to provide more support to children who were sex trafficked. The legislation established funds for these survivors as well as increased the penalties for sex traffickers. Any money derived from the crimes must be forfeited and donated to the fund. In addition, this bill requires adult entertainments clubs to pay an annual fee that also contributes to the fund.

Strip clubs can be places of entertainment and expression, but it is important to not glorify the entire industry. Illegal activity is common within the stripping industry. Human trafficking is an enormous problem in Atlanta and has connections to the local strip club industry. Most of human trafficking is done online through the deep web however, busy locations especially ones with an emphasis on naked women such as strip clubs are popular among traffickers outside of their online activity. There is also an aspect of danger and illegality that identity a strip club. This reality is not as uncommon as it may first appear. Although legal actions have been taken to try to stop the human trafficking industry, there is still a long way to go before the issue can be completely resolved.

Music Makes Money Move

The tables next to the stage are quite small. Two people can fit comfortably but my two friends, Amethyst, and myself felt like a crowd. While I usually come to the club alone, it was my friend Annie's birthday and she wanted to go out to celebrate. We all ordered drinks, Amethyst bought us a hookah to share, and we made small talk in between watching the women on stage. At this point I had been to the club regularly enough that this scene felt familiar. Drinking, smoking, and watching were part of my weekly routine as both a customer and a researcher. I assumed the night was going to be like every other when I was struck by a drastic change in music. For the first time since I had been going to the club, a *female* musician started blaring over the speakers rapping:

"Said little bitch, you can't fuck with me
If you wanted to
These expensive, these is red bottoms
These is bloody shoes"

Once we heard lyrics, my friends instantly lit up. They started singing along and dancing in their seats as Amethyst turned to them and said "get it girl!" All three of them laughed as if they were connected through some inside joke. I sat there frozen in my seat. I had only barely recognized the song as the one that beat Taylor Swift out of the number 1 spot on the Billboard Hot 100 charts. It soon became obvious that I was in the minority. As I looked out to the stage, the individual dancers started turning towards each other instead of the audience. They were rapping along as the lyrics continued:

"Hit the store, I can get 'em both
I don't wanna choose
And I'm quick, cut a nigga off
So don't get comfortable"

One dancer on stage started twerking towards the other dancer. Two more dancers came up to the stage to join them. They were dancing and showing off moves with each other. Instead of this showing being competitive, it was more of a type of sharing where each dancer would build on the previous moves. One dancer would shake her butt and go low and the next one would do the same and go even lower. After each move, there was laughter. It reminded me of a group of friends going out to a club or a bar just to have a good time. The audience became completely irrelevant for the first time all night. Girls who were giving lap dances at the time started rapping towards the other girls and laughing along with them. Even though they remained with their customer, the focus was on themselves, each other, and the song. There was an indescribable collective feeling. It was almost as if everyone else had disappeared. The space was completely transformed by the song especially when the chorus rang out:

"Look, I don't dance now
I make money moves
Said I don't gotta dance
I make money moves
If I see you and I don't speak
That means I don't fuck with you
I'm a boss
You a worker bitch
I make bloody moves"

Besides just being a rap song by a female artist, *Bodak Yellow* by Cardi B is a song about her being a "boss" or badass. She raps about having her own money, people being jealous of her, and living a lavish life. In addition to her present life, Cardi B makes it clear how this life is different from her past. The main lines repeated in the chorus and throughout the song, "I don't gotta dance/ I make money moves" are references to how Cardi B no longer has to make her money through stripping. The lines "got a bag and fixed my teeth/ hope you hoe's know it ain't cheap/ and I pay my momma's bills" talk about her newfound wealth and the lines "I used to live in the

P's/ now it's a crib with a gate" reference her growing up in South Bronx and moving to a wealthy area in a gated community. The narrative Cardi B creates through her lyrics is one of an impoverished woman who used to strip to survive financially but now can afford what she wants without it. Cardi B is known for being open about the role stripping provided in her life through helping her escape poverty and domestic violence. The general narrative regarding her as a celebrity is a Latina woman from South Bronx who gained fame through social media, reality television, and music.

The music that is typically played in Ebony is hip-hop/rap music and almost always includes themes of strip clubs, female nudity, extreme wealth ("make it rain"), alcohol and drugs. According to feminist and activist Bell Hook's (1993) analysis of the persistent hyper masculinity within hip hop, "the black female body gains attention only when it is synonymous with accessibility, availability, when it is sexually deviant" (p. 66). This type of music is not atypical for strip clubs in Atlanta. The type of music that is unusual however, are ones by female artists. Female artists rarely appear and when they do it is usually only if they are featured on a male's track. For instance, *Rake It Up* by Yo Gotti feat. Nicki Minaj is the only other song that I have heard with a female artist in the club. Nicki Minaj raps one verse.

Bodak Yellow stands out from other songs played in the strip club for a variety of reasons: it is by a female artist of color, it is the longest running number one song by a solo female rapper on Billboard's Hot 100 chart, and Cardi B openly talks about her previous experience as a stripper. However, what is it about this song in particular that generated this unique shared reaction from the dancers in the club? Is it simply just because it is a popular song or is it something more about who raps it, what they rap about, and who is listening?

The moment this song came on in the club, all of the individual dancers seemed to come together in an unspoken ritual that changed the course of their performance. The dancers did not necessarily adjust their movements drastically rather it was the intention behind their performance that changed. In general the intention behind strip dancing is to make money. The dancers also have fun doing their work, but at the end of the day it is a still job. The strip club is often their primary source of income. Therefore, the reaction to *Bodak Yellow* to dance for pure enjoyment and not as work was a powerful moment.

This moment demonstrates a group of people coming together and experiencing the same collective feeling similar to fans at a sports game, crowds at political marches, or an audience at a religious service. According to sociologist Emile Durkheim's theory of "collective effervescence," this moment refers to when individuals in society participate in the same action and communicate the same thought. The moment unifies the individuals. Durkheim states that when these individuals come together an "electricity" is released and brings the participants to a new "ideal" realm in which they feel as if they part of something extraordinary. The collective effervescence is a state in which individuals connect through an unspoken and communal feeling that is outside of themselves. The individual dancers in the club experienced this collective effervescence when this song was played. It was through this song that I witnessed the dancers collectively performing for the enjoyment of themselves and each other.

Notably this moment occurred in connection to a song. Music is a form of individual and cultural expression across the world. Hip hop music in particular is a genre and product of black culture. Most black clubs in Atlanta exclusively play hip hop whereas white clubs tend to play more pop and rock music. Music can also be a form of resistance where artists creatively express their voices. Other popular artists played in Ebony include Kendrick Lamar whose music makes

frequent reference to racism, black empowerment, and social injustice. These type of lyrics are in the mixed with other common themes of rap music such as strip clubs, alcohol, and objectifying women. Hip hop makes meaning out of this space by being a form of black culture in all of the complexities that the music lends itself to the space. This song was the spark that initiated this display of collective effervescence. In that moment, this song was the glue that held together that display of community.

Part II.

The Individual: Race, Gender, And the Body

Personality

Many outsiders assume that dancers are solely victims of a patriarchal structure where they must expose their bodies for an income. It is also assumed that black female dancers are subject to both a patriarchal and colonial structure that limits economic mobility to where stripping becomes one of the easier and higher paying options. I am not denying that these structures exist. They do. But these structures are only one aspect of a much more complex story.

