Dance and Gender

In her essay, "Reprise: On Dance Ethnography," Deidre Sklar (2000) reviews the development of dance ethnography since the appearance of her 1991 article, "On Dance Ethnography," in the *Dance Research Journal*. According to Sklar, two new trajectories have evolved in dance research over the last decade. The first trajectory is sociopolitical, building on ideas from cultural studies. Addressing the sociopolitical dimensions of dance means addressing the social construction of human movement (Reed 1998), as well as the bodily theories through which bodies perform, community, gendered, and individual identities (Foster 1995; Sklar 2000; Reed 1998). In *Feminism and Youth Culture*, Angela McRobbie (1998: 195) goes one step further, calling for a sociology of dance "to step outside the field of performance and examine dance as a social activity, a participative form enjoyed by people in leisure, a sexual ritual, a form of self-expression, a kind of exercise and a way of speaking through the body." The second trajectory is kinesthetic as it draws on ideas in the anthropology of the senses and the phenomenology of the body. With a focus on kinesthesia, scholars seek a deeper understanding of movement as a way of knowing, "a medium that carries meaning in an immediately felt, somatic mode" (Sklar 2000: 70).

This book takes up both strands in dance research, but with a wider focus on the sociopolitical. This focus is grounded in my academic background as a Southeast Asianist educated in sociology. While I am not a professional dancer, hip hop music and dance have had and continue to have a deep impact on my personal life. Research on hip hop, gender, and the city thus combines my personal interest and passion for my previous research on the social production of public spaces in Hanoi. Since conducting my first round of field research in Vietnam in 2006, I have been fascinated with young people dancing on the streets. Accordingly, this book is an attempt to make sense of young people's dancing practices, which they variously conduct indoors and out-

doors in Vietnam's main urban centres. Delving into the literature on dance, body, and kinesthesia, and attending a hip hop class and breaking workshop to better understand the meaning-making that occurs in and through dance, this book links the street dance practices of young Vietnamese urbanites to the sociopolitical and economic contexts in which they are acted out.

Dance is precious ground to learn about norms and values, ideas of community and hierarchy, and ways the self is constituted, developed, and cultivated. Social and cultural anthropology in the 20th century was already interested in social and political dimension of dance. In *The Kalela dance: Aspects of social relationships among urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia*, J. Clyde Mitchell (1956) studies kalela dance, a form of dance that became popular in the industrial areas of Central Africa's Copperbelt after 1950. The kalela dance was mostly practiced by men, and was comprised of a fixed set of roles and costumes the performers wore. The dance was accompanied by the chanting of joking rhymes. At that time of Mitchell's study, the Copperbelt attracted members of various sociolinguistic groups from across the region to work in the copper mines. Workers often came from rival groups. Thus, the dancers drew on repertoires of joking relationships between different groups, thereby engaging with extant joking rhymes while inventing new ones. Mitchell employs the analysis of the dance as a method to understand contemporary tribalism and social conflicts.

Decades prior to Mitchell's study, Margaret Mead (1928) dedicated a whole chapter to dance in her monograph, *Coming of Age in Samoa*. For Mead, dance is peculiar as it brings together people from all ages, sexes, and genders. She engages with dance in her analysis of child education, outlining the difference between the dancing child and the child in everyday life. Mead outlines two ways in which dance is significant for the education and socialization of Samoan children. First, dance gives room for children to temporarily overcome the social frame of rigorous subordination in which they find themselves in everyday life. Through dance, children move to the centre of the group, whereas they are normally situated at the social margins. Parents and kin praise their children by emphasizing their superiority over the children of their neighbours or visitors. The emphasis on individuality allows for the recognition of each child regardless of age or sex. Second, the dance reduces the threshold of shyness, as even the shiest child dares to enter the limelight to perform at least some motions. Nonetheless, Mead notices a gender component in dance education, suggesting that these early forms of habituation appear to be more beneficial to boys than to girls. Mead argues that while

both genders benefit from dance education, as adolescent girls achieve self-possessed persons on the dancefloor, girls are less easily able to transfer such ease and poise to everyday life, as typically happens for boys (Mead 1928: 117-119). Finally, Mead (1928: 121) emphasizes "the function of informal dancing in the development of individuality and the compensation for repression of personality in other spheres of life." Mead's point that dance is a vehicle for developing and performing individuality and personality highlights a crucial dimension of the sociopolitical function of dance that I examine in this book. In addressing the sociopolitical, researchers seek to "specify whether a dance affirms, resists, re-creates, challenges, undermines, or re-enforces the status quo" or whether it does several of these at once since dance can be an ambiguous social action (Sklar 2000: 70). This book is primarily concerned with the renegotiation of age, social hierarchies, moral personhood, and normative categories of gender through dance as social practice.

In her article, "Engendering Dance: Feminist Inquiry and Dance Research," Jane Desmond suggests that the "key challenge for feminist theorists is to link analyses of ideological production (the meanings attached to gender constructions and their representations) with specific social practices, public discourse, institutional structures, and material conditions" (1999: 316). By ideologies, Desmond means the framing of what is perceived as right and good, true and valuable. Feminist inquiries into dance, therefore, ought to consider dance as a social practice related to more general constructions and representations of gender in particular times and places.

Scholars such as Chandra Mohanty, and Raewyn Connell, among many others, have pointed to the necessity of considering the historical, political, and geographical specificity of gender formations. At the same time, Connell (2014b: 522) urges scholars to apply a "mosaic epistemology," by which she refers to separate knowledge systems or projects that occur side-by-side, like tiles of a mosaic. Each of these conceptions is based on a specific culture, language, religion, and so forth, therefore employing particular terminologies and categories. Each tile has its own terms of validity, and none could or should be taken as a master narrative for the whole world. However, this mosaic approach runs the risk of reproducing a colonial view of foreign tribes and other cultures, "with only the colonizing power having the integrating view" (Connell 2014b: 522). That is why Connell calls on feminists around the world to cross-fertilize their work rather than to keep it separate.

Another crucial point raised by Connell is that the historical and sociopolitical contexts under which theories of gender are produced ought to be scru-

tinized as well. Research in the sociology of gender developed in the Global North throughout the 20th century. Work by Mohanty, for example, her 1991 essay, "Under Western Eyes : Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," revealed a colonial gaze that constructed a false image of the "third world woman" (Connell 2014a: 553). In fact, the "colonized world provided raw material for metropolitan feminist debates" (Connell 2014a: 553). The harvesting of representations of the Global South for "data" is not confined to analyses of gender, but accounts for much of the development of social theory generally (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Connell 2013; Roy 2009; Roy 2014).