It feels as though this statement should go without saying, but *individuals* are *individuals*. The people who work inside of the club may have had certain circumstances lead to the decision to work here, but they still enact free will within this space. There is always a constant tension and interaction between structure and agency (See “Identity Politics and Performance”). It is therefore important to emphasize the voices and individuality of the people who work inside the club.

The first question I ask in my interviews is how would you describe yourself? This question was awkward because in both interviews the dancers seemed confused. I do not think they were expecting me to ask about their personalities, but I think they appreciated that I did. The following word map is of the exact words they used:

Even though I was only able to interview two dancers, I would argue that these words are applicable to other dancers. Many of the people in the club were generous enough to talk to me even if it was only briefly while they were working. In addition, as mentioned previously in the chapter “Let’s Talk Money, I’ll Talk That,” almost all of the dancers are ambitiously working towards a greater goal. The generosity that Amethyst showed me was not only through helping me with my project but she is always buying hookahs or drinks for everyone to share, introducing me to her friends, and being open about her life with me. These words can also be interpreted in aspects of strip dancing in general. Dancers can view their work as being generous by offering this service to someone who is seeking attention or a fantasy escape. Similarly, dancers can view their dances as an expression of the first step of their goals and ambition. One could argue that all dancers must be self-aware in order to be able to perform the

“self” or some version of it for someone else. This display of these personal terms relate to anthropologist’s Goffman’s theories of performance. Goffman believes humans are performing all the time. In the context of the strip club, dancers are always performing these aspects that they describe about themselves within and outside their work at the club.

A question that I wish I would have asked would be how did they create their club name? Red wine, Egypt, Yellow Black Boots, Arizona, Sapphire, Angel, etc. I think choosing a name is revealing of what one feels represents themselves in addition to what one finds appealing to the customers they want to attract. Choosing a name is an example of an individual’s free will to express identity within a given structure. Perhaps the structure suggests that one’s name should be seductive however, the individual chooses what name they want and who they want to be with that name.

New media also allows for greater opportunities regarding the expression of individual identity. Dancers use online platforms especially social media to create more opportunities within and outside of certain structures. Here are examples of four different dancers’ (from Ebony) bio descriptions on Instagram. The bio is usually a place to say who you are or what you are doing. Screennames have been removed for anonymity purposes.

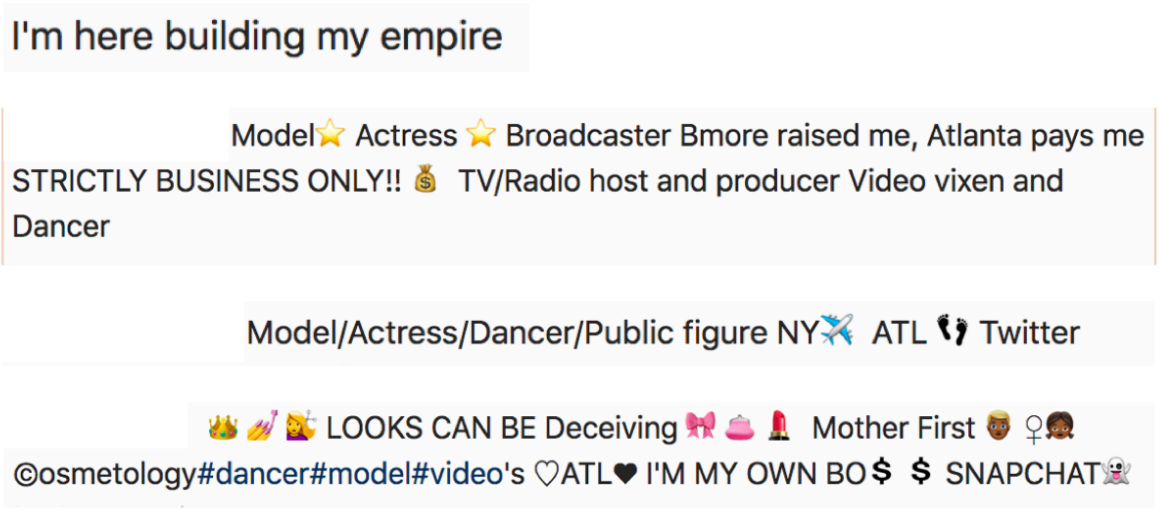


Figure 9. Instagram Bio Descriptions for the first four dancers reblogged by Ebony

I chose the bio descriptions of the first four girls that were reblogged on Ebony's Instagram page. Almost every dancer has their own Instagram account and Ebony will sometimes repost their images on their account for advertising purposes. The bio descriptions of the dancers demonstrate that these women are working in multiple fields beyond dancing. Social media platforms allow them to expand beyond the club if they choose to do so. Many of the girls are promoting themselves as their own brand in which they get paid for making club appearances and sponsoring products. All of these dancers promote to their followers when to come to Ebony to see them. Their Instagram pages seem to allow them to expand their customer base online and have access to other means of income. Not all of the girls promote themselves on Instagram, but the ones who do are always reposted on the main Ebony Instagram page demonstrating reciprocity in the form of online advertising. Online platforms allow for dancers to express more about their identity that they may not always be able to do so at the club.

The following collection of images are screenshots of captions on photos posted on Instagram by the same four dancers at Ebony found through the Ebony Instagram page. These captions further demonstrate that these women have an online profile where they can portray aspects of their individuality. These profiles also allude to a digital identity that can be a portrayal of any aspect of their lives that the women choose.