Connell suggests a way out of the dilemma of having to choose between Eurocentric or Northern theory and mosaic epistemology: First, we need to recognize the extent to which feminist thought is embedded in a global economy of knowledge that is structured by inequalities between periphery and metropole. Sujata Patel (2014) highlights the power asymmetries that underlie the academic system of knowledge production. For instance, all of the big publishing houses and major social sciences journals are located in North America and Europe – and almost all of them require publication in the English language. With the rise of neoliberalism in the university sector, scholars located anywhere else in the world are required to comply with the competitive logic of benchmarking and citation indexes, especially if they wish to acquire funding. These power asymmetries in academia have so far resulted in the prevalence of Northern theories. In a similar vein, Roy (2014: 16) draws our attention to the "geography of theory," implying the importance of the provenance of theory, the conditions under which theory travels, and the ways that it exceeds and transforms its "geographic origins." Since knowledge production about the Global South is geographically located in the Global North, Roy (2014: 16) proposes that we interrogate and disrupt such "geographies and methodologies of authoritative knowledge."

Second, Connell (2014b: 522) emphasizes the need to overcome the idea of the periphery, namely the Global South, constituted a site for the harvesting of data, the testing of (Northern) theories, and to recognize the periphery as the site for the production of important and in-depth theory. Naturally, Connell (2014a: 560) does not call for a strict separation of Northern from Southern theories. Rather she suggests an advance beyond Northern gender theories, treating them not so much as frameworks but as resources based on Southern experiences. In fact, creative feminist work from the Global South often critically appropriates Northern ideas, combining them with ideas resulting "from radically different experiences" (Connell 2014b: 527). Such Southern ex-

periences include the disruptions and experiences of colonialism. Argentine feminist philosopher Maria Lugones introduces the concept of the "coloniality of gender," drawing on the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano's concept of the "coloniality of power." According to Quijano, global and Eurocentric capitalist power is organized along two axes, including the coloniality of power and modernity. The coloniality of power denotes the universal social classification of global populations according to the idea of race, "a replacing of relations of superiority and inferiority established through domination with naturalized understandings of inferiority and superiority" (Lugones 2007: 186). In her essay, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System," Lugones criticizes her male colleagues' essentialist concepts of gender. For Quijano, for instance, the struggles over the control of "sexual access, its resources and products" define the domain of sex/gender, while the disputes can again be understood as organized around the aforementioned axes of coloniality and modernity. Lugones argues that gender is socially constructed in the process of colonialism. In other words, colonialism introduced gender, both as a colonial concept, and as a mode for organizing relations of production, property, as well as of ways of knowing implied by different cosmologies (Lugones 2007: 186). Lugones is particularly interested in intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality with respect to the indifference that "men who have been racialized as inferior, exhibit to the systematic violences inflicted upon women of color" (Lugones 2007: 187).

Ultimately, Connell (2014b: 533) suggests that we recognize the resilience of precolonial gender orders, the gendered history of colonization itself, the impact of the colonized on the colonizers, as well as the complex structures of gender relations in the postcolonial era, which have been documented by Southern scholars. Finally, for Connell, the feminist movements' aim to transform unequal gender relations at a global scale, remains intimately linked to theorizing at a global scale: "The goal is not to write a unified theory of gender, even one compiled from Southern sources. It is to create, within the worldwide counterpublic, processes for mutual learning and interactive thinking about theoretical questions" (Connell 2014b: 539). She concludes that one important step in this direction is to pay tribute, and give centrality, to theoretical work from the South.

Gender in Vietnam

Gender studies is not a new academic field in Vietnam, but has been around for quite some time, as shown by the publication of a classic in Vietnamese gender studies, *Phụ nữ Việt Nam qua các thời đại* (Vietnamese women throughout the last era), which was published in 1973 by female Vietnamese scholar, Le Thi Nham Tuyet. Tuyet draws on a rich set of data comprised of myths, narratives, and folk tales, as well as interviews with women. The book offers a history of women in Vietnam, starting with the pre-modern matriarchy that came to an end with Vietnam's occupation by China in the first millennium AD, which was followed by the oppression of women under French colonial rule, and women's liberation by the Communist Party of Vietnam (Fuhrmann o. J.). The reference to Vietnam's matrilineal past is a recurrent theme in gender studies in particular, but also a general theme in Vietnamese history, as Tuyet shows. The two Trung sisters (*Hai bà Trưng*) are reported to have led a mixed-gender army to liberate Vietnam from Chinese occupation in the first century AD, which is why the Trung sisters are part of the Vietnamese pantheon of heroes. Every middle-sized Vietnamese town has a major street named Hai Ba Trung. But even before the Trung Sisters, Vietnam's founding myth of Au Co is cited as further evidence for the strength and (political) power of Vietnamese women. In the myth, Au Co was a mountain fairy who fell in love with Lac Long Quan, the Dragon God, who resided in the sea. A total of 100 children emerged from their union. Longing to return to the Northern mountain range, Au Co took 50 children with her to the mountains, while Lac Long Quan took the remaining 50 children with him into the sea. The 50 children living with Au Co eventually became the ancestors of the Vietnamese people, known as Hung kings. Both the Trung sisters and Au Co are recurrent figures in Vietnam's history books, folk tales, and contemporary popular culture. For instance, the b-boy LionT, whom I will introduce in chapter 4, "BREAKING," choreographed a dance in 2019 that narrated the myth of Au Co and Lac Long Quan.

However, matriarchal rule in Vietnam is represented as a thing of the past, thereby neglecting the plural histories of the diverse sociolinguistic groups that reside within the territory of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, such as the Ede or Jarai. The Ede or Jarai are two matrilineal sociolinguistic groups that reside in the Central Highlands of Vietnam (Salemink 2003). However, Vietnamese gender studies mostly focus on the Kinh Vietnamese, while research on the 53 or so other ethnic minority groups that are officially recog-

nized by the Vietnamese government is left to social anthropology departments at Vietnamese universities and research institutions. Leading higher education and research institutions, such as the Vietnam National University or Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences (VASS), include an institute of gender studies. In Hanoi, for example, VASS has an Institute of Family and Gender Studies. According to the Academy's website, the institute's main tasks are:

> "1) to do theoretical and empirical research on family and gender issues, in order to build scientific grounds for the Communist Party and the State strategy-planning and policy-making; and (2) to provide training and consultancy involved with family and gender matters in Vietnam."