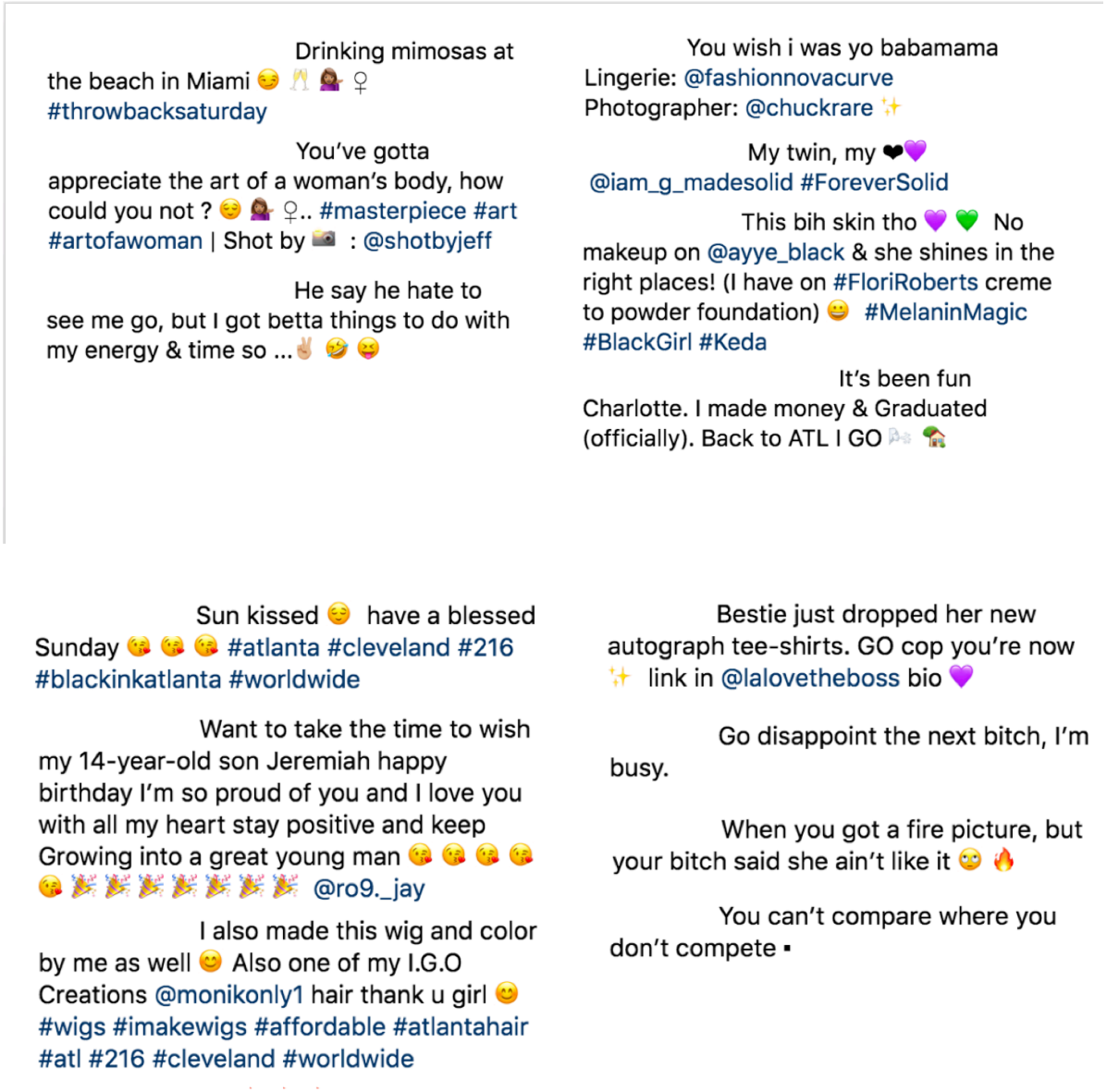


Figure 11. Instagram photo captions from dancers at Ebony

Social media is an interesting opportunity for dancer who may not have started with a lot of money or power to now have a large online following, sponsors, and an online voice. A possibility for further research could be to analyze more deeply the digital profiles of dancers and the role of social media in their lives.

Race

Out of all the Yelp reviews for 23 different strip clubs in Atlanta, the phrase "white club" is used twice in over 500+ reviews. Instead of describing what is "white," reviewers describe what is "black." Black clubs, black music, black food, black bodies, etc. The frequency in which black is used as an adjective is notably higher than the almost nonexistent white adjective. One explanation of this dissimilarity could be that white is considered the "norm" in dominant society and black is the deviation. Therefore, people only feel the need to explain what is "different." This explanation however, seems too simple to explain all of the complexities of a larger cultural fascination of all that is *black*. This chapter explores ideas of why *black* is used as an adjective to describe strip club culture in ways that *white* is never used.

People of other races float in between clubs, but the clubs are nonetheless advertised and perceived as either black or white. Since these two categories are often pitted against each other as opposites, what does that mean for how people interact with the stripping industry?

Spaces where black individuals live or spend time have historical been space of fascination for social scientists. Analyses of black neighborhoods illuminate how researchers framed black spaces. Historian and African American literature scholar Saidiya Hartman (2017) argues "The reformers and the sociologists come in search of the *truly disadvantaged*, failing to see her and her friends as thinkers or planners, or to notice the beautiful experiments crafted by poor black girl." In this essay, Hartman is commenting on the nature of historical social science research that framed these neighborhoods and their residents solely as victims of poverty. The published research characterizes the neighborhoods as dirty, noisy, broken, and a "terror to white neighborhoods." Even though different racial terms were used to describe neighborhoods, the terms used to describe black neighborhoods were ghetto, slum, ward, or the Bottom (2017). These labels then become synonymous with all that is "black."

These racialized terms, such as ghetto, to describe things that are "black" can be seen in the language used to describe strip clubs in Atlanta as well. One review of the popular club Magic City stated,

"It does have a few ghetto characteristics, but that is not necessarily a bad thing." I cannot help but wonder what are these characteristics? Is the fact that there are black people? Is it the fact the club is located in a particular neighborhood in a particular part of Atlanta? Or is it "ghetto" because of the characteristics ascribed to the term by sociologists?

A more common way in which ghetto is used in strip club reviews is to say the club is "ghetto fabulous." The implication of this term is that it is an oxymoron. It implies ghettoes are inherently not fabulous, but certain characteristics ascribed to them can be. Other racialized terms used in reviews of strip clubs include but are not limited to ratchet, urban, and twerk clubs. These terms are often used exclusively to describe black clubs whereas there are no particular terms used exclusively to define white clubs. In addition, many of the terms reserved for black clubs often originally carry a negative connotation. These terms may not be used negatively nowadays, but the question still remains of why are certain terms reserved for describing what is black but not white? To quote Hartman, "Are the undergarments of the rich so much better? Is cotton so different than silk and not as pretty draped like a banner across the streets?" (2017). Are black clubs so different that they need their own terminology?

A strip club as a space however, differs from the space of a neighborhood in that strip clubs are highly gendered. When one analyzes the space of strip clubs, it is essential to recognize these gendered performances. Not only are racialized terms used to describe strip clubs, but racialized and gendered terms are used to describe the black women that work within these spaces. Some examples of these terms as seen in Yelp reviews include thick, athletic, and attitude. While white dancers can also be described using these terms, these terms are predominantly used in relation to black women.

In general, all women in the stripping industry are looked at through a male gaze. However, that gaze shifts when black women are the focus to both a male and colonial gaze (Miller-Young, 2014). According to dancer Amethyst and her experience of being a dancer for 9 years, white men are often fascinated by black women's bodies:

> *When I was working at a white club, I tended to make more money which kinda made some of the other dancers uncomfortable. I don't think it was because I was black I just*

> *think it was because I was different. Typically, in the white clubs, the men they love to see a black girl in the white clubs. I'm just keeping it real, they love that shit. They are going to spend more money because a lot of the times, believe it or not, a lot of the white men they love the black women. They do. Like in everyday life they might be like "ok I'm gonna date a white woman" but when they come to the club, they just go crazy about black women. Even some of the guys that come in here they go crazy. But a lot of them don't like to come here because they feel uncomfortable because it's a rowdy crowd and uh… black women.*

Although at first Amethyst does not think that she was treated differently because she is black, she later states that black women are treated differently than white women in the strip club. She references white men specifically as being captivated by black women's bodies while also uninterested in having a relationship with a black woman. This example relates to the idea of an Afro-paradise by scholar Christen A. Smith. Smith focuses her argument in Brazil, where she argues the same people who are oppressing black people are taking part in and appropriating black culture (2016). This idea reflects both this attraction to and repulsion of black people from the dominant population as also observed in customers of the strip club. Smith continues to argue that these notions of oppression and celebration of black people and culture need each other to work. While perhaps that may be true with her analysis of Brazil, I am not sure that is true in terms of strip clubs in Atlanta. I am not sure if the enjoyment of black women's bodies by white men automatically appropriates black culture or if this analysis eliminates the nuances of lust and attraction.

Amethyst's experience dancing also relates to afro-pessimist thought scholar R.L. in his essay *The Wanderings of the Slave* (2013). White people being fascinated with black women's bodies in the strip club aligns with his ideas of the libidinal economy. According to R.L., white people take pleasure in multiple ways from the oppression of black people. The libidinal economy in part refers to this sexual pleasure from seeing black women in the strip club. Perhaps by the white men knowing they can view these women naked and dancing whenever they want inside the club but they do not have to see them outside of this space gives them pleasure. R.L. argues that it is not just white people who take part in this libidinal economy, but black people can also perpetuate

these ideas. Black men and women are also in the strip club and similarly highly fetishize black women's bodies. For example, I saw a male customer wearing a shirt that said *real booties are better*. This shirt is not inherently racialized if it is analyzed outside of the context of strip clubs. However, within strip clubs there is pressure for black dancers to have their "ass fat and titties perky" (Amethyst, 2017). Some black dancers will get butt injections to increase the size. Some women may choose to do so and others not. Nonetheless, by the man wearing this shirt inside of the club it was a conspicuous display of sexualizing black women's bodies while still celebrating and consuming black strip club culture. In addition to this example, I also once saw a dancer wear a black crop top with the word *thick* written across in bold white letters. This shirt could be analyzed in various ways including a reclamation of black female sexuality or a replication of the fetishes others place on black women. I do not have a definitive answer for what this shirt is implying however, it is an example of how black women also partake in this culture of fetishizing their bodies.

Since strip clubs are not just racialized spaces but also gendered, it is essential to discuss the idea of intersectionality. Civil rights activist and poet Audre Lorde was a prominent figure in discussing the importance of intersectionality in terms of the oppression of black people. Gender, in addition to race, alters how people are seen by the dominant culture. Black women have had a long history of being framed by certain outside imposed stereotypes such as the mammy figure, a jezebel, a welfare queen, a hoe, etc. In a conversation with essayist and playwright James Baldwin, Lorde stated, "we have to define *ourselves* for each other. We have to redefine ourselves for each other because no matter what the underpinnings of the distortion are, the fact remains that we have absorbed it. We have all absorbed this sickness and ideas in the same way we absorbed racism. It's vital that we deal constantly with racism, and with white racism among Black people – that we recognize this as a legitimate area of inquiry. We must also examine the ways that we have

absorbed sexism and heterosexism." (1984). Lorde is arguing that black people must recognize gendered oppression and it is through this recognition that they can work together.

In terms of the stripping industry, there is a division between black and white clubs and black and white dancers. Lorde is suggesting that perhaps by black men and women recognizing these gendered differences within the structure, they may be able to adjust these structures. This analysis could then suggest that it is possible to alter the racialized terms used to frame black spaces if black men and women recognized their positions in relation to each other and their oppressor.

In general strip clubs in Atlanta are framed through highly racialized lenses. White clubs are almost never defined as racial rather they are simply "clubs." On the other hand, black clubs are frequently defined by their race. This difference however, is not necessarily a bad thing. Black clubs are often defined by playing rap and hip hop, offering southern food, being less corporate, and having black dancers and customers. Part of this difference is the fact that these clubs also celebrate aspects of black culture. Difference is not inherently negative but becomes such when the very same people who are celebrating these clubs are also oppressing, ignoring, and not listening to black people outside of this context.

Gender

Just like that, the cue ball sank the eight. The game was over and to no one's surprise Amethyst had won again. She collected her $5 from her opponent and his friend laughed at his defeat. Amethyst was good. She could beat almost anyone who challenged her. She was a self-taught pool player and although she was not as good as the pool professionals there, she was better than most. Her victory however, was short lived. She was called to the stage to dance and for the first time, I was alone in the club with the attention of a handful of customers.

"Is that your man?" One customer asked me while pointing to someone else.

"I was about to ask the same thing" The other responded.

"Hey, let's play for her."

"Winner gets to take her out to dinner."

Before I could muster a word, the men started playing. Confused, nervous, and unsure what to do, I froze. I desperately wanted Amethyst to come back, but she was working. I would have left, but I already promised her I would stay until after her dance. I was stuck.

"He's gonna take you to Long John Silver's." One man joked.

"You look like a $100 girl. Where do you wanna go eat baby?" The other said when he made the shot.

The comments were all lighthearted, and I laughed along with them. I could tell we all knew that dinner was not going to happen, but that did not matter. Inside the club it is a fantasy land. The purpose of this pool game was not the final dinner rather the purpose of the game was that the two men were fighting over a woman: one of the ultimate displays of American masculinity. I thought to myself, what do dancers do in this situation? What should I say? How should I act? How do I keep the customers' fantasy alive without actually making plans? I had no idea how to even keep the customers playing pool and spending money.

Soon enough the men moved on to two dancers who walked over, and I had clearly failed at my brief attempt at being one. As I watched the other dancers interact, it occurred to me that it really did not matter who the men were playing pool for. The men played to perform masculinity and the role of the women was to buttress that feeling. The dancers supported their masculinity by embodying femininity. In general, in the pool area, dancers sit on the sidelines while the customers play. Sometimes the customers show the dancers how to play. It is unclear if the dancers actually do not know how to play or they are allowing the customers to feel like they are teaching them. I found Amethyst's performance particularly interesting because it was rare to see a dancer compete with customers. It was even more rare to see a dancer play competitively and win. In some ways Amethyst appeared as the exception to this gendered norm whereas in other ways she did not. Similarly to the other dancers, Amethyst buttressed the masculinity of the customers by flirting and allowing them to buy her drinks. Even the fact that she was dressed in a bikini and heels bending over to play pool may have also made the fully clothed men feel more masculine in comparison to her dainty clothing.

Not all strip clubs have pool tables however, all are inevitable displays of hyper masculinity and femininity. One could argue that the structure of a strip club buttresses masculinity in that men can view minimally clothed/naked women at any moment and have the satisfaction of knowing they are paying for their income. Women perform femininity in relation to the masculinity of the patrons in that they encourage the men to pay for them, give the men emotional support, and is working to support the male's fantasy.

According to sociologist Racel Parreñas and her research in similar clubs, women perform three types of capitol: bodily, emotional, and cultural. Bodily capitol refers to the use and appearance of the body to appeal to the customers, emotional capitol refers to the women's use of conversation by listening and supporting their patrons, and cultural capital refers the cultural knowledge of women to appeal to the culture of the customers. Parreñas wrote an ethnography about Filipina women in a hostess club in Japan. Hostess clubs are not strip clubs

or brothels, but the women do similarly dance, interact with the patrons, and buttress their masculinity. They do so by using the three types of capitol. These types of capitol are arguably universal across all clubs that provide a similar entertainment service as hostess clubs or strip clubs.

The women at Ebony use these three types of capitol to simultaneously earn money and buttress the masculinity of the male patrons. Bodily capitol is used when women exaggerate the use of their butt region, shave their bodies, and decorate themselves with makeup, tattoos, jewelry, and hair styles. The women are decorated and walk around with minimal clothing and heels which accentuate their womanly figure to be viewed by men. According to Amethyst, "They want to see your hair done, your nails done, your outfit on point, your makeup on point. That's what they want to see. They want to see everything that they not usually seeing at home. You gotta try to do everything possible to try to glam yourself up. Glam, glam, glam everything." Femininity is expressed through the body in the ways that women dress themselves up in by doing their hair, makeup, and nails. This supports the masculinity of the patrons who often wear pants in the club both literally and metaphorically.