The website thus touches on a major goal for research in Vietnam, which is to provide policy advice. In other words, policy formulation and research are closely intertwined in Vietnam. The mutual engagement of both research and state policy also appears in the way that the social sciences, such as sociology and social anthropology, are particularly inspired by Marxist theoretical work (Evans 1985; Soucy 2000). Research on gender or women's studies is no exception, as both fields are similarly influenced by Marxist thinking, as can be seen in the textbook on the *Sociology of Gender* (*Giáo Trình Xã Hội Học Về Giới*), published by Hoang Ba Thinh in 2008 through the Vietnam National University Publishing House. This textbook draws heavily but not solely on historical materialism, as it also draws on the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Talcott Parsons, and Anthony Giddens (Fuhrmann o. J.). Apart from these Vietnamese-language publications, English-language publications on gender by Vietnamese scholars include *Women and Doi Moi in Vietnam*, published by Tran Thi Van Anh and Le Ngoc Hung in 1997, as well as *Ten Years of Progress: Vietnamese Women from 1985-1995*, published by female academics Le Thi and Do Thi Binh in 1997. Both writings were published by the Women's Publishing House (*Nhà Xuất Bản Phụ Nữ*). The fact that a Women's Publishing House exists in Vietnam alludes to the historical and contemporary prominence of women in Vietnam's political sphere. The capital of Hanoi also houses a Women's Museum and the Vietnam Women's Union, one of five mass organizations in Vietnam that operates at all administrative levels, both at the grassroots level and at the national level by giving policy advice.[8]

8 Apart from the Women's Union, the Farmers' Association, Youth Union, War Veterans Association, and the Worker's Organization (VGCL) are mass organizations in Vietnam.

One of the scholars mentioned above, Le Thi, also published the English-language monograph, *Single Women in Viet Nam*, in 2004 with *Thế Giới* Publishers, which is Vietnam's publishing house for English-language books. Le Thi is a professor of philosophy and founding director of the Institute of Family and Gender Studies at VASS (formerly the Center for Family and Women Studies), as well as editor-in-chief of the journal *Science on Women* and the monthly periodical, *Family Today*. Le Thi's work comprises several books related to gender equality, women's employment, marriage, and family. Her monograph on single women touches on a sensitive issue in Vietnamese society, as the family is considered the core of society and key to the economic liberalization of the economy. Consequently, recent work by Vietnamese scholars focuses on the transformation of women's livelihoods and changing gender relations in Vietnam. These scholars examine women's mobility concerning their choice of employment, as more and more women leave their home towns to join the large workforces required by the country's industrial centres and export processing zones. Many women also migrate to cities to work as domestic workers in urban middle-class homes or as urban waste traders (Nghiem 2004; Ngo 2004; Nguyen-Vo 2004; Nguyen 2015; Tran 2004). Due to economic stress, female mobility has been increasingly recognized as a necessity, although women's movement between the home and the work place challenges gendered spatial orientations, leading to other social stressors.

In her analysis of gender relations in Vietnam, social anthropologist Minh Nguyen (2019) establishes a parallel between the gendered domains represented in Bourdieu's Kabyle house with the Vietnamese distinction between inside (*nội*) and outside (*ngoại*). While spatially coded, these terms structure relations across kinship, community, and nation (Harms 2011; Luong 1989). Linguistically, both terms are used to mark kinship terms, as in *ông bà ngoại* and *ông bà nội*, translating into "grandparents on the mother's side" and "grandparents on the father's side." For my own children, the former would refer to the maternal grandparents on my side as (in Vietnamese terms) I entered my husband's family from the "outside," while the latter are the paternal grandparents on their father's side, which is considered the origin of the family, and thus the "inside."

This dichotomy is also expressed in the spatial and semantic construction of the city, as the royal capital of Thang Long Hanoi used to be surrounded by a wall. Those living within the walls (*nội thành*) were considered urbanites, while those residing outside the city walls (*ngoại thành*) were considered villagers. Such division between inside and outside the city continues to have

implications today (Kurfürst 2012; for Saigon see Harms 2011). While Doreen Massey (1994) convincingly criticizes the drawing of boundaries to distinguish between inside and outside, as yet another way to construct the opposition between "us" and "them," the inside-outside division has been identified as crucial with respect to terms of belonging and local meaning-making in Vietnam (Harms 2011; Nguyen 2019). The inside is considered the male world of the inherited property, as well as the locus of kinship ties, whereas women are situated outside, but allowed to enter the inner family through marriage. Coming from the outside, women are rendered strange or unknown, and thus in need of domestication as they are taught how to nurture the inside. However, a woman can redefine her role, and thus enhance her status in the inside, by reproducing the inside, as indicated by the Vietnamese idiom of *nội tướng*, which means that a woman is "the general of the domestic space." Men, once again, are in charge of the moral order of the inside, while maintaining relations with the outside (Brandtstädter 2008; Nguyen 2019). This latter relationship to the outside is manifest in men's gendered consumption practices, as well. Nguyen (2019: 135) demonstrates how, among rural migrants to the city, men feel entitled to participate in urban consumption, whereas women would abstain from consumption in the city for the greater good of their family. It is socially acceptable for young men to explore themselves, to try something out before they establish their own family. Women's relations to the urban environment, by contrast, are closely monitored by fellow migrants who reside together with them (Nguyen 2015).

Although women are very active in the labour market, sometimes outdoing their husbands in terms of economic performance, a common discourse in media and popular literature relegates women to the domestic sphere (Nguyen 2015: 191). In this discourse, the socialist state takes on an active role in the construction of gender relations and responsibilities, in fact, promoting women's social role as caretakers and providers for their families. Not only in Vietnam, but elsewhere in the world, states are central issues for feminism, as Bina Agarwal (2003) shows in her research on poor women's politics around land and development in India.

In Southeast Asia, post-independence nation-states sought to control women's bodies, particularly in their reproductive functions, as a means of disciplining citizens. Even in the most loosely-structured social systems, such as Thailand (Embree 1950), the modern nation-state intruded on the private sphere, such as through family planning measures. In New Order Indonesia, women and the family became the focus of the nation's agenda

of modernization and development. The state promoted images of modern middle-class women as representing the transformation from tradition to modernity, with the family as the functional unit. The family unit was considered the nucleus of society, charged with providing security, morality, and well-being for its members. In other words, the family became a metonym for the nation as a whole. Images of the sexually desirable modern middle-class woman continue to circulate widely across different media. In fact, female sexuality, by contrast with male sexuality, transgresses the boundaries of private and public, becoming a matter of public concern. Reproduction and the family are sensitive political issues as they are taken to have implications for the future development of the entire nation (Berlant 1998; Brenner 1999).