Emotional capitol is often and overlooked aspect to being a dancer however, it is nonetheless an integral aspect to the gender performances of the club. An anonymous dancer once said, "Most guys just want to dance with a beautiful girl and they just want someone to talk to because a lot of guys are really busy and they just need a soft touch every now and then. So I just try to provide that, and that's spread across any demographic." Dancers at the club do not only provide physical titillation, but they also provide emotional support. The women have emotional relationships with their customers and provide a lot of emotional support. The men support the women as well, but it is often in the form of financial support. This example emphasizes the role of women as carrying the emotional burden and the role of men to provide the finances.

Cultural capitol refers to how the dancers understand the cultural context of the club and use it to their advantage. In both of my interviews, both dancers said their femininity is what they used:

"Yeah I'm a very arrogant dancer on the stage, so I think people see it. Because you have to command the stage"
"How do you command the stage?"
"I channel my energy, my feminine energy." – Anonymous dancer

"I usually like sexy, RnB songs, slow songs. Yeah I like sexy songs so I can feel real feminine and like a woman because that is the best way to attract a man. When you dancing ugly or ugly songs like gangster music, even though the crowd likes that, you are not as feminine."
"Do you feel like you perform feminine?"
"Oh yeah, that's who I am. I'm that type of dancer. I like to be sexy, I like to be feminine. I like to capture my crowd. I don't want to be dancing all fast, I like to make a connection with my crowd you know that's where the G's at is dancing all sexy." - Amethyst

Both the anonymous dancer and Amethyst refer to their femininity as something that they notice the customers responding to. By performing femininity on stage, they are able to buttress their patron's masculinity. Overall these examples demonstrate that in the strip club there is a clear performance of femininity and masculinity. The work of the dancer involves performing gender in a way that supports the masculinity of their patrons.

Body

“Do you feel pressure to maintain your body?”
“No, because I do that anyway.”
“What do you do?”
“I eat only organic food. I’m pescatarian. And I work out four days a week. Oh, and hella water. I drink a lot of water.” – Anonymous dancer

A dancer’s body is the main object for income. They are selling their physical appearance and getting paid to expose it to someone. This is true for any dancer. Dancers do a lot more forms a work besides just their body, but they tend to only be paid for maintaining a certain physique. The body however, can be viewed in multiple ways. The dancer has a different view of their body as seen by the anonymous dancer’s quote than others do when viewing these bodies. While someone may see it as something unique, others see a dancer’s body as just “pussy:”

“Your body is what makes your money. If your body not on point, whether, you got some people who don’t care about fat you know they just see you as pussy. But you have to keep your body together because that’s your magnet, that’s what attracts your customers. You got a nice body, toned, you work out, your stomach flat, your ass fat, your waist small, your titties perky.” - Amethyst

Amethyst’s statement raises two important points. The first point is what she believes there are the ideals for a dancer’s body. What defines a “nice” body is not universal and can vary from club to club as well as individual to individual. For instance, in the customer reviews for strip clubs, “fat asses” were always associated with black women. If the customers were to comment on a white dancer who had a “fat ass,” it would most likely be a comment that would relate their butt to a black woman’s body. It is possible that customers have different body ideals in regard to the race of the dancer.

The second point that Amethyst raises is that the body is sometimes not viewed at as an individual rather it is just looked at as a sexual object. I would imagine that many dancers across a variety of clubs feel this way. One of the questions that I started with is are black women looked at as sexual objects more than white women in the context of a strip club? Based on my

research, I am not able to definitively answer this question. However, one could argue that black women are due to a larger culture and history of sexualizing black women in ways that white women are not sexualized.

Another way in which this theme is persistent is the ways in which white dancers use their bodies on stage compared to black dancers. The following quote from Amethyst is the difference between "booty hop and the snake:"

> A lot of times people come for excitement here [Ebony] and then you go to a caucasian oriented club where the music is slower, it's more corporate wide, and you don't have to move as much. And a lot of times conversation is what move the nation at those types of clubs. And specific to here, people want you to dance and booty hop and goddamn break ya neck and shit just to make a dollar… You can do a snake dance over there where you can move slower and still get tips. Sometimes, you know you make more money at those clubs because it's a different type of crowd it's more of a laidback crowd. But you come to these types of clubs, like the one I'm in now, and they want you to work harder for your money.

White strip clubs in general are stereotyped to be more "slow" or "boring" whereas black strip clubs in general are stereotyped to be "wild" and "exciting." The way the dancers move their bodies is part of what defines the environment of each club. "The snake" then references the slower movements of the body whereas "booty hop" references the faster movements. Every dancer undoubtedly uses both techniques at some point however, these differences have become racialized. These racialized assumptions encourage black dancers to perform faster movements and work the body physically harder in order to make money.

The body is also interesting because "bodies" are often a term used in place of "people." Black bodies refer to the physical stature, but it is also used in situations to emphasize a person who is not looked at as an individual rather they are looked at as just another body. Even though everyone has a physical body, it seems as though people almost never say "white bodies" or any other racial adjective in the same place. Why is there an emphasis with black bodies and not black individuals? Is the strip club a place that just perpetuates black bodies as such or does the space provide the opportunity for black women to redefine and reclaim their sexual identity?

In the twenty first century, new media has allowed people who have previously not had a large presence in the media to have an online voice. As observed in Figure 8 and 9 of the chapter Personality, black female dancers are voicing ownership over both their profession and their bodies. For example, some dancers include the title “dancer” in their bio descriptions in Instagram as well as post photos telling their followers to ask for their name at the club demonstrating a pride in their profession. On one hand, many dancers that I approached in person were extremely private about this side of their life. On the other hand, many other dancers I met were incredibly open and proud of their work as a dancer. Some owned this identity and others were more secretive about it. The ownership of the identity “dancer” however, is a form of resisting the patriarchal and colonial gaze of their bodies. These women are redefining the idea of a dancer as someone who is more than just an object of someone else’s pleasure by sharing their voice.

This ownership is not in isolation to dancers, but overall media movements and representations of positive images of black women in media have highlighted black women taking pride and ownership of their identity. Within the last few years black women in television, music, sports, politics, and social media have redefined and reclaimed images of black women’s bodies and sexual identity. The following examples are only a few of many more prominent black women empowering a black female identity.

Lena Waithe became the first black woman in history to win an Emmy for “Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series” for the show *Master of None* in 2017. The episode that she won the award for was based on her own personal story of coming out to her mother when she was younger. By translating her experience into media about being a queer black woman, she is able to illuminate the experiences of a queer identity within the black community. A queer black identity is one that is often overlooked when regarding the assumed hyper sexuality and heterosexuality of black women. Another artist redefining identities through television include Issa Rae who first gained popularity through her YouTube series titles “Awkward Black Girl”

which later was picked up for an HBO series titled *Insecure*. In this program, Rae portrays the life of an “average” awkward twentysomething year old black woman in the U.S. Notably, the character created and played by Rae does not fall into overproduced stereotyped images of black women such as an inherently sexual identity.

Black female powerhouses in the music industry have also been redefining and taking ownership of their sexuality and their bodies. Beyoncé, who is widely regarded for having an attractive physique, uses her body and sexual identity to push musical boundaries. Beyoncé uses her body for dancing and fashion however, it is not in the same oversexualized manner as many of the bodies of black women appearing in other music videos. For example, Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* shows her struggle of learning her husband cheated on her by producing many beautiful images of the body. The production of the film felt largely from a female gaze to where the body was seen as the body of a wife, a mother, an activist, and a piece of art. Another prominent musical figure, Rihanna, has recently cost Snapchat $800 million in the stock market since she asked her fans to stop using the app after an ad posted a question stating “would you rather slap Rihanna or punch Chris Brown?” Rihanna was angry that the app would make light of her being a survivor of physical abuse. Rihanna took action against the ad that treated the abuse of her body as entertainment and emphasized that her body is not for someone else’s domination or amusement.