In Vietnam, the state's Cultured Family Program targeted issues such as health, hygiene, and social conduct generally, as well as women's behaviour in particular. Family planning campaigns advised women about when to marry, what kind of partner to choose, and when to bear children. Richard Quang-Anh Tran (2014: 14) explains that the Cultured Family Program fostered a return to traditional gender norms, re-assigning women to the sphere of domesticity, and requiring them to perform "'feminine' attributes." In her research on domestic workers, Nguyen (2015) shows in detail how female migrants' struggles with motherhood and marriage, as they engage with a gender framework produced by various forces, including the state (Pettus 2003; Barbieri and Bélanger 2009). Nguyen writes: "This framework effectively defines as failed femininity when a woman is not married and without a child, rendering them as unworthy individuals" (2015: 190). Harriet Phinney (2008: 348) concludes that the micro-technologies of the family planning program assisted the state in maintaining its authority, while mostly focusing on women's bodies and sexualities.

An intersectional approach to women's livelihoods, moreover, shows an increasing conflation of class and gender. While the socialist state previously considered working-class women as essential to development, and at the same time endangering such development, the state's focus in the post Doi Moi era has shifted toward disciplined middle-class women. In other words, the state turned from emphasizing female diligence and resourcefulness to promoting the well-educated, nurturing middle-class woman as an aspiration to achieve. The middle-class woman, simultaneously cast as desirable wife and caring mother, is central to the state project of building self-reliant, successful families that are able to provide for and protect their members from the uncertainties and ills of the market economy (Leshkowich 2008: 56;

Nghiem 2004; Nguyen 2015: 183). In explaining women's social roles, both past and present, one recurrent theme in gender studies, both in and outside of Vietnam, is the reference to Confucian principles, such as the "Three Submissions" (*tam tòng*) and the "Four Virtues" (*tứ đức*). Such principles almost invariably depict and define women's social roles in relation to men. According to the Three Submissions, women must obey the father until marriage, obey the husband during marriage, and obey the son after the husband's death. The Four Virtues, in turn, define the norms for women's labour (*công*), appearance (*dung*), speech (*ngôn*), and conduct (*hạnh*). Women ought to be skilled at cooking and housekeeping (labour), be physically attractive to one's husband (appearance), use a humble and submissive communicative repertoire and voice (speech), and, finally, embody female integrity by presenting obedience to seniors and the husband (conduct) (Khuat, Le and Nguyen 2009; Ngo 2004). These norms function as a cultural matrix against which the ideal woman is defined and evaluated. While in reality, these ideals have more often than not been and remain undermined, these norms of feminine virtue persist and inform discourses about cultural ideals of femininity (Endres 2008: 48). Yet, rather than applying categories such as the ideal Vietnamese women – which in itself is a construct – Minna Hakkarainen (2018) suggests that analysts trace such notions as socio-historical products of particular social relations at particular times, which serve the interests of those in power. Hakkarainen (2018: 47) considers the narrative of the ideal woman as an attempt to present homogeneity where there is none, and as a means for controlling female behaviour.

In sum, women in late socialist Vietnam must navigate ambivalent roles and pressures placed on them. On the one hand, female bodies are increasingly commodified, creating the "desire to become 'marketable' or 'sexually desirable'" among women, both across classes as well as in both rural and urban areas (Nghiem 2004: 312). On the other hand, women as caretakers and family providers remain doubly responsible for earning an income to support the family while caring for children and the elderly. However, these gendered expectations and responsibilities are differently dealt with, and frequently contested, according to class, ethnic, and spatial imaginations of the rural and the urban, resulting in multiple femininities.

In Vietnam's cities, as is the case in many places elsewhere around the world, women move outwards, appropriating public spaces for social, private, and economic activities. For instance, women open small food and drink stalls on sidewalks, engage in leisure activities like snacking on the streets, meeting

friends for coffee, or participating in outdoor aerobics classes, among other things. Liz Bondi (2005: 6) alludes to the potential of the city for the reworking of gender norms, defining cities as "places where embodied meanings and experiences of gender are not necessarily reproduced according to dominant norms, but can be challenged, reworked and reshaped." Female dancers make use of the opportunities offered in urban spaces, dancing along Ly Thai To Garden, the Lenin Monument, or the Soviet Vietnamese Friendship Palace in Hanoi. Unlike the female migrant workers depicted by Nguyen (2019), dancing women's consumption is not directed inward, but rather directed outward, as they participate in urban leisure activities, such as going out eating and drinking, or dancing late at night. What is more, these women perform an elevated status by investing and dressing in hip hop apparel, including branded products. Overall, they constantly permeate and re-work the boundaries between private and public, and femininity and masculinity through bodily performance.

Feminist theorists have shown great interest in the corporeality of the female body and embodiment (Butler 1990; Irigaray 1979). The reading of a person as feminine or masculine often occurs according to gestures and bodily movements. Such gendered assessments are particularly prevalent in dance:

> "Dance, as a discourse of the body, may in fact be especially vulnerable to interpretations in terms of essentialized identities associated with biological difference. These identities include race and gender and the sexualized associations attached to bodies marked in those terms, as well as national or ethnic identities when these are associated with racial notions, as they so often are." (Desmond 2006: 37)

As a result, the sexualized associations attached to bodies are an important point of inquiry when considering the socio-politics and body politics of dance. The aesthetics of different dance styles are most often assigned to binary gender categories. In fact, the aesthetics of many dance styles presented in this book, particularly breaking and popping, are associated with energetic male bodies. One exemption is the style of waacking, whose postures and gestures reference the style's queer history.

Yet, once again, we must recognize the provenance of theory (Roy 2014), acknowledging the Eurocentric discourses represented in many gender theories that are taught at many universities in Europe and North America (Connell 2014a), including my own. Therefore, let me return to an example from elsewhere in Southeast Asia. In her analysis of the theatrical form of *randai* in

Minangkabau culture, Mahjoeddin (2016) likewise attributes gender relations to bodily aesthetics. In the *ulu'ambek*, which is an esoteric form of the *silek* martial art, there is a particular preparatory movement repertoire that is associated with the feminine principle of *batino* (Kamal and Mahjoeddin 2016). In Minangkabau society, batino signals an "equal, but different" relationship to the male, as Mahjoeddin writes: "This gender attribution is indicative of the equal value and durational space provided for the feminine, non-potent aspect of a performance that accommodates receding as well as intensifying energies" (2016: 364). What is striking about Minangkabau culture, as a matrilineal society, is not only the existence of the term *batino* to describe the relationship between sexes, but that the aesthetics of a performative form are ascribed to the sphere of women, rather than men. For the Mother Goddess religion in Vietnam, ethnomusicologist Barley Norton (2006) has noted the gendered performance of spirit mediums. In the rituals of the *lên đồng* cult, the spirit medium adopts different clothing, mannerisms, ways of speaking, and ways of dancing for each spirit. Such performative vocabulary is highly informed by the spirit's gender – male or female. Norton points out the particular relevance of dance for gender performativity, since the assessment of the spiritual medium's dance aesthetic occurs according to the gender of the embodied spirit. It is evident from the vibrancy of mediums' dances and the excited reaction they usually receive from ritual participants—especially when the medium performs a spirit of the opposite gender—that dancing is one of the main ways that mediums articulate the character and gender of spirits. Ritual participants consider the music and dances of female spirits to be more "fun" *(vui)* and "lively" *(linh hoạt/ sôi nổi)* when compared with the "majestic" *(oai nghiêm)* dances of male spirits (Norton 2006: 65).

In her monograph *Embodying Morality*, Helle Rydstrøm (2003) shows how, in a rural commune located in Northern Vietnam, femininity and masculinity are performed through body styles. She describes broad and sweeping movements that take up more physical and social space as bodily manifestations of masculinity. Girls, in turn, are taught to refrain from broad movements, as well as from expressing emotions in public. Outbursts of anger – and showing any emotion generally – are not associated with femininity, and are reserved for those who orchestrate and thus dominate social interactions. Additionally, female morality and *tình cảm* "proscribe shouting, swearing loudly, kicking things, or walking angrily around in the abrupt ways that are connected with being 'hot-tempered'" (Rydstrøm 2003: 142-143). Spiritual mediums of the *lên đồng* ritual adhere to those body styles, which are read as masculine or fem-

inine. Nonetheless, the ritual performance opens possibilities for reworking and undermining gendered appraisals of body styles depicted above, and thus for performing gender fluidity.

On writing dance

Both theoretically and methodologically, the issue of writing dance has been a recurrent trope in dance research. Scholars particularly refer to the difficulties to translating somatic knowledge into words, as well as the difficulty of capturing simple dance gestures in critical literary texts (Coros 1982; DeFrantz 2016; Sklar 2000). Fiona Buckland (2002) begins her book, *Impossible Dance*, by pointing to the near impossibility of textually representing improvised social dance, as it defies any discursive description. Historian Susan Leigh Foster (1995) proposes a different relationship between dancing and writing, suggesting that the body is not only capable of producing practices, but also of generating ideas, which she describes with the term "bodily writing." Consequently, Foster calls for verbal discourse to enter into dialogue with bodily discourse, as an "ambulant form of scholarship" (Foster 1995: 9, 16). During my field work, Foster's gesture toward such dialogue came to life when my colleague from the University of Humanities and Social Sciences in Hanoi suggested that we organize a workshop in which both academics and dance groups would participate. On his request to partake in such a workshop, the dancers suggested that they would not know how to present, and instead suggested that we visit their gathering site, watch them dance, and ask questions *in situ*. We followed their suggestion and participated in the popping battle at Ho Thanh Cong, which will be presented in chapter 5, "POPPING." Sklar (2000) also suggests that verbal and somatic experience do not categorically exclude one another, but rather that they are part of the same epistemological process of meaning-making and body-making. Sklar concludes that the transformative effects of movements can be verbally enacted, since words can evoke somatic reverberations.

Besides bodily writing, autoethnographic performance can become a way to communicate bodily texture. Tami Spry (2006: 206) describes autoethnographic performance as "the convergence of the 'autobiographic impulse' and the 'ethnographic moment' represented through movement and language in performance." Autoethnography is informed by research on personal narratives in performance and communication studies, in which the socio-politi-

cally inscribed body becomes the central locus of meaning-making (Langellier 1989; Madison 1993; Spry 2006). In *Autoethnography as Method*, Heewon Chang (2016) identifies two academic strands in autoethnography, the analytic, theoretical, and objective approach to autoethnography, on the one hand, and a more emotionally engaging, subjective mode of autoethnography, on the other. Chang refers to autoethnography as the combination of cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details, considering autoethnography as both a method and literary text woven together out of diverse interdisciplinary praxes (Chang 2016; Reed-Danahay 1997). Spry (2006), for instance, combines qualitative data with personal accounts, while including creative writing in her text, such as poems or prose, thus arriving at a combination of analysis and self-observation. As a consequence, autoethnographic performance can be a means for rhythmically adjusting word play to body movement, and thereby an approach to the somatic and kinesthetic modes of knowledge production in dance. Consequently, this book combines autoethnographic accounts of hip hop dance and sensory ethnography, with narrative and semi-structured interviews as well as digital ethnography.

A sensory approach to dance and martial arts has proven useful in the field of sonic and kinesthetic research. In his research on capoeira, Greg Downey (2005) shows that more than one sense is involved in different ways of learning and knowing, particularly as he learned to listen to the rhythms of capoeira while engaging in its bodily practices. For the Indonesian martial art *pencak silat*, Jean Marc De Grave (2011) shows that learning *pencak silat* rests on the education of the senses. Drawing on the Javanese hierarchy of the senses, De Grave differentiates between four peripheral or external senses, including smell, hearing, sight, and taste, and the central sense, the inner feeling (*rasa*). According to De Grave (2011: 214), *rasa* comprises everything that can be felt and perceived within the body. *Rasa* combines sensations of the skin and proprioception, as well as feelings and emotions. As the work by De Grave (2011), as well as Howes and Classen (1991), has shown, other cultures have sense systems that may result in the emphasis of the senses or on a different number of the senses altogether. In order to overcome the cultural bias in the researcher's sensory perception, Sarah Pink (2015: 60) suggests that it is important to acknowledge one's own "sensory situatedness" before entering the field, starting with an inquiry into one's own personal sensory culture. In a similar vein, Regina Bendix (2006: 8) argues for "sensory reflexivity," meaning that the ethnographer needs to develop a reflexive appreciation of her own sensorium.