Athlete Serena Williams has been vocal about online harassers who define her body as manly. Williams redefines their comments by actively stating her body is beautiful and strong. Former First Lady Michelle Obama also emphasized strong and healthy black bodies through her “’Let’s Move!” campaign. Obama encourages physical activity of the body citing it’s importance for protecting against childhood obesity which disproportionately affects the black community. Obama effectively used her voice as well as her body as a site of strength and inspiration.

Other recent media movements include hashtags such as #blackgirlmagic, #blackwomendidthat, #myblackisbeautiful, and #iwillnotapologizeforbeingdarkskin. The movements allow for any individual who has social media to participate in a larger celebration of a black female identity.

These examples however, are not to state that negative stereotypes of black women do not still persist in popular media. The media industry is still predominantly owned and controlled by white males with limited diversity in the production. Popular media still relies on popular stereotypes and suffer from a severe lack of representation in the media, creating the media, and funding the media. Nonetheless, new media has allowed for new areas of representation. The twenty first century is arguably a time when black women have had the most presence and voice in popular media. This presence allows for opportunities to expand and explore ideas of black female identity.

Conclusion

This ethnography reveals the complexities of racial identity within the stripping industry. Overall, “Booty Hop and the Snake: Race, Gender, and Identity in an Atlanta Strip Club” demonstrates three important themes: strip clubs often are places that perpetuate certain racialized and gendered stereotypes still present in American culture, they are places of immense cultural expression and individual performance, and they are a place who should be included more frequently in relevant discussions by listening to the experiences of black female dancers.

Through the analysis of the Instagram accounts, it is clear that black women and white women are not being advertised, displayed, and consumed in equal ways. Under the initial sexual display of the dancers on the clubs’ Instagram accounts are messages of beauty, value, and power. Black women were more frequently displayed inside the club as a dancer whereas white women were more frequently displayed in a more professional photoshoot implying a sense of wealth, unattainableness, and existence outside of the strip club. When photos would not show the face of a black dancer they would focus on a particular body part implying it was the most important part about her. In contrast, when photos would not show the face of white dancers, the model would be more covered, photo shopped with items associated with wealth, and not be objectified for a particular body part. These images perpetuate a deeply rooted history of racism and sexism against black women in the United States. Not only are black women affected by institutional racism but also are affected by the structure of the strip club that continues to assume an inherent sexual deviancy (Collins, 2006; Miller-Young, 2014). This structure in turn affects the agency of the individual as the self is being influenced by the ideals of the strip club (Stryker, 1980) and the interactions with others partaking in the same structure (Mead, 1934).

The perpetuation of racist and sexist stereotypes of black women is similarly observed in the Yelp reviews from customers. Reviewers overwhelmingly emphasize the personality of white women compared to black women. Even though the comments on the body were relatively the same, there is a greater importance on the personality of white women. This evidence suggests that customers value white women as an individual whereas black women are valued for their bodies. Further linguistic analysis of the Yelp reviews also suggests racialized language is used to describe black women which imply underlying micro aggressive tones against black clubs and black dancers (See Appendix). These reviews along with the images from Instagram emphasize patterns observed in the section "A Brief History of the Sexualization of Black Female Bodies in the U.S." where black women were put on display for their bodies, assumed to be sexually deviant, and used in ways to emphasize the purity of white women. Black feminist scholar Mirielle Miller-Young (2014). emphasizes this perception of black women in her statement "the black woman is figured as having a separate and subordinate sexuality marked by the *unaesthetic weight of her black skin*" (Italics added). Black female dancers are marked by customers and clubs as separate and subordinate due to their black skin demonstrating pervasive racial and gendered views of black women.

The second important theme is that strip clubs are more than places of entertainment, but they are also places of culture. This ethnography is separated into ways in which meaning is made out of the space as a whole and the ways in which the individual makes meaning out of the space. The ways in which meaning is made out of the space as a whole is through wealth, illegality, and music. The idea of performing wealth illuminates ideas of status as Haviland et al (2017) argues that these displays are part of a prestige economy. The dancers who interact with these elaborate displays of wealth are also performing a new status of wealth in which may not be their reality outside of the club suggesting this display is for an audience (See Turner).

Illegality is an important aspect of the club to mention as well because for some people the experience of the stripping industry is one of human trafficking and drugs. The reality is that

Atlanta is a human trafficking hub and strip clubs have a close connection to this industry. Strip clubs are thus also defined by dark elements such as forced prostitution and illegal drugs.

Music is a huge element that defines the culture of each club as hip hop and rap music are almost an exclusive genre for black clubs. The narratives of the hip hop music played often discusses wealth, strip clubs, alcohol, and drugs but also includes narratives of social/political issues and black resistance. Cardi B's song *Bodak Yellow* is an interesting song that is played within the club because the song is about her not having to dance anymore to earn money. This narrative perhaps relates to the women in the club because it was through this song that a sense of collective effervescence was possible (Durkheim, 2013).

Following these main distinguishing factors of the strip club is the ways in which the individual makes meaning out of the club. Individual dancers are able to perform aspects about their identity (such as being generous, goal-oriented, and open-minded) through their dancing. In addition, this expression is not limited within the context of the club but also translates to a digital sphere through the dancers posting about their work on Instagram. This example is a different performance of identity which relates to Goffman's theories that individuals are performing all the time.

Following this theory, individuals also experience expectations of performance based on their race, gender, and the way they use their body. Clubs are frequently defined by their race and individuals are placed with expectations and assumptions based on their racial characteristics (Lorde, 1984; Hartman, 2017; R.L., 2013; Smith, 2016; Miller-Young, 2014). Black clubs are enjoyed by both the dominant culture and black culture as well as being subject to appropriation from both. Race in clubs also aligns with the gendered aspects of strip clubs in which dancers are expected to perform hyper feminized roles to appeal to and attract the hyper masculinized roles of the patrons. As observed by Parrenas (2004), dancer perform bodily, emotional, and cultural capital in which performing gender uses both an emotional and cultural appeal to the patrons.

Both race and gender are used in the displays of the bodies. Certain moves, such as moving the body quickly (booty hop) or slowly (the snake) have become racialized to where the performance of the body defines the space of the club. Slower movements tend to be associated more with white dancers whereas fast movements tend to be associated more with black dancers. The ways in which the body is used by black dancers also illuminated ideas of black women taking ownership over their body as opposed to others defining it for them. Black women use new media to illuminate the beauty, strength, and nuanced meanings of their bodies. These practices resist a larger history and culture of outsiders marking these bodies for themselves as opposed to allowing the voice and platform for black women to define their bodies for them.

By studying the strip club as a black geography, one can see the richness of cultural expression and resistance that occurs within. Meaning is made out of the strip club in a variety of ways including through money, music, danger, and community. The way that people within the club make meaning of the space allows for a more complex understanding of the stripping industry. Not only does this ethnography broaden ideas about the stripping industry, but also ideas about race, gender, and sexual identity.