Sensory participation goes beyond interviewing and observing, rather entailing co-presence in a shared physical environment, as well as sensory apprenticeship through actual engagement "in the activities and environments we wish to learn about that we come to know them." (Pink 2015: 105). This is why Pink (2015) proposes autoethnography as a way for assessing the ethnographer's own sense system, as well as to be open to other forms of sensations experienced by the participants of our research. Tim Ingold (2000) and Sarah Pink (2015) agree that the sense system in many parts of the Global North is based on the traditional five senses, which largely ignores the importance of kinesthesia. However, kinesthesia is different from the other five senses, since this mode of sense production occurs in movement, and thus differs from the modes of reception associated with the five senses. If we engage in painting kinesthetically but review the product of our efforts visually, or if we produce sounds through the kinesthetic movements of our muscles but hear the outcomes of such movements aurally, these movements are distinct as they are primarily received by the person in movement (Sklar 2000).

Personal experiences of movement, and the analysis thereof, can become an avenue for identifying larger patterns of social meaning embodied in dance, both symbolic and somatic (Ness 1992; Novack 1990; Sklar 2000). According to Sklar (2000), there is no other way to make sense of other actors' somatic knowledge than for the researchers to experience movements through their own bodies. Sklar points to the importance of proprioception, which refers to the awareness of stimuli produced by one's own body. Proprioceptive awareness, then, refers to apprehending "as felt experience, the kinetic dynamics inherent in movements, images, and sounds" (Sklar 2000: 72). These considerations informed my decision to participate in a breaking workshop and hip hop class. By 2016, I had already participated with some of my students in a breaking workshop at a local youth centre in Cologne. I was pregnant with my second child at the time when I learned basic footwork, and I was both surprised and fascinated by the physical exhaustion.

To the extent that it was possible to plan my research in Vietnam ahead of time, I resolved to participate in a hip hop class during my research. As I had been following Vietnamese hip hop for more than 10 years, I was also determined to meet Mai Tinh Vi after I arrived in Hanoi in autumn 2018. I had learned that Mai Tinh Vi was one of the most popular female hip hop dancers in Vietnam, and I hoped to be one of her students. I was lucky when Mai Tinh Vi announced that she would start teaching a hip hop class around the time of my arrival in Hanoi. Over the last decade, dance studios offering hip hop,

popping, girl style, waacking, and sexy dance classes have expanded rapidly in Hanoi. I will discuss the inflation of dance classes that cater to growing middle class demand in the chapter "SELF-ENTREPRENEURISM AND SELF-FASHIONING." For now, I would like to share some insights from my own participation in Mai's hip hop class.

Every three months, Mai Tinh Vi starts teaching a new beginner's class. The class that I joined began in the first week of October, just as I arrived in Hanoi. Originally, the class was scheduled to start during the last week of September, but the start was postponed for one week due to *Trung Thu*, the mid-autumn Festival. The class takes place every Tuesday and Friday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. The fee for one month is 17 € or 43 € for three months. It is also possible to join a class for a single day for a fee of 4 €. Mai collects the fee in cash after the first lesson, writing down each student's name, phone number, and other contact information in her notebook. The class takes place in Cun Cun Studio on Thai Thinh Street in Hanoi's Dong Da District. Cun Cun is the name of Mai's first dance crew. Together with other crew members, Mai rents a room on the first floor of a residential building.

I had initially chosen the location of my residence due to its proximity to Thai Thinh Street. However, I soon realized that I had underestimated rush hour, although I had been to Hanoi several times. Thus, during my first evening commuting to the dance studio via taxi, I learned that the route from my family's apartment to the studio could take anywhere between 40 minutes to one hour. On the first evening that I attended Mai's class, I got out of the taxi in front of a restaurant to search for the entrance to the studio. To the right of the restaurant entrance, a little alley leads through a garage that opens to a courtyard in the back, where there is a staircase that leads to the studio on the first floor of the apartment building. The garage entrance is monitored by a guard, as is often the case in Hanoi, who sits on a small chair in the front. Loud hip hop beats resonate through the courtyard, as the lesson has already started upstairs.

As I reach the first floor, Mai stands with her back to a large mirror, facing the group of students moving in front of her. I immediately recognize the rose-painted wall from the videos Mai posts on Facebook, with the Cun Cun Logo on the righthand side. On the left side, windows open to the courtyard. A fan pulls fresh air through the open windows into the room. On the opening day, 10 students were present, with a slightly higher number of young women than men, as well as one little girl. The next class on Friday that same week was more crowded with 14 participants, eight of them female. The little girl

was joined by a little boy, who wore an XL Jordan jersey as well as an earring. The two children were accompanied by the girl's mother, who sat waiting for them in the back of the room with her tablet. Most of the students are young men and women around the age of 20. Some joined the class as groups of friends, such as one group of three consisting of a boy and two girls, who regularly attend class and always stand next to each other during practice. The boy and one of the girls wear matching t-shirts, which read "dance team." Others join the class individually, including a young 25-year-old woman, who joins the class for the first time. She usually practices the Korean martial art, *taekwondo*, and chose to join Mai's class due to her well-known reputation as a skilled dancer. The young women mainly dress in black tights, sneakers (e.g., white Adidas), and some wear t-shirts tied just above their belly buttons. One of the girls has a navel piercing. Another young woman with short dyed hair always wears wide trousers and long blouses, and hiking boots instead of sneakers. Mai herself always wears wide trousers or sweatpants, sneakers, and a t-shirt. Once she wore a white t-shirt with the Big Toe Crew logo printed on the back, which read "founded in 1992," and sometimes she wears a scarf wrapped around her head or a slider cap.

Mai always takes her spot in the front of the room, in front of the mirror, next to the technical infrastructure. The music is played from a boom box. Mai prepares the music in advance for each lesson, playing a mix tape of U.S. rap music. While I recognize most of the tracks, the track *Hypnotize* by The Notorious B.I.G. (1997) takes me back into my own teenage years. The music is mostly adapted to the dance steps that Mai teaches. On rare occasions, the beats and movements do not quite fit, so Mai fast forwards the music. Verbal interludes are common in rap tracks, making it difficult to dance, particularly for beginners, so Mai also fast forwards the tapes in these cases, too. In general, the class's soundscape consists of hip hop music, the fans circulating the air, occasional street noise, and Mai's verbal instructions, in particular her beat counting. Between teaching particular moves, Mai also talks about the postures particular to hip hop's different dance styles, such popping, waacking, locking, and breaking. In the first lesson, she introduced students to groove and grooving – using the English term, while spelling it in Vietnamese. She explains that not every groove is the same and everyone can develop their own grooving style. In the first lesson, she also introduces students to the cypher, the circular organization of hip hop dance, supporting her verbal descriptions with hand gestures: With one hand she traces a circle in the air, while pointing with her finger into the middle of the other