This research supports that dancers are not solely objects of oppression when in reality they live complex lives saturated with aspirations, culture, and individual expression. Dancers do not only exist within the structure of the club, but they have a voice and presence that expands beyond these boarders. By allowing these voices to have a presence in academia, one allows more perspectives and complex ideas to contribute to an overall understanding of race and the sex industry. Race relations still seem to be an extremely overlooked topic within strip club literature. This research is valuable in illuminating the ways in which racial stereotypes are still persistent in aspects of American culture that are often overlooked. Black women do not have the same experience in the stripping industry as white women. The stripping industry thus contributes to the perpetual fascination with black women's bodies as inherently sexual.

This study is therefore important to the third theme presented in this research in that the voices of black female dancers need to be included in the larger discourse of anthropology because it challenges the colonial roots of the discipline. By exploring the performances of black female identity, it provides value and insight into the voice of a group who has largely been overlooked or misrepresented in this discipline. An anthropological perspective on strip clubs is not yet a prominent area of analysis in which this research is a beginning to the expansion. It is also important to recognize the voices of black women and their experiences. These women's voices have not always been included in discussions about race and gender, and this prospective provides valuable insights that are not obvious to individuals from different backgrounds. Including these voices allows for a more dynamic, complex, and complete discussion of the sex industry.

This research had several limitations including time, financial resources, and a lack of access to this community. For future research, I would encourage similar projects to engage with the community for a longer period of time to develop deeper relationships and a deeper understanding of strip club culture. I would encourage the researcher to work inside the space if possible because being in the position of a customer is only one part of the larger complexities of the club. Due to time and being a fulltime student, I was unable to spend more than a few hours at the club each week. Working at the club would not only allow for a more accurate understanding of the club but also help build relationships.

The future of strip club literature should be encouraged to include more ethnographies that focus on the experiences of women of color. These experiences will illuminate racialized and gendered ideas that exist beyond the club. An analysis of a singular club can reveal themes that exist in larger discussions of how race and gender are sexualized and objectified. Although an ethnography of a singular strip club in Atlanta cannot be applied to all strip clubs, the material is still valuable for deepening the understanding of this industry in the U.S. Future research

about race and gender in strip clubs will allow for greater complexity and new perspectives in the discussion.

Appendix

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
1	V Live Atlanta	2	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
2	Flashers	2	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
3	Club Blaze	2.5	8			1					1					1			2
4	Goosebumps	2.5	11			1							1			1	2		1
5	Pin Ups	2.5	41	2		1		1			2	2	3						1
6	Tattletale	2.5	9										1			1			
7	Dream's	2.5	5			1										0			
8	Club Wax	3	5																
9	Follies	3	59		3		1	1			4	4	1			1	1		
10	Goldrush	3	13		1						3	3							1
11	Mardi Gras	3	14		2				1							3	1		
12	Oasis	3	35	1			1				2	2		1					1
13	Tease	3	3																
14	Blue Flame Lounge	3.5	28				2					2	1	1		1	2		
15	Club Babes	3.5	9	1		2		2					1			1			
16	Onyx	3.5	57		7		2	1		1	7	3	3	1		2	3	1	
17	Peaches	3.5	12				1				1		1						1
18	Pink Pony	3.5	77	1	5		2			1	2	4	3	1		2			
19	Cheetah	3.5	106	16	7	1	3		3	1	5	10	5	2	1	4		1	1
20	Magic City	3.5	76		3	1				1	5	8	7	2		5	2		
21	Fannie's Cabaret	3.5	3						2										
22	Clermont	4	347	3	4		7	1	2	2		8	19	4					1
23	Doll House	4	11										1						
24	Club	Stars		Classy	Expensive	Ghetto	Favorite	Ratchet	Professional	Safe	Nice	Disappointing	Worth it	Gross	Urban	Touch	Black	White	Chill
25			# of reviews																

Figure 12. Frequency of terms describing the club in Yelp Reviews for 23 clubs

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
V Live Atlanta	2	11	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flashers	2	8	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0
Club Blaze	2.5	8	1	0				1		2		2
Goosebumps	2.5	11	2					1			1	
Pin Ups	2.5	41	4	1		4				2		2
Tattletale	2.5	9										
Dream's	2.5	5						1				
Club Wax	3	5										
Follies	3	59	3					4			1	1
Goldrush	3	13	2									1
Mardi Gras	3	14	1					1				1
Oasis	3	35	7	3				4		1	1	1
Tease	3	3										
Blue Flame Loun	3.5	28	4	1		1	1	1				2
Club Babes	3.5	9	2							1		1
Onyx	3.5	57	1	1	1			5				1
Peaches	3.5	12	1									
Pink Pony	3.5	77	4	1	1	1		10				1
Cheetah	3.5	106	17		6			7		3	1	
Magic City	3.5	76	9	1	2	2		4		1		2
Fannie's Cabaret	3.5	3	2									
Clermont	4	347	19	1	2			22				2
Doll House	4	11	3					1				
Club	Stars		Friendly	Chill	Boring	Lazy	Ungrateful	Nice	Bubbly	Aggressive	Fun	Attitude

Figure 13.Frequency of terms describing the personality of dancers in Yelp Reviews for 23 clubs

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
1	V Live Atlanta	2	11	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	
2	Flashers	2	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
3	Club Blaze	2.5	8						1		1			1	1	1	1	
4	Goosebumps	2.5	11	1	1		0	0	2						1			
5	Pin Ups	2.5	41	3	1	1	1	1		2	1				4	1		
6	Tattletale	2.5	9			0												1
7	Dream's	2.5	5	2		1		1								1		
8	Club Wax	3	5	2	1											1		
9	Follies	3	59	0	3	1	1		1	1	4					5	4	
10	Goldrush	3	13						1		1				1	1		
11	Mardi Gras	3	14	1	1	1			1	1	1			1	1	1		
12	Oasis	3	35	1	1		1				2					2	2	1
13	Tease	3	3															
14	Blue Flame Loung	3.5	28		1		1		3		8							
15	Club Babes	3.5	9	3	1	2	1				1	1			2	1		
16	Onyx	3.5	57	3	2				4	2	3	2	1		2	3	2	1
17	Peaches	3.5	12							1					1	1		
18	Pink Pony	3.5	77		3	1	1		9	1	9			1	1		1	
19	Cheetah	3.5	106	6	3	1	1		6	1	14	2	1	2		2	2	5
20	Magic City	3.5	76	4	3		3		5	2	13	3	1	1	5	1		
21	Fannie's Cabaret	3.5	3		1										2	1	1	
22	Clermont	4	347	1	7	11	6	1	3	5	3			8		8		28
23	Doll House	4	11								2							
24	Club	Stars		Booty	Ass	Tit	Big	Small	Pretty	Ugly	Beautiful	Twerk	Athletic	Fat	Thick	Black	White	Boob
25			# of reviews															

Figure 14. Frequency of terms describing the body of dancers in Yelp Reviews for 23 clubs

Bibliography

"Georgia." National Human Trafficking Hotline. https://humantraffickinghotline.org/state/georgia.

"It's Official! SB 8 / SR 7 - Safe Harbor/Rachel's Law Act and Constitutional Amendment Passed by the General Assembly." Circle of Friends | Celebrating Life. April 3, 2015. Accessed March 23, 2018. http://www.cofcl.org/blog/its-official-sb-8-sr-7-safe-harborrachels-law-act-and-constitutional-amendment-passed-by-the-general-assembly.

"Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation Between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde." *Essence*, 1984.

Alexander, E. (2004). *The Venus Hottentot*. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press.

B, Cardi. "Cardi B: I Became a Stripper to Escape Domestic Violence." Interview. Youtube.com. January 12, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzfcNl-o9bI.

Bartlett, Irving H., and C. Glenn Cambor. "The History and Psychodynamics of Southern Womanhood." *Womens Studies*2, no. 1 (1974): 9-24. doi:10.1080/00497878.1974.9978332.

Barton, B. (2003). *Stripped: Inside the lives of exotic dancers*. New York: New York University Press.

Barton, B. (2017). *Stripped: More stories from exotic dancers*. New York: New York University Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Coleman, J. S. (1991). *Social theory for a changing society*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Bradley-Engen, M. S. (2009). *Naked lives: Inside the worlds of exotic dance*. Albany: Excelsior Editions/State University of New York Press.

Bratman, M. (2007). *Structures of agency: Essays*.

Brennan, D. (2004). *Whats love got to do with it?: Transnational desires and sex tourism in the Dominican Republic*. Durham ; London: Duke University Press.

Briggs, M. (Director). (2005). *Black Is... Black Ain't*[Motion picture on DVD]. USA.

Brooks, S. (2010). *Unequal desires race and erotic capital in the stripping industry*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Browne, S. (2015). *Dark matters: On the surveillance of blackness*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Carla E. Stokes. "Representin' in Cyberspace: Sexual Scripts, Self-Definition, and Hip Hop Culture in Black American Adolescent Girls' Home Pages." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 9, no. 2 (2007): 169-84. http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/stable/4005517.

Collins, P. H. (1990). Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought. In *Black Feminist Reader*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell .

Collins, P. H. (2006). *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*. New York: Routledge.

Compton, A. and I. Ullmann (2017). "Trafficked Alumna Recounts Traumatic Past." *Emory Wheel*. http://emorywheel.com/trafficked-alumna-recounts-traumatic-past/.

Crenshaw, K. (2003). "Demarginalizing the Intersections of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." In *Black Feminist Reader*, 208-39. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publisher.

Durkheim, É. and J. W. Swain (2013). *The elementary forms of the religious life*. Place of publication not identified: Emereo Publishing.

Egan, R. D., Frank, K., & Johnson, M. L. (2006). *Flesh for fantasy: Producing and consuming exotic dance*. New York: Thunders Mouth.

Gifford, J. D. (2010). ""Harvard in Hell": Holloway House Publishing Company, Players Magazine, and the Invention of Black Mass-Market Erotica: Interviews with Wanda Coleman and Emory "Butch" Holmes II." In *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United*

*States*35, no. 4: 111-37. doi:10.1093/melus/35.4.111.
Greenfield, L. (Director). (2015). *Magic City: Inside the Atlanta Strip Club that Runs Hip Hop*[Video file]. Retrieved from http://video.gq.com/watch/magic-city-inside-the-atlanta-strip-club-that-runs-hip-hop-uncensored
Hall, S. (1993). What is this 'Black' in Black Popular Culture*?.* In *Social Justice*.
Hartman, S. (2017). The Terrible Beauty of the Slum. In *Brick: A Literary Journal*.
Hartman, S. V. (2007). *Lose your mother: A journey along the Atlantic slave route*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
Hartman, S.V. (1997). *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Haviland, W. A., H. E. L. Prins, D. Walrath and B. McBride (2017). *Anthropology: The Human Challenge*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
Hooks, B. (1993). *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-recovery*. New York, NY: Routledge.
Johnson, E. P. (2003). The Pot Is Brewing. *Appropriating Blackness,*17-47. doi:10.1215/9780822385103-002
Johnson, W. (1999). *Soul by Soul: life inside the antebellum slave market*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Lee, S. (2010) *Erotic revolutionaries: black women, sexuality, and popular culture*. Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, a member of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.
Leslie, K. A. (1986). "A myth of the southern lady: Antebellum proslavery rhetoric and the proper place of woman." *Sociological Spectrum*6, no. 1: 31-49. doi:10.1080/02732173.1986.9981772.
Maia, S. (2012). *Transnational desires: Brazilian erotic dancers in New York*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
Mead, George H. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
Miller-Young, M. (2014). *A taste for brown sugar*. Barcelona: Duke University Press.
Miranda, C. A., and S. A. Spencer. (2009). "Omnipresent Negation: "Hottentot Venus" and "Africa Rising"." *Callaloo*32, no. 3: 910-33. doi:10.1353/cal.0.0486.
Moynihan, D. P. (1965). *The Negro Family: the Case for National Action*.

Neal, L. (1968). "The Black Arts Movement." *The Drama Review: TDR*12, no. 4 (1968): 28-39. doi:10.2307/1144377.
Omi, M. and H. Winant, eds. (1994). "Racial Formation." *Racial Formation in the United States*, pp. 3-13.
Parreñas, R.S. (2011). *Illicit Flirtations: Labor, Migration, and Sex Trafficking in Tokyo*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
Patton, C. (1995). "Between Innocence and Safety: Epidemiologic and Popular Constructions of Young People's Need for Safe Sex." In *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
Pozo, N. (2017). "Human Trafficking Growing Problem in Metro Atlanta." WAGA. Accessed March 23, 2018. http://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/human-trafficking-growing-problem-in-metro-atlanta.
R.L. (2013) *Wanderings of the Slave: Black life and Social Death*. Published online.
Reed, K. (2018). "Unholy Tour Takes Legislators to Atlantas Sex Trafficking Hot Spots." WXIA. Accessed March 23, 2018. http://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/unholy-tour-takes-legislators-to-atlantas-sex-trafficking-hot-spots/85-512642567.
Reid-Brinkley, S. R. (2008). "The Harsh Realities of "acting Black": How African-American Policy Debaters Negotiate Representation through Racial Performance and Style." PhD diss., University of Georgia.

Roane, J. T. (2017). "Towards Usable Histories of the Black Commons." AAIHS. Accessed March 23, 2018. https://www.aaihs.org/towards-usable-histories-of-the-black-commons/.
Sims, Y. D. (2006). *Women of blaxploitation: How the black action film heroine changed American popular culture*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
Smith, C. A. (2016). *Afro-Paradise: Blackness, Violence, and Performance in Brazil*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Spillers, H. J. (1987). Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book. In *Black \ Feminist Reader*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell .
Squires, C. R. (2009). *African Americans and the media*. Cambridge: Polity.
Stryker, S. (1980). *Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version*. Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin Cummings
Taylor, G. (2016). "Goldie Taylor—The Sex-Trafficking Victim Next Door." The Daily Beast. Accessed March 23, 2018.
Thompson, L. B. (2012). *Beyond the black lady: sexuality and the new african American middle class*. Urbana: Univ Of Illinois Press.
Turner, V. (2000). *The anthropology of performance*. Place of publication not identified: PAJ Publications.
White, D. G. (1999). *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
Write, A. E. (2013). "The Hottentot Venus: An Alternative Iconography." *British Art Journal*14, no. 1. https://books-journals.vlex.co.uk/vid/the-alternative-507483734.
Wyatt, G.E. (1998). *Stolen Women: Reclaiming Our Sexuality, Taking Back Our Lives*. John Wiley & Sons.
Wynter, S. (1971). "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation." In *Savacou*, 95-102. Vol. 5.