hand. She then turns to a particular move, introducing us to footwork: She brings her toes together, so that they point at each other. Then, standing on her heels, she moves the toes outwards. Returning her weight to her toes, she brings her toes together once again. In the next step, she shows us how to slide along the floor without entirely lifting our feet from the floor: the right foot turns rightward, while the left foot moves along its tip-toe to the right, in order to shift the left toe that bears our body weight back to the left.[9] She gives us some time to practice on our own. As I have a hard time mimicking her movements, she shows me how to exercise the move properly, standing right beside me. She then turns to the others, moving through the class room, watching the students' foot work, giving them verbal advice, performing the move once again herself, while carefully touching the student's arm or leg. She repeats this procedure throughout all of the classes. First, she performs a move herself, standing in front of the group, supplementing her bodily performance with verbal instructions. Second, she gives the students room to practice the new move themselves, while watching them from the front or circulating about the classroom. Third, she resumes her position in front of the mirror, facing the class, and starts counting 4, 5, 6, 7, and then on 8, the whole class collectively performs the newly learned move. Fourth, she turns around to merge with the group, performing the moves with the students from her exposed position in the front, aiming to synchronize the individual bodies into a collective body. Fifth, she turns around to face the class again, explaining with both voice and body what the students are to pay attention to in order to exercise a particular move correctly. For instance, she reminds us to keep our knees together when bowing down, because we would otherwise not be able to get up.

We learned to nod with our head (to the front, right, back and left), and we continued training with our upper body. She let us groove. We had to bring our chests and knees together. She corrects me while I try, because my knees are too high – a habitual movement I learned from aerobics, in which you are supposed to bring your knees as high up as possible. I should bring my upper body lower, to meet the knees in the middle. I am happy that I can do the motion, but I do not always manage to do the steps in sync with the rhythm of the music. She has us practice some steps, back and forth, in the group, as

9 I recorded this movement in my notebook immediately after class, and practiced the moves again in front of my desk while writing this book, as I grappled with the difficulty of writing dance.

she counts to eight. We then do these steps in combination with those that we learned the first day, bringing together the toes and heels. I am happy because I can do the movement. I practiced the move two days before when we hung out at Ly Thai To. I was very proud. We then did the next move – something like a moonwalk – comprised of moving to the side (first left, then right), anchoring the big toe of the left foot and the heel of the right foot, while moving to the right and then the other way around.

During the one-hour class, Mai integrates times for relaxation. For example, she calls for a small break, telling everybody to drink some water – all the students bring their own. Moreover, between learning new steps, Mai invites the students to groove. These were my favourite parts of the lessons, as the point was to release anxiety and just relax. This was particularly important during my first lesson, as I felt like a loser, unable to correctly perform the steps. However, I was relieved to find that I was not alone, as other students had trouble, too. During a break in the first lesson, one girl says to another, "so difficult" (*khó lắm*). After my first beginner's class with Mai, she invited me to stay for her advanced class. I answered that I worried that I would get completely lost, to which she laughed and said, "Just have fun," as fun is what Mai experiences when dancing. Seeing Mai dancing, her face and body express passion and joy.

Mai is very friendly with her students, laughing a lot during class. When teaching, Mai hardly uses any first-person pronouns to address the class. When addressing her students, showing them how to perform particular moves, she uses expressions and terms such as *bọn lớp mình* (my class), *mình* (us), *bạn* (friend). She explains that her class participants usually refer to her as *chị* (elder sister), and she in return addresses them using the term *em* (younger sister/brother). Even the mother of the little girl, who is older than Mai, addresses her using the politer term *chị*, although, according to conventions for age difference, she should address Mai as *em*. While Mai linguistically constructs a classroom of peers or friends, she nonetheless demonstrates that she is in charge when disciplining the students. For example, when the two children refuse to continue practicing, she scolds them and asks them to sit in the back of the room. If a student arrives extremely late, she comments on their late arrival in front of the class. However, when students need advice concerning a dance move, she encourages them to continue trying, standing by their side to help them.

The beginner's class is followed by an advanced class from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays. While we are still practicing, the members of

the advanced class usually enter, standing or dancing at the periphery of the room while waiting for us to finish. Once again there are usually more young women than men, but they are all similarly dressed, since hip hop apparel is mostly unisex. Thao, a female student with short hair like Mai, also wears a cap. Two other women wear school uniform t-shirts, while a young man wears a bandana around his head. The students all seem to know each other and Mai quite well. The atmosphere is less formal and the class members appear more comfortable with each other while waiting at the margins of the beginner class. Following Mai on social media, I notice that two of them are regular co-performers with Mai, as they take photos and shoot videos together, posting them on Facebook and Instagram.

The idea of "each one teach one" is also embodied by members of the advanced class. As one girl watches me have trouble performing a particular move, she grabs my arm, instructing me to watch her. She performs the steps several times, inviting me to mimic her movement. Each time I perform the move correctly, she signals with a thumbs up. Sharing advice and helping others improve and develop their dance through touch, gesture, and verbal advice or encouragement all demonstrate that dance is not only a physical activity, but relational and affective as well (Hamera 2007).

After attending my first hip hop class with Mai, I wrote into my field diary:

> "I really sweat although I felt I did not move too much. I felt uncomfortable as I was not able to follow through the choreography (which I know of former experiences in aerobic classes in my fitness club). But in the end when we just grooved and the music was playing loud and we could practice some of the moves we had learned in the lesson, I felt that it was really great moving with the beat. When I hear the music, I want to move to it, even if it is not within the choreography. When I arrive home, I feel hungry and physically a little bit exhausted."

"In movement one does and feels oneself doing at the same time," thus creating an ultimate intimacy (Sklar 2000: 72). Since it is difficult to record and dance at the same time, I chose to focus on my movements and the music during class, recording recollections of my sensory perceptions with voice recordings immediately after class. The taxi or motorbike ride home to our apartment gave me enough time to record my sensations, emotions, and my physical exhaustion – evident from the shortness of breath in my recordings.

Dance biographies

Much writing in popular music is biographical, whether biographies of others or of the author herself. This seems particularly relevant in accounting for anti-establishment music, such as punk and hardcore, which by its very nature questions the legitimacy of institutions (Attfield 2011). According to Roy Shuker (2005: 22), biographies in the study of popular music tend to be particularly useful for the "construction and maintenance of fandom." In this context, autobiography becomes an important source of data generation and interpretation. For this purpose, I conducted semi-structured and narrative interviews with female dancers. In her research on female spirit mediums, anthropologist Kirsten Endres (2008: 36) considers "narrated life stories are an intriguing resource for the analysis of the dialogic construction of self and the social world." With the practice theoretical turn, anthropology's interest in life history and biography has shifted from uncovering "culturally specific selves," considered stable and enduring, toward understanding how individuals "struggle to constitute themselves as particular kinds of actors and persons vis-à-vis others within and against powerful sociopolitical and cultural worlds," and how these individuals reciprocally shape the social worlds they inhabit (Endres 2008: 35; Skinner et al. 1998: 3, 5).

Mai not only became my teacher, but once she understood my motivation for taking her class, she generously shared her knowledge and experiences as a b-girl, and female hip hop and house dancer in Vietnam. She also introduced me to other female dancers whom she thought could represent a particular style and who were well-known in the community of practice. I accompanied the female dancers to their classes and battles and conducted narrative interviews with them. All the dancers I talked to welcomed and supported my research in every possible way, and I am thankful for their cordial support. Aware of Vietnam's marginal position in the global hip hop industry, they were quite fond of letting the world know that hip hop is alive and well in Vietnam. Consequently, it was quite easy to legitimate my research for those who participated in my research. I borrow the term research "participants" from Sarah Pink (2015), who suggests a collaborative and reflexive approach to sensory ethnography, rather than treating interviewees as objects of research. Moreover, Pink considers a sensory approach to interviews as resonating with feminist methodologies, while Rubin and Rubin (2011: 21) argue that qualitative interviews allow interlocutors to talk back and even contest cultural assumptions that may be implicit in the questions. Such a sensory

approach to interviews requires researchers to reflect on their own emotions, as well.

Moreover, Pink conceptualizes the interview as a "multisensory event," referring to the multiple modes and media that are engaged in processes of meaning-making. The multisensoriality of interviews was particularly striking to me when research participants started to make clicking sounds, buzzing a melody, clapping their hands in a particular rhythm, while expressing their emotions with facial gestures. Often while sitting and talking, their affection was accompanied by a clapping hand or a movement of the head or their entire body. In other words, the performing body becomes a part of the interview itself, signifying embodied ways of knowing (Hymes 1957). The use of such non-verbal communication in interviews allows researchers to include socially marginalized forms of knowledge and communication, as called for by feminist research (Pink 2015: 79). However, in dance, research into such non-verbal communication was not limited to female dancers only. The interview with b-boy LionT was a real multi-sensory event, involving listening, watching, and tasting, as we had lunch together. He frequently demonstrated his opinion about, affection for, or refusal of something by making impressive, sometimes theatrical, movements of his facial muscles.

Since dance is so thoroughly embodied, it is difficult to dislocate any discussion of dance from the actual practice of dancing itself. Thus, my research participants would constantly search for photos and videos on their mobile phones to illustrate what they were talking about. Rather than using elicitation techniques in which I might show objects and artefacts to invoke memories, knowledge, and emotions, the research participants themselves referred to information artefacts to help bring me into their social world. When talking about a particular dance event, a battle, choreography, or music and sound, they would frequently pull out their mobile phones, playing a video or mp3 to show me what they meant. Taken together, the multisensoriality of the interview really challenged my method of recording. I soon realized that voice recordings were insufficient to record and archive research data. This is why I chose to take extensive notes during interviews, tried to mimic non-verbal sounds dancers made while transcribing interviews, and spent time doing internet research to find the videos and music they played during interviews.

During the interviews, I could relate to female research participants by sharing my own experiences with the uplifting power of hip hop during my teenage years. Growing up in a middle-sized town in Western Germany during the 1990s, I found hip hop very empowering. At the age of 15 or 16, Ger-

man hip hop was on the rise, and I either listened with friends or by myself to American and German rap, sometimes starting a cypher ourselves. The 1990s was also the time of great female rappers, such as Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, Laurin Hill, Foxy Brown, or Lil' Kim in the U.S. and Schwester S. or Cora E. in Germany.

Gender politics are essential to the development of hip hop (Rose 1994). In recent years, hip hop feminists have reexamined women's relationships to hip hop culture, seeking to redefine discourses about women in hip hop. Much of the work of hip hop feminism has focused on rap (Johnson 2014). This book departs from the typical focus on verbal expression to highlight the performativity of embodied practices. In fact, the contestation of a male-dominated and defined sphere has taken place on the ground, right from the start. The earliest b-girls in the U.S. included Headspin Janet, Suzy Q, Sista Boo, Chunky, Pappy, Yvette, and Baby Love, along with the Shaka Zulu Queens and the Dynamic Dolls.[10] The well-known Rock Steady Crew always had female breakers. While these b-girls started out dancing in the U.S., roughly between 1974 and 1984, and thus in the early years of breaking, they have not received much attention either in the hip hop community or from scholars. In fact, the smaller number of b-girls compared to b-boys resulted from social constraints, camouflaged as physical constraints, placed on young women (Johnson 2014: 17). In effect, male peers defined movements adequate for women. For instance, girls would often refrain from engaging in power moves, such as the head spin, and instead would partake in popping, locking, or the electric boogie – all styles that are performed while standing, rather than going to the ground. Tricia Rose (1994) notes how girls were discouraged from practicing break moves because some male peers considered them "'unsafe' or 'unfeminine'."Moreover, women who performed such moves, sometimes in conventionally feminine ways, were considered masculine and thus "undesirable," or, on the contrary, sexually "available." This leads Imani Kai Johnson (2014: 18) to conclude: "That b-girls were discouraged from learning these moves speaks to the way in which cultural gender politics shaped the limited ways that b-girls were encouraged to participate."

Interestingly, a discursive shift took place in the 1990s. At least in the U.S., a move away from the focus on gender politics to a focus on training occurred.

10 The Shaka Zulu Queens and the Dynamic Dolls are the female counterparts to the well-established all-male crews of the Mighty Zulu Kings and the Dynamic Rockers respectively.

While b-girls did not receive respect equal to their male counterparts, the scope for women's participation in breaking widened. At this time, prominent b-girls such as Rokafella, Honey Rockwell, and Asia One became famous. They eventually became leaders in the breaking community and continue to perform alternative femininities in hip hop in particular, and for broader society in general (Johnson 2014). They are joined by dancers around the globe, reworking gendered expectations about women's bodily movements and postures, and gender norms and expectations toward female bodies.

In this book, I use a multilevel approach that aims to ground the local bodily practices of female Vietnamese hip hop dancers within larger cultural and political movements (Ortner 2006). Such larger movements concern hip hop feminism and the queer movement challenging male dominance and homophobia in hip hop culture on a global scale.